

27 February 2018

Pick up a new hobby or learn a new skill with these holiday ideas from travel specialist members of The Association of Independent Tour Operators (www.aito.com).

From papermaking in Japan to a family archaeological adventure in Greece, and from a culinary course in Italy to a painting retreat in Kerala, here are some of the best learning holidays on offer in 2018:

History, culture, and family adventures in beautiful Peru – from £3,295 pp with Activities Abroad

With a remarkable history and plenty of natural wonders to uncover, every member of the family will be fascinated by Peru. Discover the animals and plants of the Amazon rainforest on an ethnobotanical tour: explore the Sacred Valley of the Incas by foot and zip line, mountain bike between ancient archaeological sites, unearth Machu Picchu's wonders on a private tour, explore Cusco and learn how to make chocolate, raft along the Chuquicahuana River and kayak on Lake Titicaca. **Departing 21 July**, [Incan Adventure in Peru](#) costs from £3,295 pp for adults and £2,795 pp for children (eight-10 years), and includes internal flights, vistadome train, transfers, 11 nights' B&B accommodation, six lunches, seven dinners, activities listed, all equipment and expert guides. International flights extra. Call Activities Abroad on 01670 789 991 (www.activitiesabroad.com).

Enjoy a brush with Kerala on a painting retreat – from £3,395 pp with Authentic Adventures

Under the watchful eye of a well-established painting tutor, capture the essence of Kerala on this 15-day adventure. With a wealth of inspiring subject matter, budding artists will have the chance to float on tranquil backwater canals, witness an array of endangered wildlife in Periyar Tiger Reserve, discover flora and fragrant pickings in the Western Ghats and meander through the time worn alleys of the Old Cochin port. **Departing 10 November**, [Painting in Kerala](#) costs from £3,395 pp (two sharing), including flights (Heathrow), 13 nights' full board accommodation, eight full days and three half days of painting tuition, full-time support of a local tour manager, half-day boat trip on the Backwaters, visit to spice garden and local transport. Call Authentic Adventures on 01453 823328 (www.authenticadventures.co.uk).

Learn how to photograph historic Chernobyl and the Exclusion Zone – from £795 pp with Explore

Discover the history and consequences which followed the 1986 explosion of the Number 4 nuclear reactor at Chernobyl during this fascinating five-day photography trip. Accompanied by an expert guide and a local Explore Leader, guests will have the chance to explore impressive sites, including Ukraine's capital, Kiev, and the Chernobyl Museum, the Lavra Historical and Cultural Reserve, plus Arsenalna, the deepest metro station in the world. Photography expert David Short will be on hand to help guests capture amazing photographs of this distinctive location. **Departing between March and December**, the five-day [Chernobyl Photography Break](#) starts from £795 pp (two sharing), including flights (London), four nights' B&B hotel accommodation, two lunches, one dinner and the services of an Explore tour leader and guest lecturer. Guests must be 18 years or older. Call Explore on 01252 884 723 (www.explore.co.uk).

A hands-on cooking experience in Piedmont, the gastronomic heart of Italy – from £760 pp with Fleewinter

Known for its sophisticated cuisine, Piedmont is the ideal place to learn how to recreate tasty Italian dishes. This five-day [Culinary Journey](#) offers foodies the chance to roll up their sleeves and experiment with typical Italian ingredients in several interactive gastronomic experiences. Learn how to create the typical dishes of the Langhe, Monferrato and Roero regions, as well as the origins of slow-cooking, and find out how Italians are able to turn a meal into a love affair! Guests will be looked after by a number of chefs who will share their knowledge and offer as much guidance as required. **Departing between April and November**, the price is from £760 pp (two sharing), including four nights' B&B and all cooking and wine activities stated. Flights with BA from London to Turin cost from £70 pp. Call Fleewinter on 020 7112 0019 (www.fleewinter.com).

Get hands on in Japan, from papermaking to taiko drumming – from £3,950 pp with InsideJapan Tours

From watching traditional live Japanese sports to learning about culinary arts and sampling distinctive food, this 14-night [Hands On Japan Small Group Tour](#) offers a unique insight into Japan's rich cultural heritage. Guests will discover the country's customs first hand, learning how to make traditional pickles at the Daio Wasabi farm, trying their hand at papermaking and taiko drumming plus experiencing a sumo tournament in Tokyo. The trip includes stays in unusual accommodation, including a traditional ryokan inn and one of Japan's iconic capsule hotels. **Departing between May and September**, the tour costs from £3,950 pp (two sharing), including 14 nights' B&B, transfers, a 14-day rail pass and activities where specified. Excludes international flights. Call InsideJapan Tours on 0117 370 9761 (www.insidejapantours.com).

Join an expert-led photography tour in Tenerife – from £1,841 pp with Kudu Travel

Learn the principles of composition, aperture, ISO and shutter speed on a seven-day photography tour in Tenerife. The subtropical island, with its appealing year-round climate, offers an impressive range of locations for seascape and landscape photography, including Garachico, with its colonial mansions and churches, and the Botanical Gardens in La Orotava. Led by specialist photography guide, Steve Franck, guests will also hone their photographic skills in shooting candid portraiture, architecture, creative storytelling techniques and the night sky. **Departing 19 November**, [Photography in Tenerife](#) costs from £1,841 pp (two sharing) including six nights' full board in historic hotels (three nights in Garachico and three nights in La Laguna), land transportation, entrance and sightseeing fees, and the services of a photography guide and a Kudu Travel tour leader. Flights extra. Call Kudu Travel on 01225 436 115 (www.kudutravel.com).

Discover traditional food and culture in the Highlands of Peru – from £1,659 pp with Llama Travel

Combining the culture and nightlife of Lima with the wonderful mountain scenery, ancient ruins and traditions of Cusco and the beauty and purity of Lake Titicaca, this 14-day holiday invites guests to learn about the traditions and customs of Peru. Highlights include meeting the Misminay Community in Peru's Sacred Valley to learn about their long-established way of life, such as the Inca agricultural techniques and the local dishes cooked on a daily basis, as well as visiting the Quechua people who live on the Uros reed islands on Lake Titicaca. **Departing between March and November**, [Incas & Conquistadors and Lake Titicaca](#) costs from £1,659 pp (two sharing), including flights (London), 12 nights' B&B, transfers and the services of guides and local reps. Call Llama Travel on 020 7263 3000 (www.llamatravel.com).

Learn about the Impressionists in Paris and Normandy – from £2,230 pp with Martin Randall Travel

Complementing the National Gallery's landmark *Monet & Architecture* exhibition, discover France's finest collections and learn about the Impressionists in the company of an expert lecturer on this six-day tour. Led by Dr Frances Fowle, Senior Curator of French Art at the Scottish National Gallery, explore the Le Havre and Giverny (Monet's birthplace and home town), Rouen's Musée des Beaux Arts, the Orangerie and the Musée d'Orsay in Paris. The tour also takes in the delightful fishing village of Honfleur on the Normandy coast and Étretat, the dramatic chalk promontories often painted by Monet. **Departing 15 April**, [Monet & Impressionism](#) costs from £2,230 pp (two sharing), including first-class Eurostar, seven nights' B&B at four-star hotel accommodation in Rouen and Paris, one lunch and four dinners with drinks, tips, taxes and talks by the lecturer. Call Martin Randall Travel on 020 8742 3355 (www.martinrandall.com).

Archaeological family adventures in Greece – from £2,850 pp with Peter Sommer Travels

Take the family on an educational adventure, sailing the warm Aegean Sea in search of fascinating stories about ancient Greek Gods, giants and monsters. Based aboard a traditional wooden gulet, this eight-day family cruise will enlighten both adults and children as they discover Greece's mysteries and history, with expert archaeologists illuminating the region's vibrant past with tales of Roman merchants and Crusader Knights, leading excursions to castle battlements and a smoking volcano, with ample time allowed for swimming, snorkelling or relaxing on deck before tucking into fresh meals served on board. **Departing 28 July**, [Cruising the Aegean: A Family Adventure](#) costs from £2,850 pp (two sharing), including full-board accommodation, all crew services, expert-led excursions, entrance fees and transfers. Flights extra. Call Peter Sommer Travels on 01600 888 220 (www.petersommer.com).

Take to the hills with new navigation skills in Cumbria – from £225 pp with Ramblers Walking Holidays

Learn how to navigate without relying on modern technology and gain a certificate en route during this short break. Staying in Hassness Country House on the shores of Buttermere, guests will get to grips with interpreting maps and the intricacies of a compass whilst wandering through superb Cumbrian countryside before picking up a National Navigation Award Scheme (NNAS) Bronze or Silver certificate. Choose from a

three or four-night course to brush up on those navigation skills and blaze the trail for taking on more challenging terrain with newfound confidence. **Departing 21 and 24 April, 16 May, 3 and 6 November**, [Navigation & Hill Skills](#) costs from £255 pp (two sharing), including full-board accommodation, tuition with maps, equipment and optional assessment for NNAS. Call Ramblers Walking Holidays on 01707 331133 (www.ramblersholidays.co.uk).

Learn to sail in the sunny Ionian Islands – from £895 pp with Sailing Holidays

The gentle breezes and sunny weather of the Ionian Islands provide the perfect environment for beginner sailors, and the RYA Competent Crew trip makes this the ideal course for those looking to learn the basics. Running from April to late October, and based around the islands of Corfu and Paxos, the course is suitable for all levels and ages, from families looking to try something different together to independent travellers wanting to learn a new skill. The course sails from Sunday to Sunday from one of Sailing Holidays' bases in the Northern Ionian region. **Departing 15 April**, the [RYA Competent Crew](#) course costs £895 pp (two sharing), including B&B accommodation on the yacht, lunches, two evening meals and pre-course materials. Flights and transfers extra. Call Sailing Holidays Ltd on 020 8459 8787 (www.sailingholidays.com).

Experience authentic Cretan culture and join painting workshops – from £1,208 pp with Sunvil

Guests are invited to improve their artistic skills and experience authentic Greece as the locals live it on this week-long walking and painting holiday. Based in unspoiled western Crete, the holiday features four afternoons of painting workshops, hosted by talented English artist, Camille. Guests will also learn about the local fauna and flora while finding inspiration for their art during five guided walks through Crete's varied terrain, exploring its hills and valleys as well as traditional villages and quiet ancient sites. The trip also includes visits to local museums, plus plenty of free time to enjoy nearby beaches and other attractions.

Departing 22 May, [Active Crete Walking and Painting Holiday](#) costs from £1,208 pp (two sharing), including flights (Gatwick), seven nights' B&B, a welcome dinner, activities as described and transfers. Call Sunvil on 020 8758 4758 (www.sunvil.co.uk).

Explore China's ancient history and rich culture – from £2,790 pp with Veloso Tours

China is one of the world's oldest cultures, with a rich history and unique way of life, as highlighted during Veloso Tours' 13-night [Warrior Tour](#), perfect for both inquisitive families and couples alike. Explore China's Imperial past and ancient philosophies in Beijing's magnificent palaces and temples, hike along a remote and wild section of the Great Wall and learn the classic Chinese art of calligraphy. Guests can see the Terracotta Army and learn how to sculpt their own from clay and discover why Chengdu's Panda Base is respected for its vital conservation efforts, with ample opportunities to observe panda cubs up close. The trip concludes in exotic Hong Kong, the former British colony. **Departing year round**, the price is from £2,790 pp (two sharing), including international and internal flights and bullet trains. Call Veloso Tours on 020 8762 0616 (www.veloso.com).

Ends

Note to Editors:

AITO, www.aito.com, is an alliance of over 120 of the best specialist holiday companies. AITO members collectively provide an unrivalled range of holidays to every corner of the world. They are passionate about what they do and pride themselves on their attention to every detail of their customers' holidays.

AITO members' joint aim is to offer personal, caring service, to look after the environment in the places in which they work and to provide holidays that deliver both good value and high standards. All AITO holiday companies are required, as a condition of membership, to take full financial protection measures on behalf of their clients via the appropriate industry bonding schemes.

Travel PR will happily email all AITO members with any queries that travel writers may have – it's a great way to receive speedy feedback or information from AITO experts via just one email request.

For further information on AITO, please contact [Travel PR](#) on 020 8891 4440 or email Sue Ockwell (s.ockwell@travelpr.co.uk), Jackie Franklin (j.franklin@travelpr.co.uk), or Charlotte Osborn (c.osborn@travelpr.co.uk).

Issued by Travel PR on behalf of

The Association of Independent Tour Operators (AITO),

18 Bridle Lane, Twickenham, Middlesex, TW1 3EG

Telephone: +44 (0)20 8744 9280

www.aito.com