



AITO Inspiration – Healthy Holidays

15 January 2018

Those who are feeling the January blues and need a refreshing break will be spoiled for choice with these holiday ideas from travel specialist members of The Association of Independent Tour Operators (www.aito.com).

From a week spent exploring Norway's dazzling fjords to a yoga and wellness retreat in Kerala, and from an uplifting singing trip in Italy to spa and thermal treats in the Andes, here is a selection of healthy holidays designed to blow away the cobwebs in 2018:

NEW: Active retreat in the Finnish Lakelands – from £1,185 pp with Artisan Travel

Artisan Travel has introduced a new winter [short break to Vuokatti](#) in the stunning Lakeland region of Finland, ideal for revitalising after the New Year. Over four nights, experience the highlights of a Finnish winter on a husky safari, a snowmobile and ice fishing tour, a snowshoe hike and two bucket-list Northern Lights hunts. Additionally, enjoy the relaxing benefits of the panoramic Northern Lights sauna overlooking frozen Lake Nuasjärvi from the Vuokatti Hotel and Suites. **Departing between now and 14 March**, the price is from £1,185 pp (two sharing), including flights (London), four nights' half-board accommodation, cold-weather clothing, guided activities and transfers. Call Artisan Travel on 01670 785 085 (www.artisantravel.co.uk).

NEW: Inspiring historical walking trip in Slovenia — from £2,980 pp with Martin Randall Travel

Discover Slovenia's vivid and varied landscapes on foot during this diverse walking tour. Featuring five country walks, traversing vineyards, lakes, gorges, forests and coastlines, visitors can also learn about Slovenia's fascinating history. Taste the local grape varieties cultivated since medieval times and sample cuisine influenced by flavours of Central Europe. Other highlights include a walk in the Vintgar Gorge, which leads to views of Slovenia's jewel, Lake Bled; travel by gondola to its picturesque island. The trip is led by Professor Cathie Carmichael, co-author of *Slovenia and the Slovenes*. **Departing 3 September**, [Walking in Slovenia: A green and historic nation](#) costs from £2,980 pp (two sharing), including flights (London), six nights' half-board accommodation, travel by private coach, most meals with drinks, lecturer talks and all taxes and tips. Call Martin Randall Travel on 020 8742 3355 (www.martinrandall.com).

NEW: Follow the Camino de Santiago in Northern Spain – from £1,595 pp with Mountain Kingdoms

Feel rejuvenated in 2018 with a **new** trekking holiday along the Camino Del Norte in Northern Spain. This lesser-frequented section of the Camino de Santiago allows visitors to enjoy a peaceful walk in relative solitude, quietly contemplating their pilgrimage, whilst taking in the lovely scenery of rural Galicia in Northern Spain. Highlights of the trip include ambles along pretty forest trails, sampling tasty local cuisine, accommodation in a range of characterful hotels, and, of course, arriving at the impressive cathedral at the culmination of the journey. **Departing between 18 May and 24 August**, [Camino de Santiago](#) costs from £1,595 pp (two sharing), including eight nights' full-board accommodation, an English-speaking Spanish guide, a Pilgrim's Passport, and transfers. Flight-inclusive price from £1,775 pp (London), on the same basis. Call Mountain Kingdoms on 01453 844 400 (www.mountainkingdoms.com).

NEW: Explore the Cairngorms National Park, Scotland – from £1,495 pp with Wilderness Scotland

Celebrating its 15th anniversary in 2018, the Cairngorms is Britain's most spectacular mountain range, with soaring peaks reaching 1,300m and deep valleys, accessible thanks to a well-maintained network of excellent paths. Staying at a private lodge in Glen Feshie, guests on this **new** trip will spend a week hiking to summits including Sgorr Gaoith, Meall a Buachaille and Cairngorm itself, while spotting iconic species such as ptarmigan, capercaillie, red squirrels and osprey, and perhaps even Britain's only herd of reindeer. **Departing 2 and 23 June, and 11, 18 and 25 August**, [Wilderness Walking – High Points of the Cairngorms National Park](#) costs from £1,495 pp (two sharing), including six nights' all-inclusive lodge accommodation, transfers and guiding. Call Wilderness Scotland on 01479 420 020 (www.wildernessscotland.com).

Revitalising walks and Mediterranean cuisine in the Cyclades – from £580 pp with On Foot Holidays

Try a healthy Mediterranean diet and explore the unspoilt Cycladic island of Andros on this self-guided trip. With a choice of diverse walks across this delightful Greek island, from hikes through lush green hills and valleys to ambles via pretty villages, guests can discover the remote Monastery of Panachradou, the 22 ruined watermills of Dipomata and the archaeological site of Zagora. Enjoy coffee in the pretty fishermen's village of Kochilos and swimming at sandy Nimporio beach, before retiring to authentic accommodation in the old Venetian capital of Chora. **Departing March to November**, [Greece: The island of Andros](#) costs from £580 pp (two sharing), including five nights' B&B, four lunches, return taxi transfers between Gavrio and Chora, and a walkers' pack with maps and route information. Flights extra. Call On Foot Holidays on 01722 322 652. (www.onfootholidays.co.uk).

Spas, thermal lodges and walking in the Andes, Ecuador – from £3,450 pp with Geodyssey

Escape the humdrum and venture to the heart of the Andes for an exhilarating two-week break in Ecuador. The walking routes lead through stunning scenery, past snow-capped volcanoes, over moorlands, through cloud forests, beside crater lakes and along mountain passes over which condors soar. Guests can walk between remote farming villages and hike with the last of the icemen, who harvest ice from Mount Chimborazo, and then relax at accommodation based at a spa with thermal pools, plus charming, rustic country lodges. **Departing throughout the year**, [Day Walks in the Andes](#) costs from £3,450 pp (two

sharing), including 14 nights' B&B, all meals on walking days, a private tour of colonial Quito and transfers. International flights extra. Call Geodyssey on 020 7281 7788 (www.geodyssey.co.uk).

Winter walking week in Ylläs, Finnish Lapland – from £1,335 pp with Intravel

Best enjoyed on foot, the stillness and tranquillity of Lapland's wintry environment lends its magical atmosphere to celebrating, rather than breaking, the silence. On this special winter walking holiday, guests are free to explore the many trails of Ylläs and enjoy two guided walks and a snowshoeing hike, with warming drinks on hand whenever a break is needed. **Departing 25 February**, [Winter Walking Week at Ylläs, Finland](#) costs from £1,335 pp (two sharing), including flights (Gatwick), seven nights' half-board accommodation, two guided walks, a guided snowshoe hike and transfers. Call Intravel on 01653 617 000 (www.intravel.co.uk).

Put a spring in your step on a walking holiday in Crete, Greece – from £955 pp with Pure Crete

Explore the rolling countryside and dramatic gorges of western Crete, visiting villages and ancient sites amidst an abundance of spring flowers – with a backdrop of snow-capped mountains – on this five-day walking holiday. Suitable for single travellers, couples and small groups, and featuring leisurely to medium-paced walks, hand-picked by walking guide Tony Taylor (a former resident of Crete), guests will enjoy up to four active hours per day, rewarded with delicious lunches at a village taverna. **Departing 1 May**, [Spring Walking in Crete](#) costs from £955 pp (two sharing), including flights (London), all transfers, a walking guide, six nights' self-catering accommodation and a complimentary welcome meal. Single supplement and regional flight supplements apply. Call Pure Crete on 01444 880 404 (www.purecrete.com).

Get fit and hike Iceland's iconic Laugavegur Trail – from £1,949 pp with Discover the World

Twisting through incredible scenery in the southern Highlands, the 55km Laugavegur trail is one of the world's classic long-distance hiking routes. Led by an expert guide, this small-group trek takes guests on an unforgettable journey between the geothermal hot springs of Landmannalaugar and the verdant glacial valley of Thorsmork, sleeping in mountain huts set in spectacular surroundings. The group will hike past epic glaciers, colourful mountains, thundering waterfalls, volcanic ash deserts and deep river canyons along the way. **Departing between June and September**, the six-night [Laugavegur Highland Trek](#) costs from £1,949 pp (two sharing), including two nights' B&B in Reykjavik, four nights' full-board in mountain accommodation, bus transportation, a sleeping bag and cooking gear. Flights are extra. Call Discover the World on 01737 218 802 (www.discover-the-world.co.uk).

Feel-good singing in Ischia, Italy – from £1,995 pp with Authentic Adventures

Singing is undoubtedly good for the soul, and what better way to feel in tune than on a singing holiday, set on the idyllic volcanic island of Ischia in Italy, well-known for its colourful coastal towns and rustic villages? Enjoy daily singing sessions against a botanical backdrop of chestnut forests, vineyards and lush gardens, with the opportunity to sing with an Ischian choir in the hilltop village of Fontana. Guests can explore their voices at the renowned music venue La Mortella and find harmony in the medieval wonders of Torre di Michelangelo and Castello Aragonese. **Departing 11 May**, [Singing in Ischia](#) costs from

£1,995 pp (two sharing), including flights (London), six nights' accommodation, most meals with wine, five days of singing tuition, tour manager, excursions and tastings (including a cookery class) as per itinerary. Call Authentic Adventures on 01453 823 328 (www.authenticadventures.co.uk).

Enjoy a yoga and wellness holiday in tropical Kerala, India – from £1,700 pp with Fleewinter

The birthplace of yoga and Ayurvedic massage, India is the ideal place for rest and relaxation, to clear the mind and rid the body of sluggishness. This 12-night trip to Kerala combines wellness with light adventure, offering accommodation at three distinctive properties which belong to the CGH Earth group, a selection of experience hotels which maintain a focus on health and organic food, complete with Ayurvedic centres and in-house yoga teachers. **Departing between now and December**, a [Yoga in Kerala](#) holiday costs from £1,700 pp (two sharing), including 12 nights' B&B, daily yoga, cookery demonstrations, a houseboat trip, nature walks and some dinners. International flights extra. Call Fleewinter on 020 7112 0019 (www.fleewinter.com).

Retreat to the Isle of Mull for wildlife, fauna and flora in Scotland – from £490 pp with McKinlay Kidd

Escape from it all on a four-night [Mull Wildlife Experience](#) on Scotland's secluded Isle of Mull. This self-guided holiday features a full-day whale-watching trip, giving guests the opportunity to spot Minke whales, basking sharks, porpoises and a multitude of seabirds and a full-day wildlife safari, with expert local guides helping participants track down some of Mull's many birds and mammals, including otters and majestic golden and white-tailed eagles. Between these exciting excursions there is ample free time for guests to relax on the beautiful west coast island and to appreciate the amazing varieties of fauna and flora. **Departing between April and September**, the price is from £490 pp (two sharing), including four nights' B&B accommodation and return ferry transfers from Oban on the mainland. Call McKinlay Kidd on 0141 3088 009 (www.mckinlaykidd.com).

Pilates and refreshing walks in the Yorkshire Dales – from £490 pp with Ramblers Walking Holidays

Offering a refreshing escape to improve general fitness and wellbeing, [Pilates & Walking in the Dales](#) is a four-night break which combines walks in the rolling Yorkshire countryside with daily late afternoon Pilates classes and rewarding relaxation sessions in the evening. Taking in diverse landscapes with hikes along heather moorland, the River Wharfe and across dramatic limestone pavements, and highlights such as the natural rock amphitheatre of Malham Cove and Gordale Scar, walkers will enjoy fresh country air, breathtaking vistas and an uplifting sense of wellbeing throughout the trip. **Departing 14 May, 13 August and 1 October**, the price is from £490 pp (two sharing), including half-board accommodation, all Pilates classes with a qualified instructor (plus mats and blocks), leader and local transport to/from walks. Call Ramblers Walking Holidays on 01707 331133 (www.ramblersholidays.co.uk).

Broaden your horizons exploring the Hardangerfjord in Norway – from £1,498 pp with Sunvil

Discover the Hardangerfjord in Norway, a natural landscape of glistening blue fjords, the highest mountain plateau in Europe, shimmering glaciers and the colourful blossom of its

large fruit orchards, on this seven-night trip. Learn about the region's rich and vibrant history and participate in a host of outdoor activities, from tackling the HM Queen Sonja Panoramic Hiking Trail and admiring wonderful views of the fjord – including the Folgefonna glacier, Hardanger Bridge and the pretty waterside villages – and kayaking adventures to a ride on the famous Flåm railway and the opportunity to visit the stunning Steinsdalsfossen waterfall. **Departing between now and December**, [Walking in the Hardangerfjord](#) costs from £1,498 pp (two sharing), including flights (London), seven nights' half-board accommodation at the Ullensvang Hotel and eight days' car hire. Call Sunvil on 020 8758 4722 (www.sunvil.co.uk).

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.

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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

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