

AITO Inspiration – the most exciting new tours for 2019



14 November 2018

Escape the norm and do something different in 2019; get ahead with AITO's travel specialists and try these brand-new holiday ideas.

From searching for big cats in India to a winter wonderland in Norway's Arctic Wilderness, this month's round up includes the biggest and best new ideas for 2019, including driving a classic car around the colourful streets of Havana, exploring Plovdiv in Bulgaria - European Capital of Culture for 2019 - and Jeep driving along nail-biting roads in Northern Pakistan while exploring the Karakorum Highway.

Travellers can book directly through the AITO members featured in this newsletter. AITO members marked * can also be booked through a local, trusted [AITO Specialist Travel Agency](#).

Missed the last AITO Inspiration e-newsletter? See it [here](#).

The different sides of South Africa: [Cape Town & Zanzibar](#) – from £2,265 pp with Africa Collection*

Over the course of five days, experience the 'Mother City' of Cape Town, South Africa, one of the world's most spectacular cities, and enjoy Table Mountain, the V&A Waterfront, Kirstenbosch Botanical Gardens, the Cape of Good Hope, Robben Island and much more. Swap the hustle and bustle for the next seven nights and relax on the powder-white sandy beaches of Zanzibar, a tropical archipelago in the Indian Ocean, 15-30 miles off the east coast of Tanzania. Departing before 31 December 2019, the price (two sharing) includes flights (UK), four nights' hotel accommodation in Cape Town and seven nights' hotel accommodation in Zanzibar, private transfers and City Sightseeing hop-on, hop-off tickets in Cape Town. Call Africa Collection on 01403 256 655 (www.africacollection.com).

[Discover Ancient and Modern Bulgaria](#) – from £1,320 pp with Cox & Kings*

Delve into Bulgaria's fascinating history, art and culture on this 10-day journey starting and ending in its capital, Sofia, and including a visit to Plovdiv – European Capital of Culture for 2019. From frescoed domes to cubist concrete horsemen, Bulgaria is a place where the ancient and modern collide in the most dramatic way. This varied tour takes in ancient Roman ruins in Plovdiv, a private tour of UNESCO-listed Rila Monastery and three of the largest communist monuments in the world, plus time to enjoy the mountain air and the sandy shores of the Black Sea. Departing between 18 May and 20 September 2019, the trip costs from £1,320 pp (two sharing), including direct return flights from London with BA, nine-nights' four-star B&B accommodation, transfers, some meals, an experienced local tour manager and guided sightseeing. Call Cox & Kings on 020 3642 0861 (www.coxandkings.co.uk).

[Travelling the roof of the world: Xi'an to Kathmandu](#) – from £1,960 pp with Dragoman*

Over the course of 31 days, take an epic overland journey across the Trans Himalaya, in the southern part of Tibet. Drive from Xi'an to Kathmandu, stopping for fascinating excursions along the way. Highlights include exploring the Sagke or Ganjia Grasslands of the lower Tibetan Plateau; the Forbidden City of Lhasa; discovering Everest Base Camp from the Tibetan Side; Wild Camping on the Tibetan Plateau and driving over high mountain passes through the Himalayas. The price for this 31-day trip is from £1,960 pp and includes all accommodation. Flights, transfers and meals are extra. Call Dragoman on 01728 861133 (www.dragoman.com).

[Along the Pamir Highway in Central Asia](#) – from £4,679pp with Explore*

True adventure awaits along the Pamir Highway, the 1,250 km road connecting the ancient trading cities of Dushanbe and Osh. Starting in Tajikistan and traversing the Tien Shan range, across wild Kyrgyz meadows to the cosmopolitan Kazakh city of Almaty, this is a journey of ever-changing scenery, high mountain passes, raging rivers, isolated villages and hardy people for adventurous travellers. Departing June and August 2019, prices for the 19-day trip start from £4,679 pp, including flights, internal transfers, 18 nights' accommodation, 18 breakfasts, 15 lunches and 12 dinners. Call Explore on 01252 883 409 (www.explore.co.uk).

Chile from North to South – from £2,950 pp with Geodyssey*

Experience the best of Chile, beginning in the dramatic landscapes of the Atacama Desert in the north. From a lodge in the little town of San Pedro de Atacama, visit spectacular salt flats below Andean sierras, and high plains where flamingos feed in mountain lakes. Journey south to Chile's gorgeous Lake District, where picturesque villages nestle below snow-capped volcanoes. Beyond lies Patagonia and its remote fjords and vast glaciers, before a visit to the incredible Torres del Paine national park. Departing any time before 31 December 2025, this tailor-made 13-day trip costs from £2,950 pp (two sharing), including accommodation, internal flights and guided excursions. Geodyssey offers direct overnight flights (London) from £750 pp return. Call Geodyssey on 020 7281 7788 (www.geodyssey.co.uk).

Winter wonderland in the Dolomites – Italy from £1,235 pp with Inntravel*

In 2019 the Dolomites celebrates 10 years as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Visit the region in winter to see the landscape of jagged peaks and quiet valleys cloaked in snow while staying at Hotel Drei Zinnen in Moso, near the famous Three Peaks Nature Park. Enjoy winter walking and cross-country skiing on the doorstep, or explore the region using the bus pass included. Head to Dobbiaco, Italy's premier cross-country skiing destination and see the Alps' only herd of reindeer. Departing 22 December 2018 to 10 March 2019, a seven-night stay at Hotel Drei Zinnen costs from £1,235 pp (two sharing), including half-board accommodation, daily afternoon cakes, local bus pass, transfers and flights (London). Call Inntravel on 01653 617 000 (www.inntravel.co.uk).

Trekking in the Cloud Forests of Laos – from £1,175 pp with InsideAsia Tours

Venture to an area rarely visited by tourists for a hiking holiday with a difference. The 2018 winners of The Sunday Times Travel Editor's Award, InsideAsia Tours, has launched a brand-new nine-night adventure in Laos. Push the limit with a five-day guided trek through the forests of northern Laos to the summit of Phou Louey, bookended with time to explore Luang Prabang. You'll find dense jungles, endangered wildlife, remote villages and stunning mountain scenery at every turn, plus have the chance to sleep out under the stars in hanging sleeping 'nests'. Departures from October 2018 to June 2019 (recommended travel months April or October). This trip costs from £1,175 pp (two sharing), including nine nights' accommodation, the guided trek and a walking tour of Luang Prabang. Flights extra. Call InsideAsia Tours on 0117 244 3380 (www.insideasiatours.com).

Ruskin's Venice – Italy from £2,410 pp with Martin Randall Travel

See Venice through the eyes of one of the 19th century's most influential writers and philosophers, John Ruskin, whose book *The Stones of Venice* changed the way people looked at the city. Ruskin's passionate views about the Middle Ages marked a radical departure from the accepted norms and, as one of the first modern conservationists, he instituted a campaign to protect the fabric of Venice. Marking the bicentenary of Ruskin's birth, this four-night tour, led by art historian and curator Christopher Newall, visits a selection of buildings and paintings which were significant to Ruskin, including a private, out-of-hours visit to St Mark's Basilica cathedral. Departing by 20 November 2019, Ruskin's Venice costs from £2,410 pp (two sharing), including flights (Gatwick), Vaporetto pass, four-star accommodation, most meals with drinks and the services of the lecturer and tour manager. Call Martin Randall Travel on 020 8742 3355 (www.martinrandall.com).

Via Dinarica Walks in Bosnia and Herzegovina – from £2,211 pp with Kudu Travel*

This new cultural walking tour of Bosnia and Herzegovina combines natural beauty with a rich cultural heritage based on Illyrian, Celtic, Slavic, Ottoman and Austro-Hungarian influences. The 12-day tour includes walks along the Via Dinarica, a long-distance path traversing the Dinaric Alps; a boat trip through the Hutovo Blato Nature Reserve; visits to mosques, churches, hilltop fortresses and museums, and Sarajevo and Mostar city tours. The tour costs from £2,211 pp (two sharing) when travelling from the 1-12 September 2019 and includes 11 nights' full-board accommodation (three and four-star hotels), all land transportation, entrance fees, sightseeing and activities as per itinerary, together with the services of a local guide and a Kudu Travel tour leader. Flights extra (Austrian to Sarajevo). Call 020 8150 3367 (www.kudutravel.com).

Explore the legendary Karakorum Highway in Pakistan – £2,545 pp with Oasis Overland*

Journey through this amazing and barely travelled area of Northern Pakistan in open top jeeps along nail-biting roads with jaw-dropping views. Travel from Islamabad up the Karakorum Highway, where the Himalaya, Karakorum and Hindu Kush mountain ranges meet. Trek to Nanga Parbat base camp, explore the legendary Hunza Valley, hike to Passu Glacier and walk over a death-defying suspension bridge. Cross the spectacular scenery of the Shandur Pass to Chitral, and see the remote Kalash Valley, where a warm

welcome awaits. Departing before September 2019, this 21-day trip costs £2,545 pp (two sharing), including accommodation, all transport, three meals per day, airport transfers, English-speaking local guide and driver. Flights extra. Call Oasis Overland on 01963 363 400 (www.oasisoverland.co.uk).

Self-guided walking in the Priorat region of Catalonia – from £815 pp with On Foot Holidays

An hour from Barcelona lie the beautiful Catalan hills of El Priorat, and a glorious walk between the two ancient abbeys of Poblet and Escaladei. Along the way are remote bathing pools, Neolithic rock art, the medieval town of Prades and the 'holy mountain' of Montserrat. The final day is a highlight for wine buffs, passing through the vineyards to Porrera, to taste the renowned vintages of the region. Available from April to October 2019, *Catalonia to El Priorat* costs from £815 pp (two sharing), including seven nights' B&B, some meals, luggage transfers, route notes and maps. Contact On Foot Holidays on 01722 322 652 (www.onfootholidays.co.uk).

Norway's Arctic Wilderness – from £2,175 pp with Scandinavia Only*

A complete winter wonderland experience awaits on this five-night break to Norway's Arctic Wilderness, culminating in a two-night stay in Tromsø, the great Arctic capital itself. The first three nights are spent at a cosy mountain-side lodge nestling amongst snow-laden trees overlooking the frozen Alta River. Adventures include a full day dog-sledding with campfire lunch, mushing personal husky teams; a guided tour with dinner at Norway's first ice/igloo hotel and exciting options for Northern Light hunts, reindeer sledding, snowmobiling, and more. Departing January to April 2019, the trip costs from £2,175 pp (two sharing), including flights from London (Heathrow), five nights' accommodation with breakfast plus three dinners & one lunch, transfers and taxes. Call Scandinavia Only on 01274 875 199 (www.scandinaviaonly.co.uk).

Caribbean to the Pacific – Costa Rica – from £1,550 pp with Tribes Travel*

Travel from the lush Caribbean to the Pacific over two weeks, exploring rainforests and cloud forests, seeing a wealth of wildlife and enjoying an array of activities along the way. See the wonderful highlights of Costa Rica on this Classic Costa Rica tour, including the rainforest channels of Tortuguero, the bird and wildlife-filled cloud forest at Monteverde and the volcanoes of Arenal, walking along the famous hanging bridges. After days spent adventuring, relax on a beach along the Pacific Coast. Departing before 8 May 2020, this tour costs from £1,550 pp (two sharing), including accommodation and all ground transport. Flights extra. Call Tribes Travel on 01473 890 499 (www.tribes.co.uk).

Cuban Highlights – from £899 pp with Tucan Travel*

From walking the streets of colourful Havana, to exploring Cuba's prime tobacco-growing region, this nine-day journey encompasses some of the best Cuban culture that the country has to offer. Discover UNESCO World Heritage's Old Havana, including a drive in a classic car. Travel to Viñales via Jaimanitas and Las Terrazas, plus Cafetal Buenavista (Cuba's oldest coffee plantation), before venturing onto Cienfuegos, Trinidad, Santa Clara and back to Havana. Experience Caribbean flavours and Latin vibes on this new tour of Cuba, from £899 pp (two sharing) for an eight-night trip, including B&B accommodation and most excursions. Flights extra. Call Tucan Travel on 0800 804 8435 (www.tucantravel.com).

Big Cats and Small Kingdoms – India from £2,055 pp with Undiscovered Destinations*

Go in search of three large iconic cats on this remarkable 14-night tour. Look for tigers in Ranthambore National Park, leopards in the remote areas of southern Rajasthan and the only remaining lions outside of Africa in Gir National Park. Visit the dramatic marshland of Kutch, home to the Indian Wild Ass, where the plains provide a haven for the endangered Indian wolf, desert cats, striped hyenas and birds of prey. During the tour, guests can also enjoy a fascinating insight into the customs of tribal village life and climb the Jain temples in Palitana. Departing before 25 June 2020, the *Rajasthan and Gujarat tour* costs from £2,055 pp (two sharing), including flights (London), accommodation, breakfasts, transport, sightseeing with local English-speaking guides and taxes. Call Undiscovered Destinations on 01912 962 674 (www.undiscovered-destinations.com).

Unveil the Beauty of Persia – from £3,695 pp with Wild Frontiers*

Iran has so much with which to reward the adventurous traveller – the exquisite Islamic architecture of Yazd and Isfahan; the remnants of the great Persian empire at Persepolis and Pasagadae; the gardens and tea houses of Shiraz, including the moving tomb of the poet Hafez and the rural beauty of the Bavanat Mountains. Not to mention a warm welcome from the most hospitable locals – one traveller described their experience as “*An awe-inspiring country with a welcoming population.*” The 15-day tour costs from £3,695 pp (two sharing), including full-board accommodation, guided excursions and transfers with leading UK expert, Wild Frontiers. Call Wild Frontiers on 020 8741 7390 (www.wildfrontierstravel.com/iran).

Ends

Note to Editors:

AITO, www.aito.com, is an alliance of over 120 of the best travel specialists. 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](http://TravelPR) on 020 8891 4440 or email Jackie Franklin (j.franklin@travelpr.co.uk) or Charlotte Griffiths (c.griffiths@travelpr.co.uk).

Issued by Travel PR on behalf of
AITO, The Specialist Travel Association.
18 Bridle Lane, Twickenham, Middlesex, TW1 3EG
Telephone: +44 (0)20 8744 9280
www.aito.com