

AITO ([www.aito.com](http://www.aito.com)) turns 41 this year. Its 120-plus specialist holiday companies continue to innovate, and here is a selection of exciting new ideas, destinations and itineraries on offer in 2017 and 2018.

11 April 2017

### New tours and news from AITO members

*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](#).*

**Activities Abroad\*** has a **new** week-long family holiday to the stunning volcanic island of Madeira. [Magical Madeiran Adventure](#) combines both land and sea experiences, from whale watching and snorkelling with dolphins to exploring the lava caves of Sao Vicente and swimming in the lava pools at Porto Moniz. Guests can also hike, jeep and kayak around the island. *Departures between now and 21 October 2017.*

**Artisan Travel\*** introduces a **new** small-ship cruise, [Southern Spain & Portugal by Sea](#), which explores the beauty of the Iberian Peninsula. The seven-night trip begins in Málaga on Spain's southern coast, travels to Portugal's capital, Lisbon, and stops at a series of coastal towns, including Motril, Granada, Porto Banus, Ronda, Gibraltar, Seville, Cadiz and Portimao. *Departures between 13 May and 14 October 2017.*

**Cachet Travel\*** offers two [new guided walking holidays](#) for 2017: Walking in Central Crete and Walking in Western Crete. The week-long itineraries are conducted in small groups (maximum 8 people) and led by Cachet Travel's MD, Ghislain, taking in Crete's majestic mountains, spectacular gorges, ancient Minoan sites and unspoilt coastlines. *Departures between 25 April and 10 October 2017.*

**Discover the World** has a **new** fly-drive itinerary, [Iceland Ring Road Special](#), which makes the most of long summer days, as guests travel around the remarkable island on one of the world's classic drives. Take in well-known sights and explore off the beaten track in search of hidden gems, aided by the free – exclusive to Discover the World clients – iDiscover iPad guide, featuring personalised itineraries for guests. *Departures between 16 June and 18 August 2017.*

**Intravel\*** introduces a **new** self-drive trip, [Italian Food Adventure](#), for visitors to discover the heart and soul of gastronomic Emilia-Romagna, taking in the three splendid cities of Bologna, Parma and Modena. Stay at a rural wine estate and discover some of Italy's finest foods, including prosciutto di Parma, Parmesan cheese and balsamic vinegar. *Departures between now and 31 October 2017.*

**Ffestiniog Travel\*** offers an [eight-night tailor-made holiday](#) to witness this summer's Great America Eclipse (21 August) and enjoy an unforgettable railway experience, including a journey on the Georgetown Loop Railroad, a stay in America's 'Railroad Capital', Cheyenne, and a visit to the railway paradise of Powder River Basin, where clients can view the eclipse, weather conditions permitting. *Departs 16 August 2017.*

**KE Adventure Travel\*** has a **new** 10-day [Spirit of the Dragon](#) trek in Eastern Bhutan, featuring internal flights from Paro to Bumthang so travellers spend less time travelling on the road and more time sightseeing. Highlights include visits to the incredible cliff-hanging Tiger's Nest monastery, the capital of Thimphu, and seeing the black-necked cranes at Gantey in the Phobjika Valley. *Departs 2 November 2017 and 1 March 2018.*

**Kudu Travel\*** has added a **new** departure date for its successful cultural walking tour in Greece, [in the Footsteps of Patrick Leigh Fermor](#), dedicated to the celebrated travel writer. This 11-day tour begins in central Athens and visits the monasteries of Meteora, explores Missolonghi with its links to Lord Byron, and travels to the south Peloponnese. *Departs 7 October 2017.*

**Load Off Your Back\***, the self-guided walking holiday expert, has expanded its programme with a **new** European portfolio, featuring six hand-picked trails in Greece, Spain and Italy. Eight-day [Ionian Jewels of Corfu & Paxos](#) in Greece is set away from busy resorts, and includes the remarkable 220 km Corfu Trail

and Tripitos Arch, a spectacular natural formation which plunges into the sea on Paxos. *Departures between now and October 2017.*

**Martin Randall Travel** offers a **new** six-night walking tour, [Memories of Monte Cassino](#), which gives unparalleled insight into the key conflict of Italy's campaign during the Second World War. Led by a foremost military historian, whose father fought in the campaign, enjoy daily walking tours and stay at a four-star hotel – the former headquarters of the German army – in San Pietro. *Departs 6 October 2017.*

**Mountain Kingdoms\*** has a **new** two-part holiday, [Gentle Walking Ecuador & Land Based Galápagos](#). This 18-day trip includes walks on the slopes of Cotopaxi and Chimborazo in the Ecuadorian Andes, plus a week spent exploring the iconic Galápagos Islands, with their volcanic landscapes and fascinating wildlife. Stay on three islands and visit a further three on boat trips. *Departures between 19 May and 1 December 2017.*

**Naturetrek** has launched a **new** programme of 'Go Slow' wildlife holidays, offering gentle terrain and six hours of outdoor excursions each day, allowing guests to enjoy the natural world at a leisurely pace. [Go Slow in Extremadura](#) combines birdwatching, natural history exploration, wine tasting, and delicious home-cooked food with comfortable hotel accommodation in this tranquil region of Spain. *Departures from 29 May 2017.*

**Nomadic Thoughts (Worldwide Travel)** has a variety of exciting tailor-made Iceland itineraries – [Chasing Waterfalls](#). Navigate the most dramatic cascades which plunge off glaciers, mountains and Mid-Atlantic Ridge cliffs, with the near-Arctic location and wild, top-of-the-world isolation adding to the magnificence of region's waterfalls. *Departures between now and 28 March 2018.*

**Pettitts\*** has created a **new** 16-day, small group tour, [India's Orient](#), led by author and historian John Keay. Discover some of India's best kept secrets, including rarely-visited Jaunpur, the showpiece capital of the pre-Mughal Sharqi 'Kings of the East', a stay in imperial Lucknow, the Buddhist and Hindu sites of coastal Odisha, plus the better-known wonders of Varanasi, Kolkata and Delhi. *Departs 6 March 2018.*

**Simpson Travel** has added a **new** collection of villas to its 2017 Sicily portfolio. Located in and around the small town of Cefalù on the northern coast, each villa offers the perfect combination of coast, culture and countryside. Among the new arrivals is [Villa Le Sorbe](#), a six-bedroom hillside villa, featuring sea views, a pool and a path leading to a private beach. *Departures between 6 May and 21 October 2017.*

**Sunvil\*** has introduced a **new** seven-night holiday, [Islands of Grinda and Sandon](#), which combines the Swedish capital, Stockholm, with her archipelago. Explore the city at leisure before taking a boat to the islands to discover summer the Scandi way – outdoors in the fresh air with long daylight hours, surrounded by unspoiled natural beauty. *Departures between now and 6 October 2017.*

**The Aurora Zone\*** offers a **new** holiday, [Autumn Aurora hunt](#), ideal for nature lovers wishing to make the most of the next Northern Lights season in Harriniva. Experience a three-night escape to tranquil Finnish Lapland and hunt the Northern Lights by mountain bike and minibus. There's also a trip to a secluded area to maximise the chance of seeing the Aurora Borealis. *Departures between August and September 2017.*

**Traveleyes\*** introduces a brand **new** [12-day trip](#) to three of Europe's hidden gems: The Baltic States of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, where travellers will explore the region's secret Soviet past, imposing Gothic architecture and beautiful unspoilt scenery. With Traveleyes, sighted travellers describe the sights to a different blind traveller each day, and travel at a reduced cost (up to 50% off) in return. *Departs 17 July 2017.*

**Wilderness Scotland\*** has designed a **new** journey to coincide with the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the invention of the bicycle. [Five Countries Tour of Great Britain and Ireland](#) begins in the Yorkshire Dales National Park, travelling through Snowdonia, Dublin, the coastal roads of Donegal, the Antrim coastline of Northern Ireland and finally to Keir Mill in Dumfries & Galloway, where the pedal bicycle was invented. *Departs between 15 May and 11 September 2017.*

**Latest news from AITO-affiliated Tourist Boards**

**Catalan Tourist Board** announces that Montsec has been declared a [Starlight Destination](#), which is a site for astronomical observation, and has a new Star Bus service. Departing from Barcelona and Sabadell to Montsec Astronomy Park every Friday, the Star Bus is designed to introduce astronomy to tourists. Visitors can enjoy an astronomic dinner and a visit to the Universe Observation Centre, where they will enjoy gazing at the starry sky.

**Macao Tourism** shares a stunning [3-minute video](#) taken by the creative agency, Beautiful Destinations, last year during a visit to Macao. The short film “celebrates the beauty of the world and its amazing people, places and experiences”, showcasing what visitors can see and do in Macao, from its World Heritage sites and traditional neighbourhoods to its spectacular modern-day attractions and entertainment.

**The Greek National Tourism Organisation** announces that leading contemporary arts show, [documenta 14: Learning from Athens](#), will be hosted in Athens from April to July, bringing the Greek capital into the international arts spotlight. Originally held exclusively in Germany, this is the first time that the show will be hosted by a second city. More than 130 artists will share their work during the 100 days, including paintings, installations, music and film festivals, displayed in the museums, buildings and public spaces of Athens.

**Tenerife Tourism Corporation** is gearing up to host the popular [Tenerife Walking Festival](#) (23-27 May 2017) for the third time. Designed to showcase Tenerife’s astonishing natural beauty, the event will feature a total of 20 walking routes and a packed programme of supporting activities, including stargazing and wine tasting sessions. New for this year, participants can learn about their individual environmental footprint and how to offset it through activities which contribute to the conservation of protected areas on the island.

**Turismo Lanzarote** announces that Europe's first underwater museum, [Museo Atlántico](#), has recently opened in Lanzarote. Located in the south, 14 metres below the surface, this amazing museum features over 300 life-sized sculptures made by British artist, Jason deCaires Taylor, displayed across 12 installations. All of them are built with pH neutral materials which are environmentally friendly.

**Visit Finland** welcomes the inauguration of Finland’s 40<sup>th</sup> national park, [Hossa](#), on 17 June, which coincides with the country’s 100<sup>th</sup> year of independence. The new national park is approximately 11,000 hectares in total and is part of the *Natura 2000 network* of nature conservation areas in the European Union. The most notable natural attractions include Julma-Ölky canyon lake and Stone Age rock art at Värrikallio, estimated to be some 5,000 years old.

**Visit Gibraltar** announces that [Gibraltar’s](#) first suspension bridge, Windsor Bridge at Royal Anglican Way, has opened as part of a new Thrill Seekers Trail. The bridge is 71m long and is constructed over a 50m gorge. It forms part of a sustainable tourism initiative to restore parts of the Upper Rock country walks and to encourage a healthier outdoor lifestyle. The Thrill Seekers Trail complements other restored paths, including Nature Lover, History Buff and Let’s Go Ape.

**West Sweden Tourist Board** is promoting Dalsland in West Sweden, which is famous for its lakes, the Dalsland Canal, the aqueduct in Håverud and canoeing. Now there is also a hidden trail system to explore for those keen to venture deep into the region’s forests. At the core of this walking route is [The Pilgrim Trail](#), which features 100km of ancient paths. Travellers can stay at the Upperud 9:9, which has been converted into a hotel and restaurant and is a centre for hikers, canoers and mountain bikers alike.

## Ends

AITO, [www.aito.com](http://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.

Their joint aim is to offer personal, caring service to their customers, to look after the environment in the places in which they work and to deliver 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.

## Recent additions to the AITO portfolio include:

- All Saints Travel Ltd

- Chalfont Holidays
- Anzcro UK Ltd
- Bamboo Travel
- Silver Fern Holidays
- Personal Touch Holidays
- Travel Editions.

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For the latest Directory of AITO members' PR contacts, please [click here](#).