Last year whizzed by more quickly than any other year I have known. I’m pleased to say this was largely due to how busy we were – a record year for forward bookings, which was very encouraging with the uncertainty of Brexit always in the background.

Some incredible new voyages have been announced recently, news of which you’ll find inside. Don’t miss the opportunity to experience the new ships Hondius and Greg Mortimer – their respective whale watching and East Coast of Canada voyages will be unforgettable. Also the much smaller new MV Strannik has announced some awesome itineraries for Russia this summer.

We’ve also got plenty of new ideas for land-based adventures, as you’ll see on pages 2 and 3 with news of my new itineraries for Jordan, Turkey, Russia, Brazil and China.

A new year and new ideas. Time to start planning a really memorable trip – I’ll be only too delighted to help.

Happy New Year to everyone.
Ringing in the New

I’ve been beavering away putting together these stimulating new experiences for 2019. Tempted? Let me know if you’d like to see a detailed sample itinerary.

» JORDAN
Hospitable Kingdom
This 10 day tour gives a flavour of Jordan’s culture, visiting local villages, drinking mint tea with the Bedouins, cooking exquisite Mediterranean food and dining with a Jordanian family.
Visit the Baptism site at the Jordan River, the Tomb of Moses at Mount Nebo and the castle of Machaerus where John the Baptist was beheaded.
Extend the tour to hike through mountains and explore the Biosphere nature reserves. We can also suggest a luxurious Dead Sea spa retreat for a pampering and restorative finale.
See page 6 for feedback from clients who have recently returned from Jordan.

» BRAZIL
Land of contrasts
This spectacular three week holiday starts in fun-filled Rio de Janeiro and visits Salvador, Brazil’s oldest city; the Pão de Açúcar (Sugarloaf Mountain); the Christ Statue at Corcovado and the Iguassu Falls.
After the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Ouro Preto you’ll have two days in the Amazon jungle including a journey by motorized canoe to the Meeting of the Waters (where the Negro and Solimões rivers meet). On to the Pantanal, a 77,220 square mile lowland plain full of flowers, jaguars, peccaries, bobcats, wild boar, grey teal, partridge and heron – a wilderness paradise for photographers.

» when to go «
Brazil is a year round destination but wildlife is easier to spot in the dry season July to September. Don’t miss the Rio Carnival which takes place 2-9 March 2019

» guide price «
£6,950 per person including flights

» TURKEY
A delight!
With Istanbul’s new airport opening in January, visitor numbers on the increase and a new period of stability settling over the country, it’s a good opportunity to look afresh at all there is to see and do.
My nine day Istanbul to Cappadocia itinerary includes the best of Istanbul, Gallipoli, Troy, Izmir, Ephesus and Cappadocia. Sample Turkish coffee at Sark Kahvesi cafe, baklava and Turkish delight at specialist makers, enjoy wine tasting at a famous wine house and lunch at a local village house in Cappadocia.

» best time to go «
Mid-March to mid-November

» guide price «
£2,995 per person including flights

» RUSSIA
The Golden Ring and more
Amid the plains, lakes and marshes of Russia’s vast country is a circle of old towns extending north east from Moscow known as the Golden Ring. Each is part of the complex history of the Russian State.
This 11 day tour takes in Suzdal, Vladimir, Kostroma, Yaroslavl and Rostov Velikiy in all their fascinating diversity. It commences in Moscow with Red Square, St. Basil’s Cathedral, the Church of Christ the Saviour and a tour of Moscow’s Kremlin and Armoury Chamber.
Experience a meal at home with a local family, learn about surviving artistic traditions (such as the famous painted lacquer boxes), join in workshops on enamel and matryoshka (Russian doll) painting, and enjoy a concert of church bells or choir singing in the monastery.

» when to go «
May, September and early October

» guide price «
£4,840 per person including flights
**CHINA**

*Trek the Great Wall*

My new 12 day trekking itinerary will immerse you in China’s fascinating landscape and history. The 2,000 year old Great Wall winds nearly 9,000km from east to west across desert and mountain, grassland and plateau. Spend two days getting to know Beijing and then trek three important sections of the Wall (Laolongtou, the stretch to the ocean, Shanhaiguan Military Pass and the Great Wall Museum). Each day starts from a different location and you walk for three to five hours amid incomparable views and history before returning at night to a local hotel or guesthouse. On day eight, you’ll visit the majestic Putuo Zongcheng Temple, built in 1771 in Tibetan Buddhism style and Chengde Mountain Retreat, a popular summer resort for emperors in the Qing Dynasty, which was the biggest Imperial garden in the world.

- **best time to go**: May, September and early October
- **guide price**: £6,595 per person for a 12 day holiday including flights

**ARCTIC voyages 2020 – Iceland, Canada and more**

We’ve some fascinating new itineraries on board the stunning new purpose-built expedition vessel Greg Mortimer, sailing dates below:

- **Inuit Arctic and beyond**
  A 21 day voyage from Reykjavik to St John’s taking in some of the best scenery in Iceland, South Greenland and East Coast Canada, encountering traditional Inuit communities and their cultures on the way. The Torngat Mountains are home to polar bears and caribou – and in the dark night sky in mid-Autumn you might see the Aurora Borealis.
  - **when**: 23 September – 13 October 2020
  - **offer**: 10 per cent off Balcony Staterooms until 15 January 2019

- **Iceland, Jan Mayen and Svalbard**
  Travelling over 11 days from Reykjavik to Longyearbyen on Greg Mortimer, discover Iceland’s majestic Westfjords, Jan Mayen, the world’s northernmost active volcanic island, and Svalbard’s north west coast. Be thrilled by dramatic bird cliffs and puffins nesting on ledges, Zodiac cruise through glacier-filled fjords, hike the tundra, search for polar bears and see walrus hauled out on the pack ice.
  - **when**: 12-22 June 2020
  - **offer**: 20 per cent off all cabin categories until 15 January 2019

**British Isles to Spitsbergen**

We’ve a special 10 per cent off promotion for this new voyage departing from Leith, Edinburgh on 3 June 2019 on Sea Spirit, combining Fair Isle, the Shetlands and the Faroe Islands with Spitsbergen. It’s a great introduction for those new to expedition cruising or an interesting itinerary for seasoned travellers. Your expedition leader will be Dr. Huw Lewis-Jones, former curator at the Scott Polar Research Institute and the National Maritime Museum. I heard him lecture recently in Ireland – one of the best speakers you will come across. You’ll also benefit from famous wildlife photographer Rick Sammon’s award winning experience in the free photography option.

**Kapitan Khlebnikov – ‘Ice’ Breaking news!**

We’re very excited to be able to offer the famous polar class icebreaker Kapitan Khlebnikov for three Wrangel Island expeditions in the High Arctic this year. She holds the passenger ship record for the most crossings of the Northwest Passage and has circumnavigated Antarctica twice. Recently refurbished, she accommodates up to 110 guests in well-appointed and spacious cabins and suites and has a fleet of 10 Zodiacs for maximum ice exploration. Let me know if you’re interested in her!
WILDLIFE, WILDERNESS AND WINE

MV STRANNIK – inaugural itineraries

The new MV Strannik is heading north into Russia for some intriguing itineraries from April to end September 2019: The Galapagos of the Orient (three island groups south of Tokyo); the Kuril Islands; Commander Islands; the Russian Far East coast; Islands and peoples of the Bering Sea and the New Siberian Islands. She’s a small ocean-going expedition ship and an exciting new option if you’re keen to experience less predictable and risk-averse expedition voyaging than on the bigger ships. Strannik sleeps 12 in five en-suite cabins (double, twin or triple berth). Combine one of her voyages this summer with a land-based exploration of the Kamchatka Peninsula.

INDIA

Ride the Marwar desert

We’ve a wonderful eight-day desert ride (dates to suit you) showcasing the best of Rajasthan’s magical Marwar Kingdom. Riding the Royal Marwari horse along sandy river beds, through towering dunes and granite mountains, you’ll come across ancient temples, unspoiled rural villages and local tribespeople whose way of life goes back centuries. The region abounds in wildlife such as blackbuck antelope, porcupine, demoiselle cranes, hyena and leopard. Ask me about combining this with our Forts and palaces of Rajputana itinerary.

ARCTIC voyage offers

Save 15 per cent on the following voyages on Ocean Endeavour and an outstanding 20 per cent when booking two or more together:
- Ireland circumnavigation 9-20 June 2019
- Scotland slowly 21 June – 1 July 2019
- Iceland circumnavigation 4-14 July 2019

In the wake of the Vikings 13-26 July 2019

Offer applies to the voyage component and ends 19 January 2019.

INDIA’S wildlife haven

Situated in the Terai, the marshy jungle region of Uttar Pradesh, Jaagir Lodge started life as a 1940s colonial building. Here, from December to June, you can explore the incredible forest reserve of Dudhwa, the only national park in India where you might see tiger, leopard, one-horned rhino, Asiatic elephant, otters and Ganges river dolphin in one location. The lodge is close to the Dudhwa Tiger Reserve with its long-standing Bengal tiger conservation programme pioneered by ‘Billy’ Arjan Singh, the hunter turned conservationist and, coincidentally, my husband Rahul’s late uncle! Learn about Billy’s work between cycling around sugar cane farms, spotting rhino by elephant, or looking for critically endangered gharials (crocodile) by boat. Stay here and combine with the Hindu Kumbh Mela festival, one of the world’s largest religious gatherings, which takes place from 10 January to 6 March 2019. Combine Jaagir with our Darjeeling and Sikkim or On the trail of the Bengal tiger itineraries.

What’s new for OMAN

Time your holiday in Oman to coincide with the amazing experience of swimming with whale sharks! These gentle giants are only around in September/October (a perfect time to visit) but you have to book well in advance as it’s understandably popular.

Guests arriving early at Alila Jabal Akhdar, atop the rugged 2,000m Al Hajar mountain range can now treat themselves to a reviving ‘Redeye’ package including a revitalising shower and 60-minute massage in Spa Alila and breakfast afterwards amid breathtaking views. Make sure your stay at the Chedi Muscat includes a Friday so you can enjoy brunch with live entertainment and exquisite dishes from around the world.

Any or all the above can be incorporated into our Forts, wadis and souks of Oman itinerary.

NEW ZEALAND

With its lovely people, breathtaking scenery and incredible places to stay – as well as an excellent and growing reputation as a wine region, New Zealand is outstanding. Stay at a fishing lodge in Taupo, North Island, and for South Island, I recommend Fjordland Lodge at Te Anau, one of several stunning private properties which clients have loved.

Welded Volcano, Kuril Islands
AUSTRALIA WITH TASMANIA

Make spring special with our incredible 16 day hosted safari of Australia’s remote outback by private air charter. Starting in Darwin on 13 May 2019, a group of just eight guests will be taken to Kakadu and Arnhem Land, the Bungle Bungles, Mitchell Falls, Ningaloo Reef and more. Your world-class accommodation will range from a working cattle station to eco-luxury safari tents on the beach.

We can build events such as the annual Vivid Sydney festival in May/June into your itinerary.

Tasmania offers some of the most beautiful wilderness areas on earth, fascinating history and delectable food and wine. Discover its wild west coast; play golf on an exclusive course having been whisked there by private jet or enjoy the wildlife of the Tamar Valley or at Picnic Island close to Freycinet National Park.

Let me know if you’d like more information for any of our antipodean adventures.

We’ve currently a great offer for the award-winning Saffire Freycinet – stay three nights and save 20 per cent between 24 March and 31 August 2019.
Whale study voyage – late offer

Join Island Sky this March for an incredible research voyage to explore Antarctica and take part in a major study of the feeding habits of humpback whales. You’ll be in the company of leading experts from the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution as well as other experts on whales and the health of the oceans. Also on board will be a BBC film crew, filming part of their Big Blue Live TV series, which will make this unique opportunity even more exceptional.

This elegant and comfortable all-suite ship is a far cry from the kind of science vessel you would normally expect on a research expedition of this calibre. There are now savings of 20 per cent on the voyage element, so do contact me if you’d like to be involved.

when 1-17 March 2019
offer price From £10,680 per person including flights

» PLANCIUS, ORTELIUS and HONDIUS
Update 2019 and 2020

Antarctic voyages in 2019 on Plancius and Ortelius are now nearly sold out, but we’ve great discounts of up to 20 per cent on the last few remaining berths for our discovery and whale watching voyages in the Antarctic Polar Circle, Weddell Sea, and the Antarctic Peninsula in March 2019. Recently Ortelius’ helicopters were able to reach the remote emperor penguin colony on Snow Hill Island for the second year running, so you might want to snap up a Weddell Sea voyage this year while you can.

A fantastic new 10 night Discovery and learning voyage on the world’s first registered polar class cruise ship Hondius has been added.
» ANDAMAN ISLANDS

Gorgeous new seven-room Jalakara in the Andaman Islands nestles in the hills with glorious views across the tropical jungle canopy. There are private dining areas, a secluded spa and stunning infinity pool. Chef-owner Mark Hill’s culinary ethos is farm-to-table, with particular emphasis on fabulous fresh seafood.

Combine this with a cruise of the east coast of the archipelago on the luxurious 10-suite Andaman Explorer expedition ship. Cruises commence in early 2020 and I’ve already had keen interest. Ask for more details.

» VIETNAM

Hoi An is one of my favourite places in Vietnam – be there for the 14th day of the lunar month when the ancient town’s streets are adorned with brightly-coloured lanterns and it becomes a performance venue for Vietnamese arts.

An Lam Retreats’ stylish five star boutique property in Ninh Van Bay (near Nha Trang) opened in 2017 to much acclaim. Last year the Evening Standard named it among 14 of the ‘Most incredible hotels in Vietnam’. Meanwhile, the peaceful riverside location of the recently renovated and splendidly quirky 19-room hotel An Lam Retreats Saigon River continues to appeal.

Both properties currently have some attractive bonus-night and early bird offers and are perfect for one of our Cambodia, Laos and/or Vietnam itineraries.

» JAPAN

2019 Rugby World Cup

Eight months to go until the 2019 Rugby World Cup kicks off in Japan from 20 September to 2 November. What better excuse to plan a visit? I can combine some or all of the matches with our Best of Japan’s cities, culture, temples and gardens itinerary. Do get in touch to learn more.

» CHILE

Atacama and Patagonia offer

We’ve a 15 per cent discount for Chile when combining a three night all-inclusive stay at Alto Atacama with a three night all-inclusive stay at The Singular, Patagonia. This offer applies to new reservations for stays until 30 April 2020 (apart from 15 December 2019 – 5 January 2020). Call me about a biking or hiking trip along the amazing Carretera Austral (Southern Highway). The northern sector stretches over 661km and the amazing landscape of national parks and river basins offers many exciting nature-based, cultural and active activities. Stay in one of two great new hotels – the beautiful boutique wilderness Hotel Raudal and the trendy, family run hotel Simple Patagonia near Puerto Natales.

» SEA SPIRIT

Repositioning north

Here’s something for intrepid travellers who love long, uninterrupted days at sea and the chance to totally get away from it all. Join the luxury expedition ship Sea Spirit on her repositioning voyage from Puerto Madryn, Argentina on 19 March 2019, disembarking either at Mindelo, Cape Verde on 4 April 2019, or at Santa Cruz de Tenerife, Canary Islands on 7 April 2019.

The astonishing price of £80 per passenger per day for a spacious ocean-view cabin with large picture window or a private balcony includes all meals. I’ll be happy to book all arrangements UK to UK for you, so just ask!
Excellence acknowledged

MV Origin takes luxury expedition cruising in the Galapagos Islands to the next level. In 2018 she was selected to join the prestigious Relais & Châteaux, association.

““A tremendous success, ‘South Zealand’s’ detailed planning and choice of local agent paying off, as ever. Though I’ve travelled extensively in remote areas I still found Mongolia one of the most challenging lands to have visited, physically and, sometimes, culturally – but also one of the most rewarding and special. One needs stamina and, specifically on the cross-country driving, anyone with back problems or whose body might not withstand hours of being wrenched and shaken up should look elsewhere. However the rewards are enormous in the beauty of the scenery; the flora and the insights into nomadic life and ancient cultures. My guides and drivers were excellent. You gave ample advice about the uncertain standards of accommodation and food and with few exceptions I was very content with both. I was really glad that I had included some non or only local travel days at each of the camps to balance the long drives and take in the surroundings. The secret is to be selective, and not try to do too much.””

David Carter, Mongolia, August-September 2018

““Thank you for getting me to the Kingdom of Lo in Mustang, a dream fulfilled. Both guide and driver looked after me recognising I needed time to adjust to the altitude. Your pre-departure information was as ever brilliant and the holiday realised all my expectations. Some wonderful memories and I loved the people, from new friends to old ones.””

Ian Stubbs, Nepal and Mustang October – November 2018

>> UZBEKISTAN – New developments

Uzbekistan’s new Afrosiyob high-speed train service between Tashkent and Shakhrisabz via Karshi commenced last year. Tourism is set to grow with new hotels coming up in Bukhara and Samarkand. A new e-visa system is now in place, making entry formalities much easier and there are plans to abolish the need for British citizens to obtain visas for Uzbekistan in 2021.

““We had a wonderful visit, from the moment we arrived until the day we left. A few eyebrows were raised when we said we were off to Jordan, especially two women of mature years, but we could not have felt safer. Our itinerary was perfect from bustling Amman to scenic Aqaba and 10 days was the ideal stay. We were amazed at how mountainous and beautiful the country is. Mt. Nebo really conveys a biblical atmosphere, but the highlight is definitely Petra, just breathtaking. The food was very good and caters for all tastes and the people are charming. The spa at the Dead Sea was the best I have ever had, I only wish I could have another! Highly recommended.””

Sheila Westwater, Greenlander Explorer, August 2018

““We had a fantastic trip, thank you for all your planning on our behalf. We loved the Faroes. The landscapes were stunningly strange and other-worldly, helped by the regular low cloud and mist, rapidly followed by dapples of sunshine. It was difficult to stop taking photographs! All in all it was a terrific trip, and one we will be recommending to some friends. We look forward to travelling with your assistance again soon.””

June Waring and Elizabeth Pybus, Jordan, October 2018

“A good, challenging camp/hike tour in extreme polar outback.

I particularly enjoyed hiking in the hills with the team. They were knowledgeable drivers. We could relax and just enjoy our trip.

“We had a great trip...”

Alan Haselden, Hiking across Nordenskiold, August 2018

““A good, challenging camp/hike tour in extreme polar outback. I particularly enjoyed hiking in the hills with the team. They were knowledgeable drivers. We could relax and just enjoy our trip.

“We had a great trip...”

Mrs Elizabeth (Tilly) Smith, Kamchatka – Bears, volcanoes, native people, reindeer herders, autumn colours, August 2018

ϕ Far Frontiers Travel made our experience great with smooth, detailed itinerary planning, wonderful adventures and knowledgeable drivers. We could relax and just enjoy our trip.

William and Janet Crowder, New Zealand and Australia, November 2018

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