



update | September 2007



far frontiers

tailored travel for today's explorer.

Our Autumn newsletter comes to you from our new home on the edge of Dartmoor. We have a superb office in idyllic surroundings which all adds to the enjoyment of each working day. I started off the summer with an unforgettable journey around Indochina and I hope you will enjoy reading my report inside.

You won't be surprised to learn that this summer's atrocious weather and near-monsoon conditions have led to a high volume of bookings by those keen to head for sunnier climes. We have lots of ideas inside to tempt those of you who would like to do the same at some point over the coming months.

Please keep in touch and always make us your first port of call when considering a short holiday, a long weekend centred around a special event, a longer journey or even a sabbatical from work. We are regularly quoting on multi-country trips of four to six weeks long and consider this a speciality area.

Before I go, could I please ask you to make sure you have updated your address books with our new address and telephone number. Our website and email remain the same.

Fiona Brijnath

Fiona Brijnath
Far Frontiers Travel

CHRISTMAS IN THE INDIAN SUB-CONTINENT

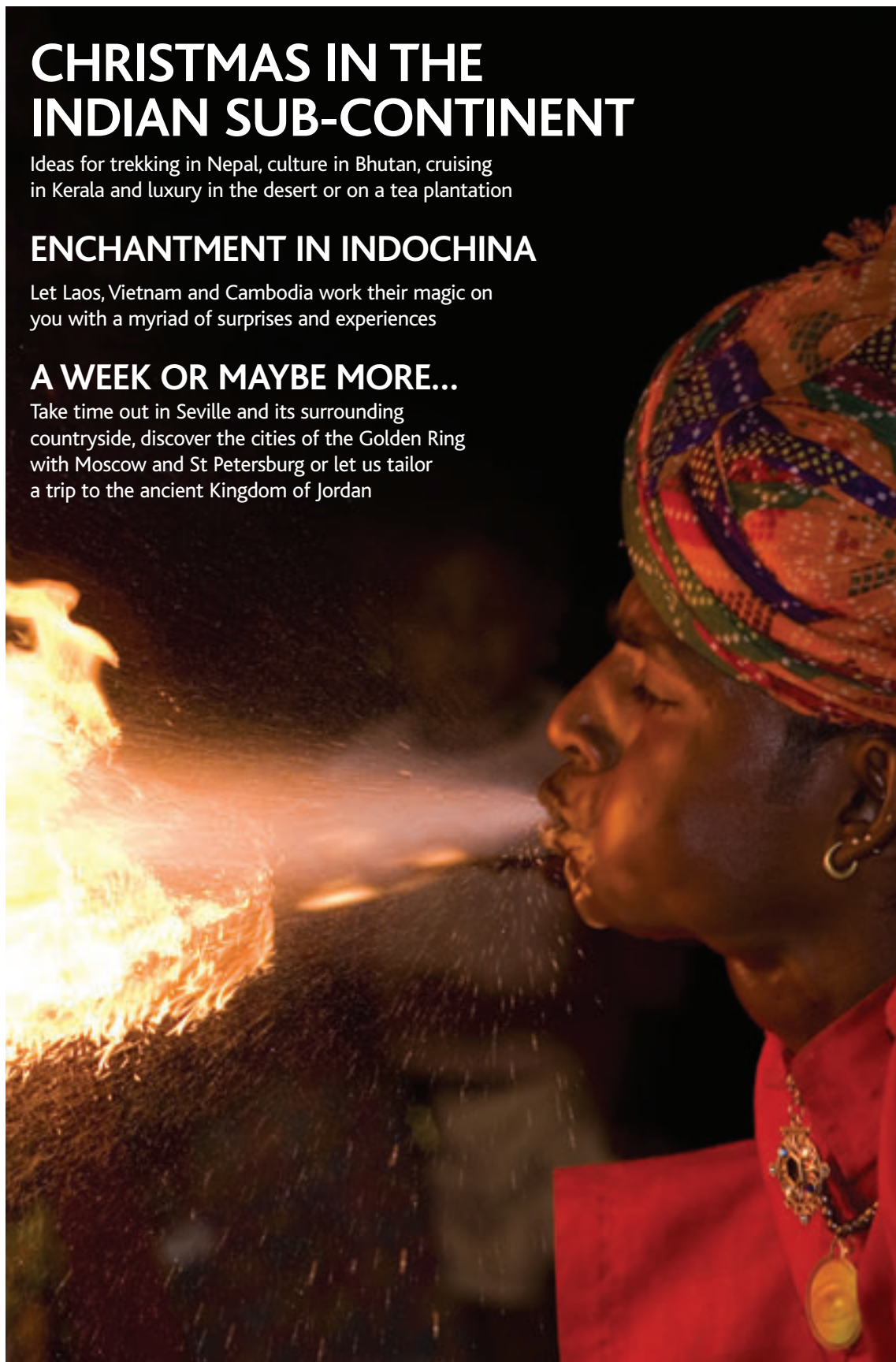
Ideas for trekking in Nepal, culture in Bhutan, cruising in Kerala and luxury in the desert or on a tea plantation

ENCHANTMENT IN INDOCHINA

Let Laos, Vietnam and Cambodia work their magic on you with a myriad of surprises and experiences

A WEEK OR MAYBE MORE...

Take time out in Seville and its surrounding countryside, discover the cities of the Golden Ring with Moscow and St Petersburg or let us tailor a trip to the ancient Kingdom of Jordan



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brochure

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CONTACT US

The romantic rose-coloured city of Petra

LAND OF DREAMS

the Kingdom of Jordan

We offer a highly specialised tailored-travel service to all areas of Jordan and will also put together itineraries to combine neighbouring countries if desired.

We like to talk to each client individually in order to tailor the trip to suit your exact requirements. Whether it be a long weekend to **Petra**, a cultural or religious journey or a relaxing holiday with swimming, diving and spa treatments, we will plan you a wonderful break.

If you want to have a longer trip, in ten days you could take a four-wheel drive into the desert at **Wadi Rum**, sleep under the stars in a Bedouin tent, see **Mount Nebo** where Moses looked across to the **Promised Land**, visit **Jerash** (today the world's most perfectly preserved Roman ruins), float in the **Dead Sea**, the lowest point on earth, and visit the recently excavated **Bethany Beyond the Jordan** where John the Baptist lived and Jesus was baptised. A mud treatment, facial or massage at the Dead Sea is a must as is the opportunity to snorkel or dive some of the world's finest reefs on the **Red Sea**.

» **when to go** « Year-round excluding the heat of high summer and the cold of winter
» **prices from** « £1185 per person for 10 days

Fiona's trip report:

Angkor Wat, Cambodia



INDOCHINA

More than one hundred saffron-robed monks, strolling serenely down the road in the early dawn silently taking alms from the local people, will be an enduring memory of my magical visit to Laos, Vietnam and Cambodia.

With its magnificent gold leaf and mosaic temples, elegant French colonial buildings, busy night markets and gentle pace, my days in Laos were filled with a colourful cross-section of life. Everywhere you are met by the friendly Lao greeting "Sayabadea" – with the palms pressed together and an open smile. Lao cuisine is an important part of any trip to the country and the visitor is spoilt for choice – delicious spicy curries and flavoursome soups, stuffed bamboo, sticky rice, deep-fried shrimps and fresh mango salads.

All too soon, my sojourn in this simple but charming country was over and a short flight brought me to **Hanoi**, capital of **Vietnam**. The uniformed officials at the international airport seemed to promise a sterner atmosphere than the

warmth of our Lao friends, but it wasn't long before Hanoi began to work its charms. I soon found myself on an exhilarating 'cyclo' (rickshaw) ride through the narrow streets of the ancient quarter where pavement sellers and old ladies wearing traditional bamboo cone-shaped hats and fruit baskets slung from yokes jostled for position among overflowing kite stalls and speeding mopeds. The mustard-yellow French architecture of the grand **Presidential Palace** was a striking contrast to Ho Chi Minh's simple cottage in the grounds. Even the unsmling guards in **Ho Chi Minh's** mausoleum cast a spell on our line as we filed into the dark chill interior of his tomb.

Over the days that followed I had many more wonderful experiences, including a memorable day spent on a Chinese fishing junk in **Halong Bay**, where limestone outcrops provide a glorious backdrop for a feast of fresh king prawns, stuffed crabs and stir-fried calamari, washed down with icy cold Halida, the local beer.

The luxurious overnight **Victoria Express** train with

A WEEKEND BREAK or something longer?



Seville's magnificent Plaza de España



SEVILLE

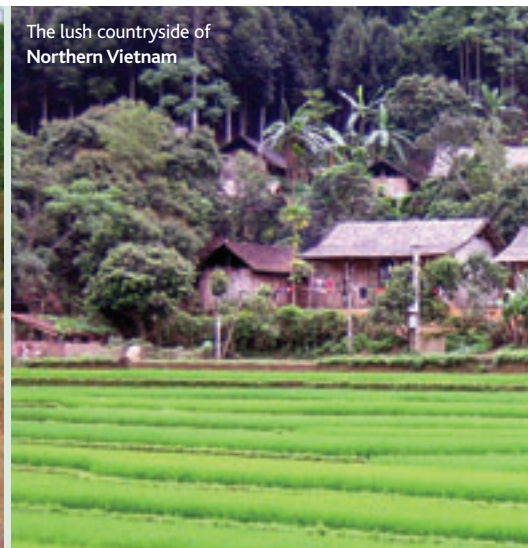
» **what to see** « Seville's immense cathedral is one of the biggest in the world and its adjoining 12th Century tower, **La Giralda**, was originally the mosque's minaret. Other major landmarks include the **Torre de Oro** on the banks of the River **Guadalquivir**, the **Alcázar** (fortress) from the Muslim-era which dates from AD 913, the spectacular **Plaza de España** with its fountains and mini-canals and the **Plaza de Toros de la Real Maestranza** – the city's bull ring.



Temple statues, Laos



Hill tribes in Sapa



The lush countryside of Northern Vietnam



Hoi An market

its mahogany and brass interior was a very comfortable way to arrive in **Sapa**, a former French hill station in the rugged mountains of northern Vietnam. In the grip of a tremendous thunderstorm, we set out on foot to explore some of the numerous ethnic settlements which scatter the countryside and ended in the colourful night market, packed with unusual embroideries and tasty food stalls.

Central Vietnam offered still more delights, including the incredible **Imperial Tombs** of the kings of the last dynasty and the **Citadel** – an extraordinary complex modelled on Beijing's Forbidden City with moats, lily

ponds, serene temples and walls more than 20 metres thick. My favourite day was in the ancient town of **Hoi An**, cut off from civilisation by destroyed railway lines and a silted river, untouched by war and frozen in time. There I spent many happy hours strolling past colourful stalls festooned with lanterns and lacquerwork and tailors' shops bursting with beautiful silks, not to mention sitting in one of the many atmospheric restaurants to watch the world go by. Particularly memorable was the morning biking through the lush green Hoi An countryside with its water buffaloes, fish farms, rice being harvested in the paddies, the brilliant blue flash of a kingfisher, ducklings paddling down to the lagoon and an ever-changing view of the locals in their houses, simply getting on with daily life.

From there it was just a short air-hop to **Ho Chi Minh City** in the south of the country. Here I visited the extraordinary **Cu Chi** tunnels – an underground rabbit-warren of narrow tunnels, opening into meeting rooms, hospitals and smokeless kitchens where the Vietcong lived a hard but long undetected life during the Vietnam War.

My journey would not have been complete without visiting **Cambodia**. **Phnom Penh**, its attractive capital, was full of surprises – from the silver tiled floor of the main pagoda in the **City Palace** to the

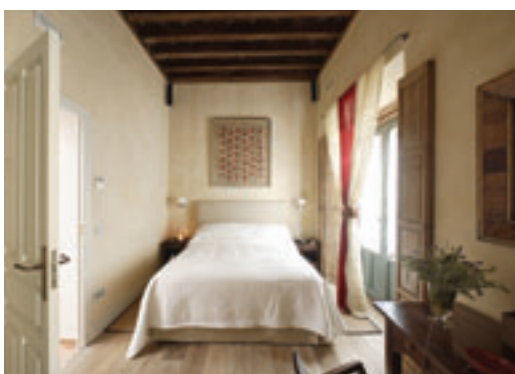
vibrant riverfront cafes and elegant hotels. Without a doubt though, the prize for the most amazing day of sightseeing goes to the magnificent temples at **Angkor**. In temperatures of up to 35 degrees centigrade we scaled extensive terraces marvelling at the delicate bas-relief carvings depicting the minutiae of life some 900 years ago, clambering through doorway after doorway into courtyards where the grasping roots of banyan trees coiled themselves like sleeping snakes over broken pillars and leaning arches. The grand finale was a steep climb up 40 or 50 or so near-vertical steps to look out over the vast complex of **Angkor Wat** and beyond to the Cambodian jungle topped by the setting sun.

It was my last day and I'd go back tomorrow like a shot.

Our extensive 23-day tour of Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam starts at £3290 per person and there is a great variety of five-star hotels to choose from. I specialise in multi-country itineraries and will be delighted to talk to you about combining any one or all of these fascinating and colourful countries, either by air or overland and including one of several memorable boat journeys we can recommend.



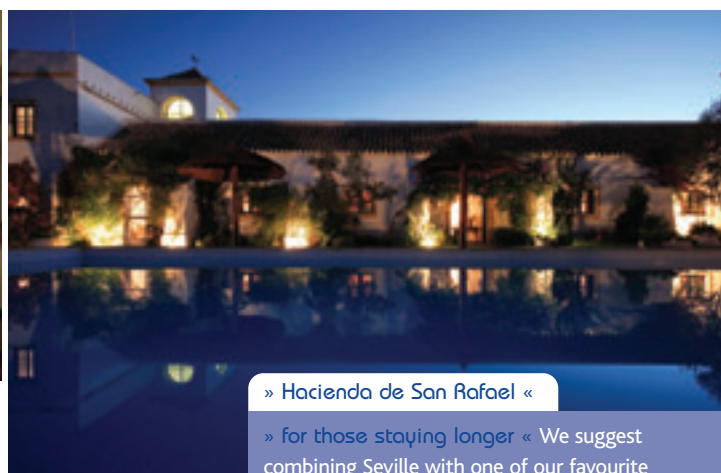
» Corral del Rey «



» when to go « year round
» prices from « £850 per person for a week's stay

» where to stay « **Corral del Rey** is located in the heart of **Seville**, in the old quarter of **Barrio Alfalfa**, five minutes' walk from the Cathedral. The original 17th Century **Casa Palacio** has been meticulously restored and converted into a small private luxury hotel, with a vibrant bar and restaurant. Its architectural highlights include the atrium patio, Roman marble columns and original wooden carved

beams. The six bedrooms are situated around the galleries of the central courtyard and each has its own creative design and state-of-the art sound and TV system. Enjoy the vista from the roof terrace, a dip in the plunge pool, viewing the art gallery or the massage and beauty treatments. Private guides can be booked for tailor-made visits to the best sights.



» Hacienda de San Rafael «

» for those staying longer « We suggest combining Seville with one of our favourite haunts – Hacienda de San Rafael, some 45 minutes' drive away. From here we can help you plan beautiful mountain drives, riding, visits to national parks and lakes for birdwatching, exclusive bull-breeding ranches and stud farms, and family-owned sherry bodegas. Don't miss the opportunity to see the unforgettable Spanish Lipizzaner horses.



VIETNAM

Cruise around **Hanoi's** ancient quarter in a cyclo – a unique way to experience the city's hustle and bustle. Your base could be Hanoi's classic and stylish **Metropole Hotel**, built in 1901 with elegant wood-panelled interiors, historic rooms and a glorious pool in the heart of the city.

Take the romantic **Victoria Express** overnight train and visit the former French colonial hill station of **Sapa** near the Chinese border where you can trek through picturesque hill villages and meet village people. Situated at 1,600m, its cool climate inspired the French to build villas there as a summer retreat.

Explore the World Heritage Site of **Halong Bay** from your own private Chinese sailing junk, dropping anchor in one of the many tranquil bays. Enjoy a magical night on board in this seascape of limestone islands and next day take a kayak out for an adventure on the emerald waters.

Float down the **Perfume River** and visit the **Imperial City** with its tombs, pagodas and temples and stay in the grandiose 1920s art-deco **Hotel La Residence and Spa** which was built on the banks of the river for the French Governor. A swim in the floodlit pool with its nightly chorus of frogs is something to remember.

Experience **Hoi An's** bustling market streets and order silk suits – hand-tailored in a day – then retreat back to the tranquility of the **Life Resort** with its gorgeous gardens filled with trailing orchids and frangipani. Sit on the edge of the infinity pool and watch the sampans on the river just a stone's throw away or relax with a massage in the spa.

Relax on the tropical white sandy beaches or explore some of the small outlying islands at **Nha Trang** in **Southern Vietnam** from the stunning **Evason Hideaway Villas**. Winner of Tatler's 'Hotel of the Year' in 2005, the resort is accessible only by sea and feels like a private island. Its 53 villas are peaceful, open-sided and dotted around a glorious beach on the remote **Ninh Van Bay**. It is a luxurious world where everything is crafted from local woods and hot bowls of 'Pho' are delivered by hand-drawn wooden boat.

Visit **Saigon's** extraordinary **Cu Chi tunnels** – an incredible network of underground rooms, tunnels and hideaways hand dug by Vietnamese resistance fighters. You could stay in the sumptuous grandeur of the five-star **Park Hyatt** in the heart of the city which is just a short walk to the central market.



The Metropole Hotel, Hanoi

LAOS, VIETNAM AND CAMBODIA

Where to stay and 'must do's'



Bayon Temple, Siem Reap



Silver Palace, Phnom Penh

CAMBODIA

Explore the extraordinary temples at **Angkor**, notably **Ta Prohm** which is known as the **Kingdom of Trees** because of the way in which the roots of the giant fig, Bayon and kapok trees have wormed their way all over the buildings, reclaiming it for the jungle. Allow several days as there is so much to see.

We suggest a night or two at **La Residence d'Angkor** with its superb teak and brass décor and sumptuous rooms set around a fragrant tropical garden dotted with fountains and lotus ponds. Soak in an enormous corner bath or slide back the rattan Japanese-style doors to your balcony – a perfect way to end a busy day of sightseeing.



La Residence d'Angkor



Giving alms in Luang Prabang



Hotel La Residence, Phou Vao

LAOS

Witness the early morning giving of alms in **Luang Prabang** – a swaying column of orange robed monks, all carrying a simple bowl to accept your gift of sticky rice, sweets or cakes. Make your base the **Hotel La Residence Phou Vao**, an Orient Express property with traditional wooden décor, grey stone baths, slatted windows and an atmosphere of time gone by. At sundown, the lush gardens and pool are lit with tiny scented lamps. Relax in the steam room and then plunge into the infinity pool to cool off with the sounds of **Luang Prabang** and a chorus of cicadas as a backdrop.



CHRISTMAS

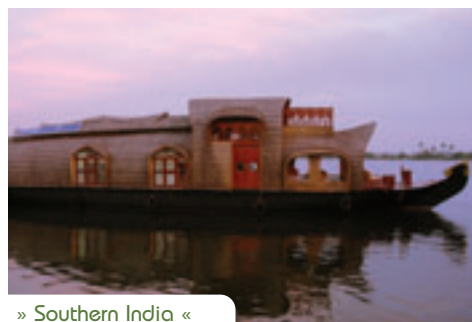
with a difference

» Nepal «

» prices from « £1670 per person for 14-day trek on a private basis for two

Christmas at the Fishtail Mountain

This could be the year to do something really different. We suggest you start your Christmas break with a dramatic adventure offering magnificent Himalayan panoramas of **Mt. Dhaulagiri**, **Annapurna**, the **Manaslu Range** and **Machhapuchhre**, the **Fish Tail Peak**. This superb walking holiday offers some of the best middle-hill trekking under the spectacular gaze of the Annapurna Range. The trek combines incredible ethnic and cultural diversity with gradual ascents through picturesque villages, serene rhododendron forest and alpine meadow. The high point is **Panchase**, a pilgrimage place for local people, who gather yearly to pay homage to their deceased ancestors by making offerings to the local deities and mountain spirits. This trek passes through a diverse range of climate, vegetation and cultures from lush rain and temperate forest to terraced rice fields. The land and its people change daily, giving trekkers a tantalizing introduction to Nepal's natural and cultural beauty.



» Southern India «

» prices from « £2495 per person for 18 days

Kerala backwaters

Join the **Lily**, a one-suite houseboat for a leisurely cruise that will give you an unforgettable insight into village life among the backwaters of **Kerala**. The area traverses a network of small waterways and canals and is used by locals as a means of commuting or ferrying goods. Houseboat Lily has many unique features that set it apart from the many other boats you can find here, including a large beautifully appointed suite, bathroom with bathtub, hot and cold running water, bathrobes, a fully-equipped kitchen where your meals are made to order, a private terrace and seating area at the front and a wonderfully knowledgeable private crew to attend to your every wish.



» Northern India «

» prices from « £2195 per person for 17 days

Pushkar Desert

Enjoy Christmas under the stars at **Pushkar** on the edge of the **Rajasthan Desert**, or combine your stay with a colourful tour of **Rajasthan**.

The ancient town of Pushkar with its 400 temples is built around a sacred lake and, being one of India's holiest cities, non-vegetarian food and alcohol are strictly prohibited. Every October and November the town comes alive for the month of Kartik when it hosts the world's largest camel trading fair. From here you can visit the artists' village of **Pisangan**, the pilgrimage centre of **Ajmer**, the marble factories in **Kishangarh** or **Tilonia**, a village run on sustainable principles.

The exclusive **Orchard** luxury tented camp sits among orchards and fields of roses. Its ten very luxurious tents each have living and dressing areas, a beautifully appointed bedroom, large bathroom and private verandah. Breakfast and lunch are taken in the **Golghar**, a circular tent with 360-degree views. Dinner is served al fresco around a bonfire and often accompanied by music and dance by an acclaimed Rajasthani troupe. With an emphasis on authenticity, the resort specialises in local delicacies as well as world cuisine and most of the garden vegetables are grown on-site.



» Sri Lanka and the Maldives «

» prices from « £2625 per person for 16 days

Celon tea trail

Just four hours from **Colombo** by car lies the **Bogawantalawa Valley**, known as the Golden Valley of Tea and home to old **Ceylon**, distinguished by its rolling green hills, plantation bungalows, high tea and exquisite service. The **Tea Trails** are four classic colonial bungalows built for British tea estate managers in the days of the Raj. With 20 luxury rooms and suites, this all-inclusive resort offers something for everyone, whether it be unwinding in the beautiful gardens, visiting a factory to learn about the art of Ceylon tea or trekking, biking and even white-water rafting for the most adventurous. Combine this authentic and special hotel with a cultural tour of **Sri Lanka** or take a short flight to the **Maldives** for an unforgettable beach holiday and superb diving.

Decisions in the run-up to Christmas can be agonising – whether to stay at home for family celebrations or to get away completely. If you go away, where to go and what to do?

This year we recommend a really special holiday in the Indian subcontinent. We can tailor-make your Christmas break to incorporate one, some or even all of these suggestions.



» Bhutan «

» prices from « £3450 per person for 17 days including the west-east traverse

The Dragon Kingdom

In recent years, the closed **Kingdom of Bhutan** has gradually opened its doors to visitors from outside and in Spring and Autumn it is increasingly hard to get flights and accommodation, such is the popularity of this colourful festival season. It is really worth considering a trip at Christmas when it is less busy. The air may be colder but it is delightfully clear and, because the snows tend to come in the early months of the year, it is still possible to traverse the country from west to east. This year there is a late festival scheduled for 18-20 December in **Tongsa**.



TO RUSSIA *with love*

We highly recommend a week's holiday combining both **Moscow** and **St Petersburg** as the two cities are connected by comfortable overnight sleeper-train. Our local Russian guides have unsurpassed knowledge of each city's history and architecture.

TRAVEL SNIPPETS

Travelling companion wanted

We have a delightful single lady who is visiting **Bhutan** and **Tibet** in September/October 2008 and who would be keen to join up with other similar-minded clients. If you are considering a visit to these remote and mystical lands but have no one to travel with, please contact us and we will gladly put you in touch.

Your feedback

Here is a selection of comments we have received recently from clients about their trip.

"What is better than excellent?"

John James, Oman, February 2007

"As you will see we are much pleased with the tour. Of course unexpected things happen, but what matters is how the local guide or driver handles the situation. A drive calculated to take 12 hours which ends after 30 hours is, naturally, something to tell friends about afterwards. We made the best of it in the back seat and so did our guide, running for kilometres in front of the car trying to get the big lorries of the track, until everything came to a final halt for the night! I feel really bad for the owner of the car, it was almost destroyed on the bad roads just carrying us around, but it's part of the game. The tours up and down the hillsides, looking for tulips, were the highlight of our days and we sure found a lot. Being on the Afghanistan border meant that some valleys were inaccessible, blocked by military posts, but there is nothing you can do about that. The local guides were very good, and so were the botanists. The home stays were also a new experience, sleeping on the mud floor on a blanket was a bit hard but, as the following night was in better conditions before the next home stay, we made it. The local milieu and food all add something extra to your knowledge of the country and the people so you don't forget it afterwards.

We still have some blind spots on our tulip map in Central Asia, like Turkmenistan, Iran and Georgia/Kaukasus. We have to look into our calendar and finances to see how we can plan our tulip season next year. All the best and thanks for an unforgettable tour!"

Marit and Hans Olaf Aanensen, Central Asia Tulip tour, April 2007

"We had an excellent trip. Thanks so much for your help. We appreciated your flexibility over the Christmas holidays! We have a long list of plans for future and will definitely be in touch when we decide what is next."

John and Judy Boynton, Thailand, February 2007

Moscow's St Basil's Cathedral



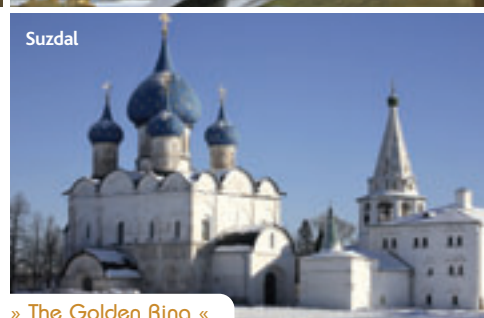
St Isaac's Cathedral, St Petersburg



Peterhof



Suzdal



» The Golden Ring «

» for those staying longer « We recommend extending your trip to include the **Golden Ring**, a name given to the ancient cities lying to the north-east of **Moscow**. Although far from circular, it is, by virtue of its ancient monuments, kremlins and the wealth of folk art, golden. Many buildings date from the 12th Century and a journey between each town provides a glimpse of the simple rural life of Russia. Due to generally poor accommodation, the area is usually visited by taking one of the many boat cruises between Moscow and **St Petersburg**, however inevitably such trips provide limited access to the region. With a number of new, small private hotels being built, the Golden Ring is set to become the exciting new destination within Russia.

A complete tour of the Golden Ring can take up to two weeks but for those guests travelling to Russia for the first time we would suggest a two-day extension from Moscow visiting two of the most beautiful towns – **Suzdal** and **Vladimir**.

MOSCOW AND ST PETERSBURG

» what to see « Founded in 1703 by Peter the Great, **St Petersburg** has an unparalleled collection of palaces and art treasures illustrating the excesses of the Russian court in the 18th and 19th centuries. Your visit would include the **Peter and Paul Fortress**, once a prison and now the burial place of the Tsars, the breathtaking **St Isaac's Cathedral** with its majestic malachite columns and vast painted dome and the **Russian Museum** full of the country's finest art. A 45-minute drive outside the city brings you to the magnificent palace and parks at **Peterhof**. Situated on the **Gulf of Finland**, this is the oldest accessible royal estate where, in summer, 144 fountains create a spellbinding display. One of the main highlights is **The Hermitage**. Built in the 1660s as part of the **Winter Palace** to house the private art treasures of Catherine the Great, this magnificent building houses over two million exhibits. No visit to St Petersburg is complete without **Yussipov Palace** with its exquisite miniature theatre and the gilded Rastrelli masterpiece of **Catherine's Palace** at **Tsarskoye Selo**.

In **Moscow** see the mysterious territory of the yellow-walled Kremlin, home not only to unexpected treasures but also to the Russian Parliament. The Armoury Museum displays an astonishing collection of royal gifts and the priceless regalia of the Tsars and Tsarinas. Continue on foot to **Red Square** and past the goose-stepping guards into Lenin's tomb before admiring the colourful onion-domes of **St Basil's Cathedral**.

» when to go « year round

» prices from « £1730 per person for seven days

» prices from « £985 per person for a week's Golden Ring extension