



update | January 2008



# far frontiers

tailored travel for today's explorer.

*I'd like to wish all my clients a very warm welcome to 2008 and I hope that many of you managed to fulfil your travel dreams and aspirations for 2007. For those who did not, we are looking forward to hearing from you. There's lots to read about in our latest newsletter – including my top ten best travel tips and your own feedback. As many of you will know from previous issues, we try to bring you a personal account of travel in one of the many destinations we cover and this issue is no exception – we are focusing on Jordan as well as profiling some special 'Best of' boutique hotels and lodges around the world.*

*New for this year will be a regular E-newsletter – it will come to you only if we have your current email address – so please let us know if you think we need updating.*

*On a personal note, we're loving our new home on Dartmoor. A number of loyal clients have already made their way down here – we can promise a warm welcome.*

*Best wishes*



Fiona Brijnath  
Far Frontiers Travel

## HOLIDAYS TO RENEW THE SPIRIT

With the festive season over and winter stretching on, we have some fabulous ideas for far-away places – from luxury camps and lodges to award-winning spas

## FOCUS ON JORDAN

Land of a thousand possibilities – Jordan is waiting for you to uncover its mysteries



## TOP TEN DESTINATIONS

Our all-time favourite places, and top recommendations to make your trip really special

telephone & fax

**01837 840640**

email

[fiona@farfrontiers.com](mailto:fiona@farfrontiers.com)

website

[www.farfrontiers.com](http://www.farfrontiers.com)

brochure

Call us for a copy of our 'show-case' brochure

Far Frontiers Travel Limited  
Ninestone, South Zeal  
Devon EX20 2PZ

CONTACT US





# Focus on JORDAN

*January is an ideal month to think about planning a visit to Jordan. Spring and autumn are the best times to go and there are sights and activities to cater for all interests.*

## PETRA – THE HIGH PLACE

Although Petra is best known for its grand façades carved into the rock face such as the **Treasury** and the **Monastery**, the extraordinary mountain-top **High Place of Sacrifice** is worth the puff to reach – for the views and sense of history as well as the sense of achievement.

All around Petra, on several summits ringing the ancient city, so-called 'high places' survive – exposed mountain-top sanctuaries built by Petra's Nabataean people to worship their gods. Many are difficult, or even dangerous, to reach. The 'High Place', though, is neither; even if you have only one day in Petra, it's worth the climb – and takes 30 or 40 minutes with safe steps at all the tricky points.

Steps near Petra's ancient theatre divert off the main path, leading up into a gully on a circuitous route up the mountain-side. This was a processional way for Nabataean priests and followers and in some parts you climb steps carved into the rock by masons 2000 years ago. The 360-degree view when you emerge onto the hand-levelled platform at the summit is unparalleled and stretches right across Petra's vast landscape.

This is where religious ceremonies were held – there is a rock-cut altar to one side, with a carved basin (probably for catching blood). What exactly took place up here is uncertain, but animal sacrifice is pretty certain, and possibly even human sacrifice too. Historians have suggested that the Nabataeans may have practised ritual exposure of the dead on these 'high places'. It is an extraordinarily peaceful and spiritual setting in which to linger in the cool breeze and imagine looking down on an ancient procession of colourful priests with their musical instruments and incense, and animals bearing the wood to burn the offering.



Jordan offers so much – the rose-red city of **Petra**; the extraordinary **Dead Sea** where you can swim at the lowest point on earth without sinking; the breathtaking Roman amphitheatre at **Jerash** and the majestic citadel which sits atop **Amman** and affords spectacular views of the city below, especially at night – being just a few of them. However, Jordan is not just all about monuments and souqs and there are many special things to see and do outside the main attractions. If, for example, you like to walk – look beyond Petra's dusky-pink façade and take a day to visit the **High Place of Sacrifice**. It's bypassed by many of those who are caught up in the well-trodden tourist path to the Treasury. Peter Wrangham's account of his journey through Jordan will give you a colourful flavour of the country. Peter is a keen birder who took time out to visit a couple of reserves and very much enjoyed the experience.

### *Trip report:*

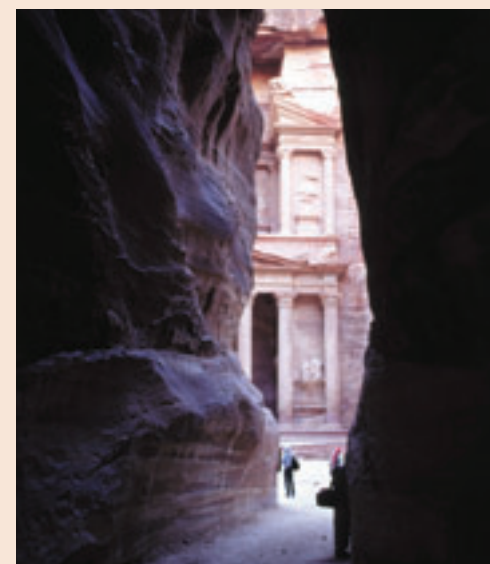
*On one of his holidays with us **Peter Wrangham** took our ten-day **Ancient Kingdom of Jordan** trip. Here we highlight just one day of his journey in this excerpt from his diary.*

**25 February.** We left the hotel at 7.30am for Petra. The entrance gate is a kilometre from the start of the Siq. The Siq is a gully of about 400 metres through rugged stratified rock and the sides rise on both sides to as high as 100 metres and vary in width from about three metres to seven metres. At peak times of the year with horse drawn carriages (which Philip, our guide, called chariots), donkeys carrying the overweight and so many people, I can imagine the crowd becomes quite congested.

Suddenly, we see our first view of the Treasury ahead through the narrow slit of the Siq. Apart from being the best known building in Petra it is really dramatic. The full effect of its grandeur is felt as you clear the Siq. The morning sunshine makes the façade very dramatic with its detailed carving. The Treasury is a misnomer as the legend was that

pirate treasures were stored behind the façade, however none have ever been found.

After seeing all we wanted we went on down a gentle decline in the valley which opened out before us. We wandered around a Roman amphitheatre, which is said to have held 3000 people. Then we picked up our donkeys to take us to the Monastery up 800 steps. The saddles have a metal hold on the front to help riders. This experience saved us time and energy in the heat and was rather fun except my beast rubbed my knee hard against a rock! The Monastery is yet another dramatic façade on multi-coloured rock, which was built in 300 AD. We lunched in the shade of a juniper tree then back down on foot seeing great views as we descended the 800 steps. Finally the long walk back to the entrance passing the Treasury in quite different light – a long and exhausting day, but a real pinnacle of our trip.





# TOP TIPS

## for favourite destinations

Here are some top travel tips for my ten favourite destinations. Why not plan a trip to one or more of them this year? We can tailor an itinerary that will be special for you.



### 1. MONGOLIA

One of Asia's last unspoilt travel destinations, **Mongolia's** endless horizons and simple nomadic lifestyle will make you feel you have travelled to the end of the earth!

» Tip « Enter Mongolia by train from **Russia** or **China** and immerse yourself slowly into a lifestyle which goes back centuries.

### 2. VIETNAM

Our comprehensive trans-**Vietnam** programme offers an exhilarating journey from the mountain highlands of **Sapa** in the north to the **Mekong Delta** in the south. From **Hanoi**, head up to the hill station of **Sapa** (1650m) which enjoys the coolest climate in Vietnam. After returning by train, drive to **Halong Bay** with its 3000 spectacular limestone rock formations and enjoy a night on a traditional Chinese-style sailing junk, visiting the nearby caves and grottoes by boat or kayak. Journey on to the old imperial capital of **Hue** and a cruise on the **Perfume River**; then **Saigon**, a vibrant city of elegant hotels, roadside noodle stalls, exclusive restaurants, street children and noisy 'cyclo' drivers. Journey's end is Vietnam's 'rice-bowl' – the **Mekong Delta**, a rich, fertile region of flat farmland interlaced with thousands of waterways and tributaries of the mighty **Mekong**.

» Tip « Prepare yourself for quite a few internal flights. We normally try to avoid this, but it's a good way to cover this geographically very long country and its incredibly diverse sights in a relatively short space of time.

### 3. PERU

A country of extraordinary diversity, superb archaeological sights, beautiful landscapes and abundant wildlife, **Peru** not only offers amazing treasures, but lovely places to stay. There are a number of superb small boutique hotels and lodges coming up which we can incorporate into your holiday.

» Tip « I have several! Make sure you visit the **Enrico Poli** private museum in **Lima** – home to a mesmerizing collection of some of the most outstanding relics of ancient **Peruvian** cultures. Even if you don't want to trek the whole **Inca** trail, you can still leave the **Cusco** to **Machu**



**Picchu** train at the **KM104** marker where our private guides will take you on an unforgettable day-long trek culminating at **Machu Picchu** – arriving the way the Incas used to come. Stay at the lodge right by **Machu Picchu**. Getting up at dawn the next morning, with only a few steps to the entrance, you will have virtually the whole site to yourself.

### 4. RUSSIA

A far cry from how we used to imagine dull-grey life behind the iron curtain: **Russia** offers **St Petersburg's** magnificent palaces and art museums, **Moscow's** symbolic **Red Square** and yellow-walled **Kremlin**, the chance to take an extraordinary journey across the **Siberian Tundra** by train, the far-off ports on the eastern seaboard, and interaction with the country's extraordinarily tough and patriotic people.

» Tip « Go in winter with the chance of snow on the ground. It's cold enough to freeze the end of your nose but the queues for palaces and monuments are much shorter and the image of golden domes against a snowy backdrop will be etched forever on your memory. While in the cities,



take one of our marvellous English-speaking Russian guides – they are so good, we feel bound to give them a special mention.

### 5. TIBET

**Tibet** offers some of the most magnificent scenery on earth. Peaceful and hospitable inhabitants and an unusual remoteness make this country quite unique.

» Tip « Don't just visit **Tibet**. Allow time to explore **Nepal** and **Bhutan** too. All three countries are vastly different and we strongly recommend that you travel overland through **Tibet** and **Bhutan** to really grasp the contrasts in their personalities.

### 6. INDIA

A few years ago now I spent over four months criss-crossing **India** from north to south and west to east on a colourful journey which took in the barren moonscapes of **Ladakh**, the mystical foothills of the **Himalayas**, **Rajasthan's** colourful heritage, the colonial hills stations of **Shimla** and **Darjeeling**, the heat of dust of **Kolkata** and the tranquil tropical





2



3



6



7



9



10

south. I loved India then for its sheer diversity and much later for providing me with a charming, handsome and well-read husband!

» Tip « One of our great strengths is our inside track into a huge variety of beautiful boutique hotels and unique heritage palaces in rural towns and villages. We will usually incorporate at least a few into your itinerary. As almost all are owner-run, they will provide you with a unique insight into the lives of Indian nobility of a bygone era.

## 7. OMAN

Oman reveals many hidden surprises given that its neighbour Dubai is known for its huge-scale construction and mass-market tourism. Here could not be more different – true wilderness in the craggy coastal northern **Mussandam Peninsula** and desert in Thesiger's **Empty Quarter** in the south. You will love the variety of Oman's unspoilt coastline, mountains, palm-fringed wadis and the imposing restored fortresses of the interior.

» Tip « Make sure you are in **Nizwa** on a Friday morning and take yourself back centuries by visiting the ancient cattle market where traders still come together for this important weekly event.

## 8. BHUTAN

The remote and mystical kingdom of **Druk Yul**, Land of the Thunder Dragon, lies virtually forgotten, sandwiched between India and Tibet in the very heart of the **Himalayas**. Just one surfaced road crosses the country from west to east. Along it unfolds a tale of extraordinarily diverse scenery, peoples and their customs. Landlocked, and still with relatively limited communications, much of its magic and charm lingers despite the arrival of the 21st century. We urge you to visit while this delightful kingdom retains its unique heritage. **Bhutan** is one of the last 'untouched' cultures in the world – mainly because visit numbers are strictly controlled.

» Tip « If you have time, traverse the country from west to east. You will be

astonished by the diversity of the landscape – from snow-capped mountains and ancient forests in the west to tropical jungle in the east.

## 9. CENTRAL ASIA

Little-known and even less visited, the countries along the **Great Silk Route** provide spectacular surprises for the traveller willing to explore. Discover the fabled **Khanate of Khiva** and the dazzling monuments of **Bukhara** and **Samarkand** before heading east to cross the windswept steppe of the **Tien Shan Mountains** in **Kyrgyzstan**. The **Pamir Mountains** of **Tajikistan** have an allure of their own for those who enjoy true wilderness. It's a hard place to travel but you really will enjoy a holiday experience unlike any other.

» Tip « Allow an extra day in Bukhara where you can sit in the cafes of the **Lyab-I-Hauz** and watch old men with long beards and gnarled hands playing chess, drinking coffee and debating life. You will be transported back in time.

## 10. MOROCCO

An outstandingly diverse country which evokes the romanticism of the camel caravan and the bustling souk. Only a three and a half hour flight from the UK yet after an evening wandering the labyrinth of souks, or a day out in the dramatic jagged peaked landscape of the **Atlas Mountains** you will feel a world away.

» Tip « If you can, we suggest you self-drive. Once outside the cities, the roads are relatively empty and you will find it easy to move from A to B. Relaxing with your own car means there are no time constraints and you can really pace the trip to suit yourself.



# HOLIDAYS

*to renew your spirit*



» Peru's Sacred Valley «

» prices from « £2990 per person for 12 days including flights and four locations

**W**hether you fancy trekking in the mountains, white water rafting, bird-watching, game drives or just want to drop out by a beach and take the odd spa treatment, we have some delights in store for you.



» Southern Patagonia «

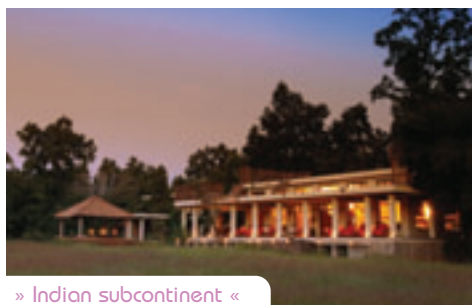
» prices from « £2495 per person for 10 days including flights. Contact us to discuss possible extensions

## Luxury camping in dramatic surroundings

The delightful new **Patagonia Camp** is situated on the edge of the **Torres del Paine National Park** in the wilds of Chile's southern Patagonia. The camp is right at the shores of **Lake Toro** and you can enter the park by road or, we suggest, by boat. The camp has 15 luxurious wooden 'Yurt-style' tents, equipped with central heating and en-suite bathrooms, and both double and single rooms are available. It offers all the facilities and services that travellers have come to expect of similar luxury camps in Africa. We suggest you have five nights in Patagonia – two nights at the Patagonia Camp and three at **Estancia Cerro Guido** on the other side of the park where you can relax and enjoy life on a proper working estancia.

## Cultural experiences from a secluded hamlet

The **Urubamba Valley** has a sublime climate, moderate altitude, beautiful scenery, proud local people and picturesque villages. This is a unique opportunity to slow down and mingle with the living Inca culture while experiencing a timeless region. At **Urubamba Villas** you live in luxury in a fully-catered private home with your own dedicated landrover, driver, housekeeper and guide. The concept of five villas in a quaint secluded hamlet is unique and Urubamba's sister property, **La Casona**, in **Cusco** combines well to give a boutique flavour to your journey through Peru. We can also offer similar properties in the **Peruvian Amazon**, **Lake Titicaca** and near **Machu Picchu**.



» Indian subcontinent «

» prices from « £3260 per person for a 12 day holiday including flights

## Best wildlife from luxury lodges

Breaking new ground in India are the kind of luxury lodges formerly found only in Africa which allow superior wildlife viewing in some of the country's foremost national parks and the chance of some of the best tiger sightings in the country. Situated near **Bandhavgarh National Park**, **Mahua Kothi** boasts charming jungle suites that are spacious spread out along the edge of a beautiful bamboo and sisal tree forest. The luxurious quirky bungalows of **Baghvan** overlook a picturesque dry river bed right on the border of **Pench National Park**, one of India's lesser known reserves yet with some of the best sightings. This spring sees the opening of **Banjaar Tola** and its elegant tented suites right on the edge of the **Banjaar River** in the **Kanha National Park**. Finally, **Pashan Garh** (meaning stone houses) draws inspiration from the dry-packed stone houses of northern Central India. The neighbouring **Panna National Park** is a private jungle wilderness and within striking distance of the erotic temples of **Khajuraho** to give your trip a final twist!

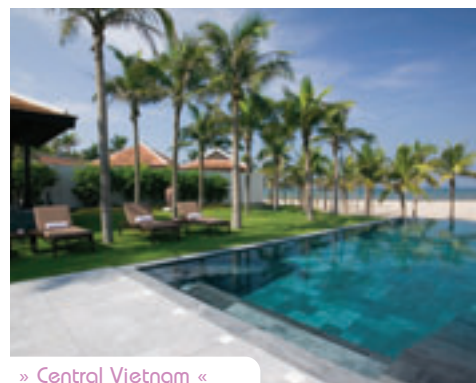


» Indian Himalayas «

» prices from « £1895 per person for an 11 day holiday including flights

## Award-winning spa in tranquil mountains

For the third year running, **Ananda**, in the foothills of the **Indian Himalayas**, has been voted 'Favourite Destination Spa' by the readers of *Conde Nast Traveller*. Once the residence of the Maharaja of **Tehri Garhwal**, the beautiful palace of **Ananda** is a world-class spa and treatment centre. Teakwood furniture and luxurious silks adorn the interiors and it is the perfect place to experience ancient Ayurvedic treatments amid peaceful mountain surroundings. Take a gentle walk and enjoy some birdwatching or do something more vigorous with a longer trek or trip by kayak or white-water raft. Treatments include lifestyle and fitness evaluations, spas, beauty therapies and daily yoga and meditation. Getting to **Ananda** used to involve a long day's drive or 5-6 hour train ride but the upgrading of **Dehra Dun** airport will make it an easy hour's flight from **Delhi** and 45-minute drive. **Ananda** has just finished a number of private villas with their own pools which afford the very ultimate luxury retreat.



» Central Vietnam «

» prices from « £2140 per person for 11 days including flights. Contact us to discuss possible extensions

## Magical beach resort and spa

Running down the east coast of **Central Vietnam** in a seemingly unbroken swathe of alluring soft white sand, **China Beach** has captured the imagination like no other sun-and-sand playground. Here on a stretch of **Ha My Beach** near historic **Hoi An** you will find the **The Nam Hai**. Located 30 kilometres south of **Danang**, this splendid spa resort sets new standards for sybarites in search of real class. It has 60 elegant villas and a further 40 stylish pool villas, each within landscaped gardens giving unobstructed views across the South China Sea to the misty **Cham Islands**. The design harmonises with nature and flows along traditional lines. Bedrooms are spacious with en suite baths, walk-in closets, and high ceilings, all adding to the sense of space.





## COMBINE BIRDWATCHING WITH THE GALAPAGOS

If you are going to **The Galapagos** why not extend your stay in **Ecuador** to see the unrivalled birdlife in the cloud forests surrounding the volcanoes in the high **Andes**? Ecuador is home to some 1600 species of birds – more than half of the species in all of South America. The protected forest areas of **Antisana**, **Yanacocha**, **Tandayapa**, **Mindo** and **Papallacta** can be reached by taking a private day trip from **Quito** or a one or two-night excursion deep into the heart of the forest. Comfortable accommodation is provided at each site as well as snacks, boxed lunches and delicious dinners. Explore the different habitats of the eastern or western slopes of the Andes, which offer the greatest biodiversity known on the planet, guided by highly-experienced bird-watching experts. Hummingbirds are everywhere, as are the most colourful tanagers, mountain toucans and the spectacular Andean Condor. The weather allows for year-round birding outings so call us to see how we can include this in your itinerary.

### Last call for the Antarctic

As we go to press, there are still a few cabins left on the adventure ship **Professor Multanovskiy** which will visit the **Antarctic Peninsula** between 22 March and 1 April this year on a ten-night voyage, and on the **Aleksey Maryshev** which visits from 21 to 31 March and offers the option to scuba dive. Both ships are ice-strengthened Russian research vessels built for the Russian Academy of Science. They have been converted for passenger use and are ideally suited to expedition cruising in polar areas. All cabins have outside windows.

» prices from « **£2175** per person (triple share) and **£2545** (twin share) (cruise only). Call us for more details.

### Travelling companions wanted

**Tibet/Bhutan** » Sept/Oct 2008 «

Sybil (recently retired) seeks male/female companions for this tailor-made six-week trip which includes Lhasa, Everest base camp, Mt Kailash trek, crossing Bhutan, Bumthang trek. All transport and guides arranged, involves some camping. Arrangements offer potential to do only one country if preferred. Please contact me through Far Frontiers Travel.

## Your feedback

Comments we have received recently from clients about their trip:

**Pre-trip:** "We were delighted with the two separate and different itineraries prepared in a very short time giving us two quite different types of holiday based on some rather vague instructions from us".

**On the trip:** "Could not fault – every meeting and transfer went entirely to plan local reps were up to date with any changes to the itinerary and were pleasant, interested and helpful. All the guides were knowledgeable and friendly".

**Overall:** "Very satisfied, everything ran smoothly and many of our experiences were terrific and very memorable. The itinerary was well-balanced, well paced and a mix of places and we appreciated how you had minimised the flights and allowed overland travel wherever possible. We loved exploring a part of the world that neither of us knew previously. Without your guidance we would not have known where to start and we felt we came away with a very good and broad experience".

**Mr and Mrs Charles Pybus**, Honeymoon, Argentina, Chile and Brazil.



## UPPER BRAHMAPUTRA – SPECIAL EXPLORATORY CRUISE

» 10-22 April « This is an opportunity to join a special 12-night exploratory cruise on the **Brahmaputra River** in Assam in April. The regular Brahmaputra cruises travel upstream as far as Neamati, around 400 miles east of the **Bangladesh** frontier, the highest point where there is sufficient depth of water all year. In April, with the first of the snow melt coming down from the Himalayas, the aim is to go 125 further upriver to **Guijan**, which is 90 miles from **Tibet** to the north and 40 miles from **Burma** to the south.

The itinerary cannot be completely firm but it should include the **Dibru Saikhowa National Park**, a little-known reserve with excellent birding and the chance, if you are very lucky, to see tiger and leopard. In addition to visiting the archaeological site of **Deopahar**, a hilltop temple dating from the 11th century, side-trips may include the coal mines at **Tipong** with their working steam locomotives; **Digboi**, with its war cemetery and world's oldest working oilfield; a bamboo mask-making workshop on **Majuli Island**, and the pyramidal burial mounds of the Ahom kings at **Charaideo**.

Cabins are expected to fill fast so do call soon if you are keen to join.

» prices from « **£2280** per person including flights.



## FESTIVAL OF FOOD AND WINE

» 14-17 February « Founded in 1561, the city of **Mendoza** in **Argentina** is renowned for being one of the world's eight great wine capitals. In addition to more than 550 wineries there is also world-class hiking, mountaineering (Mendoza has the highest peak in South America), biking, rafting, horse-riding and skiing in the province.

One of the world's most important gastronomic gatherings takes place in February with the four-day **Masters of Food & Wine South America 2008**. The event features lunches and dinners for small groups as well as culinary demonstrations by distinguished chefs from Europe, Asia, North and South America, whilst acclaimed sommeliers from around the globe introduce some of Mendoza's finest wines. A number of related events are taking place in the city's internationally acclaimed restaurants and wineries, as well as at wine lodges in the vineyards and foothills of the Andes. Do contact us for more details.

## WANT TO PLAY POLO?

Have you ever wanted to learn 'the sport of kings' but thought the cost too prohibitive? Combine the delights of **Argentina** with a week at the beautiful **Estancia Los Potreros** on top of the 'Sierras Chicas' where the resident professional can teach you from scratch. It's lot cheaper than the going rate for polo here which can be up to £80 per hour – and the surroundings are rather more exotic too. This would be an ideal experience for a family with teenagers who are looking for a trip with a difference.

» prices from « **£1890** per person for a 10 day trip.