

## **AITO Inspiration – adventure holidays**

Here are some of the best adventure holidays available with members of the Association of Independent Tour Operators (AITO, [www.aito.com](http://www.aito.com)).

**Fed up with the nine ‘til five rut and looking for some adventure? Choose from a range of trips, from climbing volcanoes or trekking the Grand Canyon to riding horses in the Azores or helping to save elephants in Kenya, from cycling in the Outer Hebrides or backpacking through China to driving through Iceland and much, much more.**

### **Trek the Grand Canyon and celebrate in Sin City – from £2,200 pp with Discover Adventure**

This trip includes an [unforgettable four-day trek of the Grand Canyon](#), taking in the sublime landscape of striking colours, fascinating rock formations and numerous waterfalls (great for a dip when the temperatures are soaring). Initially based at the Havasupai Indian Reservation in the west - away from the main tourist areas of the Grand Canyon - participants will then head to Vegas for the two final nights to toast their achievements. Departing 11 October, the trip costs from £2,200 pp (two sharing) and includes six nights' accommodation, flights (London), transfers, some meals, most camping equipment, entry to sites listed in the itinerary and Discover Adventure support team. Call AITO\* member Discover Adventure on 01722 718444 ([www.discoveradventure.com](http://www.discoveradventure.com)).

### **Backpacking China Adventure – from only £1,168 pp with China Links Travel**

An affordable way to travel the length and breadth of China, [this backpacking tour](#) includes climbing Victoria Peak in Hong Kong, Bamboo Rafting in Yangshuo, Giant Pandas in Chengdu, the Terracotta Army in Xian and a mountain farm homestay. What's more, there's the chance to learn Kung Fu in an orphanage at Shaolin Temple, see the sunrise on the Great Wall, visit the bamboo forests of Moganshan and sip champagne in a hot tub on the rooftop of a Shanghai skyscraper. There's even a chance to stay in a traditional Hakka roundhouse before jumping the world's highest Bungee in Macau! The price of the trip is £1,168 pp (sharing hostel rooms) including 24 nights' accommodation and activities listed. (Flights (international) extra). Call AITO\* member China Links Travel on 0208 543 8133 ([www.chinalinkstravel.co.uk](http://www.chinalinkstravel.co.uk)).

### **Adventures with Alexander the Great, Greece – from £3,295 pp with Peter Sommer Travels**

Journey the ancient lands of northern Greece on this new cultural adventure which uncovers sites linked to Alexander the Great's formative years. Visit the site where he was proclaimed king and his birthplace, plus incredible Meteora, Byzantine castles, prehistoric tombs and pretty harbour towns, all in the safe hands of Athens residents and archaeologists Heinrich Hall and Nota Karamaouna. Departing 14 June, [‘Exploring Macedonia: the Homelands of Alexander the Great’](#) costs from £3,295 pp (two sharing) and includes 13 nights' B&B accommodation, most other meals, transfers, all entrance fees and expert guiding. Flights extra. Call AITO\* member Peter Sommer Travels on 01600 888 220 ([www.petersommer.com](http://www.petersommer.com)).

### **New: Calling all elephant lovers to ‘Save the Safari’ – from £3,175 pp with Tribes**

For those who are elephant lovers (and who isn't?), this new [13 day safari in Kenya](#) is ideal. Enjoy wildlife viewing in the Masai Mara and Tsavo east with a private group of just six people. Visit Sheldrick's elephant orphanage, and stay at the camp in Tsavo, from where there will be the opportunity to visit two release stations and get involved with the elephants based here. The safari costs from £3,175 pp (two sharing), including all accommodation, mixed board, all game

activities, and the sponsorship of a baby elephant. Departure dates are 15 February, 1 March, 2 July & 25 October. Call AITO\* member Tribes on 01473 890499 ([www.tribes.co.uk](http://www.tribes.co.uk)).

### **The Heart of the Silk Road – from £1,949 pp with Undiscovered Destinations**

Explore the [Heart of the Silk Road](#) on this small group tour. Visit Khiva and its superb monuments, the holy city of Bukhara, and Samarkand - home to Central Asia's most stunning architecture. Cross the border into Turkmenistan to visit the ancient cities of Merv and Konye-Urgench, and its unique capital Ashgabat. Spend time in stunning Tajikistan with its incredible mountain scenery, get off the beaten track at Penjikent and Termez, and enjoy Uzbek hospitality in a mountain village. The 15-day trip costs from £1,949 pp (two sharing), including daily breakfast, airport transfers, domestic flights, English speaking guide and excursions. Flights (international) extra. Call AITO\* member Undiscovered Destinations on 0191 296 2674 ([www.undiscovered-destinations.com](http://www.undiscovered-destinations.com)).

### **New: Unique horse riding on an Azorean island in the mid-Atlantic – for £1,551 pp with Archipelago Choice**

This exciting new [one-week riding holiday](#) covers the whole of Faial in the Azores, exploring its pretty countryside, green canyons, hidden coves and dreamy villages, as well as a wild canter on a black Atlantic beach. The Lusitano horses are well-trained, hardworking and relaxed, and are suitable for all abilities. Staying in a lovely restored Azorean farmhouse, this trip costs £1,551 pp (two sharing) including full board, airport transfers, six trail rides, English speaking trail guide and special trail equipment. Flights extra. Call AITO\* member Archipelago Choice on 01768 775672 ([www.azoreschoice.com](http://www.azoreschoice.com)).

### **Explore the beautiful South Downs Way – from £255 pp with Mickledore Travel**

Starting at the ancient city of Winchester - passing through charming villages and the gorgeous rolling countryside of England's newest National Park along the crest of the chalk escarpment - [the South Downs Way](#) leads to the magnificent cliffs of Beachy Head. See Iron Age hill forts, the spectacular chalk formations of The Devil's Dyke and the Seven Sisters - and experience a wonderful sense of solitude. Choose between three, seven or ten nights, staying in a range of lovely farmhouses, guesthouses and village inns. The price starts at £255 pp (two sharing) and includes three nights' accommodation, packed lunches, route maps and guides. Call AITO\* member Mickledore Travel on 017687 72335 ([www.mickledore.co.uk](http://www.mickledore.co.uk)).

### **New: 'Totally Tropical Trekking' in the Caribbean – from £2,745 pp with KE Adventure Travel**

The paradise island of Dominica has recently developed an 'end-to-end' long distance hiking route named the 'Waitukubuli National Trail'. The trail - built in 2012 through sections of virgin rainforest, with log bridges and stepping stones - snakes over the island from south to north, connecting both coastlines. [Spend 10 days walking the trail](#) with an experienced English-speaking guide, staying in charming hotels and guesthouses along the way, visiting stunning beaches and dramatic gorges. The price of £2,745 pp (two sharing) includes nine nights' accommodation, all meals, flights (Gatwick), transfers and land transport. Departure dates are 5 April, 17 May & 20 December. Call AITO\* member KE Adventure Travel on 01768 773966 ([www.keadventure.com](http://www.keadventure.com)).

### **Active adventure, finishing in Nicaragua – from £3,243 pp with Journey Latin America**

Beginning in Managua, this new [14-day Active Adventure to Nicaragua](#) includes jungle hiking in El Castillo, kayaking tours and a volcano hike in León. From here, head to Grenada to climb Mombacho volcano and take a ferry to Ometepe to enjoy a bike ride before relaxing at the beachside Aqua Spa Resort. Prices start from £3,243 pp (two sharing), and include flights

(London), domestic flights, transfers, B&B accommodation, some meals and excursions. Call AITO\* member Journey Latin America on 020 8747 8315 ([www.journeylatinamerica.co.uk](http://www.journeylatinamerica.co.uk)).

### **Explore the wilder side of Iceland – from £2,551 pp with Discover the World**

Drive rollercoaster mountain routes on this brand-new off-road adventure, taking in rugged volcanic landscapes, remote fjords and some of the most beautiful waterfalls found in Iceland. Witness lavascapes, sweeping glaciers and mossy canyons whilst exploring picturesque national parks. Trace a craggy coastline and marvel at the distinctive sea stacks. Spend the night on a tiny island in the middle of a beautiful bay, walk on deserted sandy beaches and watch abundant birdlife from cliff-top paths. [This trip](#) costs from £2,551 pp (two sharing) including flights (London, Manchester or Glasgow), 14 nights' accommodation and car hire. Departures are in July & August. Call AITO\* member Discover the World on 01737 214 291 ([www.discover-the-world.co.uk](http://www.discover-the-world.co.uk)).

### **New: Birding and Wildlife Trek, Bhutan – from £2,895 pp with Mountain Kingdoms**

This trip offers an exceptional opportunity to view rare and endemic birds in Bhutan. Planned to maximise wildlife and birdwatching opportunities in a variety of landscapes and habitats, the itinerary includes the newly-opened Royal Manas National Park, which is home to Asia's 'big five' - elephant, buffalo, rhino, tiger and leopard - and hundreds of bird species. Led by an expert native guide with a passion for photography, as well as birds and wildlife, there will also be a chance to visit the main cultural sites, including Taktsang Monastery. Departing on 6 November, the '[Birding & Wildlife Trek](#)' costs from £2,895 pp (two sharing). Flights extra. Call AITO\* member Mountain Kingdoms on 01453 844400 ([www.mountainkingdoms.com](http://www.mountainkingdoms.com)).

### **Secret History of the Mongols – from £4,175 pp with ACE Cultural Tours**

Discover the Secret History of the Mongols on [this epic journey](#) through northern Asia. Follow the Trans-Siberian Express around the shores of Lake Baikal, explore spectacular Buddhist temples located high in the mountains and visit incredible ruins, including the ancient capital of Genghis Khan. Ride horses or camels on the sand dunes of the Khugnu Khan Mountain National Park, stay in traditional 'ger' encampments, and meet nomadic families. Departing 8 September, the price is £4,175 pp (two sharing) and includes 17 nights' B&B accommodation, flights (Heathrow) and most meals. Call AITO\* member ACE Cultural Tours on 01223 841 055 ([www.aceculturaltours.co.uk](http://www.aceculturaltours.co.uk)).

### **New: Seven Capes of Lycia walk – from £798 pp with Inntavel**

Expect some exciting walking over rugged terrain on this fascinating [eight night route](#) from Ovacik to Antalya, along a section of Turkey's beautiful Lycian Way. Highlights include Kayaköy, the Greek ghost village featured in Louis de Bernières' 'Birds Without Wings', a descent into the village of Faralya on the green slopes above Butterfly valley, and a visit to ancient Sidyma to explore the ruins of this once-huge Lycian city. The trip costs from £798 pp (two sharing) and includes eight nights' half board accommodation, some meals, walking maps and notes, and luggage transfers. Flights extra. Departures are between 27 April and 31 October. Call AITO\* member Inntavel on 01653 617000 ([www.inntavel.co.uk](http://www.inntavel.co.uk)).

### **New: Road cycling trip in the Outer Hebrides – from £1,195 pp with Wilderness Scotland**

New for 2014, [this trip](#) explores both the magnificent landscapes and rich culture of the Outer Hebrides. Weaving their way through nine of the most unspoilt and beautiful islands in Europe, cyclists are surrounded by the rich and varied wildlife and natural beauty of the Outer Hebrides. Each day is rewarded with locally-sourced fresh food and cosy inns or hotels. Highlights include cycling from Barra to Lewis through nine amazing islands, the outstanding landscapes of white sand beaches and towering peaks, and the fascinating history, rich culture and warm hospitality

of the islands. The tour costs from £1,195 pp (two sharing) and includes six nights' B&B, some meals, seven days, guided tour, luggage transfers and boat transfers. Departures are 7 June & 26 July. Call AITO\* member on 01479 420020 ([www.wildernessscotland.com](http://www.wildernessscotland.com)).

**Albania, Macedonia and Kosovo: walking beyond the bunkers – from £2,390 pp with Kudu Travel**

This [new 15 day tour](#) gives adventurous travellers the chance to discover just what lay hidden for decades behind Enver Hoxha's thousands of bunkers. Included are walking high in the wild Albanian Alps (still subject to blood feuds), taking a private boat trip through the scenic Komani gorge (in fact an old coach welded onto a barge), exploring Lake Ohrid in Macedonia for bears and Byzantine frescoes, and enjoy a jaunt into Kosovo, Europe's newest nation, to see exceptional Ottoman architecture. Departing 18 May, the cost is £2,390 pp (two sharing) and includes full board accommodation with wine or beer, all transfers, all entry fees and specialist guiding. Flights extra. Call AITO\* member Kudu Travel on 01225 436 115 ([www.kudutravel.com](http://www.kudutravel.com)).

**\*AITO is a highly-respected travel organisation that provides an unrivalled collection of exciting, specialist holidays from award-winning tour operators. Its 120-plus members are all focused on quality of customer experience and personal service, and aim to offer sustainable travel options.**

**Ends – 10 February 2014**

**Press:** For more information about AITO ([www.aito.com](http://www.aito.com)) please contact Sue Ockwell, Rebecca Milne or Laura Manning at Travel PR (020 8891 4440, [s.ockwell@travelpr.co.uk](mailto:s.ockwell@travelpr.co.uk), [r.milne@travelpr.co.uk](mailto:r.milne@travelpr.co.uk) or [l.manning@travelpr.co.uk](mailto:l.manning@travelpr.co.uk)).