

TOP TIP

Disneyland Paris is celebrating its 25th anniversary with a season of events starting on March 26

2016

2017

Leap into the new year

Get ahead of the game with what's hot in 2017, writes Katie McGonagle

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Looking back at this time last year, who could have predicted how many surprises we had in store?

It's been the year of Trump's triumph, of divisive debates over Brexit, of earthquakes in Italy and Ecuador, terrorist attacks in Brussels and Istanbul, and more celebrity deaths than anyone would care to remember.

But before we go getting all 'annus horribilis' about 2016, there have been plenty of lighter moments too: seeing Team GB come back from Rio with a clutch of medals; milestones as

diverse as Shakespeare's 400th birthday and the centenary of the US National Park Service; and a country united in watching Tim Peake spend six months in space and seeing a Brit top the world tennis rankings.

So it's clear there's no way of knowing the ups and downs of the year to come - but that doesn't mean we can't try to predict what will sell well in 2017.

Our rundown of the destinations to watch out for will not only help you brush up on any gaps in your knowledge but will also give you ideas for where

to send those clients who look to you for inspiration.

► CHILE

There's nothing like a new flight to put a country in the spotlight, and if Peru and Costa Rica - both have attracted unprecedented attention since British Airways added direct services from London - are anything to go by, Santiago should brace itself for an influx of Brits.

Starting on January 3, the 14-hour, 40-minute journey from Heathrow will become BA's longest direct service, and with a

scenic flight route skimming over the snow-topped peaks of the Andes on its approach, visits are bound to get off to a good start.

Take some time to enjoy sophisticated Santiago, then escape the city in favour of the epic scenery for which Chile is famous. Head north for the expanse of the Atacama Desert, or south to the glacier-filled landscapes of Patagonia. Cox & Kings is making the most of the direct flight with a new Wonders of Chile & Argentina trip for 2017, starting its 12-day tour of the two countries in Santiago. [➔](#)

RIGHT:
Torres del
Paine National
Park, Chile

FAR RIGHT:
Bibimbap,
Korea

BELOW:
Playa de las
Teresitas,
Tenerife



5 OF THE BEST EVENTS AND ANNIVERSARIES

→ KOREA

Japan has rather hogged the East Asian limelight of late, becoming the rising star of the region thanks to favourable exchange rates, enhanced airlift from the UK and a constant stream of new product. Yet there's another reason to cast your eyes eastwards: South Korea has been steadily nurturing a reputation as Asia's must-see spot, whether on a multi-centre itinerary – Japan, China and South Korea linked up this year to form the Visit East Asia partnership – or as a destination in its own right.

There's investment in the lead-up to the Pyeongchang 2018 Winter Olympics, plus the opening next year of the Seoul Skygarden, a bypass-turned-half-mile stretch of garden bringing together cafes, shops and arts venues. Yet the new-found enthusiasm for Korean food – the



South Korea has been steadily nurturing a reputation as Asia's must-see destination

up-and-coming cuisine on the UK restaurant scene – must surely take some credit, prompting new tours such as Intrepid Travel's Real Food Adventure in South Korea, which covers the basics from bibimbap to craft beer in Busan.

→ ICELAND

The temperature might be hovering around zero right now, but Iceland is hot property. It's been a regular feature

of trends forecasts over the past few years, but it seems there's no stopping the Icelandic juggernaut as operators across the board report further hikes in demand. SuperBreak has seen a 90% jump in interest, and even regional specialist Taber Holidays – rebranding as Scandinavia Only from January – says forward bookings have more than doubled year on year.

Airlift is a key factor, with several new flights – many tapping into Reykjavik's growing reputation as a stopover spot en route to the US and Canada – including Icelandair's new Belfast City service starting in June.

Yet that's not the only reason for its popularity. Jos Dewing, managing director of Voyages to Antiquity, says: "Our no-fly cruises are performing exceptionally well for 2017. The new ex-UK cruises to Iceland are fully booked, with sailings around the



AUSTRALIA

hosts the 2017-18 Ashes series at five venues starting November 23

FINLAND

celebrates 100 years of independence on December 6

GERMANY

marks the 500th anniversary of the Reformation with events all year

NEW ZEALAND

hosts the British and Irish Lions tour in June and July

THE US

sees a solar eclipse visible from several states on August 21



→ Outer Hebrides also proving extremely popular.”

▶ **SPAIN**

Spain? On a list of hot new destinations? It's not exactly a newcomer to the British market, but as political unrest and terrorist attacks elsewhere in the world drive tourists back to familiar spots, old favourites like Spain are seeing a spike in visitor numbers.

The Spanish mainland and islands made up eight of On the Beach's 10 most popular winter-sun destinations this year, with bookings for the Canary Islands rising by 6%, led by Tenerife. That's hardly surprising, since British arrivals to Tenerife were already 20% up between January and September, and are set to surpass the two million mark for the first time this year.

And it's not just about the beach. Monarch reports more younger customers booking weekend breaks to Barcelona and Madrid, while lesser-known cities are coming to the fore, including Girona, which will be



Jersey and Guernsey use sterling, so Britons don't have to worry about falling exchange rates

served next summer by 11 new Ryanair and Jet2.com routes from the UK.

▶ **UK**

This might seem another surprising entry, but it shouldn't be. The 'staycation' rose to prominence in the wake of the 2008 financial crisis, as everyone tightened their belts. Now, amid Brexit and the falling value of the pound, it's time to remind ourselves how much holidaying at home has to offer.

Cosmos Tours has added UK short breaks for the first time, including events such as the Edinburgh



ABOVE: Andy Murray at Wimbledon



Merry Christmas

...to all our Travel Agent partners!

Thank you for your support in 2016 and we wish you all the very best for 2017!
From your Agency Sales Team and all at Riviera Travel



Joseph



Darren



Tom



Nichola



Shelley

RIGHT:
Pula, Croatia

BELOW:
Banff National
Park, Canada



▶ CANADA


If 2016 has been the year of US national parks, then 2017 is Canada's turn as its national parks open their gates for free to mark the 150th anniversary of the country's foundation.

There's plenty to look forward to this year as capital Ottawa holds a series of sesquicentennial celebrations, Montreal marks another key milestone with its 375th birthday, and Toronto gets ready to host the high-profile Invictus Games in September.

This comes hot on the heels of a strong year for Canada, with a 14% rise in UK arrivals between January and August, further buoyed by the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge's royal visit in September. TrekAmerica has seen a 27% increase in passenger numbers, while sister brand Grand American Adventures has added departure dates on popular tours such as Best of the Rockies and Canadian Park Trails.

▶ CROATIA

"There's no stopping Croatia," says Andrew Brown of Post Office Travel Money. "Its currency, the kuna, is now at its highest position, seventh, in our list of bestselling currencies after another growth year in which sales rose 12%. With such strong appeal, we expect Croatia to be a top hotspot for 2017."

Money certainly talks when 

EXPERT PREDICTIONS: SHORT-HAUL



Carl Catterall,
marketing director,
Olympic Holidays
"We've seen an increase in sales for the four classics: Zante, Corfu, Crete and Rhodes. These larger islands have a greater variety of resort and hotel options and we have experienced an uplift in younger travellers, families and luxury holidaymakers booking these destinations."



Chris Mottershead,
managing director,
Thomas Cook UK & Ireland
"Many of our holidaymakers are opting for an all-inclusive holiday to ensure value for money, particularly in destinations not traditionally recognised for their all-inclusive offering. During summer 2016 we saw a growth in all-inclusive package holidays to the Canary Islands, Greece – namely Corfu, Rhodes, Zante and Crete – Bulgaria and Cyprus, and we believe this trend will continue into 2017."



Alan Cross,
head of trade sales,
Jet2holidays
"We are expecting to see continued growth in the number of customers looking to book package holidays, meaning they can escape to the sun knowing everything – accommodation, transfers and meals – is included. We expect more customers to look for the assurance of Atol protection too."

Festival and Chelsea Flower Show, while Newmarket Holidays has seen higher-than-ever advance sales of its Wimbledon packages. Special-interest breaks are also gaining momentum, with specialist rail operators such as Great Rail Journeys and Diamond Rail Holidays expanding their UK portfolios next year.

And it's worth remembering the variety of breaks at home, from the Highlands of Scotland to the sunny shores of the Channel Islands, which Premier Holidays tips for success next year. Short-haul product manager Beverley Scarr says: "A new Cardiff to Guernsey service for summer 2017 has just been launched by



There's no stopping Croatia. Its currency is at its highest position in our bestselling list

Blue Islands, Flybe's new franchise partner. We've already seen a surge of interest from clients to the Channel Islands for next year. Jersey and Guernsey have a continental feel but, as they're part of the UK and use sterling, people don't have to worry about falling exchanges rates."



RIGHT:
Cape Town,
South Africa



→ it comes to getting the real story of which destinations are doing well, and with sales of the kuna more than trebling over the past decade, there's no denying Croatia's inexorable growth. Its appeal ranges from classics like cruising the Adriatic coast or spending a weekend in Dubrovnik, to rising city-break stars such as Zagreb or Pula, which welcomes new BA and Jet2.com flights next year.

It's not just the bargain end of

the market either. Vanessa Dean of luxury operator Carrier says: "Croatia and Montenegro continue to grow in popularity. Carrier's business is currently 80% up year on year, and this looks set to continue in 2017. Luxury hotel chains are taking note, and One&Only Portonovi has plans to open soon."

▶ SOUTH AFRICA

Currency is also key to the ongoing appeal of South Africa, where



Up-and-coming destinations

IRAN: It's been rising up the ranks among adventure operators, but Iran's must-see status was sealed with BA's direct service to Tehran, which began in September. G Adventures' sales have doubled this year, Cox & Kings has seen good forward bookings and Regent Holidays is venturing farther afield with its 14-day Highlights of Northern Iran tour.

GREENLAND: Brits are used to the cold at home, but it seems we don't mind it on holiday either, with growing demand for Greenland. Hurtigruten, Fred Olsen

Cruise Lines and Holland America Line have added adventurous excursions, while G Adventures sails the fjords and goes whale-watching on its Arctic Highlights itinerary.

UZBEKISTAN: After easing its visa requirements for UK citizens – now a much easier \$50 fee on arrival – Explore predicts a surge in demand for Silk Road itineraries visiting cities such as Samarkand, Bukhara and Khiva. Saga has also added a tour to nearby Kazakhstan and Krygyzstan, Where Steppe and Mountain Meet.

W Wendy Wu Tours

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Saturday 24th December – Monday 26th December: Closed, Tuesday 27th December: 10:00 until 16:00, Wednesday 28th December – Friday 30th December: 9:00 until 17:30, Saturday 31st December: 10:00 until 16:00, Sunday 1st January: Closed, Monday 2nd January: 10:00 until 16:00

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LEFT:
India

RIGHT:
Hermitage
Museum,
St Petersburg



PICTURES: SHUTTERSTOCK; TURISMO, CHILE; NEWMARKET HOLIDAYS; (AELTC/BOB MARTINI); DESTINATION CANADA; BANFF LAKE LOUISE TOURISM/PAUL ZIZKA

EXPERT PREDICTIONS: LONG-HAUL



Andy Stark,
managing director,
The Global Travel Group

"The Caribbean looks like it is off to a strong start for 2017 and with

the increased flight capacity into the US, we are quietly confident that we will see growth in this area. Dubai continues to be a dominant seller for us with sales up year on year. With more new hotel and attraction openings planned, we are confident it will remain on many travellers' 'must-do' lists."



Brian Young,
managing director,
GAdventures

"Numbers in Central Asia have more than doubled year on year,

driven by the popularity of Iran and increased awareness of the 'Stans. Eastern Africa is coming back, up 68%, and southern Africa is also performing very well, up 184%, most likely due to the rand as South Africa is great value at the moment. We're also seeing significant growth in Madagascar and have added new trips there for 2017."

the pound-to-rand exchange rate is still very much in Brits' favour. Gordon McCreadie, sales and marketing director at Gold Medal and Travel 2, says: "Price-wise, the destination to watch for next year is South Africa as it continues to offer the best value for money anywhere in the world, and bookings here are up year on year. A five-course tasting menu for two with wine in a five-star restaurant in South Africa can cost as little as £70."

Cape Town, which made Lonely Planet's list of top-10 cities for 2017, has gained flight capacity with Thomas Cook's launch of a seasonal service this month, making the destination an option for city breaks or as a gateway to the rest of the country.

▶ INDIA

Few countries are as photogenic as India, so it's little wonder that rises in its fortunes are often attributed to the success of the latest blockbuster filmed there, from *Slumdog Millionaire* and *The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel* to this year's hit, *The Jungle Book*.

Whether the wave of new product added in 2016 – from escorted journeys to luxury train tours and tailor-made trips – was



South Africa continues to offer the best value for money anywhere in the world and sales are up year on year

actually sparked by the film is up for debate, but it has certainly helped lay the groundwork for another strong year in 2017, when India will celebrate the 70th anniversary of its independence from the British Empire with a series of cultural events marking the ties between the countries.

Wendy Wu Tours has boosted its India programme with three new tours, including the epic 22-day Enticing India and 23-day Trans-Himalayan Journey; Newmarket Holidays has grown to five Indian itineraries; and 18-35s specialist Contiki will return for the first time in 40 years with its 12-day Eternal India trip. Cox & Kings has also seen such strong forward bookings that India group tours account for two of the spots on its list of top-10 bestsellers.

▶ RUSSIA

India is not the only one with a big anniversary next year: 2017 marks a century since the Russian Revolution, and the stream of new tours themed around it suggest operators are expecting a spike in interest.

APT's premium river cruises to Russia have already sold out – though agents can pre-register clients for 2018 to avoid missing out again – while Uniworld is tipping its Imperial Waterways of Russia cruise to be especially popular when departures begin in May.

Back on land, Kirker Holidays has added a seven-night escorted tour, The Romanovs & Revolution – the Centenary of the October Revolution, which will bring guests to St Petersburg for the anniversary of the very day the revolution kicked off, on November 7.

Regent Holidays is also topping up its programme with its new nine-day Russian Revolution group tour taking travellers through the life of Vladimir Lenin, from his university in Kazan and house museum in Ulyanovsk, to the former Bolshevik Party headquarters in St Petersburg and his mausoleum in Moscow.