



NEW TOURING DESTINATIONS

Explore up-and-coming areas with the benefit of a tour guide, writes **Alice Barnes-Brown**

If your client's new year's resolution is to explore somewhere they've never been before, a wealth of new guided tours can help you to point them towards the path less travelled over the coming months.

As travellers seek to avoid contributing to overtourism, appetite for niche locations is growing. Explore reports that sales to countries such as Laos and Nicaragua have grown by as much as a third year on year.

Whether clients want to discover the colours and contrasts of Central Asia or the corners of Europe they'd never considered, now is the perfect time to encourage curious adventurers to go off the tourist trail.



MOLDOVA

Romania's diminutive neighbour punches above its weight when it comes to cultural appeal, from golden-domed monasteries and underground mines-turned-wine cellars to a capital filled with fascinating Soviet-era architecture. In April, G Adventures will launch a standalone tour of Moldova, with medieval villages, verdant valleys, organic cheesemakers and plenty of wine tastings on the cards. Stu Darnley, G Adventures' national sales manager, says: "Moldova is an exciting and beautiful part of the world that remains under the radar. The trip we have recently launched is an example of tourism done right; travellers can build connections with local communities, who are welcoming tourism with open arms."

Book it: The Moldova Discovery itinerary costs from £1,179, based on a May departure. Includes ground transport, daily breakfast, some meals and listed excursions, but excludes international flights. gadventures.com



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ALGERIA

The largest nation in Africa has plenty to recommend it, from red-hued Roman ruins to the dunes of the Sahara Desert. Algeria is keen to increase tourism too, with targets to receive 12 million annual visitors by 2030 – a big increase compared with last year's target of four million. Next month, clients will be able to experience Algeria with Explore. Starting in capital Algiers, they'll see the city's 10th-century medina and grand seaside boulevards before flying south to the Sahara. Philippa Baines, Explore's agency sales manager, says: "Explore last featured trips to Algeria in 2016, and our new trip covers a lot of distance. With vast expanses of sand, towering dunes, dramatic rock formations, canyons and extraordinary rock art, this is a trip for those wanting a digital detox in the breathtaking scenery of the Sahara."

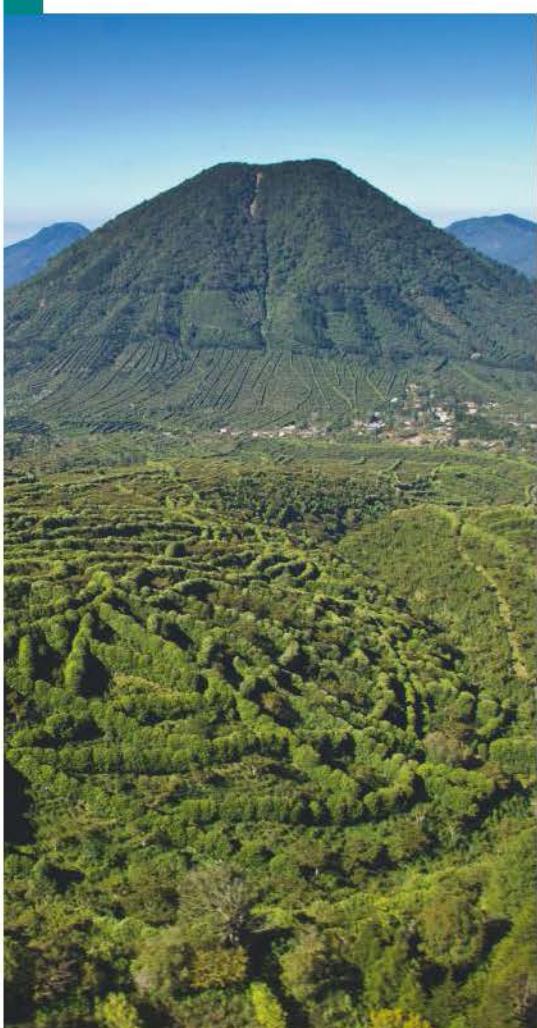
Book it: Explore sells the nine-night Algeria's Sahara Desert Adventure from £1,795, including local transport, activities and breakfast, but excluding international flights. explore.co.uk



EL SALVADOR

El Salvador is on the rise – according to the UN World Tourism Organisation, it experienced an 80% rise in visitors between 2019 and 2024, and last year it made Intrepid Travel's Not Hot List of trending destinations. A new Intrepid Travel tour taking in three Central American countries, including El Salvador, sets off from September. Holly Miller, product manager for North and Central America, says: "El Salvador's 22-mile Ruta de las Flores (Route of the Flowers) is ideal for clients who enjoy exploring nature at a relatively easy pace. This tour is great for coffee lovers and there's a chance to wind down on the beaches of El Salvador's Costa del Sol too."

Book it: Intrepid Travel offers the nine-day Discover Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador tour from £1,195, including listed excursions, ground transport, breakfast and some lunches. International flights not included; based on a September 9 departure. intrepidtravel.com



KYRGYZSTAN

Central Asia has been in the spotlight for a while, but Kyrgyzstan is still the new kid on the block, offering a rich Silk Road history, awe-inspiring landscapes and nomadic culture – yet fewer visitors than neighbours such as Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. Cox & Kings will launch a Kyrgyzstan tour in May, exploring the bustling capital Bishkek, the shores of Issyk-Kul lake and secluded mountain paths. George Colvin-Slee, product director at Cox & Kings, says: "Central Asia is now one of our leading regions, with bookings for the region rising by approximately 34% year on year. We are delighted to be launching a new tour in Kyrgyzstan, offering even more choice in this increasingly sought-after region."

Book it: Cox & Kings has a 10-day Colours of Kyrgyzstan tour from £2,645, including flights from London, transfers and daily breakfast, plus listed excursions. coxandkingstravel.com

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ITALY

As the touring sector's top-selling destination, according to the Association of Touring & Adventure Suppliers (Atas), it would be hard to find any part of Italy that remains relatively unexplored. Yet Newmarket Holidays' first Premier Collection tour in the country has done just that by focusing on the less-travelled northeast. Hidden Italy – Trieste & Friuli Venezia Giulia starts and ends in Venice, making use of competitively priced flights from regional UK airports. But in between, it diverts off the tourist trail to explore the port city of Trieste, Unesco-listed Roman ruins in Aquileia and a Renaissance star fort in Palmanova (pictured). Guests can also learn the art of mosaic-making in Spilimbergo and enjoy a wine tasting in vineyard-filled Gorizia, a town at the foot of the Julian Alps along the border with Slovenia.

Book it: Newmarket Holidays' Hidden Italy – Trieste & Friuli Venezia Giulia starts at £1,749, including flights, seven nights' accommodation with breakfast, tours and transfers, based on an October 7 departure from Bristol. newmarketholidays.co.uk

TURKMENISTAN

Turkmenistan offers Caspian coasts, fiery gas craters and even the world's largest hand-woven carpet. Regent Holidays has introduced four itineraries in the country, including the 12-day Classic Turkmenistan, starting from £3,790 based on two sharing, including flights, departing April 18. regent-holidays.co.uk

ANGOLA

Undiscovered Destinations is introducing a 13-day Angola Unveiled tour. As well as the Namib desert, clients will discover the capital Luanda, cooling waterfalls and tropical beaches. From £5,495 per person based on two sharing, departing July 15, excluding flights. undiscovered-destinations.com

CHINA

Wildlife Worldwide's new 14-day tour of the Gouli Valley – known as the Valley of the Cats for its wild felines – is one of few to visit this remote region in northwest China. From £5,495 based on two sharing, including flights on October 15. wildlifeworldwide.com

ZAMBIA

If safari-loving clients want something new, a guided nine-night itinerary from Rainbow Tours offers the chance to explore Zambia's lesser-known parks. They'll spot elephants and leopards in the Lower Zambezi, followed by wild dogs and cheetahs in the Kafue region. From £7,765 including flights. rainbowtours.co.uk

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LAOS

Southeast Asia has long been popular, but landlocked Laos is sometimes overlooked in favour of beach destinations. But that could soon change; in 2025, Laos received a 13% increase in visitors year on year, and this month, Exodus Adventure Travels will launch its first standalone tour in the country. Clients will have the chance to swim in the pearly blue pool of the Kuang Si waterfall, kayak on the rushing Nam Song River and discover the riverside city of Luang Prabang (pictured) by rail and boat. Brendan Phelan, sales director for Exodus, says: "Laos is a relatively undiscovered country, so we are very pleased to launch this trip now. Agents can lean into the fact that Laos offers affordable travel and a perfect blend of relaxation and adventure."

Book it: Exodus offers a 10-day tour, Discover Laos in Comfort, which costs from £2,449 per person, including some meals, ground transport and listed excursions. International flights are extra. exodus.co.uk

