

Summer of adventure

Upsell longer trips in Australia and capitalise on China reopening, says Adam Shaw, as he rounds up some of this year's best adventures

Whether it's climbing mountains, spotting exotic wildlife or getting out into local villages, travellers are keen to embrace adventure while truly exploring the places they're visiting.

"Customers are really craving adventure trips, as we've seen in January, where about 50% of bookings were for our Go Beyond tours, which is our more active touring range," says Wendy Wu Tours' head of trade sales Gary King.

"There is an appetite for adventure now, particularly in the touring market where customers want engaging cultural experiences and to get off the beaten track. And this year we're seeing a huge growth in the immersive market. People are refusing to settle and want to see the iconic sights and experience the most authentic and immersive experiences destinations have to offer."

With opportunities for upselling longer, more-epic adventures, new rail routes opening and new tours debuting – these trip ideas combine both active outdoor pursuits with opportunities to explore a destination in-depth. It's time to sell summer 2023 as the 'summer of adventure'.

LONGER STAYS IN AUSTRALIA

With travellers keen to spend more time exploring Australia, now's the time to upsell a longer package. According to the country's International Visitor Survey, year-end figures from ➤

Surfing at Byron Bay

PICTURE: Shutterstock.com/RugliG



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: Hall of Supreme Harmony in Beijing, China; koala in Kennett River, Australia; Colorado, US; Longji rice terraces, China

PICTURE: Shutterstock.com/superjoseph, Galyna Andrushko, OSTILL is Franck Camhi; Uncornered Market.com/Daniel Noll and Audrey Scott

September showed British travellers spent an average of 38 nights in 2022 compared with 30 nights in 2019. Sally Cope, Tourism Australia regional general manager for UK & northern Europe, says: "There's an engaged audience looking to travel long-haul, and we believe Australia offers the diversity of fulfilling experiences that British travellers are seeking."

The diversity Cope speaks of can be found on several longer-length tours, including an epic 36-day east coast adventure offered by Ultimate Travel. The package includes the opportunity for clients to try their hand at surfing in Byron Bay and snorkel in the Great Barrier Reef, take a 4x4 tour through the forested tracks of K'Gari (formerly Fraser Island) and explore the Blue Mountains.

There's also the option to add a week's stay in Sydney onto the tour, while a three-day visit to the Outback, which includes a visit to Uluru, can be included as a further excursion.

Book it: The 36-day East Coast Explorer trip from Ultimate Travel starts at £2,099 and the 43-day East Coast Explorer + Sydney trip with an extra week in Sydney starts at £2,499, based on a June 12 departure. ultimate.travel/agents

CHINA'S GREAT REOPENING

China reopened its borders to foreign travellers earlier this year. Wendy Wu Tours will be among the first operators to head back and it has already seen plenty of bookings several months in advance. The operator's China: The Big One itinerary combines a visit to the

beguiling Terracotta Army, with a cycle around the city walls for good measure. Not to mention trips to the megacities of Shanghai and Beijing, and a walk along the less visited Huanghuacheng section of the Great Wall, reached by boat. Hiking opportunities include time in the Longji rice terraces and a trek to Tiger Leaping Gorge.

Book it: Wendy Wu Tours' 28-day China: The Big One tour starts at £4,890, based on a May 6 departure, including most meals, flights and a China visa. wendywutours.co.uk/agents

HIKING IN COLORADO

Keen walkers will love the opportunity to take on some of Colorado's most impressive trails with a new tour from Trafalgar, which was introduced due to increased demand for trips to national parks in the pandemic.

"As we enter 2023, we have seen this trend continue and expect it to carry on," says Kelly Jackson, managing director at TTC Tour Brands EMEA.

The Colorado Active Adventure, which will welcome its first guests this summer, includes visits to the Unesco-listed Mesa Verde National Park, Rim Rock Trail at the Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park and the Rocky Mountain National Park.

Clients will also explore Glenwood Canyon and the steep cliffs of the Colorado National Monument, while there's the chance to tackle one of the state's 'fourteeners' with an optional hike through the 14,265ft-high Quandary Peak Breckenridge, ➤

ASK THE operator

"Touring in China is going to be a whole new experience. The country has had three years without tourism to rejuvenate and refresh. China is eagerly looking forward to welcoming visitors again with a touring experience that promises to be as fresh and captivating as 25 years ago, when we first started group tours there."

Gary King,
head of trade sales,
Wendy Wu Tours



DESTINATIONS

SUMMER 2023 | ACTIVE & ADVENTURE



CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE: Hot-air balloons in Cappadocia, Turkey; rice fields in Laos; Vientiane, Laos PICTURE: Johnnie Naitro

which offers 360-degree views of Summit County and the Tenmile mountain range. On top of the walks, there's a scenic drive along the hairpin turns of the Million Dollar Highway and a thrilling rafting experience on the Colorado River.

Book it: Trafalgar's Colorado Active Adventure offers 10 nights' B&B accommodation, some meals and internal transport starting at £3,292, based on a July 16 departure. Flights not included. agents.ttc.com

EMBRACE TURKEY

It's no secret that Turkey experienced a wave of popularity with British travellers in summer 2022, as the pound performed well against the Turkish lira. And beyond its beaches, adventures abound.

Turkey continues to recover from February's earthquakes, and operators have assured potential visitors that Istanbul, Cappadocia – and the Turkish Riviera – are unaffected. Joanna Reeve, Intrepid Travel's head of business development, says: "As Turkey rebuilds after its devastating earthquake, one of the best ways travellers can support the local economy is to visit."

On Intrepid's Best of Turkey tour, clients can snorkel in the Med, hike along part of the ancient Lycian Way walking trail, admire the Blue Lagoon of Ölüdeniz from up high, and explore the otherworldly landscapes of Cappadocia.

Book it: The 15-day Best of Turkey tour with Intrepid Travel starts at £1,685, based on a July 17

departure, including accommodation, transport and selected meals. International flights not included. intrepidtravel.com

RIDING THE RAILS IN LAOS

The Vientiane to Boten railway line only opened in December 2021 and, after some disruption due to Covid, is finally welcoming regular streams of passengers.

It weaves northwards, taking in limestone karsts and lush rice fields, zooms through rock-cut tunnels and across bridges over the Mekong, and winds up in the country's spiritual capital, Unesco heritage site, Luang Prabang.

En route, clients will get the chance to bike around sleepy villages, kayak on striking blue lagoons and walk through caves near Vang Vieng or take a 4x4 excursion to meet local Ikho, Hmong and Khamu communities that live high up in the mountains by Muang La.

Charlotte Bower, senior southeast Asia product executive at InsideAsia, says: "The new train has added a completely new dimension to travelling Laos and transformed it from a destination that is no longer just an add on from Vietnam, but a destination in itself."

Book it: A 10-night Laos by Rail tour with InsideAsia starts at £2,051, based on a July 1 departure, including accommodation, rail tickets and some meals. Flights extra.

insideasiatours.com/travel-agents

ASK THE expert

"The typically active and adventurous holidays such as the Inca Trail and Kilimanjaro will always be popular for those seeking a personal challenge, but there are so many tours, trips and destinations where you can incorporate an element of activity, such as hiking or biking. We're seeing more interest in active holidays like this in destinations closer to home."

Natalie Greaves, touring and adventure manager, Barrhead Travel

