

# 8 of the BEST

## SLOW TOURS


Make sure you're up to speed with the trend for slow travel, writes **Joanna Booth**

**A**ccording to the Chinese calendar, it's the year of the rat. But when it comes to travel, I'd suggest we might, more fittingly, attribute 2020 to the tortoise. Rushing around like the proverbial hare is terribly passé; now it's all about slowing down.

Trend analysts report that travellers are looking for holidays that are unhurried and reflective, and that offer meaningful connections with destinations and local people, rather than hurrying through a tick-list of sights. Quality is key, not quantity.

The immersive, experiential tours that follow are just the tip of the iceberg in this growing sector – this is one trend that's showing no signs of slowing down.

1



**PYRENEES BY RAIL**


A rainbow of colourful trains will transport clients through spectacular mountain scenery on Arena Rail's Little Trains and Walks of the Pyrenees tour, staying at a base in Roses, near Perpignan. They'll wind through forests on the Yellow Train, ride the Red Train past vineyards and castles, and take the Roses Express – a road-train pulled by tractor – through Cap de Creus National Park. There are also three gentle, guided coastal hikes and the Refugee Trail, used by those escaping Franco's regime.

**Book it:** The eight-day Little Trains and Walks of the Pyrenees starts at £1,095, including travel by train from London, half-board accommodation and all rail trips and walks.

[arenarailholidays.co.uk](http://arenarailholidays.co.uk)



2




**INDIA'S BACKWATERS BY HOUSEBOAT**

Sitting at the nation's southern tip, Kerala has all of India's traditional vibrancy without the frenetic nature of the cities on the northern tourist circuit. A new Cox & Kings itinerary introduces its delights slowly, with activities including a spice plantation walk, morning yoga class and an overnight aboard a houseboat gliding along the famous backwaters – the epitome of tranquillity. The trip ends with a three-night stay in a luxury villa resort overlooking the ocean.

**Book it:** The 12-day Kerala at Leisure private tour starts at £2,425 including flights, accommodation, private transfers, and some activities and meals.

[coxandkings.co.uk](http://coxandkings.co.uk)

3



**WALKING THE WEST HIGHLAND WAY**

Leisurely needn't mean lazy. Wilderness Scotland's guided walk along the 95-mile West Highland Way (which is celebrating its 40th anniversary this year) takes clients on foot through the monumental landscapes of Loch Lomond, Rannoch Moor and Glencoe. They'll follow in the footsteps of Rob Roy, see the carved stone seat said to contain the sword of Robert the Bruce, and learn about the area's legends, history, flora and fauna, staying in comfortable accommodation each night.

**Book it:** The eight-day West Highland Way guided walking break starts at £1,695 including accommodation, most meals, luggage transfers and guides.

[wildernessscotland.com](http://wildernessscotland.com)

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**LA DOLCE VITA IN TUSCANY**

If sleeping in a different destination every night isn't your idea of slow, suggest Shearings' Tuscan Sights & Culinary Delights, a tour that bases itself at one hotel in Italy's most idyllic countryside. Clients will venture out on some fittingly relaxing excursions, including a tasting at Italy's smallest pasta factory, a salami workshop at a traditional butcher's and a visit to a Chianti vineyard.

**Book it:** The 10-day Tuscan Sights & Culinary Delights itinerary starts at £869 including coach travel, half-board accommodation and four excursions.

[shearingsagent.com](http://shearingsagent.com)



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## DESTINATIONS

SLOW TOURS | ESCORTED TOURS

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### SNORKELLING IN INDONESIA

The Indonesian archipelago of Raja Ampat is the most biodiverse marine area on the planet. A new daily flight service from Jakarta to Sorong has made the archipelago more accessible, and a Dive Worldwide trip staying onboard the 16-passenger sailing yacht *Pindito* will take clients at a relaxed pace to remote villages and snorkelling sites where they can spot dolphins, manta rays, turtles and pygmy seahorses.

**Book it:** Dive Worldwide's Coral Triangle Snorkelling Adventure starts at £5,195, departing on May 23. The price includes 11 nights' full-board on *Pindito*, two nights' bed and breakfast in Jakarta and transfers. [diveworldwide.com](https://diveworldwide.com)

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### NAMIBIA BY BIKE

Keen pedallers can enjoy the epic landscapes of Namibia from the saddle with H+I Adventures' new e-mountain bike tour. A battery boost will help propel them past the destination's soaring sand dunes and along red dirt tracks, where they'll spot giraffes, zebras and elephants, and meet indigenous communities, before camping under cloudless, star-filled skies.

**Book it:** The 12-day E-MTB Safari of Namibia starts at £3,500 including accommodation, most meals, guiding, transfers and the services of a support vehicle. [mountainbikeworldwide.com](https://mountainbikeworldwide.com)

[travelweekly.co.uk](https://travelweekly.co.uk)

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DESTINATIONS

ESCORTED TOURS | SLOW TOURS



NOMADIC LIVING IN MONGOLIA

Riding horses, learning archery and sleeping in traditional ger tents are all included in G Adventures' Mongolia – Nomadic Life tour, which will also send clients to live with families in three rural communities. They'll be immersed in a totally different daily existence, herding yaks, collecting wood and learning to make vodka, and will take rides and treks to see fortresses, waterfalls, sand dunes and forests.

**Book it:** The 10-day tour starts at £799 including basic accommodation (there are no shower facilities in ger camps), transport and most meals.  
gadventures.co.uk

8

**A TASTING TRIP THROUGH JORDAN**

Immerse clients in the culture of Jordan via its cuisine on Intrepid Travel's Real Food Adventure. They'll join a shepherd for a breakfast of fire-warmed sheep's milk, enjoy a Bedouin feast and sleep under the stars in Wadi Rum, and learn how to cook traditional dishes with a local family. There's also time to visit Petra and soak in the Dead Sea.

**Book it:** The six-day Jordan Real Food Adventure starts at £985 including accommodation, most meals, transport and guiding.  
intrepidtravel.com



BEST OF THE REST

☼ Forage in Finland with Regent Holidays' eight-day Foodie Eco-Explorer tour. Combining baking and biking, guests will intersperse making local delicacies with cycling between guesthouses.

☼ Float through France on Back-Roads Touring's seven-day Loire Valley Cruise. Clients will meander between vineyards and villages onboard a boutique hotel barge.

☼ Two sets of legs trump one, as cyclists on Headwater's tandem cycling tours will discover. Suggest the eight-day Porto Coastal Cycling trip for beginners, which travels south from the Portuguese city's wine cellars to Aveiro's canals and Praia de Mira's Atlantic beaches.

☼ Introduce travellers to outdoor wellness on Inntravel's eight-day Slovenia's Enchanted Valley itinerary. Staying in the quiet Logar Valley, they can try forest bathing and go on a guided hike to learn about the medicinal qualities of herbs.

PICTURES: Alberto Molero/Wildjunki; Benemac

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