

High and retiring

For retired clients with time on their hands, try Asia, where epic trips go with the territory, writes Laura French

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Asia has its fair share of treasures. Retirement has its fair share of perks. Combine the two and clients have unlimited time to explore one of the most welcoming, captivating and culturally intriguing of all continents.

And just because those clients are retired, it doesn't mean they're done with adventure, according to Saga Holidays' Lisa Harris. "Our customers tell us that while, to the rest of society, they're 'retired', they have no intention of slowing down," she says. "They're just doing different things and have a little more time to keep doing what they love - like travelling."

Without the constraints of working life, travellers can take things at a slower pace and opt for the longer trip they've always wanted to take - and you get to capitalise on big, commission-boosting bookings while helping make lifelong dreams a reality. A win-win if ever there was one.

▶ CHINA AND JAPAN

With its iconic, must-see sights - from the Terracotta Warriors and Tiananmen Square to the Great Wall and the Yangtze River - China deserves to be high on the list for older clients seeking an epic, culture-filled trip, and there's a host of longer, slower trips to cater to that crowd.

For a medium-length itinerary taking in key highlights, suggest Trafalgar's 17-day Classic China trip, which combines Beijing, Xi'an and Shanghai with several days in panda-centric Chengdu and a four-night Yangtze river cruise.

For clients who've got several countries they've always wanted to see, why not pack them into one? Kuoni says demand for multi-country trips is on the up, with customers increasingly looking to combine several touring holidays, so capitalise on the trend among retired clients with budget and time to spare.

Paul Ingram, Kuoni's product and category manager for



Kyrgyzstan

RIGHT:
Bukchon,
South Korea

FAR RIGHT:
Angkor Wat,
Cambodia

BELOW:
Mehrangarh
Fort, India



ASK THE EXPERT



Angela Waite, head of sales and commercial, APT
 “Our guests tell us they love Asia because it offers the contrasts of buzzing big cities and ancient history and culture. It’s a really popular choice for British travellers, especially those who are approaching or enjoying retirement – mainly because to explore Asia in depth requires a little more time due to its distance from the UK and the number of highlights each destination packs in. Vietnam and Cambodia bookings made in 2017 for the 2018 season trebled for both our Luxury and Premium river cruising programmes in this region, and we’re already seeing growth in forward bookings for 2019.”

escorted touring, recommends retirees combine the operator’s Highlights of China, Highlights of South Korea and Highlights of Japan itineraries into one epic, 29-day voyage that takes in the best of these three Asian stars. Sights featured include the historic city of Gyeongju in South Korea and the Kiso Valley in Japan, with the tours placing an emphasis on the culinary side of things and offering plenty of opportunities to delve into local culture.

For those wanting to spend more time in each place, Travel 2 offers a 28-day Highlights of China and Japan tour, taking in the likes of Beijing, the Great Wall, rural China, Mount Fuji, Kyoto, Tokyo, Hiroshima, Osaka and beyond, with optional extras for clients wanting to tailor it to their interests. “This is a mini bucket list in itself,” says Mark Henderson, senior product and commercial manager for touring.

INDIA

Elsewhere on the list for culture-curious retirees is India. Cox & Kings

has a 17-day Colours of Rajasthan (easy pace) itinerary, introduced as part of the operator’s new collection of slower-paced private tours. It gives mature clients the chance to linger longer at each stop, with three nights in Udaipur, Jodhpur and Jaipur, as well as stays in the lesser-known Pali, home to 300-year-old palace Chanoud Garh, and Deograh, set on the peaceful shores of Lake Ragho.

Nothing quite beats a heritage train journey through these landscapes, of course, and for that, there’s the iconic Palace on Wheels, which Great Rail Journeys says is one of its biggest sellers among the mature market.

The operator offers a seven-day trip on board the train, plus a journey on the classic Toy Train, as part of a wider 15-day itinerary exploring Delhi, Shimla, Jaipur, Ranthambore National Park and beyond. The trip packs in cultural experiences with flashes of dramatic, sweeping scenery, as passengers live like a maharaja for a few fleeting days.

SOUTHEAST ASIA

Just as rich on the culture front is southeast Asia, and it’s not only twentysomething backpackers flocking there in their droves. Travelsphere’s 22-day A Journey Through South East Asia ticks all the boxes, with Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos and Thailand strung into one mammoth itinerary. Alongside the must-sees, guests will visit community projects, from a handicraft centre in Vietnam to a kindergarten under construction near Siem Reap, and it’s all designed to suit more mature travellers, with half of the operator’s customers aged over 65.

InsideAsia Tours, meanwhile, has a 14-night Soulful Pursuits trip through Laos and Cambodia that’s ideal for older clients looking to get spiritual thanks to a similarly steady pace, higher-end accommodation and several traditional spa and holistic treatments. Experiences include a guided meditation session with a Buddhist monk and a Barci Ceremony with a local family, plus a visit to



PICTURE: POWER OF FOREVER

➔ Unesco-listed Luang Prabang. But if clients want to take it even easier and sit back watching the southeast Asian world go by for a few days, suggest a Mekong cruise. APT has a 23-day itinerary which includes a week on this iconic river, giving passengers a chance to stop at traditional, rarely-seen rural towns and villages where pottery, silverware and other crafts continue to be the communities' lifeblood.

Beyond Indochina, Premier Holidays recommends retirees look to Malaysia. "The beauty of being retired is you have time to experience the whole of Malaysia at once," says David Carlaw, head of faraway product. Premier can tailor-make a package to suit. He suggests a few nights in Kuala Lumpur and a week soaking up the sun on Penang's beaches, before flying on to Borneo to see orangutans and other creatures in the wild on this nature-rich, jungle-carpeted island.

► **BEYOND EPIC** For a truly epic, unforgettable trip that branches out even further, there's the Silk Road. Stretching more than 4,000 miles through western China, central Asia and Europe, this ancient network of roads was once one of the most important trading routes in the world.

For those wanting to explore the central Asian part, suggest Exodus tour The Five Stans of the Silk Road, which ticks off Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan in one big hit. Taking

RIGHT: APT's *Amalotus* on the Mekong

BELOW: Everest Base Camp



PICTURES: ISTOCK; TRAVELSPHERE; KEVIN PARROTT; POWERFOREVER



Saga's 18-night Trans-Siberian Railway Adventure costs from £5,999 including 12 hotel nights and six nights aboard the train, some meals, optional travel insurance and additional cancellation rights, UK travel, tour manager, flights, transfers and some activities. travel.saga.co.uk

Travelsphere's 22-day A Journey Through South East Asia starts at £2,999 including 18 nights' accommodation, activities, some meals, overnight cruise, tour manager, domestic flights, transfers and flights from Heathrow. travelsphere.co.uk



The beauty of being retired is you have time to experience the whole of Malaysia at once

guests through desert landscapes, rural villages, dramatic mountains and a giant, still-burning gas pit in Turkmenistan, it veers off the beaten track to show little-known sights in a 23-day journey that's suited to culture seekers and history lovers as much as

it is to full-on, roving adventurers. It's not the only once-in-a-lifetime journey you'll find in the region, of course. If clients have always dreamt of a trip on the Trans-Siberian Railway and never had the time or money to do it, now's the time to make it happen. Saga says its small-group tour on board has been selling especially well and it's not hard to see why, with the route's iconic status as the world's longest railway, spanning 5,726 miles, and its roster of world-famous spots, including Moscow; the Gobi Desert, where Saga guests stay in a traditional Mongolian ger camp; and Beijing.

Last but not least there are the more active, outdoorsy adventures, such as Everest Base Camp. Wendy Wu Tours combines this once-in-a-lifetime challenge with other adventures on foot in its 23-day Tibetan Wonders trip, adding immersive experiences like meditation with a Taoist priest and a visit to the real Shangri-La, Zhongdian.

But for those worried about doing it in a rush, suggest World Expeditions, which stretches the Base Camp trek out into a three-week trip designed specifically for over-55s, following the classic route with a slower, more relaxed pace that builds in rest days. There's extra time for acclimatisation, and accommodation is stepped up a notch with comfortable eco-lodges and private eco-campsites with heated dining rooms, making it that bit more appealing for young-at-heart retirees. **TW**

