



10 OF THE Best TOURS FOR PHOTOGRAPHERS



Focus on camera skills with Katie McGonagle's guide

@katie_mcgonagle



TOP TIP
Ask your client if you can use their photos to promote group tours at your next in-store event

Some moments deserve to be savoured – to stand back, take stock and absorb every little detail of the scene before your eyes. But if you're like 99% of travellers these days, that's immediately followed by whipping out a phone and taking a picture for posterity.

Yet snapping a selfie has about as much in common with proper travel photography as finger painting has with the Sistine Chapel: no matter how good you think you are, it's tricky to capture the majesty of that moment on film without a bit of expert help.

That's why many escorted tour operators have created photography-themed holidays, drafting in professionals or giving their customers the inside track on how and where to take the best shots. Whether your client is a would-be Annie Leibovitz with a fancy camera or a creative type armed with nothing but an iPhone, these tours offer the perfect canvas to put those skills into practice.

1 NORTHERN LIGHTS
Is there any greater challenge – or reward – than capturing the aurora borealis on camera? While most people come home with nothing but a few blurry blobs, it takes real effort to capture those dark skies rent with shimmering flashes of green.

Scandinavian specialist The Aurora Zone offers photographer-led tours showing travellers the tricks for capturing the best northern lights pictures. One such tour starts in Tromsø then heads north to remote Finnish village Kilpisjärvi, home of sweeping snow-covered scenery and remarkably little light pollution.

Photographer-guide Gareth Hutton takes guests out each evening to find the best view of the lights, including back across the Norwegian border. His experience comes into play by day too, photographing the pretty fjords and colourful fishing villages of Norway's Lyngen region.

If clients want advice in advance of their trip, fellow photographer-guide Antti Pietikainen says: "Batteries run down quicker in cold temperatures, so have spare batteries somewhere warm – I suggest an inside pocket close to your body heat. Handling the camera with thick gloves in the dark can be challenging, so you should practise with gloves on and get a feel for settings like zoom, aperture and exposure."

Book it: The Kilpisjärvi – Photography in the Finnish Borderlands tour starts at £1,415 for five nights, including transfers, half-board accommodation, three lunches, activities, cold-weather clothing and photography tuition. Flights extra. theaurorazone.com

2 SOUTH ISLAND SCENERY
Landscapes are grist to the amateur photographer's mill: unlike a moving object, where you might miss a fleeting moment and never capture it again, scenery stays still, offering the luxury of time for a second attempt.

It helps if the scenery is worth photographing, and few places are more riveting than the glacier-cut landscapes of New Zealand's South Island. Around almost every corner lies a smooth, glassy lake, a mountain rising out of nowhere, lush hills dotted with white sheep or a rocky plain crying out to be preserved on film or screen.

John Lightwood, managing director of New Zealand specialist Silver Fern Holidays, says: "The landscape is the obvious attraction. I don't think there can be any other country that offers so much variety within such a small land mass, so whether you want to capture snow-capped mountains, steaming geothermal springs, coastlines, grasslands or pristine rainforest, it's relatively easy to access your chosen landscape.

"There's the wildlife too, and Maori culture provides a rich source of ethnic art to record. If you meet and build a rapport with a Maori sporting an intricate moko (tattoo), you may even be given permission to photograph them, but never photograph

anyone without their permission." **Book it:** A 14-day South Island Spectacular tailor-made tour starts at £3,199 based on two sharing hotel and lodge accommodation, with breakfast daily. Excludes flights. silverfernolidays.com

3 AMERICA'S WILD WEST
The epic scenery of America's west is no less impressive, though the wildlife is somewhat larger. With the towering mountains of the Teton Range, bright hues of Yellowstone's geothermal pools, and wildlife ranging from bears to bison, it would be hard to take a bad photograph on Tauck's new Mythic West tour.

That said, the chances of taking a really good one are greatly improved by the addition of a wildlife photography talk by a local professional photographer – in his log cabin, no less, with the aid of a few entertaining stories of how he came by his most famous shots.

Accommodation is in Yellowstone National Park in a lodge near the Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone – perfect for sneaking out to get early-morning shots before the crowds arrive, and for visits to the park's volcanic calderas and waterfalls.

It's worth putting in the effort: Tauck runs an annual photography competition across all tours, and the winning

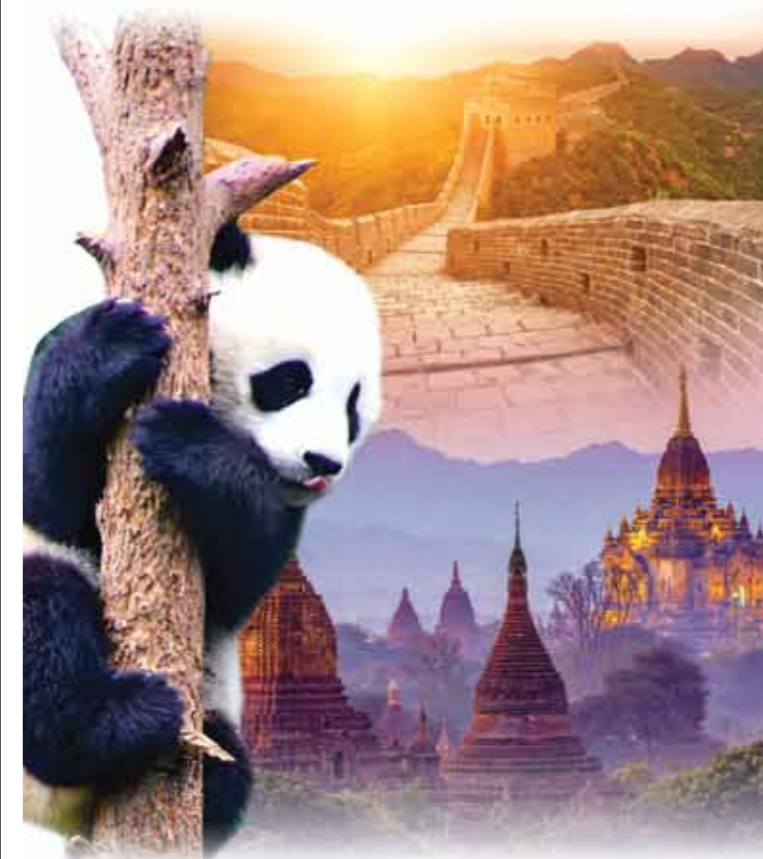
PICTURES: ANTTI PIETIKAINEN; TOURISM NEW ZEALAND/TIM WHITTAKER; INTREPID TRAVEL/DIANNE MILDON; TAUCK; CONTIKI; G ADVENTURES/JEFFREY GARRICK; FILIPPO ROMEQ; TOURISM IRELAND/CHRISTOPHER HILL; PHOTOGRAPHIC; PAUL GOLDSTEIN; OANA DRAGAN; NICK GARBLITT



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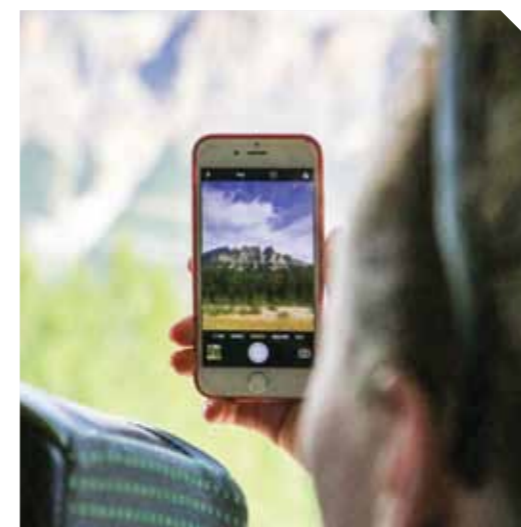
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ABOVE: Canadian Rockies
LEFT: Sossusvlei dunes, Namibia

➔ effort earns a travel voucher worth up to £1,500. Cameras at the ready!
Book it: Mythic West: Montana, Yellowstone & The Tetons is an eight-day group tour starting at £3,240 land-only, including accommodation, most meals, transfers and Tauck Exclusives.
tauck.co.uk

4 CAPTURING CANADA
Head north of the border and you'll come to the Canadian Rockies, and more-majestic scenery you couldn't wish to find. Bursting in riotous shades of green and blue, made all the richer in the summer sunshine, this region is exactly what the #nofilter hashtag was made for.

If travellers fancy tormenting friends and followers with this Instagram gold, Contiki's new Snap Canada tour will give a head start. Aimed squarely at its 18-to-35s age group, this holiday takes the social media-savvy approach to western Canada, with trip managers who know all the best selfie spots and allow plenty of time at each destination to get just the right shot.

The tour concentrates its time in the most Instagrammable spots - posing by totem poles in Vancouver's Stanley Park, rugged mountain scenery in Whistler and meeting cowboys in Kamloops - though it wouldn't be a Contiki tour without a bit of excitement. Visitors might not want to risk their cameras on the 60mph 'superfly' zipline in Whistler or white-water rafting down Fraser River in Mount Robson, but they can post about it to their heart's content afterwards.
Book it: Contiki's Snap Canada tour starts at £1,559 including 10 nights'

“**Bursting in riotous shades of green and blue, the Canadian Rockies are exactly what the #nofilter hashtag was made for**”

accommodation, 10 meals, national park entry and transport. Departures begin June 17, 2018.
contiki.com



LEFT: Peruvian meal

5 OVERLANDING IN AFRICA
If staying abreast of social media is key, consider a tour that comes with guaranteed Wi-Fi so clients can upload as they go. And the more pictures they put up, the better for your business - a like or comment on how good a time they're having not only shows great follow-up but is also the best free marketing.

Though when you're travelling overland from the city streets of Cape Town to the vast deserts of Namibia, the views pretty much sell themselves. G Adventures' Cape & Dunes Overland tour uses the new Lando vehicle, introduced last year, which has in-built Wi-Fi, large front windows for better wildlife viewing, and side windows specifically designed for capturing photos or video.

The tour is packed with the most photogenic of moments - sunset at Fish River Canyon, the Sossusvlei dunes, and a wildlife drive through Etosha National Park - but allows time to turn off the technology and appreciate the sounds of the wild while camping under wide African skies.
Book it: G Adventures' Cape & Dunes Overland starts at £1,169 for a 14-day trip from Cape Town to Windhoek, excluding flights.
gadventures.co.uk

6 PACHAMANCA IN PERU
Want to go home with photos that prove you've really 'seen' the destination? Take a food tour - nothing says local culture like a street-food stall or a makeshift kitchen in the middle of nowhere - and colourful ingredients or steaming saucepans add a bit of drama to your pictures too. Intrepid Travel's Real Food Adventures are just the ticket, giving food photographers the opportunity to hone their skills by getting access to some of the most inventive foodie experiences around.

The Peru tour starts with the vibrant Mercado Central in Lima, a melee of colourful fabrics and stalls piled high with exotic fruits. Then there's a visit to a cacao plantation, a night at a coffee farm, and a chance to try Inca-style cooking pachamanca, whereby meats are marinated in spices and cooked slowly in an earth oven over hot stones.

Next year, a new Amazon Extension is available to tag on a trip to the Amazon rainforest.
Book it: Intrepid Travel's 14-day Real Food Adventure Peru starts

at £2,455 including flights, with departures from March 2018.
intrepidtravel.com

7 GET CHILLS IN CHILE
"Chile is an extraordinarily beautiful country," says Vessela Baleva, Latin America product manager for Cox & Kings. "It encompasses just about every type of landscape, from the arid desert of the north through verdant lakes and pastures to the soaring peaks and glaciers of Patagonia. "The scope for taking photographs is endless."

It's true - while there are plenty of landscapes around the world that are worthy of a study in photography, few take the breath away like Chile's. Whether it's the glint of winter sunshine on the peaks of Torres del Paine or the lunar landscapes of the Valle de la Luna in the already-otherworldly Atacama, this destination will make visitors want to improve their photography in the hope of capturing just a little of its brilliance to bring back home.
Book it: Cox & Kings has a 12-night escorted tour



LEFT: Torres del Paine, Chile

FACING PAGE: Lion and cub in the Masai Mara, Kenya

Head in Donegal, this route veers from the untamed fury of the wild wave-battered west coast to calm, quiet bays where the water barely seems to stir. Scenic highlights are too many to mention, but be sure to charge camera batteries before stopping at the Cliffs of Moher or windswept Achill Island in particular.

Book it: CIE Tours' 13-day Ireland's Wild Atlantic Way tour adds the Giant's Causeway, Dublin and Blarney Castle to the west coast. Prices start at £2,090 land-only including 12 nights' accommodation, most meals and a guide.

cietours.com/uk

9 SAFARI SNAPS Wildlife photography is notoriously tricky. Professionals spend weeks or even months questing for that perfect shot of a lion prowling across the savannah

or an elephant pausing to drink from the waterhole, then tourists come along and wonder why they can't instantly capture the same sight. The reality is it takes patience, no small amount of skill, and a decent camera to get that sort of epic shot - and a bit of luck doesn't go amiss either.

Of course, clients can significantly improve their chances with expert coaching from the likes of Paul Goldstein, who leads photography-focused tours for Exodus. Its Photographic Safari concentrates on Kenya's Masai Mara, allowing time to get a feel for the landscape and wildlife, and hone skills over several days.

Book it: Exodus offers a nine-day Photographic Safari, bookending six nights in a tented camp in the Masai Mara with time in Nairobi, from £4,949 including tuition from Paul Goldstein, and game drives with photo opportunities.

exodus.co.uk

10 SEA LIFE IN SOUTH GEORGIA


Once the safari box has been ticked off the bucket list, you'd be forgiven for thinking there's nowhere else for a wildlife enthusiast to go - but it's just the beginning. Wildlife photography trips can be found in the most remote reaches of the world, from lemurs in Madagascar to orangutans in Borneo, birds of paradise in Papua New Guinea to snow leopards in India, but the daddy of do-before-you-die trips must surely be South Georgia.

Often said to be better than Antarctica by those lucky enough to compare, this southern Atlantic island is the subject of Wildlife Worldwide's Festival of Wildlife Photography, accompanied by award-winning photographers Nick Garbutt and Alex Hyde. It starts with learning how to photograph petrels and

albatross on deck; moves to the black-sand beaches of Salisbury Plain, where up to 100,000 king penguins make their home while elephant seals laze on the beach and fur seals patrol the waters below; and ends after a stop at Sea Lion Island to spot colonies of gentoo, Magellanic and rockhopper penguins.

It doesn't come cheap, but if would-be photographers want the snaps that will earn them the biggest bragging rights, this is where to find them.

Book it: The 14-night Festival of Wildlife Photography includes full-board accommodation on the *Akademik Sergey Vavilov* vessel, transfers, return flights from the Falkland Islands to Punta Arenas, photography workshops and expedition gear, from £8,895 departing November 1, 2018.

International flights and Punta Arenas accommodation are extra. wildlifeworldwide.com 



→ Splendours of Chile, which starts at £3,695 including flights, transfers, accommodation, excursions and some meals. coxandkings.co.uk

The rolling hills of the Lake District or heather-strewn hills of the Scottish Highlands offer just as much inspiration as exotic climes, but the crashing waves, precipitous cliffs and twisting coastal roads of the Wild Atlantic Way edge this Irish journey to the top of the landscape photographer's list.

Stretching from the Old Head of Kinsale in Cork up to Malin

8 WILD ATLANTIC WAY The best photography doesn't have to come from far and wide - sometimes the greatest subjects are on our doorstep.

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EXPERIENCE  ADVENTURE

HOW TO BE A BETTER *photographer*



Renowned wildlife photographer **Paul Goldstein** takes time out from leading specialist trips for Exodus to offer advice on how your customers can come home with the best holiday photos

KNOW YOUR GEAR

Don't feel you have to pay the price of a car for a new lens, it is perfectly acceptable to buy a second-hand one or, better still, hire one. However you must know and understand your kit – reading the manual on the flight out is way too late.

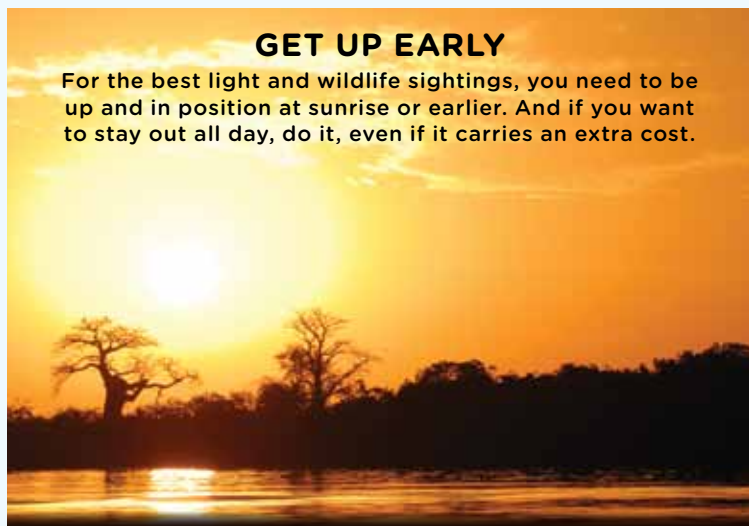


BRING BACKUP

Everyone needs it. You can buy massive portable hard drives for very little now, so there's no reason to lose any data.

GET UP EARLY

For the best light and wildlife sightings, you need to be up and in position at sunrise or earlier. And if you want to stay out all day, do it, even if it carries an extra cost.



PUT THE TIME IN

Golfer Gary Player famously said: "The harder I practise, the luckier I get." You must put in hours at home photographing foxes, deer, seagulls or robins – it's no use arriving and expecting to be anything other than rusty.



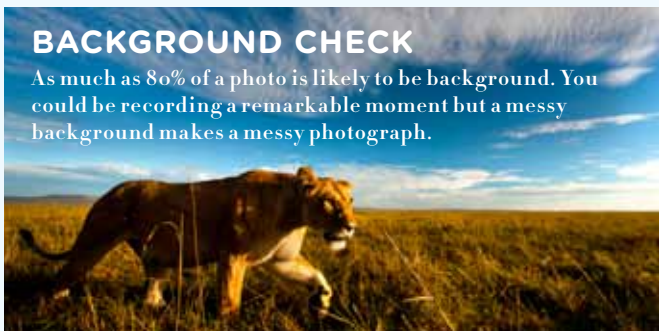
PATIENCE IS IMPERATIVE

If you have to wait for nine hours for 5,000 wildebeest to cross the Mara River, do so. Likewise, if the Arctic has 24 hours of daylight in its summer, be prepared for some long nights. The 'P' word is not a virtue, it's a must.



BACKGROUND CHECK

As much as 80% of a photo is likely to be background. You could be recording a remarkable moment but a messy background makes a messy photograph.



BE CRITICAL

Striking images often elicit strong feelings, so do not be afraid of criticism. However, you should be your harshest critic. If it is just a 'nice' image, it has to go.

LONG AND WIDE

95% of the best wildlife photographs are taken with a very long lens or a very wide one; make sure you have both to hand.



DELETE!

You must, must, must delete, preferably straight away. People take far too many images, drop them straight onto a hard drive and leave them to lie there in perpetuity. Far better to get rid of the dross in camera – if it is blurred, or the lion's legs are cut off, lose it. I delete images every day. It will make you a better photographer.