

of the BEST

WILDLIFE TOURS

Laura French rounds up itineraries for clients in search of a wildlife holiday to remember

From gorillas in Uganda to polar bears in Canada, monkeys in Costa Rica to lemurs in Madagascar, the world isn't short on extraordinary wildlife – and for travellers looking to learn more about these weird and wonderful creatures in the company of a wildlife pro, an escorted tour is an excellent option.

That's especially true now, when customers might want the expertise of a guide and the added reassurance of booking with a reputable tour operator.

With that in mind, we've rounded up some of the best itineraries to inspire customers for the year ahead and beyond.



GO MONKEY MAD IN COSTA RICA

Three-toed sloths, red-eyed tree frogs, white-faced capuchins and a whole host of other monkey species swinging from the canopies – Costa Rica is a living dream for wildlife enthusiasts, home to about 5% of the world's plants and animals. Rainbow Tours' 13-day itinerary takes in the best of it, travelling from the Central Valley to the Pacific Coast via the Arenal Volcano, the Monteverde Cloud Forest and the monkey-filled Manuel Antonio National Park. There's a big focus on sustainability, with stays at properties awarded the top rating under the Certificate of Sustainable Tourism.

Book it: Rainbow Tours' Costa Rica Sustainable Wildlife Tour costs from £4,352 including all breakfasts and some other meals, plus all flights. rainbowtours.co.uk



PEEK AT POLAR BEARS IN CANADA

Glimpsing a polar bear skulking through the Arctic tundra has to be up there with some of the most exhilarating wildlife experiences of all time, and a new Trafalgar tour, Polar Bears in Manitoba, offers guests the chance to do just that. The six-day trip combines a visit to the small, remote town of Churchill – where about 1,000 of the animals migrate every autumn, putting the human-to-bear ratio at around 1:1 – with a two-night stay in the wilderness, where guests head out in a Tundra Buggy to find polar bears, Arctic foxes and other subarctic wildlife, ride a dog sled through the forest and hear from a polar bear expert to learn about these elusive creatures.

Book it: From £4,902, including most meals, experiences and private airport transfers. trafalgar.com



SPOT TIGERS IN INDIA

If clients have long dreamed of glimpsing a tiger roaming the Indian savannah, suggest this 13-day trip from Explore, which takes guests from Delhi to Mumbai via four of the country's most impressive wildlife spots. They include Pench Tiger Reserve, the original inspiration for *The Jungle Book*; Satpura National Park, where boats take visitors out in search of crocodiles; and Tadoba Andhari, a rarely visited spot where tigers, leopards and honey badgers roam among the serene, bamboo-forested hills.

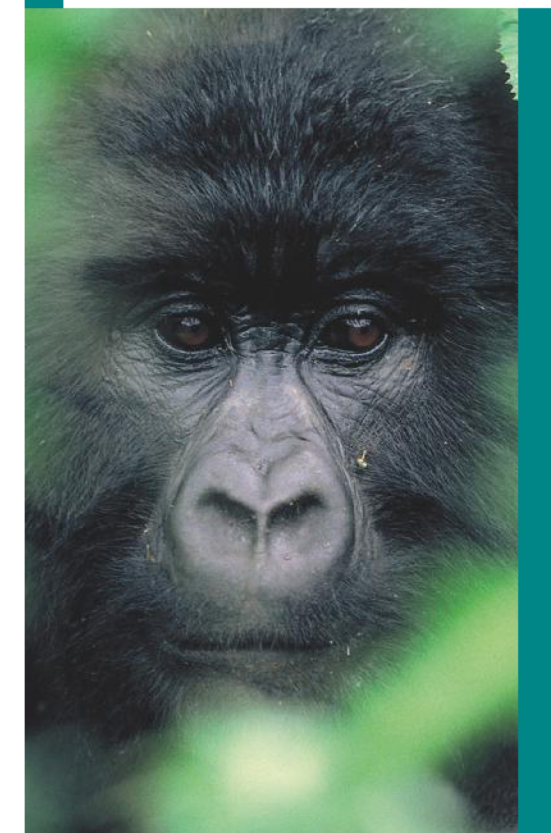
Book it: Explore's Indian Wildlife Adventure costs from £2,630 including some meals (flights extra). explore.co.uk



GO GORILLA TREKKING IN UGANDA

When it comes to once-in-a-lifetime experiences, almost any country in Africa could pull it out of the bag – but Exodus Travels' 15-day tour brings together two of the continent's most spectacular experiences. Guests spend two days in Kenya's Masai Mara, spotting lions, hyenas, cheetahs, zebras and gazelles, before moving on to Lake Nakuru National Park, known for its population of black and white rhinos. From there, it's on to Uganda for chimpanzee tracking in Budongo, gorilla spotting at Bwindi Impenetrable Forest and game drives in Queen Elizabeth National Park, where lions, leopards, buffalos, elephants and one of the world's largest hippo populations reside among leafy rainforests and volcanic crater lakes.

Book it: Exodus Travels' Gorillas & The Masai Mara starts at £3,599, including all meals (flights extra). exodus.co.uk



PICTURES: Shutterstock; Andreea Edeleanu; Walking with Bears



“Pre-Covid, our most popular destinations were Botswana, Zambia, the Brazilian Pantanal and India. We are still receiving significant interest for all of these destinations, although our enquiries and bookings are for later this year or 2022. We’ve had a tremendous amount of interest in forward bookings, with people not only looking at 2022 but also 2023 and 2024. Botswana and Zambia head the list in Africa. There is no doubt the UK and Europe will grow significantly as destinations people want to visit. The likelihood is that people won’t feel comfortable travelling long-haul and that Europe, which offers some incredible wildlife-viewing opportunities, will be first on the list of places for people who want to get away. Wildlife holidays in the UK are now firmly in our portfolio with wonderful opportunities in the Somerset Levels, Norfolk, Lancashire, Wales and of course the Scottish Highlands and islands.”

Chris Breen,
founder and managing director,
Wildlife Worldwide



5

SEE BEARS AND BOARS IN SLOVAKIA

Wildlife tours don’t have to mean flocking to the ends of the Earth, of course. Europe’s Carpathian Mountains are home to around 8,000 brown bears, and this nine-day tour takes in the highlights across both sides of the Slovakia-Poland border. Clients will hike, drive and river-raft their way through this unique region with plenty of bear-spotting opportunities along the way, as well as chances to spot wild boar, red deer and the endangered, goat-like chamois. They’ll also stop by Krakow, the Wieliczka Salt Mines and the historic Spiš Castle, and explore the traditional Goral village of Osturna to learn more about this remote mountain community.

Book it: Wild Frontiers’ Bears in Poland & Slovakia tour costs from £1,995 including accommodation, guide, activities and some meals.
wildfrontierstravel.com



6

LOOK FOR LEMURS IN MADAGASCAR

No list of top wildlife spots would be complete without a nod to Madagascar, where nearly 90% of all flora and fauna are endemic to the island, and where you’ll find more than 100 species of lemur, including sifakas, indris and the long-fingered aye-aye, alongside unusual creatures such as the cat-like fossa. BBC naturalist Mike Dilger shares his knowledge on a two-week trip with Wildlife Worldwide, visiting the likes of the Analamazaotra Reserve, one of the world’s best locations for primate watching; Ranomafana National Park, home to 30 endemic bird species; and the Anja Community Reserve.

Book it: Madagascar – A Journey of Discovery with Mike Dilger, starts from £5,295, including most meals, transfers and flights from the UK.
wildlifeworldwide.com