



10 OF THE Best WILDLIFE TOURS

Clients won't forget these animal magic encounters, writes Aby Dunsby

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Whether clients want to gawp at gorillas, look out for lemurs or be wowed by the big five, there's a tour whatever their bucket-list wildlife experience.

Unless they're David Attenborough types, clients will really benefit from the expert knowledge provided by a local guide on an escorted tour, as well as being able to share their experiences with a group and avoid having to plan a complex trip themselves. Ensure you've done your homework so that clients visit destinations at the best possible time of year: tiger-spotting in India is easiest from November to the end of March, for example, while the best time to watch brown bears fishing for salmon in Canada is in May.

1 LEMURS IN MADAGASCAR

If DreamWorks film *Madagascar* taught us anything, it's that lemurs are impossibly cute. What the movie didn't tell us, though, is that the world's fourth-largest island is one of the most diverse, and a paradise for exotic wildlife. Madagascar is home to 5% of all known animal and plant species, including 50 types of lemur, 70 species of chameleon and 6% of the world's frogs. Clients are best off exploring Madagascar's unspoiled protected areas as part of a small group tour, which will allow them to respect their surroundings while also getting closer to a whole host of weird and wonderful creatures and

plant life. The park fees paid by escorted tours here go towards maintaining reserves and boosting the local economy, ensuring that tourism does its best to aid conservation.

Book it: Rainbow Tours offers a 16-day Madagascar Wildlife Discovery Tour for 2017 from £3,765 per person including flights and transfers. rainbowtours.co.uk

2 ORANGUTANS IN BORNEO

Though they might not sound cute on paper, it's impossible not to fall in love with Borneo's famous hairy, ginger and paunch-bellied residents in the flesh. Every year thousands of tourists head to the island of Borneo, one of two places in the world where orangutans live in the wild, and where clients can witness their fascinating human-like habits up-close. Borneo's tropical rainforests and climate allow a huge variety of other species to flourish too, including rainbow-plumed exotic birds, pygmy elephants and incredible plant life. Single travellers on Just You's trip to Borneo get their own room and are hosted by a tour manager, and the trip also comes with an optional add-on to Singapore. **Book it:** Just You offers a 12-day trip to Wild Borneo from £3,099, including flights, transfers, nine nights' B&B accommodation, some meals and use of an airport lounge in the UK. justyou.co.uk

3 WHALES AND DOLPHINS IN THE AZORES

When it comes to creatures of the sea, you don't get more 'A-list' than the blue whale, and clients who catch sight of the largest creature in the world slapping its fluke on the waves of the Atlantic, or sending hissing spray metres up into the air, won't forget the experience in a hurry. On the windswept Portuguese archipelago of the Azores in the North Atlantic, clients might be lucky enough to see blue whales in spring as they migrate northwards. On Saga's Azores tour, clients will be joined by professional naturalist Diarmid Doody for pulse-racing excursions to see fin whales, humpbacks, sperm whales and dolphins, and he will also host several wildlife talks during the trip. **Book it:** Saga's wildlife tour of the Azores starts from £1,749 for 14 nights, departing Gatwick on April 8 and June 3, 2017. The price includes return flights, transfers, accommodation, all breakfasts and some meals. travel.saga.co.uk

4 PENGUINS IN THE GALAPAGOS ISLANDS

Charles Darwin first arrived on the Galapagos Islands in September 1835 and spent two months exploring the flora and fauna on this collection of remote islands dotted more than 600 miles away from mainland Ecuador. The rest, so

they say, is history, and Darwin's discoveries have made the archipelago, and its one-of-a-kind wildlife, forever famous. Stepping foot on the islands is like walking back in time thanks to its prehistoric-looking creatures, and for clients wanting to get up close to the natural world, the experiences they offer are unforgettable. A lack of large predators means the animals who live here are fearless, so clients can swim with playful sea lions, snorkel with penguins, watch giant turtles trudge through forests, and glimpse the famous finches, whose unique beaks sparked Darwin's theories of evolution. On Collette's tour, clients can tick off two epic experiences in one holiday: Peru's Machu Picchu and the Galapagos Islands.

Book it: Collette's Machu Picchu & the Galapagos Islands trip starts from £5,629 for 15 days, including all accommodation, internal flights, transfers, 28 meals, plus a four-night luxury cruise around the islands. gocollette.com

5 THE BIG FIVE IN SOUTH AFRICA

A rhino drinks from the river to a backdrop of sweeping savannah; in the bush, zebra and antelope graze beneath a baking sun; a black-maned lion stirs in thick grass... Clients can expect plenty of spine-tingling encounters with the world's most majestic animals on a game-viewing



PICTURES: RICK JONES; JUST YOU; TRAFALGAR; SAGA; ISTOCK; GRAND AMERICAN ADVENTURES; WENDY WU TOURS; G ADVENTURES; PAULO MAGALHAES; FRED FROESE



ASK THE EXPERT



Daniel Pawlyn,
head of business
development,
Intrepid Travel
“Wildlife tours
are an ideal way
to give your client
a memorable
experience
that they’ll be
talking about for
years. There are
endless options,
from sailing around
the Galapagos
Islands to jungle
walks in Borneo, so
there’s something
to suit all clients.
A safari in Kenya
or South Africa is
a great choice for a
first wildlife holiday,
while trekking
to see gorillas in
the mountains
of Rwanda is
perfect for the
more adventurous
traveller. For
families, Costa
Rica has fantastic
opportunities for
wildlife spotting
and is one of our
top-selling trips
this year. Opting
for an escorted
tour will make sure
your client gets
the most out of the
experience, with a
carefully planned
itinerary and a local
guide who will
make sure they
get to the heart of
the action.”



LEFT: Lion,
South Africa

RIGHT:
Orca,
Canada

BELOW:
Costa Rica



→ tour, and South Africa boasts some of the best game reserves in the world. Kruger, a national park the size of Wales, is home to 150 mammal and 500 bird species including the big five, so clients need only step outside to ensure they’re seeing something magical. Riviera Travel’s tour allows clients to experience a patchwork of different cultures, sample world-class food and wine and take in cinematic scenery, with an itinerary that moves from Kruger to Johannesburg, Cape Town and the Winelands.

Book it: Riviera Travel’s 16-day South Africa tour starts from £1,799 including all flights, transfers, B&B accommodation and all tours.
rivieratravel.co.uk

6 BEARS IN CANADA
Canada’s got a wild side, as clients will soon discover when they step into the great outdoors and spot moose, eagle, coyote and beaver in their natural habitats – plus bears of the black,

grizzly and polar variety. Clients are most likely to see a black bear, of which there are about half a million plodding through the forests of British Columbia or feasting on salmon in the rivers of Bella Coola. The splendid, solitary grizzlies are harder to find, making their homes on the higher slopes of the Rockies, while polar bears are only seen in Churchill, Manitoba, between late September and early November. Taking to the water off Vancouver Island offers plenty more creature-spotting possibilities, including the chance to see orcas, Pacific white-sided whales and majestic humpbacks.

Book it: Grand American Adventures’ Canada Wildlife Vancouver →

TOP TIP

Clients can combine the big five with visits to Durban and Zululand on Travel 2’s Wildlife and Culture trip to South Africa

➔ Island holiday costs from £2,339 for 14 days including hotel accommodation, private transport and tour guide. grandamericanadventures.com

7 SEA TURTLES IN COSTA RICA
The rise in Costa Rica's popularity has a lot to do with its status as a menagerie for wildlife, boasting rainforests resplendent with everything from monkeys to iguanas and toucans to sloths. Clients can visit a plethora of world-class national parks to catch a glimpse of rare and endangered species, and the country's dedication to environmental protection will help clients fly the flag for sustainable tourism. On Trafalgar's Monkeys, Jungles and Volcanoes tour, families can marvel at countless exotic bird species and monkeys at Braulio Carrillo National Park, and if

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Kanha park is home to some 80 Bengal tigers, which clients may see preening their young or even hunting

they're visiting during nesting season, kids and their parents can take part in a night walk with a naturalist guide in Tortuguero to see some of the world's largest turtles laying their eggs.
Book it: Trafalgar's eight-day Monkeys, Jungles and Volcanoes family trip starts from £1,550 (£1,377 for children aged five to 17) and includes seven nights' B&B accommodation, three lunches and five dinners, and airport transfers. trafalgar.com

8 TIGERS IN INDIA
Today there are just over 3,000 tigers worldwide, but the elusive creatures have started to grow in number in India's central highlands, where they live in national parks and reserves. The beautiful park of Bandhavgarh is one of the best places in the world to spot tigers. Kanha, another national park, is home to around 80 wild Bengal tigers, which clients can catch preening their young or even hunting. The park is reputed to be the inspiration for Kipling's *The Jungle Book*. Keeping the stealthy striped cats company at Ranthambore national park are leopards, macaques, deer and bears. Wendy Wu Tours' private itinerary to India includes visits to several national parks, an optional tour to the Taj Mahal in Agra and free time in Delhi.
Book it: Wendy Wu's Wildlife in Focus tour starts at £2,990 based



LEFT:
Seal,
Kangaroo
Island,
Australia

RIGHT:
Gorilla,
Uganda



10 GORILLAS IN UGANDA
Uganda allows clients a chance to see some of the best wildlife in Africa but without the tourist crowds of the Serengeti or other big safari parks. A quarter of Africa's bird species live here, as do tree-climbing lions, elephants, hippos and flamingos. The stars of the show, though, are the beautiful mountain gorillas. If clients are hoping to encounter a gorilla family in the wild, they'll need to obtain a gorilla trekking permit, which costs around £460 in high season. Escorted tours are an appealing option as the permit is included in the overall cost.
Book it: G Adventures' Culture & Wildlife of Uganda & Rwanda tour starts from £1,999 for 10 days including accommodation, transfers and national park fees. The price excludes flights. gadventures.com **TV**

on two sharing, travelling between January and June 2017, including flights and accommodation. wendywutours.co.uk

9 GO WILD DOWN UNDER
If clients want to tick off scores of thrilling wildlife experiences in

one trip, Oz is a great place to start. The jaw-dropping diversity of Queensland's Great Barrier Reef is legendary, so a diving or snorkelling trip is a must. That's just the start though: wildlife adventures range from watching tiny sea turtles hatch and scramble towards the sea, to

hugging a furry koala, spotting a platypus or swimming with gentle whale sharks. Clients must head 90 miles southeast of Melbourne to Phillip Island to see the enchanting fairy penguins waddling across the beach, while Kangaroo Island is a great place to befriend sea lions, seals,

echidnas and the iconic kangaroo. **Book it:** AAT Kings offers an 11-day Tastes of Southern Australia trip, including visits to Kangaroo Island and an optional excursion to Phillip Island, from £2,375 including return flights, transfers, accommodation and coach travel. aatkings.com

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