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The ultimate blow the budget holidays to book for spring 2021 and beyond

Whether you join a polar exploration or embark on a round-the-world wildlife tour, the vaccine means it's time to get planning

By Francesca Syz, CONSULTANT ULTRATRAVEL EDITOR

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If today's vaccine announcement hasn't inspired you to start planning an adventure for next Easter or beyond, nothing will.

For increasing numbers of us, there's a desire to reconnect with family and friends, yes, but also to get out into nature and to have an adventure. Wide open spaces, fresh air and the sense of being free to roam have never felt more appealing.

And with money left over from this year's lack of holidays, why not get off the beaten track and explore somewhere truly exceptional - somewhere you've never been before? Here's a little inspiration for you...

Wildnis The Highlands, Scotland

Three ex-army majors have just launched Wildnis, a tour operator specialising in luxury four-day expeditions in the Scottish Highlands offering everything from scrambling and sea kayaking to abseiling. The first set departure has been postponed to 5 April 2021 due to Covid but the trip is also available for private groups of up to nine people.



Hiking on a Wildnis adventure

Days will be spent heading out on guided activities in the mountains and lochs, and nights back at base camp - enjoying campfire feasts prepared by an award-winning chef, followed by slumber in adapted Land Rover Defenders or bell tents, depending on your preference.

You might hike to the summit of Ben A'an in Loch Lomond & The Trossachs National Park and abseil down to Glen Finglas Reservoir, which you'll then cross in packrafts to the far bank, where you will stop for soup before continuing on to the night's base camp at Glen Etive.

From £3,000pp, including guiding, all activities, meals, Land Rover hire and transfer, wildnis.co.uk

Bird Watching in Transylvania, Romania

It's good to be reminded that you don't have to travel to the other side of the planet to see extraordinary natural wonders, and Original Travel has launched a new European Safaris collection to prove it.

The 'Transylvania & Danube Delta' trip to Romania will see you exploring Saxon villages, medieval citadels, tracking bears, wolves and lynx and, most excitingly, heading to the Danube Delta - the world's only river delta biosphere reserve - where the birdlife rivals anything you'd find in Botswana's Okavango Delta.

Bird-watching in Transylvania

You'll travel through a landscape of marshes, waterways and woodlands by boat and kayak, witnessing huge flocks of pelicans, swans and other migratory birds, at their most prominent in May. The Danube Delta is also home to semi-wild horses that roam the Letea Forest, and there is the opportunity to tag on a riding safari to the trip.

A 10-day trip from £5,165pp including all flights, transfers and accommodation,
originaltravel.co.uk

Slow Cycling in the Mani The Peloponnese, Greece

Specialists in high-end, expertly guided, small-group cycling and walking holidays, The Slow Cyclist has just launched its most luxurious trip yet - to the Mani peninsula in Greece (the middle finger of the Peloponnese). The lovely location is a bit like being in the Greek islands but with some of Europe's most dramatic scenery thrown in.

A pool on the Ilias Estate in the Mani

The six-day trips (offered on both set dates and for private groups of up to 12) spend three nights based at historic tower hotel Citta dei Nicliani in the rural village of Kitta, and three at rustic chic Ilias Estate (above) outside the seaside village of Kitries.

After choosing between a push bike and an e-bike (the latter comes recommended for this trip), your days will combine walking and cycling in the wilderness, stopping off at villages, Byzantine churches, Frankish castles and tucked-away coves for delicious picnics.

The trips cost from £2,500pp, including everything except international flights to Athens or Kalamata, theslowcyclist.co.uk

Oman Desert Adventure, Oman

This 11-day small-group trip deep into the Omani desert with Wild Frontiers works brilliantly for a party of 10 friends. It's a proper adventure in which some nights will be spent camping in comfortable but basic tents in the desert or on the beach, with dinner under the starry Arabian sky.

The desert of Oman

Beginning in the capital, Muscat and ending in the coastal city of Salalah, you will head deep into the mountains and deserts of the Bedu and the old Omani Imamate. You'll take in the Hajar Mountains and the Wahiba - 3,800 sq miles of shifting sands and towering dunes - before heading to the pink shell beaches and white dunes of Khaluf on Oman's eastern coast.

Next, you'll head on into the Empty Quarter, a 250,000 sq mile waterless desert that is the heart of the nomadic Bedouin community. Along the way, you'll stop off at bustling market towns, forts and fishing villages.

Oman Desert Adventure: Wahiba Sands & Empty Quarter costs from £2,790pp including almost everything except international flights, [wildfrontierstravel.com](https://www.wildfrontierstravel.com)

Sayari Camp Serengeti, Tanzania

Asilia Africa is known for pioneering safaris in remote locations, and Sayari Camp in the northern Serengeti, which has just reopened after a major refurbishment, is no exception. In 2009, it became the first mobile camp to put down roots in the area, up to that point plagued with poachers. This brought employment and long-term conservation security to the region.

Sayari camp in the Serengeti

Sayari Camp is also the closest one to the Mara River this migration season, as Tanzania National Parks has pushed all mobile camps back from the river six miles due to over-cluttering, so will be the best spot to watch the wildebeest crossing.

The camp's 15 spacious tents have been redesigned with hand-stitched Maasai textiles, and have new wrap-around terraces and extra large freestanding tubs. The pool area has been extended and now has a pizza oven, there's a new spa with all-natural products by Africology, and the camp is home to the first solar-powered microbrewery in the bush.

From £630pp per night, asiliaafrica.com

White Desert's Ultimate Antarctica Trip, Antarctica

Two of the top players in Antarctic tourism have teamed up to offer The Ultimate Antarctica trip for 2021. A collaboration between Cookson Adventures (that organised the first-ever manned submersible dive in Antarctica) and White Desert, which was founded by record-breaking polar explorer Patrick Woodhead and his wife Robyn, the 24-day trip costs from £2,237,000 - you read it right - for up to 12 guests.

Hiking in Antarctica

The trip kicks off in Cape Town, where those on the first departure (29 December) will spend New Year's Eve, before hopping on to a Gulfstream 550 down to Wolf's Fang Runway and on to White Desert's luxury sleeping pods at Whichaway Camp.

The trip will also include a visit to the South Pole, horseback riding with cowboys in Torres del Paine in Patagonia and a cruise down the Antarctic coastline aboard the luxury explorer yacht *M/Y Legend*. This comes with a helicopter and a three-seater submersible, to maximise the experience both above and below water.

[white-desert.com](https://www.white-desert.com)

A&K's Around the World by Private Jet: A Wildlife Adventure for 2022

Looking a little further ahead, A&K has just announced a show-stopping, globe-spanning, 24-day multi-destination wildlife adventure by private jet, taking place between 3 and 26 February 2022.

Gorillas in Rwanda with A&K

Providing the perfect opportunity to encounter iconic and often critically-endangered animals in their natural habitats accompanied by leading conservation experts, you'll observe snow monkeys in Japan, honey bears in Malaysia, gorillas in Rwanda and swim with whale sharks in the Philippines, among other one-in-a-lifetime experiences.

Home along the way will range from the Peninsula in Tokyo and The Oberoi Vanyavilas in Rajasthan to One&Only Gorilla's Nest in Rwanda. From £125,975 per person.

abercrombiekent.co.uk

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