

Creating ADVENTURES

HISTORIC STEAMER NILE CRUISE



Explore the wonders of the ancient **Egyptian** world in luxury and historic charm on the **SS Misr**. Originally built by the British Royal Navy in 1918 and later converted into a luxury **Nile** steamer for **King Farouk**, the **SS Misr** is a true time capsule that rekindles the nostalgia of a golden age, with true luxury accommodation, cuisine and service. 16 cabins and eight suites, luxurious bar and lounge, restaurants, and a large sun deck with a swimming pool await you - ultimate comfort during your slow cruise between **Luxor** and **Aswan**. There are options for three, four and seven nights on board.

>> **Ask:** Fiona will tailor-make you a holiday to remember. Contact her for details.



OLYMPIC FEVER

Are you off to **Paris** to embrace the **Olympic** spirit this summer? We have two brilliant Olympic themed suggested tours of **Switzerland** for you - action-packed with unique experiences, alpine thrills and cultural exploration, these trips weave their way through **Switzerland's** own impeccable sporting heritage, moving from cityscapes to mountain landscapes and interspersed with tranquil spa R&R and intrepid adventures on bike, horseback, hot air balloon and more!

>> **Action:** For an ideal **Olympic** add-on that seamlessly blends the electrifying atmosphere of the competition with an awe-inspiring expedition through breathtaking **Switzerland**, ask for details!



Dear Adventurer

With the extended period of cold and wet weather this Spring, I am sure you, like me, are keen to escape to warmer climes or find fresh vistas. I'm still reliving my glorious January escape to **Jamtara Wilderness Lodge in Central India** and hugely contrasting wildlife expedition voyage to **Antarctica** on small ship **Sylvia Earle** in February. I'll be revisiting the stunning **Hacienda de San Rafael in Andalusia** in May and plans for **Costa Rica** in September are shaping up nicely. We've got numerous polar offers out at the moment and a suitcase full of new travel ideas so if these or any of the myriad locations in this month's issue are of interest, please contact me for a chat.

Fiona Brijnath

Fiona Brijnath, Director

THE LOST CITY OF UBAR, OMAN

I recently had the pleasure of attending a lecture in **Exeter** by **Sir Ranulph Fiennes**, British Explorer and finder of **Oman's** fabled '**Lost city of Ubar**' celebrated as the centre of the lucrative frankincense trade some 3,000 years before Christ. The fortress city had been buried under the shifting sands of a section of **Oman** so barren that it is known as the

Rub'al Khali or **Empty Quarter**. Frankincense, an aromatic resin grown in the nearby **Qara Mountains** was used in cremations, perfumes and medicines and at one time was as valuable as gold.

>> **Action:** You too can explore the area but from a slightly more comfortable base. Stay at the **Al Baleed Resort Salalah by Anantara** - nestled between a private beach and freshwater lagoon. Plan your trip to with Fiona to **Oman**, now.



FIONA'S TRIP REPORT: JANUARY 2024



Jamtara-

INDIAN WILDERNESS AT ITS BEST

I'm sitting on the decking outside my enormous canvas safari tent - which nestles among nine others overlooking a winding dry river bed or *nullah*. All around me tree frogs and cicadas create a perfect symphony interspersed with the occasional alarm call of a langur and chirruping of birds.

I am at the extraordinary wilderness camp of **Jamtara**, situated on the Northern edge of **Pench National Park**, some 3hrs drive from **Nagpur** in **Central India's Madhya Pradesh**. It's a 1hr 20 flight from **Delhi** plus the drive - and my oh-my is it worth it! Quite apart from the abundant wildlife, the camp is all about unique experiences. No two meals were eaten in the same place - be it dinner round a fire pit in a remote area of the forest, lunch under a 150 year old giant banyan tree rooted in a dry river bed or a delicious breakfast of eggs, parathas and seed cake washed down with steaming hot coffee served during our morning game drive.

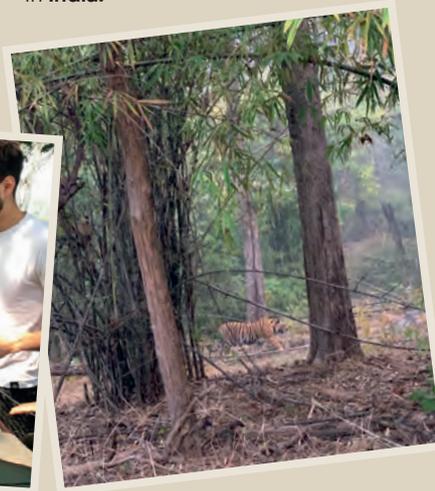
Jamtara's owner, **Amit Sankala**, is a true visionary with a family pedigree stretching back several generations in tiger conservation and owning/running these unique camps - and my goodness it shows. The location is sublime, the staff could not have been kinder and the naturalists were full of knowledge, enthusiasm and dedication to showcasing the best of **India's** natural wonders.

Game drives are morning and evening in nifty gypsy jeeps exclusive for each family. Open topped with tiered seating, they are perfect for exploring the park via its numerous sandy tracks through teak and sal forest, grassland and ethereal water holes.

Back to my planter's chair on the verandah, I'm completely absorbed in the moment as I think back to our first thrilling morning in the park. Peering back at us through a dense thicket of bamboo - we're held spellbound under a constant steady orange and black gaze - it's a heart stopping moment for our sons who have just spotted their first **Royal Bengal Tiger** in the wild. We've only been in the National Park for half an hour and cannot quite believe it. A mother and cubs are resting up on a kill and we are lucky enough to catch a glimpse of this iconic mammal. Shortly after we encounter wild dog (two on the track in front of us) and three shy jackals darting this way and that. The solid black form of a lone wild boar scuttles through the scrub, majestic herds of chital (spotted deer) graze under the trees and we have several great sightings of gaur and sambhar. There's plenty of interest for birders too with birds of prey, ducks on the water, owls and more - not forgetting the emblematic peacocks which seem to be round every corner.

Jamtara is a must for any serious wildlife enthusiast and combines very well with **Bandhavgarh** and **Kanha** National Parks which are both within a half day drive.

>> Ask: Fiona about wildlife itineraries in **India**.



SHH - MOROCCO'S HIDDEN DESERT GEM

Be ready for an unforgettable luxury desert adventure at **Scarabeo Camp** - a thrilling retreat, yet only 40 minutes' drive south of **Marrakech**. The **Agafay Desert** is a fascinating location - in contrast to the traditional towering sand dunes of the **Sahara**, it's a stunning landscape of rugged rocky plateaus, rolling hills and vast open spaces. Explore a nomadic lifestyle, set against the backdrop of golden sand dunes. Savour delectable **Moroccan** cuisine beneath the open desert sky among the glow of lanterns. Prepare for camel rides, quad biking, and breathtaking sunsets that turn the desert into a colourful canvas. Nightfall brings an incredible stargazing experience.

>> Action: Fiona can't wait to include this camp in your **Morocco** tailor-made holiday or long weekend adventure. Contact her now.



JAMTARA STAR BED

For generations, **Indian** villagers have spent their nights in the fields on machans (beds on raised platforms), to keep a watchful eye on their livestock. **Jamtara Lodge** close to **Pench National Park** in **Central India** allows guests a similar (albeit more comfortable) experience with its very own **Star Bed**. Under the night sky, you'll listen to an orchestra of crickets, owls, frogs and jackals ceremoniously punctuated by the alarm calls of the spotted deer. It is wilderness in its purest form. Ask for details.

OLD PATAGONIA

Thinking of travelling to **Argentina**? Heading South to **Antarctica**? Explore one of the quietest corners of the world - 10 room **Nibepo Aike** the only livestock ranch within **Los Glaciares National Park**. See gauchos on horseback herding cattle and sheep, ride out to hidden glaciers with a picnic or trek/sail to the **Perito Moreno Glacier**. Journey on foot (a trek of 3 days /2 nights) through the **Patagonian**

immensity, surrounded by the wild beauty of the **Sierra Baguales Mountains**. **Nibepo Aike** preserves the essence of the old **Patagonian** estancias. Today, after three generations, the ranch is still run by the same family.

Getting there: 56kms or 1.5 hours' drive from **El Calafate** in **Southern Argentina**

>> **Ask:** Fiona for more details.



NEW YEAR IN CAMBODIA

Less visited than its neighbours, **Cambodia** is a **South East Asian** jewel. Stunning natural scenery, beautiful temples, empty beaches and a fading colonial **French** grandeur make it a truly compelling destination. Since the 13th century, New Year in **Cambodia** has been set according to the solar calendar and usually falls in **mid-April**, just after crops have been harvested. The whole city of **Siem Reap** bursts into a wildly colourful celebration, with most of the buildings adorned with displays of stars, flowers and fruit. There are traditional dance performances, processions, live music, fireworks, feasting and a huge, citywide water fight.

All this takes place, of course, against the backdrop of the world-renowned **Angkor Wat** temples.

>> **Action:** Let us plan you a visit to remember. Ask Fiona for details.

SMALL PLANE CHARTER IN SRI LANKA

If you are short on time but keen to see **Sri Lanka's** main sights, consider the option of domestic air travel. There are a variety of great routes which link the capital **Colombo** with **Kandy** and the Cultural Triangle, and the hills, **Jaffna** and the coast. Flights aren't always flexible - you can't fly from the south coast to the Cultural Triangle or **Kandy** without changing in **Colombo**, but do ask about chartering your own plane. Helicopter charters are also possible.

>> **Action:** See our handy map for more details then call Fiona.



I'LL TAKE THE HIGH ROAD ... TO USHGULI

I'm still musing over my trip to **Georgia** last autumn and thinking of what I left to do next time. If you, like me, yearn for haunting vistas, read on. Travelling in Autumn, due to snow I had to miss out this 4WD-only high route from **Tsageri** to **Ushguli** in **Georgia's** Northwest high **Caucasus** region of **Svaneti**. The winding 92km journey offers astounding views of mountain peaks, lush valleys, and the remains of glaciers. The road to the town is snow-covered for 6 months of the year and tops out at the **2620m Zagari Pass**.

>> **Action:** Plan your visit in July, August and September and I'll plan it for you. Ask for our sample itinerary 'All Georgia'.



RIVER CRUISE ASIA

For over 25 years **Pandaw** has been the leader in **Asian** river cruising. With 17 beautiful ships in 6 amazing countries there's no excuse not to join. We love this stunning new map which handily highlights where these luxury small-ship river cruise expeditions operate - from the **Mekong River** through **Vietnam & Cambodia**; the **Red River** and **Halong Bay** in **Vietnam**; **Laos & Thailand** on the **Upper Mekong**; to the **Ganges River** and the **Brahmaputra River** in **India**.

>> **Action:** Latest offers for the 2024/25 season include **No Single Supplement** departures, **Early-bird Discovery Discount Dates** and **Under 18s go free**. Email Fiona with your preferred month of travel and she will give you all the options.



TRIP REPORT: FIONA'S ANTARCTIC EXPRESS



The cry went out 'orcas on the port side' and moments later three of these awesome ocean predators were powering alongside our ship. Memorable! I'm aboard top notch 132 passenger **Sylvia Earle** on her 9-day **Antarctic Peninsula Express** - a concise sail-fly voyage from **Ushuaia** to the **Antarctic Peninsula**. This is the voyage for those with limited time but wanting to see the mesmerizing 7th continent.

The infamous **Drake Passage** - a two-day sail was extremely kind to us and combined with the stability of the ship and her special X-Bow, the dining room was full most days. We travelled at 16 knots to run ahead of a brewing storm and arrived at **Melchior Island** ahead of time, giving space to a pod of feeding whales. Gliding by huge blue/white icebergs with incredible striations, we entered a sheltered bay and headed out by zodiac to explore hidden coves.

Further zodiac cruises in the coming days encountered light snow, limp sunshine and impressively large-scale icebergs. In **Paradise Bay**, a colony of cormorants rested on bird cliffs and gentoos bustled in their rookeries outside the **Argentine Brown Base**. We made a continental landing at **Portal Point** and hiked up through deep snow to incredible view-points over

sparkling **Charlotte Bay**. The two landings per day were always in varied locations and full of surprise. The polar snorkellers swam with fur seals. Kayakers and hikers spotted a mound of elephant seals. We had soaring skuas and a thrilling encounter with feeding humpback whales blowing and diving all about our zodiac. We walked on rocky shores littered with whale bones, hiked volcanic sand in the flooded caldera of **Deception Island** and spotted a lone king penguin in the **South Shetland Islands**. What a thrill!

Flying out to **Chile** from the gravel air strip on **King George Island** - time to reflect. Truly a trip to remember!

Ask **Fiona** about the numerous Antarctic and Arctic polar voyages available on **Sylvia Earle** and her sister ship **Greg Mortimer**.

Snippets

SANTANI WELLNESS

Why not make this the year you focus on wellness? Up in the misty hills near **Kandy, Santani** is an absolute standout as wellness is incorporated into every aspect of a stay. There's a beautiful tri-level spa, hydrotherapy, daily yoga (often with visiting Masters), meditation, a curated Ayurvedic menu, river swims and revitalising walks. No two people are alike, and at **Santani, Sri Lanka** every package (five to 21 days) is personalised based on an assessment of body composition, current lifestyle, stress, fitness, emotional state and future goals.

>> **Action:** Ask Fiona for a quotation.



2024 ARCTIC OFFERS

We have a selection of **Arctic voyages** departing from the far northern settlement of **Longyearbyen** on the **Norwegian Arctic** island of **Spitsbergen** in the famed **Svalbard** archipelago. Ships explore the coastline, home to dramatic mountain scenery, tidewater glaciers and some of the **Arctic's** best wildlife viewing opportunities. At the jumbled edge of the north-polar ice cap you'll search for polar bears stalking their prey.

>> **Action:** Contact us for dates and prices as there are still last-minute offers around with discounts of up to 50%



CAMEL TREKKING IN THE GOBI

Trek through the rich, varied, landscape of the **Gobi Desert** on camels, camp in tents under the vast **Mongolian** skies, visit local nomadic herding families in their gers, explore ancient ruins and sites of dinosaur fossil finds, and submerge yourself in the peaceful silence of this immense desert. Return to **Ulaanbaatar** to experience the unique contrast of the traditional and modern in **Mongolia's** capital city. Although now rare throughout the rest of the world, the two-humped Bactrian camel is common in **Mongolia** and is just great for distance camel riding.

Dates:
26 August - 11 September 2024
Prices from £4,695 per person



INTO THE NORTHWEST PASSAGE

For centuries it was among Earth's greatest riddles: Did a sea route link **Europe** to "the Orient" by way of the top of the world? Today the **Northwest Passage** remains wrapped in history and mystery—a fabled corridor of Inuit culture, glittering ice, prowling bears, snow-capped peaks, eerie ruins, and clues to the epic Franklin tragedy that are only now being pieced together. Join **Ocean Endeavour** (198 passengers) to find out more.

When: 27 August - 12 September 2024

Offer: £1,700 per person discount for limited time only

Discounted trip price: £17,295 per person UK to UK



FROM BUKHARA TO SAMARKAND

At the heart of the ancient silk route, **Uzbekistan** is steeped in trading history. Largely unvisited by modern travellers, its ancient cities are living museums of stunning architecture that easily evoke the romanticism of the silk trade.

The country's greatest treasure – the glittering city of **Samarkand** – lies at the junction of **Central Asia's** ancient caravan routes. It is here that the immense blue domes of the **Registan**, the most spectacular architectural ensemble in the whole of **Central Asia**, stopped many a traveller in their tracks.



>> **Action:** Make your own tracks in **Uzbekistan** – ask Fiona for our **Classic Uzbekistan** sample itinerary.

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VOYAGE FOR 12 NIGHTS FREE

Book the **St Lawrence River in the Heart of the Boreal Winter** voyage, departing on 17 January 2025, and we'll offer you a stateroom on the ocean voyage preceding – completely free of charge!

Depart from Helsinki on 5 January 2025, and you will enjoy 24 nights for the price of 12, aboard luxury hybrid Icebreaker **Le Commandant Charcot**.

From £17,590 person (voyage only).
Ask **Fiona** for details.

NORTHEAST GREENLAND 2026 SOLAR ECLIPSE EXPLORER

We have so many amazing Arctic programs lined up, but one of those we're most excited about is this **Svalbard and Greenland solar eclipse** voyage with a goal of positioning the vessels in **Scoresby Sund**, Earth's largest fjord, right in the centre of the eclipse's path of totality.

Enjoy the ultimate **Arctic** thrill experiencing not only the solar eclipse but also with the option for long hikes from **Plancius** far from the landing sites. The route takes you through some of the best areas for viewing polar bears, Arctic foxes, various seals, and even more species of whale.

ECLIPSE FACT FILE

Duration of Eclipse: 2 hours, 1 minute
Duration of Totality: 2 minutes, 17 seconds

Latitude 70.878 north, longitude 27.286 west
(Øfjord in Scoresby Sund)

PLAN AHEAD - NEW YEAR'S EVE IN ICELAND

Did you know that **Iceland** in recent years has become quite famous for its spectacular fireworks on New Year's Eve! Fireworks are only sold by the **Icelandic Search and Rescue Teams** and are an important source of fundraising for them. If you'd like to plan a visit at the end of this December, get in touch with Fiona.



When: 2 - 17 August 2026 on Plancius (110 passengers)
2 - 15 August 2026 on Sea Spirit (114 passengers)
Special: Sea Spirit has onboard astrophysicist Paul Sutter
From: £11,760 per person in twin porthole cabins on Plancius UK to UK

LONG HIKING IN THE ARCTIC

New for this summer - long hikes specially designed for adventurers who want to explore on foot far beyond the landing sites. Accompanied by armed expedition staff and a zodiac that will cruise ahead to watch for bears, make exhilarating hikes of around 15km in semi-rough terrain, including shorelines, tundra, low hills, and river crossings.

Ships: Hondius, Plancius, Ortelius
Where: Greenland voyages
When: Summer 2024/2025
Contact: Fiona for more details



SOUTH GREENLAND EXPLORER - PLAN AHEAD!

Southeast Greenland offers many historic sites relating to ancient **Thule, Norse,** and **Moravian** culture while also allowing us to walk in the footsteps of famed polar explorers like Fridtjof Nansen. On this unusual voyage, glaciers, icebergs, and fjords make for a dazzling environment where we may see polar bears, and the crossing to **Iceland** will give us a great opportunity to observe migrating whales and seabirds.

Voyage dates: 1 - 11 September 2025
Price from: £6,765 per person UK to UK
Ship: Plancius

Client COMMENTS



“It was lovely to be speaking directly with Fiona again! This is the third trip she has arranged for us. The whole process was handled thoughtfully / imaginatively. Every local representative we met was punctual, courteous and informative. We were excited at the prospect of returning to **India** a second time, to visit a different region: **Tamil Nadu**. It didn't disappoint.”

**Mr & Mrs Mark Allsup,
Southern India - November 2023**

“We are just back from **Marrakech**. Once again, thank you for organising such a fantastic trip. It all went swimmingly, the day trips were really enjoyable and the guide for **Essouaira** was fantastic. All of the people we dealt with, from the drivers to the local agents and especially in the riad, were so lovely and helpful. The New Year's Eve gala in the riad was a particular highlight. We hope to travel with you again soon!”

**Conor McGlynn & family,
Morocco, December 2023**



“Exceeded expectations!”

**Mr and Mrs Jamie Buchan and family,
Falklands, South Georgia, Antarctic
Peninsula on Hondius - January 2024**



“We have had a great trip. No hiccups on arrangements, all according to your plan! It was a long trip of 21 days - 10, I think, sea days. The expedition team were first class, all exhibiting real enthusiasm, humour and knowledge. The kayak programme was for me a huge success. Georgia also thoroughly enjoyed the snorkelling. We were, I think, the oldest and the youngest on board!”

**Roger Murray with grand-daughter
Georgia Colegrave, Falklands, South
Georgia, Antarctic Peninsula on Sylvia
Earle, January / February 2024**



“We had a wonderful time on our trip across **Canada** on the **VIA train** from **Toronto** and the **Rocky Mountaineer**. **Jasper/ Banff/ Lake Louise** all exceeded expectations. The scenery was gorgeous and guides and excursions terrific. Our trip to **Victoria** went very smoothly with our wonderful driver/guide. Probably the highlight of our time with Lydia and the granddaughters was the whale watching. We braved some cold, inclement weather and saw many, many whales and seals. Thank you for organizing such a wonderful trip for us!”

**Jan and Anne Kruthoffer & family,
Canada, September 2023**



“The northern tip of **Musandam** was the real highlight for us. As you fly in you get a tantalising glimpse of mountains plunging into fjords a mere 65km across the **Strait of Hormuz** from **Bandar Abbas** in **Iran**. The glory of the Peninsula lies in its spectacular kaleidoscope of geological formations. The drive up to **Jabal Harim**, the highest mountain on the peninsula, is not for the faint-hearted, though our excellent driver, Sharif, navigated every twist and turn expertly. On the other hand, a trip by dhow out into the aquamarine waters of **Khawr Ash Sham**, the biggest fjord, is truly relaxing and memorable. Long may the whole area remain principally for the dolphins, and the fishermen who make their living in this spectacular landscape.”

Mr & Mrs Graham Bell, Oman and the Musandam Peninsula, January 2024

Design: Sharpe Design Ltd 01934 740141

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