

Travel in 2022



▲ Glow ahead: visitors will soon be back black-water rafting in the Waitomo Caves

NEW ZEALAND

The Land of the Long White Cloud held the title of your most beloved country consistently from 2012 until 2019. So, apart from the mountains, fjords, rivers, lakes, marine life, ancient forests, volcanoes, great walks, beaches, wine, friendly locals and bungee jumping, why did *Telegraph* readers keep voting New Zealand their favourite long-haul travel destination?

There is so much to see and do, but of course, since March 2020, it has been hardly anyone's destination. In 2019, 3.8 million people visited, by the end of the following year numbers were down by 75 per cent. And 2021 has been even worse. But all that is about to change when we welcome the return of our international *uhānau* (family) on April 30 2022 (omicron, pi, sigma, tau, upsilon, etc, notwithstanding).

In the interim, the country's operators have taken the opportunity to rethink the tourism model. "We've trained our crew in environmental restoration," says Juhl Shareef of Tourism Holdings Ltd, which conducts tours of natural attractions such as the glowworm-filled caves at Waitomo in the North Island. "Our black-water rafting guides, for example, better understand the Waitomo Caves

Bryn Rode

JAPAN

Steam rising into the night in a hot spring onsen bath. A glimpse of Mount Fuji floating above a sea of skyscrapers. The sound of bamboo whisking matcha in a hushed tea room. The white nose of a bullet train gliding into a station. There are countless reasons to visit Japan, which rose two places in the 2019 awards.

And when its borders reopen, there will be one more reason to add to the list: a vast selection of new hotels and travel hotspots have come to life during the past two years, from deluxe skyscraper accommodation to rural art meccas, a string of establishments are new to the scene. In the capital – where the Tokyo Olympics fuelled countless new projects – hotel highlights include the Tokyo Edition in the city's Toranomon district (a second will open in Ginza), with its hip, jungly lobby and minimalist Kengo Kuma-designed rooms, and the Four Seasons Hotel at Otemachi, an elegant skyscraper affair.

There are also hints of a shift away from city hubs towards something at which Japan excels: nature. Countless smaller gems are popping up in mountains, fishing islands and forested val-

Danielle Demetriou



▲ In bloom: new retreats include Zenagi, a 'wellness and expedition' hotel in Nagano

ecosystem and can pass this knowledge on to our visitors in the spirit of *kaitiaki-ā-tiaki* – shared guardianship – of New Zealand's natural environment."

One area of innovation is Maori-led tourism. Ngai Tahu opened its award-winning Dark Sky Project visitor centre at Lake Tekapo in 2019 to immerse visitors in astronomy, mythology and custom. The Footprints of Kupe Experience, which opened last year in Northland's Hokianga Harbour, uses theatre, animation and special effects to tell the story of the Polynesian explorer. It is the second in a trinity of justly lauded experiences in the north: from the living prehistory of the 2,000-year-old kauri trees of the Waipoua Forest, via the Polynesians' discovery of the islands at Hokianga, to the signing of New Zealand's founding document at the Waitangi Treaty grounds. It's the New Zealand you know and love – but now you can dive deeper.

You, Me & Friends (0064 2143 8493; youmeanfriends.co.nz) offers an eight-day self-drive Northland tour from £1,690 per person (minimum two travelling), excluding flights

Bryn Rode

leys: from Azumi Setoda, Adrian Zecha's minimalist island escape near Hiroshima, to Zenagi, a "wellness and expedition" hotel in a historic three-room property in a lush corner of the Nagano prefecture.

Creativity is another buzzword – as reflected in Naoshima, the iconic art island in the Seto Inland Sea, where the Setouchi Triennale art festival kicks off in the spring, along with the launch of two new museums.

Some things, however, never change: be prepared for Japan to be as safe and clean as ever, with hand washing and mask wearing elevated to sacred new heights, plus the nation's famed *omotenashi* hospitality firmly in place.

Japan Journeys (01234 567567; japanjourneys.co.uk) offers a self-guided Japan Arts Revealed package, taking in a raft of creative hotspots including Tokyo, Kyoto, Naoshima and Arita. From £1,495 per person, including 10 nights' three-star accommodation, transfers and a seven-day JR rail pass, excluding international flights

Danielle Demetriou



▲ Refreshingly little has changed SOUTH AFRICA

MALDIVES

The Maldives, with its pure shores, exquisite seas and sensational snorkelling, has long been a favourite of those seeking a relaxing break in paradise.

After seeing a plethora of resort openings and a record number of visitors in 2019 – with a dozen more resorts in the 2020 pipeline and a new international airport terminal in the making – the pandemic should have been a disaster for a country where tourism accounts for nearly 30 per cent of GDP. But thanks to its unique, naturally socially-distanced topography, a one-island-one-resort policy and sensible health protocols, the archipelago was able to reopen to international travellers without the need for quarantine in July 2020 – just four months after borders slammed shut across the globe.

Since then, the country's tourism industry has made an impressive recovery. The last half of 2020 brought just over half a million visitors and the launch of 13 new resorts, including JW Marriott Maldives and Kagi Maldives Spa Island. This year, the destination has welcomed more than 1.1 million visitors and 10 new hotels, with the ultra-luxurious Fari Islands development stealing most of the thunder.

"We've seen a big demand," says Marco Den Ouden, general manager of the designed Patina Maldives, one of the three luxury resorts that inhabit the man-made Fari island cluster. "We're seeing bookings for our larger rooms being snapped up by guests from all over the world as families look to reconnect."

Whether you are travelling with

the family, as a couple, flying solo, or looking for a spa retreat, a dive trip, a romantic celebration or an expedition all-inclusive, the Maldives has it covered. So with 12 more properties expected in 2022, the only dilemma you will have is deciding where to stay.

Turquoise Holidays (01494 678400; turquoiseholidays.co.uk) offers seven nights at Patina Maldives in a one-bedroom beach pool villa, half board, including speedboat transfers and international economy class flights with Qatar Airways from Heathrow (via Doha) from £5,365 per person

Lee Cobaj

Refreshingly little has changed

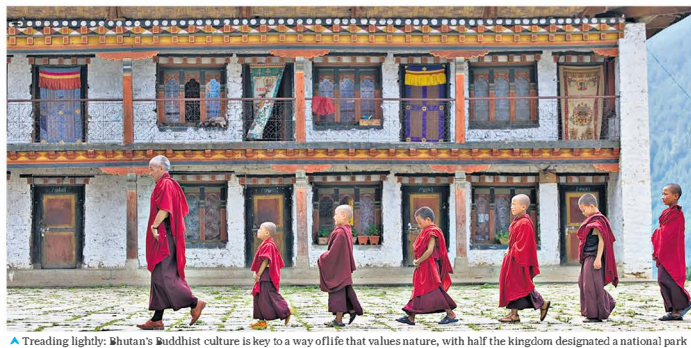
SOUTH AFRICA



Annabel Fenwick Elliott

I have long said that if a plane's pulverising meteor was destined to hit Earth and I had three days left to spend before doomsday, I would high-tail it to South Africa. Specifically to Kruger Park's utterly magical Singita Lebombo Lodge, where I first fell in love with safari six years ago, to be reunited with the very guide, Brian, who gave me that initial – and as yet unrivalled – debut tour. This October, in the absence of a meteor (I reasoned that a global pandemic was excuse enough), I returned. Refreshingly little has changed since my first visit: the bush was fragrant and untamed; the animals fragile and majestic; the lodge grand yet quiet. And Brian, at times masked, was otherwise as free and entrancing as he ever was. Next time I won't wait for a worldwide disaster before going back.

Lee Cobaj



▲ Treading lightly: Bhutan's Buddhist culture is key to a way of life that values nature, with half the kingdom designated a national park

4. BHUTAN

The Kingdom of Bhutan, in the Eastern Himalayas, might be surprised to learn it came in at number four on our 2019 favourite list, given that the Land of the Thunder Dragon hasn't changed much since the first 287 visitors were allowed into the country in 1974. But Bhutan's appeal may be less a whim of fashion and more down to the logic that, if you're going to travel far, you might as well go somewhere authentic.

That authenticity is certainly being preserved: Bhutan's borders have remained closed to all foreign nationals, including British citizens, for the duration of the pandemic. And it has announced no plans to reopen them. This mysterious mountain kingdom is becoming even more of an enigma.

Half the kingdom is national park: to the north rise sacred peaks – with those over 19,600ft high never to be climbed – while in the south, forested hills ebb away to sub-tropical plains. It is watched over by a predominantly Buddhist culture, preserving a way of life within the cycle of reincarnation: here, you reap what you sow.

The famous Tiger's Nest monastery, clinging to a mountainside near Paro, is the iconic image of Bhutan (and the hike to the top can be strenuous, taking up to five hours). Adventure-seekers should

try the Trans Bhutan Trail – a 250-mile trek along the former ancient east-west trade route. For most, though, Bhutan offers a relaxed holiday: visiting temples; day-trekking; bathing in hot springs; and observing the colour of daily life.

Intrepid Travel (0330 808 7335; intrepidtravel.com) offers a nine-day Premium Bhutan small group escorted tour from £810 per person sharing, based on 10 in September 2022, including all accommodation, guiding, excursions and transport, but excluding international flights

Will Robson

TRAVEL WARNING

There are restrictions in force governing international travel and things can change at short notice. For more information, see gov.uk/coronavirus, gov.scot/coronavirus-covid-19, gov.wales/coronavirus

For more information and advice on holiday bookings, see telegraph.co.uk/tt-covidtravel

All information correct at the time of going to press

SOUTH AFRICA

South Africans are a resilient bunch. "Worse places to be trapped," they shrugged, sipping from chilled glasses of excellent and affordable wine. "No other wine industry possesses such energy or excitement," writes master of wine Tim Atkins in his 2021 South Africa Special Report when the excellence of their medical science was recently rewarded with another punitive travel ban and the overnight loss of almost £50 million in cancellations.

From enjoying easy last-minute bookings to benefiting from pay-less-stay-longer rates, we locals like to celebrate silver linings, rediscovering what *Telegraph* readers – who voted Cape Town their favourite city in 2019 for the seventh year running – already knew: this is one grand place to be.

With tourism and hospitality sustained for two years by a small domestic market, changes have, for the most part, been incremental. Self-catering cottages are in big demand, resulting in a spate of new cabins in remote areas, usually without outdoor tubs to allow in, such as those you will find at Leopard Valley in the otherworldly Cederberg.

Farm stays remain popular, too, particularly on those farms that produce superlative wines, such as Kalmoesfontein in Swartland, famed for its chenin and shiraz, or gorgeous Brookdale,

Barrel of fun: stay at Kalmoesfontein Farm in Swartland, famed for its chenin and shiraz wines

a luxurious new exclusive-use home-stead amid vines planted in the lee of the Drakenstein mountains. There is also the new Coot Club, officially launching in May 2022, but already offering a handful of cottages on the mesmerising Kleinrivierlagoon, often fringed with pink flamingos.

While these options lie two hours or less from Cape Town, wispid bodiles have been making for the north and Tsvalu reserve to experience Klein Jan. The restaurant showcases the surprisingly rich bounty of the Kalahari desert in a way that is multisensory, edifying and delicious: chef Jan Hendrik has created a truly transportive experience.

In a world of such instability, it's nice to know that some things never change and many of your favourites remain – such as De Hoop which, with its foot-print-free beaches, is still the prettiest coastal reserve in the country. Worse places indeed.

Timbuktu (020 3808 3860; timbuktu.travel.com) offers a six-night escape in the Cederberg mountains from £690 per person and a six-night road trip in the Overberg from £1,200 per person, including car hire, accommodation and some meals but excluding international flights

Pippa De Bruyn



BOTSWANA

Botswana might be best known for its diamond mining (and rightly so: the country unearthed the world's third largest diamond last June, weighing 1,174 carats), but tourism is just as big an earner for this southern African nation. Its popularity testament to its myriad wild treasures.

It is home to the largest concentration of elephants in the world (best seen splashing along the Chobe River), 22,000 zebras, which migrate from Boteti Valley to the miner-rich Makgadikgadi salt pans after the rains, and thousands of flamingos, which transform these pans into a vast shimmer of pink during the breeding season.

But Botswana's richest drawcard is the papyrus-fringed Okavango Delta, the largest inland delta in the world, filled by the floods from Angola that create a labyrinth of flystream waterways around floodplains rich in predators and prey. Add luxurious lodges in vast private concessions, superb guiding and diverse activities from horse riding to drifting in mokoro (dugout canoes) and you have the perfect safari.

The consequences of the pandemic meant the country's income from its low-volume, high-cost tourism industry plummeted by 75 per cent in 2020. Yet among lodge revamps and rebuilds,

Water world: explore the Khwai River and the wildlife-rich region around the new Khwai Leadwood camp in Botswana

this year heralded a trio of prestigious new camps, proving Botswana remains the jewel in the safari crown.

Wilderness Safaris launched Little Duma Tau, the intimate baby sister to nearby Duma Tau Camp in the wildlife-rich Linyanti Reserve bordering Namibia.

In the Okavango Delta's Khwai concession, African Bush Camps unveiled its beautiful new Khwai Leadwood camp. Offering walking, mokoro trips, helicopter rides and birding, the camp has strong community connections, its design inspired by local traditions of basket weaving.

Red Carnation also unveiled Xigera Safari Lodge near Moremi Game Reserve's western borders. As much a walk-in art collection as it is one of the most elite lodges on the entire continent, Xigera showcases some of Africa's most talented artists and designers deep in the Okavango Delta.

Far & Wild Travel (01768 603715; farandwildtravel.co.uk) offers a tailor-made Okavango Delta tour with four nights at Khwai Leadwood and three at Xigera at £1,995 per person, including flights

Sue Watt

CANADA

Received wisdom has it that Canada is a superlative realm of colour-coded bears, caribou herds, spytopping orcas, railway adventures, Arctic-blue lakes and skies filled with the northern lights. Admirably, it fulfils all this bucket-list potential, yet more than ever it feels like a marketing dream for times like these: nature is in the ascendancy, adventures are grounded in the landscape and social distancing – in a country of this size – is practically a human right. Here, space is abundant.

Since 2019 – a record-shattering year for Canada, with 22.1 million arrivals, of which 876,000 were Brits – many small-scale tourism operators and First Nations communities have pivoted towards more sustainable, enlightened experiences. The thrill of Indigenous Niagara Living Museum Tours is discovering something new and intimate about the overly familiar Horseshoe Falls south of Toronto, while British Columbia's Kliahose Wilderness Resort, now under First Nations ownership, is a next-level example of a community-run eco lodge and place for spiritual repose. You can grizzly watch on Toba Inlet, hike riverine islands in Desolation Sound and learn about Kliahose indigenous culture.

With so many places to fall off the compass, it's no surprise Canada is swamped with quiet, underrated nooks to discover. The net result is huge swathes of the country where Brits rarely register: Take Nova Scotia, which is now home to Halifax's first five-star property, the Muir Hotel, and newly opened vineyard vults in Guvsbrough,



▲ Full board: Kliahose Wilderness Resort offers water-based activities on Desolation Sound

located on rarely-seen Chedabucto Bay. This coming year will also put Quebec more into focus, with a new weekly Air Transat flight from Gatwick to Quebec City from May and the arrival of Club Med's first North American mountain resort in Charlevoix. If you are tempted by late-season skiing overlooking the levithan St Lawrence River, or by unheralded Saguenay Fjord National Park to see beluga and blue whale by zodiac, you might well be first-in.

Canadian Affair (02037772613; canadianaffair.co.uk) offers a 12-day Taste of Quebec and the Magical Fjord tour from £1,596pp, including flights and car hire

Mike MacEachern

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