

SPIEKERMANN TRAVEL - HISTORICAL MOMENTS



WHERE IN THE WORLD

Come and join one of our exceptional adventures

Unexplored Gems of Turkey

May 02 to May 17, 2022 Led by **Local Guide**

Turkey has multiple identities, located on two continents between East and West. Although in some respects, Western, Turkey retains its contradictions: mosques co-exist with churches, and Roman remnants crumble alongside ancient Hittite sites. It is a vast country and a great place to travel, not least because of the people, whose reputation for friendliness and hospitality is richly deserved. Turkey's abundance of history has left an indelible mark and is abound with historic sites and archaeological wonders set in a varied and beautiful landscape. The Mediterranean coastline is punctuated with well-preserved Greco-Roman cities, while the austere and rugged Anatolian plateau has cave churches hidden away in the improbable fairytale landscape of Cappadocia. Istanbul, still very much the pulse of the nation, has even more to offer, with Roman aqueducts, Byzantine churches and Ottoman mosques and palaces. (II - ***)

North Africa... Tunisia, Algeria & Mauritania

May 05 to May 31, 2022 Led by **Michel Behar**

Sep 18 to Oct 13, 2022 Led by **M. Halouani**

Apr 24 to May 08, 2023 Led by **M. Halouani**

Sep 18 to Oct 13, 2023

Few countries on earth match the historical, cultural, and natural splendor of Tunisia. Begin and end in the capital city of **Tunis** with its wondrous medina (ancient city) and fascinating souqs (markets). Travel onward to ancient Carthage, one of the most important cities in the ancient Roman Empire. Other important historical sites include Dougga, Sousse, Oudna, and Kerkouane, as well as the sacred Islamic site of Kairouan.

Algeria is a vast country of breathtaking scenery, well-preserved Roman ruins, pre-historic cave paintings and a strong Berber culture. Your journey will take you from the sweeping shoreline to the majestic mountains, through the huge wilderness of the Sahara Desert into the palm-fringed oases. Some of the highlights include the Roman ruins of Timgad, the former Roman port of Caesarea, the oasis town of Bou Saada and the Kasbah of Algiers. This fascinating tour offers the adventurous traveler an alluring blend of art, history, culture and scenery, including the marvelous city of Constantine, the city of gorges and bridges. **Mauritania** boasts many natural wonders, as well as ancient cities. In the Middle Ages, Mauritania was the seat of the Almoravid movement that spread Islam throughout North Africa. Highlights include two of its four "ksour" (villages) - Chinguetti and Ouadane - located in northern Mauritania. Chinguetti is a medieval Berber trading center, with stark, unadorned buildings that reflect the strict religious beliefs of the Almoravids. Ouadane is an oasis settlement concealed by waves of golden sand dunes and home to an ancient mosque (and UNESCO World Heritage Site). So, come and join us on this amazing journey spanning three countries, or select the segments that are most intriguing to you. (II - ***/****)

Iran... Hidden Gems of Persia

Oct 16 to Nov 05, 2022 Led by **Mehreen Razvi**

Apr 04 to Apr 21, 2023 Led by **Miklos Sarkozy**

Oct 16 to Nov 04, 2023 Led by **Miklos Sarkozy**

Iran is home to a breathless mix of spectacular madrassas, exquisite mosques and some of the most wonderful examples of Islamic architecture in the world. Everywhere you look, the magnificence of 2,500 years of history lies all around you. Ancient Persia has been the seat of many civilizations and unique contributions in poetry,

art, architecture, science and history. Many of Iran's achievers have contributed to our modern world. Most of the country's archaeological gems are well preserved and portray a rich historical heritage. Your tour will not only explore ancient ruins and colorful cities but also exotic bazaars and old baths. Marvel at ancient monuments and beautifully tiled mosques. Stroll through medieval bazaars that remain much as they were centuries ago. Stop to visit local nomadic tribes when driving across the vast country. Your journey will take you to Yazd the center of Zoroastrian culture, to Shiraz city of poets, which has had major Jewish and Christian communities, and the UNESCO World Heritage sites of Isfahan, and Persepolis. Come and discover Iran, a repository of grand relics and ruins. **(II-*** /****)**

Cyprus, Santorini, Crete & Rhodes

Islands of Sun and History

May 09 to May 22, 2023 Led by Local Guides

Oct 28 to Nov 05, 2023 Led by Local Guides

Cyprus is an island with a unique archaeological legacy - from its beautiful sanctuaries and monuments to the architectural marvels scattered along its craggy mountains, verdant plains, sweeping beaches, rolling hills and abundant vineyards. This Mediterranean island lies at the crossroads of three continents - where East meets West and a new experience awaits you under the sun of Cyprus.

Crete is an island with an exquisite 700-mile-long coastline dotted with numerous coves, bays, and peninsulas, and a multitude of soft, sandy beaches that line the dazzling blue Mediterranean Sea. As the home of the Minoan civilization, the island is of historic importance in today's world with important archeological finds at Knossos, Phaistos, and Gortys. There are many jewels just waiting to be discovered by the more adventurous explorers. If you have not visited Crete yet, maybe now is the time to come and explore this fascinating Greek island.

Santorini is one of the Cyclades islands in the Aegean Sea. It was devastated by a volcanic eruption in the 16th century BC, forever shaping its rugged landscape. The whitewashed, cubiform houses of its two principal towns, Fira and Oia, cling to cliffs above an underwater caldera (crater). They overlook the sea, small islands to the west, and beaches made up of black, red, and white lava pebbles. Santorini boasts that it is one of the romantic spots in the world.

Rhodes, the largest of Greece's Dodecanese islands, is known for its beach resorts, ancient ruins, and remnants of its occupation by the Knights of St. John during the Crusades. The city of Rhodes has an Old Town featuring the medieval Street of the Knights and the castle like Palace of the Grand Masters. Captured by the Ottomans and then held by the Italians, the palace is now a history museum. Displaying one of the most extensive collection of relics and treasures. **(I - ****)**

Malta... Island of History & Mystery

May 04 to May 10, 2023 Led by Local Guide

May 03 to May 09, 2023 Led by Local Guide

Megaliths, medieval dungeons and Calypso's Cave - The Maltese Islands are positively mythic. The narrow meandering streets of their towns and villages lead to the main square, which is invariably dominated by the huge baroque church. As the countryside is dotted with medieval towers, wayside chapels and the oldest known human structures in the world, the Islands have rightly been described as an open-air museum. The Maltese archipelago lies virtually at the center of the Mediterranean, and consists of three islands: Malta, Gozo and Comino. **(I - ****)**

Algeria... The Garden of the Sahara

Oct 15 to Oct 30, 2023 Led by M. Halouani

May 08 to May 25, 2023

Algeria is a vast country of breathtaking scenery, well-preserved Roman ruins, pre-historic cave paintings and a strong Berber culture. Your journey will take you from the sweeping shoreline to the majestic mountains, through the huge wilderness of the Sahara desert into the palm-fringed oases. Some of the highlights include the Roman ruins of Timgad, the former Roman port of Caesarea, the oases towns of Ghardaia and Bou Saada, the gorge of Sisi Meid and the Kasbah of Algiers. This fascinating tour offers the adventurous traveler an alluring blend of art, history, culture and scenery, including the marvelous Moorish city of Tlemcen, voted recently as one of the best 41 places one should see in a lifetime. **(II - ***)**

Uganda, Rwanda & Burundi

Aug 14 to Aug 26, 2022 Led by STS Tour Manager

Aug 20 to Sep 01, 2023 Led by Michel Behar
Travel to some of the least explored parts of East Africa on this two-week journey visiting three

beautiful countries: Uganda, Rwanda and Burundi. Starting with **Uganda**, a country located on the East African Plateau, you will experience beautiful waterfalls, Lake Victoria, the world's largest lake, and the world's longest river, the Nile. You will also have the chance to see all kinds of wildlife, including the majestic and endangered mountain gorilla. Then cross into **Rwanda** to discover the beautiful Lake Kivu, one of the African Great Lakes. One of the highlights of your visit will be the chance to see the splendid Golden Monkey, one of the rarest primates in the world. Also, experience the Rwandan culture at a traditional village. Continue your journey to **Burundi**, which has two national parks - Kibira to the northwest, and Ruvubu to the northeast. Both were established in 1982 to conserve wildlife populations. Burundi's culture is based on local tradition and the influence of neighboring countries. **(III - ***)**

North Caucasus

Sep 04 to Sep 22, 2022 Led by Norman Jones

Apr 30 to May 18, 2023 Led by Nancy Weber

Sep 03 to Sep 17, 2023 Led by local Guides

The Northern Caucasus is northern part of the Caucasus region between the Black Sea and Caspian Sea and within European Russia. Historically North Caucasus is one of the hottest spots of the world, the land of famous warriors and strange archaic traditions that is turning to peace now. We will start from Abkhazia, a partially recognized country, which was the pearl of Georgia in the Soviet period and marvel other North Caucasian Autonomous republics, including Kabardino-Balkaria, North & South Ossetia, Ingushetia, Chechnya and many others. We will move from developed West to wild East: from subtropical and friendly Abkhazia and all the way to Dagestan where we will explore ethnicity and history from Stone Age to Soviet era. We will witness daily life of highlanders up in the high mountains with centuries-old forests that are filled with oaks, firs and wild blueberries. The culmination of our adventure will be exploration of the most visually striking and culturally different villages. So join us on this fascinating journey marveling historical monuments, isolated settlements, towers, orthodox monasteries, majestic landscapes and cultures that have survived centuries without outside influence. **(II - ***/****)**

South Caucasus...Azerbaijan, Georgia & Armenia

Sep 23 to Oct 10, 2022 Led by Local Guides

Apr 13 to Apr 30, 2023 Led by Local Guides

Sep 17 to Oct 03, 2023 Led by Local Guides

Journey through more than five millennia of history of the **Armenian** Plateau, the legendary landing place of Noah's Ark. Learn about one of the earliest civilizations in the world, referred to by many as one of the cradles of civilization. Visit monasteries precariously perched on mountains; ruins of once imposing castles and fortresses; the largest collection of khachkars (stone crosses), and vishaps (ancient megaliths) dating from 1500 BC unique to the Armenian Plateau. Traverse part of the ancient Silk Road and see the only surviving intact caravansary in Armenia. Explore archaeological excavation sites and watch as the past, undisturbed for thousands of years, emerges before your eyes.

Georgia will mesmerize you with its magnificent history and unparalleled natural beauty, from the shores of the Black Sea to the soaring peaks of the Caucasus Mountains, from the rich vineyards to the arid deserts. The Georgians have built a modern country on the foundation of their rich and ancient culture, a perfect blend. Georgia's world-famous wine, unique and tantalizing cuisine and legendary hospitality make this a favorite destination for the curious and sophisticated traveler.

Azerbaijan is a magnificent country with rich natural resources, ancient culture and history. The lifestyle of the people represents a harmonious blending of the traditions of many different cultures and civilizations, with a very strong Persian influence. A visit to this fascinating country with its unique culture, history and traditions will round out your journey to the land of the Trans-Caucasus. **(II - ***)**

Belarus, Ukraine & Moldova

Sep 16 to Oct 02, 2022

Led by Native Tour Leader and Local Guides

Apr 06 to Apr 22, 2023

Led by Native Tour Leader and Local Guides

Sep 14 to Sep 30, 2023

Led by Native Tour Leader and Local Guides

Travel to some of the least explored parts of Europe on this two-week journey visiting three beautiful countries: Belarus, Ukraine and Moldova, which are considered some of the hidden gems of Europe. Starting with Belarus, we discover the glorious and

elegant capital: Minsk, representing a stunning amalgam of Soviet-style/Communist architecture and amazing medieval churches. Experience the genuine Belarusian hospitality, and then travel to the fairytale castle at Mir and the 16th century town of Njasvizh. Departing Belarus, head to Kiev and begin exploring Ukraine. In the capital, you will visit some magical golden-domed monasteries and cathedrals dating back many centuries, before heading on to Lviv – considered by many as one of the most elegant cities in Europe. In the nearby villages, you will discover some imposing old castles before heading on to the beautiful Carpathian Mountains, a treasure chest of traditional Hustul culture, incredible scenery and fascinating wildlife. Finally, you will visit the tiny nation of Moldova, with its vast underground wine cellars, ancient monasteries and the unique republic of Transnistria. A country that does not officially exist. Our tour visits a truly intriguing region, full of surprises and imbued with a rich heritage that easily rivals better-known parts of Europe, and best of all, it is well off the tourist map. (II - ***)

North & South Pakistan

Sep 25 to Oct 12, 2022 Led by Mehreen Razvi

Feb 18 to Mar 08, 2023

Sep 24 to Oct 11, 2023

Pakistan Revisited with Chitral Festival

May 09 to May 21, 2022

May 09 to May 21, 2023

South Pakistan

May 01 to May 09, 2022

May 02 to May 09, 2023

Pakistan shares an eastern border with India and a northeastern border with China. Join us as we visit the various villages, local traditional houses, and historical monuments. Marvel at the breathtakingly beautiful scenery as you travel along the Karakorum Highway to the Hunza Valley and through Besham, Khoistan, Chilas and Gilgit. The high mountain valley of Hunza is located in the extreme north of Pakistan, fortified by the giant mountain ranges of Karakorum, the Himalayas, the Hindu-Kush and Pamir through the Wakhan Corridor. The Indus Valley of south Pakistan is a repository of some of the most ancient sites of civilization and human history. From the Moghul city of Lahore to the cacophony of Karachi's markets on the Arabian Sea, you will pass through

so many ruins and sites filled with Sufi shrines, mausoleums, mosques, palaces, and ruins of fabled ancient cities. (III - ***/****)

Cultural Mosaic of the Balkans

(Albania, Macedonia, Kosovo, Montenegro, Croatia & Slovenia)

Oct 02 to Oct 18, 2022

Sep 29 to Oct 13, 2023

The Balkans' region is an amazing cultural mosaic of diverse ethnic fabric combined with historical importance and natural beauty. Journey through the former Yugoslavia that is home to a very eclectic mix of people, ethnically, geographically and religiously. This strikingly beautiful region is radiating in the early summer months, with all its mountains covered with green foliage and blooming flowers, as well as its turquoise colored coastline dotted with gorgeous villages. Its rugged interior mountains are home to a gamut of high perching monasteries and churches, spectacular lakes and waterfalls. Albania is a former enclave of the Ottoman Empire, and today this nation is emerging from its medieval existence under a strict Communist regime. It offers the visitor a glimpse into a unique cultural heritage. Visit exotic bazaars, Ottoman citadels, mosques and towns, medieval churches, fortresses, and monasteries as well as ancient Roman ruins and many UNESCO World Heritage sites. (II - ***)

Treasures of Eastern Turkey

Oct 11 to Oct 26, 2022 Led by Local Guide

Mar 18 to Mar 31, 2023 Led by Miklos Sarkozy

Sep 17 to Oct 01, 2023 Led by Local Guide

Eastern Turkey is the true cradle of civilization, encompassing the earliest farmers, the great Hittite and Urartian empires of antiquity, the conquering Romans, early Christian churches, and medieval fortresses. Bordering Georgia, Armenia, Iran, Iraq, and Syria, this seldom-visited region offers travelers simply incredible sights. See the earliest "temple" at Göbekli Tepe with its 12,000-year-old carvings. Visit Hittite sites with carved reliefs, and cuneiform inscriptions on the Urartian capital at Tushpa. Explore the Biblical connections of Urfa and Harran (where Abraham once lived), and Mount Ararat, claimed to be the final resting place of Noah's Ark. Eastern Turkey is a fantastic repository of ancient Roman, biblical, Seljuk, Armenian and Crusader relics.

See the magnificent carvings in the Armenian Church on Akdamar Island in Lake Van, and an entire ghostly ruined Armenian city at Ani. In addition, you will not forget the stunningly situated sculptured heads of Nemrut Dag, or Ishak Pasha Palace, the Taj Mahal of Turkey. (II - ****)

Lebanon... The Land of the Cedars

Oct 11 to Oct 18, 2022 Led by Ghiath Abdallah

Mar 29 to Apr 06, 2023 Led by local Guide

Oct 15 to Oct 22, 2023 Led by local Guide

Lebanon has always been a well-traveled bridge between East and West, sea and desert that is dense with history. Above the layers of antiquity lies a land of mesmerizing beauty and contrast from the modernity of Beirut, once known as the Paris of the Middle East to the lush Cedars. Experience the warmth of its people, the tastes of its world-renown cuisine, the aromas of its souks, the majesty of its past and explore some of the best-preserved Roman and Byzantine cities in the Near East as well as some of the most stunning Byzantine gems as well as many of the Islamic architecture jewels! Explore the Phoenician cities of Sidon & Tyre and the well-preserved Roman city of Baalbek, and the town of Byblos with its multiple layers of civilizations. (I - ****)

Syria ... In depth

Oct 18 to Oct 27, 2022 Led by Ghiath Abdallah

Apr 06 to Apr 14, 2023 Led by Ghiath Abdallah

Oct 08 to Oct 16, 2023 Led by Local Guides

Above the layers of antiquity lies a land of mesmerizing beauty and contrasts from the desert surroundings of the ancient city of Palmyra to the green meadows near the castle of Krak des-Chevaliers. Begin your tour in Lebanon, a country well deserving the title of "Switzerland of the East" then cross into Syria to Damascus, regarded as one of the oldest continuously inhabited cities in the world. Head west as you leave Damascus for the oasis city of Palmyra, home of Queen Zenobia and north to Syria's second largest city: Aleppo, and complete your circular route with stops in Hama and Ma'aloula as you make your way back to Damascus. Experience the warmth of the people, the tastes of the cuisine, the aromas of the souks, and the majesty of the past and explore some of the best-preserved Roman cities in the Near East as well as Byzantine gems and Islamic jewels! (I - ****)

Saudi Arabia... The Forbidden Kingdom

Oct 23 to Nov 05, 2022 Led by Barbara Porter

Mar 04 to Mar 17, 2023 Led by Local Guides

Nov 16 to Dec 01, 2023 Led by Local Guides

As the birthplace of Islam, Saudi Arabia has been shielding itself from the eyes of the west for a long time but time has come now that the Kingdom is moving in huge steps towards modernization and openness. However, this is also a land with a vibrant cultural pedigree, aside from its glitzy oil-rich modern cities. Amongst the rock-hewn splendors of Madain Saleh and Madain Shoeb, you will explore Nabatean heritage equal to what Petra offers. Most of the great empires of the ancient world traded with the Arabian Kingdoms that commanded the important spice trade routes in the peninsula. Colorful markets, desert landscapes, coral reefs, rock engravings, ancient monuments, traditional mud-brick cities, and imposing fortresses are abundant in a country that has so much to offer to those who choose to venture in it & explore its enigmatic and intriguing side. (II - ***/****)

Sicily and Malta...The Land of the Myths & Legends

Oct 16 to Oct 28, 2022

Led by M. Halouani

Situated at the toe of the boot of Italy, Sicily is an archaeological treasure. Sikanian to its most ancient peoples, Sicily was Sikelia, Plato's utopian society, to the ancient Greeks. This small island serves as a museum to the many ancient civilizations that colonized it throughout the centuries. It is a land where Archimedes taught and Saint Paul preached. Asians, Africans and Europeans have ruled it, as it was once a Greek colony, a Roman province, an Arab emirate and a Norman kingdom. The Phoenicians, Carthaginians, Swabians, Angevins and Aragonese all left their mark on Sicily. Experience their legacy in Phoenician settlements, Punic cities, Greek temples, Roman amphitheaters, Norman Arab castles and Aragonese churches. Sunny Sicily is Punic Palermo, towering Taormina, ancient Agrigento, splendid Siracusa, and medieval Monreale and Cefalù.

With 7,000 years of history, the Maltese Islands are steeped in culture and heritage. The Islands went through a golden Neolithic period, the remains of which are the mysterious megalithic temples dedicated to the goddess of fertility. Later on, the Phoenicians, the Carthaginians, the Romans and the Byzantines, all left their traces on the Islands. Malta exudes character, from its vibrant blue waters and secluded bays, to

medieval walled citadels and splendid baroque churches, explore the many historic buildings and colorful traditional villages that speckle the landscape. Magical is the only word to describe Malta-by-night. (II/III - ****)

Kurdistan... The other Iraq

Oct 26 to Nov 04, 2022 Led by Tobin Hartnell

Mar 20 to Mar 29, 2023 Led by Norman Jones

Oct 01 to Oct 08, 2023 Led by Barbara Porter

Kurdistan, the autonomous northern region of Iraq predominantly inhabited by the Kurds, is amazingly different from the areas populated by the Arabs. The terrain is in stark contrast to the desert that characterizes middle and southern Iraq. It is an eclectic region that offers a multitude of experiences and chance encounters. Tour the world's oldest inhabited city with its famous museum of antiquities. Visit monasteries and churches dating from the 2nd to 4th century and the holiest sites of the Yezidis including the cave of the fire worshippers. Drive through breathtaking views of Kurdistan's mountains, rivers and waterfalls. Explore former Jewish cities and other ancient locations such as Amadiya. Shop in the local bazaars for gold, silver, carpets, spices – you name it. From the great walled city of Erbil to nearly deserted but still-functioning monasteries to gushing rivers like the Greater Zab and Lesser Zab feeding into the Tigris, the region has much to offer the seasoned traveler. (II/III - ****)

Iraq... Ancient Mesopotamia

Nov 04 to Nov 19, 2022 Led by Tobin Hartnell

Mar 05 to Mar 20, 2023 Led by Norman Jones

Oct 08 to Oct 19, 2023 Led by Barbara Porter

Mesopotamia-the land between the great rivers Tigris and Euphrates-was the home to the world's earliest civilization. To walk on such sites as Eridu, Uruk, Ur of the Chaldees and Babylon is to trace the history of the first cultures to build cities, invent writing, develop the wheel, and to rule the known world. Some have claimed that the Garden of Eden was located in Iraq, and biblical history touches this land too. When it became an independent country in 1932, Iraq had been home to ancient Sumer, Babylonia, and Assyria, and had been conquered by Persians, the Macedonian army of Alexander the Great, the armies of the Islamic conquest, the Mongol hordes, and the Ottoman empire of Turkey. At many points in its history, Iraq could be said to have been at the center of the civilized world, and

you will see elements of this ancient history along with remnants of more recent times, including the regime of Saddam Hussein and the Coalition occupation. (III - **/***)

Egypt... The Land of the Pharaohs

Nov 06 to Nov 20, 2022 Led by Local Guides

**Mar 21 to Apr 07, 2023 Led by Geoff Emberling
"Sold out"**

Nov 06 to Nov 20, 2022 Led by Local Guides

"Lake Nasser Cruise"

Nov 19 to Dec 01, 2023 Led by Michel Behar

Whether it is your first visit or your tenth, this is the perfect time for you to see Egypt, with its incredible monuments, temples, artifacts and history. Cruise along the eternal NILE River in the style of the "belle époque of the early 20th century" on a yacht that was built for the King of Egypt. Witness time standing still evidenced by the rhythm of life along its banks. Visit all of the sites that one expects to see in an itinerary offering an overview of the history of the region. A highlight of this tour is the visit of the newly opened Museum of Antiquities, which is the largest in the world. Visit temples, tombs, pyramids and markets and explore the Coptic Christian heritage of Egypt as well as its Islamic monuments. Explore Khan el Khalili bazaar in Cairo for a slice of life both past and present. Of course, no itinerary would be complete without a stop at some of the oldest attractions in the world, the colossal pyramids of Giza and the mysterious Sphinx. NO trip is complete in Egypt without flying to see the most majestic and monumental of its temples: Abu Simbel. Let this superbly-crafted exploration of Egypt captivate you with the bountiful treasures of ancient times and the hospitality of modern natives. (I - ****)

Horn of Africa...Eritrea, Somaliland, Djibouti & E. Ethiopia

Nov 02 to Nov 14, 2022 Led by Elena Dak

Feb 15 to Feb 28, 2023

Eritrea is a state on the southern shores of the Red Sea whose history dates back to the Stone Age. Following a succession of wars with Ethiopia that spanned a thirty-year period, Eritreans under a United Nations' supervised referendum voted for independence in 1991 and gained international recognition in 1993. Asmara, the capital, proudly displays a shining collection of Art Deco and other architectural wonders. Massawa, a port city on the Red Sea, was heavily influenced by the Turks and

the Europeans. This coastal city is the starting point for visits to the Dahlak Islands, one of the most unspoiled and least known reefs in the Red Sea. Eritrea's nine colorful ethnic groups are diverse and individual, and are a major highlight. The latest peace agreement with Ethiopia has finally put an end to the utter isolation that Eritrea suffered for the last decades and carries a great future for development.

Somaliland should not be confused with Somalia. Westerners are welcome there... Somaliland is home to what is often considered one of the most interesting attractions in the Horn of Africa, the Laas Geel cave paintings. Untouched for nearly 10,000 years until discovered by a French archaeological team in November 2002, Laas Geel cave paintings have become a major tourist attraction and a national treasure. Somaliland boasts many natural attractions including mountains, mangrove marshes and pristine beaches as well as opportunities for cultural interaction in its colorful markets.

Djibouti draws few tourists thanks to its reputation for being the hottest place in Africa (probably true) and being ridiculously overpriced (also probably true). However, with vistas that will take your breath away, and a culture caught half way between 20th century France and modern Africa, the smallest country in the region is most definitely worth a visit. Despite the tensions that at least two of these neighbors often display, it remains somewhat removed from the hostility. Thanks largely to it being located at the entrance of the Red Sea. Djibouti has found itself in the enviable position of being a strategically important point with both global industry and the military. The country itself, outside of Djibouti City the capital of the Republic of Djibouti is largely composed of volcanic wasteland an apocalyptic looking terrain of naturally formed chimneys and beautiful lakes.

Eastern Ethiopia many of you may have joined us on the Ethiopia tours in the past years, but most likely, you have not visited this gem of a city. Harar, a well-preserved walled city that stands to the east of the Great Rift Valley and was founded between the 7th and the 11th centuries and emerged as the center of Islamic culture and religion in the Horn of Africa; it also served for a long time as an important trading center. Harar was a fiercely religious city and was closed to visitors until 1887 when King Menelik restored central rule. With its 99 mosques, including the 16th century Grand Mosque with its beautiful twin towers and slender minaret, it is

considered to be the fourth most holy city in Islam after Mecca, Medina, and the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem. Besides its many mosques, Harar is also home to 102 shrines and a very vibrant market place, regarded as one of the most colorful in all of Ethiopia. The surrounding Ahmar Mountains are where Ethiopia's best coffee grows. (III - */***)

Morocco and the Western Sahara

Nov 03 to Nov 13, 2022 Led by M. Halouani

Feb 26 to Mar 20, 2023 (w/Mauritania)

Led by Local Guides

Few places on earth compare to the Sahara Desert, a natural wonder of vast plains and heated dunes that controls the south and east of Morocco. The world's largest hot desert, the Sahara stretches a staggering 5.6 million square miles (9 million square kilometers) over several countries. Hemmed in by the Atlas mountain range, the Saharan sands are one of Morocco's many highlights.

It is one of the most sporadically populated territories in the world, mainly entailing of desert flatlands. It is a territory of northwestern Africa, bordered by Morocco to the north, Algeria in the northeast, Mauritania to the east and south, and the Atlantic Ocean on the west. The largest city is Laâyoune, which is home to a majority of the population of the territory. Join us on this amazing journey and to a unique part of the world. (II - ***)

Socotra... Undiscovered Garden of Eden

Nov 05 to Nov 16, 2022 Led by Nancy Weber

Feb 05 to Feb 14, 2023 Led by Local Guide

Nov 11 to Nov 22, 2023 Led by David William

Arab governments are in conflict over an island paradise in the Indian Ocean that few people have ever seen. Socotra, the largest island in the Middle East, is one of the most isolated places on Earth, home to an ancient culture and some of the world's strangest-looking plants. The island is part of Yemen, but the United Arab Emirates has been investing there, building infrastructure.

UNESCO has designated Socotra as World Heritage site in 2008 in recognition of its biodiversity. Hundreds of Socotra's species of plants, reptiles and land snails exist nowhere else on earth. Notable are the dragon's blood trees that look like flying saucers perched on trunks. Adenium socotranum are trees that look like elephants' legs with pink flowers on top. Birds such as the Socotra Starling, Socotra Sunbird, and Socotra Grosbeak are

found nowhere else on the planet. Bats are the island's only native mammal. In 2010, a Russian archaeological team discovered the ruins of a city on Socotra dating to the second century AD. The island is also held by some to be the location of the original Garden of Eden, due to its isolation, biological diversity, and the fact that it is located on the edge of Yemen's Gulf of Aden, which many connect with the ancient Sumerian tales of a paradise called Dilmun. (III - **)

The Arabian Gulf...Kuwait, Bahrain, UAE & Oman

Nov 05 to Nov 19, 2022 Led by Courtney Stewart

Feb 18 to Mar 04, 2023 Led by Local Guides

Dec 01 to Dec 17, 2023 Led by Local Guides

Known for their wealth and abundance of oil, the Gulf States also house some remarkable museums that display magnificent ancient Islamic art, calligraphy, pottery, embroideries and jewelry. This unique tour will visit Bahrain, an archipelago located in the heart of the Gulf that boasts a unique blend of ancient and modern; a destination where glistening skyscrapers share the skyline with majestic, centuries-old mosques. In Qatar, you will saunter around the Old Souq (market) and down to the nearby Dhow Harbor to see some of the Gulf's traditional and distinctive trading vessels and the world-class Islamic Arts Museum. Kuwait, home to the oldest modern art movement in the Arabian Peninsula, contains an impressive number of art galleries. A quick stop in Kuwait City is just enough time to experience its diverse and liberal culture. In the UAE, you will marvel at Abu Dhabi's unique architecture as one of the most futuristic cities in the world. When in Dubai, an emirate that has transformed itself in the last few decades from an obscure pearl-fishing village into one of the world's most important trading hubs and a land of luxuries, you will visit its Old town. Oman is one of Arabia's true gems - a land of rugged coastlines and vast deserts where tradition and progress go hand in hand. This wonderful adventure takes us from the heart of its picturesque capital, deep into its desert. (II - ***)

Sultanate of Oman

Nov 15 to Nov 26, 2022 Led by Local Guide

Jan 25 to Feb 06, 2023 Led by Local Guide

Oct 23 to Nov 02, 2023 Led by Local Guide

Oman is one of Arabia's true gems - a land of rugged coastlines and vast deserts where tradition and progress go hand in hand. This wonderful adventure takes us from the heart of its picturesque capital, deep into mountains and deserts of the Bedu. We will take in the breathless landscapes of the Hajar Mountains, the shifting sands of Wahiba, and explore the old forts of Nizwa. It is a journey of incredible contrasts, following in the footsteps of the pioneering explorers of old and discovering some of the richest natural and cultural highlights that Arabia has to offer. Shopping for native crafts in vibrant markets provides the perfect opportunity to interact with the locals. Oman is also steeped in myths and legends as it is believed to be the home of Sinbad the Sailor and the site of the ruins of the palace are reputed to be that of the Queen of Sheba. (II - ****)

Ivory Coast

Jan 03 to Jan 13, 2023 Led by Local Guide

As one of Africa's most recent additions to tourism, the **Ivory Coast** was out of bounds for years due to political conflict. Situated on the Atlantic coast of West Africa, Côte d'Ivoire - or Ivory Coast as some may call it, provides a range of landscapes that are sure to please - from the beaches and inland lagoons in the south and dense tropical forests in the southwest, along savannas and grassy plains in the interior, to impressive montane forested mountains in the north. The country also has a fascinating cultural heritage. Spend time with different ethnic groups such as the Baulé, who are known for their fine craftsmanship, the Dan, Lobi, and Fulani, as well as the Senoufo, who are known for their handicrafts that feature their own cultural themes and religious beliefs. During village visits, you will witness colorful tribal festivals, rituals, initiations, and amazing mask dances. Each ethnic group has its own style of music, most showing a strong vocal polyphony. (II - ***)

West Africa... Ghana, Togo & Benin,

Jan 08 to Jan 22, 2023 Led by Michel Behar

Thriving traditional cultures, renowned art forms, flamboyantly colorful festivals, mask dances, and a dazzling ethnic mosaic are the golden gems of tribal West Africa. Our fantastic cultural odyssey takes you to remote reaches of Ghana, Togo & Benin to discover lost tribal worlds guided by ancient spirits. Our journey witnesses a special festival, the Egun Mask Dances of the Yoruba villages of southern Benin. Along the way, you will meet unforgettable people including the Taberma, whose

fairytale clay castles are spectacular examples of uniquely African architecture. End on the coast, the heart of voodoo country, visiting practitioners, watching trance-dances & learning about the awesome power that voodoo spirits still hold over people. **(III - */***)**

Atlantic Coast of Africa... Ivory Coast to Dakar *(Liberia, Sierra Leon, Guinea Conakry, Guinea Bissau & the Gambia)*

Jan 13 to Feb 05, 2023 Led by **David Willaim**

As one of Africa's most recent additions to tourism, the **Ivory Coast** was out of bounds for years due to political conflict. Situated on the Atlantic coast of West Africa, Côte d'Ivoire - or Ivory Coast as some may call it, provides a range of landscapes that are sure to please - from the beaches and inland lagoons in the south and dense tropical forests in the southwest, along savannas and grassy plains in the interior, to impressive montane forested mountains in the north. The country also has a fascinating cultural heritage. Spend time with different ethnic groups such as the Baulé, who are known for their fine craftsmanship, the Dan, Lobi, and Fulani, as well as the Senoufo, who are known for their handicrafts that feature their own cultural themes and religious beliefs. During village visits you will witness colorful tribal festivals, rituals, initiations, and amazing mask dances. Each ethnic group has its own style of music, most showing a strong vocal polyphony.

Jutting into the Atlantic on the Cap-Vert peninsula, **Dakar** has long been considered the traditional hub of Francophone West Africa. Senegal's capital fascinates travelers with its vivacious cultural life, its diverse cuisine and its infectious musical grooves. Encirclement the rhythm of Senegalese life on the tour with the local guide. **(II - ***)**

Nigeria...The Land of the Lost Kingdoms & Tribes

Jan 13 to Jan 21, 2023 Led by **Local Guide**

Discover one of Africa's most vibrant ancient kingdoms on a trip that will challenge any preconceived ideas about Nigeria. The nation has a recent reputation that discourages many travelers, but this tour shows the historic and appealing cultural legacy of the Odudwa Kingdom that dates to the 1200s and encircles the globe. We begin from Lagos, one of the liveliest cities on Earth, to the central town of Ilorin, and then on to the coastal town of Badagry, which has secrets to uncover

connected to the 17th century slave trade. See how Yoruba culture traveled worldwide from the old city of Abeokuta, with its grand Afro-Brazilian buildings, and climb the sacred Olumo Rock, a local holy site. From there, we head to the virtually unknown Idanre Hills, to discover a hidden civilization and, in Osogbo, we learn the intricacies of Yoruba religion from revered priestesses. Our last stop is Ilorin, the last site of the Odudwa dynasty, conquered by Fulani Jihadists in the early 18th century, where Islamic life fused with Yoruba culture. **(II - **/***)**

Nigeria and Cameroon

Jan 22 to Feb 07, 2023 Led by **Nancy Weber**

Discover one of Africa's most vibrant ancient kingdoms on a trip that will challenge any preconceived ideas about Nigeria. The nation has a recent reputation that discourages many travelers, but this tour shows the historic and appealing cultural legacy of the Odudwa Kingdom that dates to the 1200s and encircles the globe. We begin from Lagos, one of the liveliest cities on Earth, to the central town of Ilorin, and then on to the coastal town of Badagry, which has secrets to uncover connected to the 17th century slave trade. See how Yoruba culture traveled worldwide from the old city of Abeokuta, with its grand Afro-Brazilian buildings, and climb the sacred Olumo Rock, a local holy site. From there, we head to the virtually unknown Idanre Hills, to discover a hidden civilization and, in Osogbo, we learn the intricacies of Yoruba religion from revered priestesses. Our last stop is Ilorin, the last site of the Odudwa dynasty, conquered by Fulani Jihadists in the early 18th century, where Islamic life fused with Yoruba culture.

Cameroon is sometimes described as "Africa in one country" in reference to its variety of habitats and people. This virtually unexplored country is home to an astonishing 250 ethnic groups and a matching diversity of landscapes, from the jungles of the south to the Sahel of the north. The southern rainforest is home to communities of Ba'aka and Badgeli pygmies, existing in harmony with their environment. In between lie ancient kingdoms, cattle herding nomads, stunning golden, palm-fringed beaches, glassy rivers and volcanic mountain ridges. Forest canopies throb with the call of the rarest of species and flamboyantly

colorful tiny markets and streets bustle with excitement. Photogenic waterfalls thunder down in the 'white smoke' of spray to unspoiled landscapes. Cameroon is a land that will steal your heart away. Vestiges of faded French colonial glory rub up against craftsmen's alleys where the wisdom and skill of countless generations are revealed to you by the friendliest of locals. You will see nature at its wildest and rarest, from canoes, on roads and during walks that take you to places where few outsiders have been privileged to explore. (II - **/***)

Niger... The Land of the Tribes & Vistas **Jan 22 to Jan 31, 2023** **Led by Michel Behar**

Feb 07 to Feb 15, 2023 **Led by Elena Dak**
A landlocked country named after the Niger River, is home to a wide variety of ethnic groups.. The largest of these groups are the Hausa, followed by the Zarma. There are many other nomadic tribes throughout Niger including the Taureg and Fulani. Niger has stunning natural beauty, especially in the Mountain ranges in the north, but also houses a few old trading centers in the Sahara such as Agadez and Zinder that have a distinct mixture of Arab, Tuareg, and black African culture. The locals are also very friendly - do not be surprised if you are invited into someone's home! A wild giraffe herd lives near Koure, which is only around 37 miles from Niamey on a paved road. However, you will need a 4x4 vehicle and a guide to get you there. The giraffes live near many people and are rather curious and friendly. You can approach within 30 feet or so before they become more cautious. You'll also see other mammals such as elephants, lions, and hippos at the W Wildlife Reserve. (II- **)

Gabon, CAR, Congo & DRC **Jan 22 to Feb 07, 2023** **Led by M. Halouani**

Feb 15 to Mar 01, 2023 **Led by Michel Behar**
Travel to some of the least explored parts of Africa on this journey visiting these beautiful countries: Gabon, Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of Congo & Congo. Gabon features internationally celebrated masks, such as the n'goltang (Fang) and the reliquary figures of the Kota. Small populations, as well as, oil and mineral reserves have helped Gabon become one of Africa's wealthier countries. The country has generally been able to maintain and conserve its pristine rain forest and rich biodiversity. The CAR consists of Sudano-Guinean savannas, but the country also

includes a Sahelo-Sudanian zone in the north and an equatorial forest zone in the south. What is the Central African Republic today has been inhabited for millennia. However, the country's current borders were established by France, which ruled the country as a colony starting in the late 19th century. The DRC has a wonderful and vibrant city called Kinshasa, which you will get to experience. Once was a site of fishing and trading villages, Kinshasa is now a mega-city with an estimated population of more than 11 million. Kinshasa has a flourishing music scene, which, since the 1960's, has operated under the patronage of the city's elite. The Congolese culture has been influenced by a wide variety of natural landscapes, stretching from the savannah plains in the North Niari flooded forests, to the great Congo River, to rugged mountains and forest of Mayombe, and including 106 miles of beaches along the Atlantic coast. The presence of numerous ethnic groups and various political structures (the Kongo Empire, the Kingdom of Loango, the Kingdom Teke, and the Northern chiefdoms) once provided an enormous amount of diversity in the traditional cultures as well as in many ancient artistic expressions. Join us to discover the magic of Central Africa. (III-**-***)

Mali & Burkina Faso **Feb 14 to Mar 02, 2023** **Led by M. Halouani**

Mali, a landlocked country is bisected by the Niger River, one of the great rivers of the world. It marks an approximate boundary between the Sahara desert and the Sahel. Mali means hippo in one of the local languages and they can sometimes be seen during the dry season. Head to Timbuktu the city of legend that truly exists on the fringes of the Sahara Desert. Visit its ancient mosque as well as the Grand Mosque in Djenne, the largest mud-brick building in the world. Both are UNESCO World Heritage sites. Stroll through the weekly markets in Djenne and Mopti, known to attract thousands of people from Mali's many tribes. Spend time in Dogon country home to one of the most fascinating tribes in Africa. End your tour at the River Niger Festival, a celebration of music, dancing and culture. Burkina Faso may not have many big-ticket attractions, but the warmth of its welcome and the friendliness of the Burkinabé people is unique. Wherever you go, you will be greeted with a memorable *bonne arrivée* 'welcome' and a handshake. There is also the lively cultural scene. The capital, Ouagadougou, and Bobo-Dioulasso, Burkina's two largest and gloriously named cities,

are famous for their musical traditions and beautiful handicrafts. (II - ***)

Horn of Africa... Eritrea, Somaliland, Djibouti & E. Ethiopia

Feb 15 to Feb 28, 2023

Led by Elena Dak

Eritrea is a state on the southern shores of the Red Sea whose history dates back to the Stone Age. Following a succession of wars with Ethiopia that spanned a thirty-year period, Eritreans under a United Nations' supervised referendum voted for independence in 1991 and gained international recognition in 1993. Asmara, the capital, proudly displays a shining collection of Art Deco and other architectural wonders. Massawa, a port city on the Red Sea, was heavily influenced by the Turks and the Europeans. This coastal city is the starting point for visits to the Dahlak Islands, one of the most unspoiled and least known reefs in the Red Sea. Eritrea's nine colorful ethnic groups are diverse and individual, and are a major highlight. The latest peace agreement with Ethiopia has finally put an end to the utter isolation that Eritrea suffered for the last decades and carries a great future for development.

Somaliland should not be confused with Somalia. Westerners are welcome there... Somaliland is home to what is often considered to be one of the most interesting attractions in the Horn of Africa, the Laas Geel cave paintings. Untouched for nearly 10,000 years until discovered by a French archaeological team in November 2002, Laas Geel cave paintings have become a major tourist attraction and a national treasure. Somaliland boasts many natural attractions including mountains, mangrove marshes and pristine beaches as well as opportunities for cultural interaction in its colorful markets.

Djibouti draws few tourists thanks to its reputation for being the hottest place in Africa (probably true) and being ridiculously overpriced (probably true). However, with vistas that will take your breath away, and a culture caught half way between 20th century France and modern Africa, the smallest country in the region is most definitely worth a visit. Despite the tensions that at least two of these neighbors often display, it remains somewhat removed from the hostility. Thanks largely to it being located at the entrance of the Red Sea. Djibouti has found itself in the enviable position of being a strategically important point with both global industry and the military. The country itself, outside of Djibouti City the capital of

the Republic of Djibouti is largely composed of volcanic wasteland an apocalyptic looking terrain of naturally formed chimneys and beautiful lakes.

Eastern Ethiopia many of you may have joined us on the Ethiopia tours in the past years, but most likely, you have not visited this gem of a city. Harar, a well preserved walled city that stands to the east of the Great Rift Valley and was founded between the 7th and the 11th centuries and emerged as the center of Islamic culture and religion in the Horn of Africa; it also served for a long time as an important trading center. Harar was a fiercely religious city and was closed to visitors until 1887 when King Menelik restored central rule. With its 99 mosques, including the 16th century Grand Mosque with its beautiful twin towers and slender minaret, it is considered to be the fourth most holy city in Islam after Mecca, Medina, and the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem. Besides its many mosques, Harar is also home to 102 shrines and a very vibrant market place, regarded as one of the most colorful in all of Ethiopia. The surrounding Ahmar Mountains are where Ethiopia's best coffee grows. (III-*/***)

Sudan...Ancient Nubia

Feb 19 to Mar 01, 2023

Led by Geoff Emberling

Optional pre-tour to South Sudan for 1 Night

Sudan has more than 500 ethnic groups, each with its own dialect, traditions, and dance making it the most diverse nation on the continent. The Nile, flowing north from Khartoum towards Egypt, is the link that runs through Sudan, influencing the lives of its people. Along the banks of the river and in the valley of the Sahara Desert are many interesting archaeological sites from the Egyptian and Meroitic civilizations seldom seen by the public and include more pyramids than Egypt! Come and explore magnificent monuments, tombs and temples set in a landscape of impressive natural wonders as we travel through the desert and along the Nile of Sudan's mysterious north, an ancient land once known as Nubia. Kushite monuments display a rich combination of Pharaonic, Greco-Roman, and indigenous African traditions, two of which are UNESCO World Heritage Sites - Meroe and Jebel Barkal. Tall pyramids, gigantic mud-brick buildings, rock-cut painted tombs, and ornately carved temples - all present for you to discover. (III-*/***)

Albania... The Land of the Dawning Sun

Apr 22 to Apr 30, 2023

This captivating country has a countless faces. In the rocky north, the Alps are so fierce they are 'accursed', while the south enjoys one of the least known and most beautiful coastlines in all of Europe. Tirana is filled with craziness, from its traffic to its nightlife, but on its doorstep are mosques, citadels, Ottoman architecture and a stunning dose of medieval Balkans. **(II - ***)**

Central Asia... Five Stans

Apr 23 to May 10, 2023

Central Asia presents a colorful melting pot of people and cultures. Since the end of the second millennium, nomads from the north have periodically occupied these regions, settling and mingling with the local population to create new cultures and civilizations. From the middle of the first millennium BC until the 10th century AD, the territories of modern Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan were part of the Persian Empire. You will explore shimmering desert towns, UNESCO-listed palaces, stark soviet towers, bizarre oil-boom buildings and the history of the ancient trading routes between east and west. Stretching all the way from China to the Mediterranean, the Silk Road is a historic and cultural marvel. Caravans laden with, amongst many other things, gold, ivory, spices, furs, jade, exotic animals and of course, silk, trundled along the vast network of trade routes that made up the road for nearly two millennia. Not only were goods transported on the route but it also acted as a bridge that brought cultures and ideas together; Islam and Buddhism reached China thanks to the Silk Road while it facilitated the spread of Persian, Greek, Roman, Indian, Arabian and Chinese influences around the world. Central Asia was a major center for three great religions: Zoroastrianism, Buddhism and Islam. Mosques, mausoleums, madrasas and traditional souks offer a glimpse of times past. **(II/III - ***/****)**

Tajikistan... Pamir Highway

May 16 to May 30, 2023 Led by Nancy Weber

This journey will take you to explore exotic landscapes of snow-covered peaks, high-mountain lakes and rivers, inhabited by mountain communities living in settlements preserving century-old traditions and customs. History of Pamir Highway is over one hundred years, but the history of Pamir itself is over millennia. It was left largely untouched by the ravages of the Soviet

occupation and the Taliban's invasion. Archaeological findings testify presence of Zoroastrians, Buddhists and Muslims in Pamir. The birth date of Pamir Highway can be considered March 14, 1981 when lieutenant colonel Bronislav Grombchevskiy read a lecture on "Our interests in Pamir. Military-political outline" at the secret meeting of the General headquarter of the Russian army in Saint Petersburg. The aim of this secret bridgehead was to prepare for any possible invasion of the British Empire to Central Asia.

We will cross to Afghanistan via Termez, which is one of the ancient cities of Central Asia. For several centuries, it served as the main center of Buddhism in Central Asia. Missionaries travelled from Termez through the iron gates to Sogdiana on the northwest along the valley of Oxus to Margiana and to the northeast through the Pamir and Alay mountains. Afghanistan is home to some incredible treasures bound to leave you in awe. This journey will take you from bustling Kabul to the foothills of the Hindu-Kush. Follow in the footsteps of Marco Polo and Alexander the Great as you explore the country's safest areas in the northern regions. Visit the fabulous city of Herat, which was once a great medieval center for Islamic learning and culture. Marvel at the legendary mountain caves of Bamyán and the spectacular lakes of Band-e-Amir. Join to tour the historical town of Mazar-i-Sharif, famous for its blue-tiled mosque and Balkh, the nearby ancient caravan town. **(II/III- ***/****)**

Malawi & Mozambique

May 25 to June 10, 2023 Led by Michel Behar

Located in southern Africa, **Angola** is the seventh largest country on the continent and one of the most expensive countries in the world. Diverse ethnic communities such as the Mumuila and Mucubal, maintain their own cultural traits, traditions, and languages to varying degrees. In the cities, where slightly more than half of the population now lives, you will find a mixed culture that has been emerging since colonial times. In this urban society, since its foundation in the 16th century, the Portuguese heritage has become more and more dominant. However, African roots are evident in music and dance, and is molding the way in which Portuguese is spoken. This process is well reflected in contemporary Angolan literature, especially in the works of Angolan authors. On this tour, you will explore a land that the modern world has yet to discover. As you make your way inland, the landscape becomes almost endless plains.

Having earned its nickname not for location or climate but for the friendliness of its people, landlocked Malawi comes as a welcome marvel to many travelers. Stretched along its eastern border lies long, narrow Lake Malawi, a deep Rift Valley lake bordered with rolling hills and tropical vegetation. Dotted with sandy beaches, hidden coves, and wooded islands, filled with unique tropical freshwater fish, the lake makes for an idyllic water-sports destination, including superb lake diving. Balancing this water world are Malawi's dramatic plateau reserve parks filled with skittish zebra, and the highlands around the 3,000m (9,849 ft.) Mulanje Massif, growing from tea plantations and spotted with mountain streams tumbling into steep mountain gorges. (II - **/***)

Angola

June 10 to June 23, 2023 Led by Michel Behar

Located in southern Africa, Angola is the seventh largest country on the continent and one of the MOST EXPENSIVE countries in the world. It is bordered by Namibia to the south, the Congo in the north, Zambia to the east, and the Atlantic Ocean to the west. The diverse ethnic communities, such as the Mumuila and Mucubal, maintain their own cultural traits, traditions, and languages to varying degrees. In the cities, where slightly more than half of the population now lives, you will find a mixed culture that has been emerging since colonial times. In this urban society, since its foundation in the 16th century, the Portuguese heritage has become more and more dominant. However, African roots are evident in music and dance, and are molding the way in which Portuguese is spoken. This process is well reflected in contemporary Angolan literature. On this tour, you will explore a land that the modern world has yet to discover. As you make your way inland, the landscape becomes almost endless plains.

Siberia and Russia's Far East

Jul 21 to Aug 03, 2023 Led by Nancy Weber

Explore South Siberia, a remote and atmospheric land where mounted Scythians thundered across the steppe long time ago, leaving behind burial mounds and golden ornaments. On this cross-cultural adventure, interact with local ethnic people: Russians, Tuvans, Buryats, and Khakass, learning about their history, cultures and traditions. We will begin in Irkutsk, founded by Cossacks in 1661. Continue by visiting the shores of deep, UNESCO-listed Lake Baikal, and explore its

largest island, Olkhon, the place where the area's indigenous Buryat people believed that the Gods of Baikal once lived there. From Irkutsk, fly to Kyzyl, Tuva's remote capital. The heart of the journey is a stay in Tuva, a rarely visited rural region just north of the Mongolian border. Dine here with local people, and learn about the art of throat singing. The journey through the Valley of the Czars to Abakan, capital of Khakassia, will captivate you with its abundance and history. (II - ***)

Silk Road in China... From Xian to Kashgar

Sep 28 to Oct 13, 2023

Dating back to the years of the Han Dynasty, China's famous Silk Road gained its name and reputation from the lucrative trade in silk that once plied its way into the West, travelling from the ancient capital of X'ian and through the Hexi Corridor towards India, Pakistan and Rome. Beginning in Beijing and ending in Urumchi, this remarkable journey follows in the footsteps of those original caravans, taking you from the imperial treasures of the Chinese capital and on through the remote and scorching deserts around Turpan to fabled Kashgar, arriving in time for its famous Sunday market. Along the way, you will have an opportunity to visit the glorious Temple of Heaven and the Great Wall at Mutianyu, gaze upon the Summer Palace and the Terracotta Warriors and explore the fabulous Buddhist caves at Dunhuang, considered the greatest and consummate collection of Buddhist art anywhere in the world. You will enjoy the snow-capped mountains of the Heavenly Lake before ending the journey in the fertile oasis of Kashgar, which is located at the foothills of Pamir Mountains. (II - ***)

OUR TRIP GRADING CHART

We have been using the following system to help you identify the tour that best matches your travel interests and your physical abilities by ranking activity grade levels and lodging standards. Not every trip fits the needs and the expectations of travelers or their tolerance levels. We hope that this new system will make it easier to find the program that is right for you.

Trip Grade:

I Easy – Reasonably paced sightseeing, easy walking, and leisurely days. No particular physical challenges.

II Active – Some hikes, slightly more demanding walks at or to sites, few elevations, comfortable but busy schedule and some long rides.

III Challenging – Parts of the trip are physically challenging, involve hiking on rough terrain or in sand or at high altitudes. There may be very long drives on rough roads; weather conditions with high heat or humidity, presence of insects. You may have simple picnic lunches, primitive bathroom facilities along the road and remoteness from modern towns or cities.

Lodging Level:

★ **Simple** – One or more properties on the trip are very basic, rustic, primitive, with shared bathroom facilities (1 or 2 stars)

★★ **Delightful**: Comfortable yet on the Spartan side, usually small but generally with private facilities. Some such lodges and motel-style are in need of repairs, added cleaning, and improvements but they are suitable for one night stays even if they lack western style amenities. (2 or 3 stars)

★★★ **Superior**: Lodges and hotels with additional amenities, refined service and comfort level acceptable to western standards. (3 or 4 stars)

★★★★ **Luxury**: Regular style- usually large- hotels, typical western standard with ample venues, and full amenities. (4 or 5 stars)

Unexplored Gems of Turkey

May 02 to May 17, 2022

North Africa

May 05 to May 31, 2022

Sep 18 to Oct 13, 2022

Apr 24 to May 08, 2023

Sep 18 to Oct 13, 2023

Iran

Oct 16 to Nov 05, 2022

Apr 04 to Apr 21, 2023

Oct 16 to Nov 04, 2023

Cyprus, Santorini, Crete & Rhodes

May 09 to May 22, 2023

Oct 28 to Nov 05, 2023

Malta

May 04 to May 10, 2023

May 03 to May 09, 2023

Algeria

Oct 15 to Oct 30, 2023

May 08 to May 25, 2023

Uganda, Rwanda & Burundi

Aug 14 to Aug 26, 2022

Aug 20 to Sep 01, 2023

North Caucasus

Sep 04 to Sep 22, 2022

Apr 30 to May 18, 2023

South Caucasus...Azerbaijan, Georgia & Armenia

Sep 23 to Oct 10, 2022

Apr 13 to Apr 30, 2023

Sep 17 to Oct 03, 2023

Belarus, Ukraine & Moldova

Sep 16 to Oct 02, 2022

Apr 06 to Apr 22, 2023

Sep 14 to Sep 30, 2023

North & South Pakistan

Sep 25 to Oct 12, 2022

Feb 18 to Mar 08, 2023

Sep 24 to Oct 11, 2023

Pakistan Revisited with Chitral Festival

May 09 to May 21, 2022

May 09 to May 21, 2023

South Pakistan

May 01 to May 09, 2022

May 02 to May 09, 2023

Cultural Mosaic of the Balkans

Oct 02 to Oct 18, 2022

Sep 29 to Oct 13, 2023

Treasures of Eastern Turkey

Oct 11 to Oct 26, 2022

Mar 18 to Mar 31, 2023

Sep 17 to Oct 01, 2023

Lebanon

Oct 11 to Oct 18, 2022

Mar 29 to Apr 06, 2023

Oct 15 to Oct 22, 2023

Syria ... In depth

- Oct 18 to Oct 27, 2022
- Apr 06 to Apr 14, 2023
- Oct 08 to Oct 16, 2023

Saudi Arabia

- Oct 23 to Nov 05, 2022
- Mar 04 to Mar 17, 2023
- Nov 16 to Dec 01, 2023

Sicily and Malta

- Oct 16 to Oct 28, 2022

Kurdistan

- Oct 26 to Nov 04, 2022
- Mar 20 to Mar 29, 2023
- Oct 01 to Oct 08, 2023

Iraq

- Nov 04 to Nov 19, 2022
- Mar 05 to Mar 20, 2023
- Oct 08 to Oct 19, 2023

Egypt

- Nov 06 to Nov 20, 2022
- Nov 06 to Nov 20, 2022
- "Lake Nasser Cruise"
- Nov 19 to Dec 01, 2023

Horn of Africa

- Nov 02 to Nov 14, 2022
- Feb 15 to Feb 28, 2023

Morocco & the Western Sahara

- Nov 03 to Nov 13, 2022

- Feb 26 to Mar 20, 2023
- (w/Mauritania)

Socotra

- Nov 05 to Nov 16, 2022
- Feb 05 to Feb 14, 2023
- Nov 11 to Nov 22, 2023

The Arabian Gulf

- Nov 05 to Nov 19, 2022
- Feb 18 to Mar 04, 2023
- Dec 01 to Dec 17, 2023

Sultanate of Oman

- Nov 15 to Nov 26, 2022
- Jan 25 to Feb 06, 2023
- Oct 23 to Nov 02, 2023

Ivory Coast

- Jan 03 to Jan 13, 2023

West Africa... Ghana, Togo & Benin,

- Jan 08 to Jan 22, 2023

Atlantic Coast of Africa... Ivory Coast to Dakar

- Jan 13 to Feb 05, 2023

Nigeria

- Jan 13 to Jan 21, 2023

Nigeria and Cameroon

- Jan 22 to Feb 07, 2023

Niger

- Jan 22 to Jan 31, 2023
- Feb 07 to Feb 15, 2023

Gabon, CAR, Congo & DRC

- Jan 22 to Feb 07, 2023
- Feb 15 to Mar 01, 2023

Mali & Burkina Faso

- Feb 14 to Mar 02, 2023

Horn of Africa

- Feb 15 to Feb 28, 2023

Sudan

- Feb 19 to Mar 01, 2023

Albania

- Apr 22 to Apr 30, 2023

Central Asia

- Apr 23 to May 10, 2023

Tajikistan

- May 16 to May 30, 2023

Malawi & Mozambique

- May 25 to June 10, 2023

Angola

- June 10 to June 23, 2023

Siberia and Russia's Far East

- Jul 21 to Aug 03, 2023

Silk Road in China

- Sep 28 to Oct 13, 2023

Please send me more information on the following tours:

Name: _____

Email: _____

Phone: _____

Address: _____

City: _____

State: _____