

# UNIQUE

travel experiences

# 2021



SMALL GROUP TOURS

**Blue Dot Travel**

Go somewhere different

[bluedottravel.com.au](http://bluedottravel.com.au)



# WELCOME TO BLUE DOT TRAVEL

We are a community of curious travellers. The kind of traveller who's ears prick up at conversations about those out of the way places. Who gets a certain glint in their eye as they talk about the next place to explore (because there is always a next one). Does this sound like you? Then read on....

Blue Dot is a boutique travel operator with more than 50 tried and tested itineraries worldwide. We're proud to have spent 10 years building our network of Australian tour leaders, local guides, in-country experts, a passionate team here in Sydney, and most importantly our like-minded, loyal travellers. The thing we all share is the desire for in-depth travel experiences to unique destinations around the globe.

We're interested in experiencing different cultures and learning about how others live. We remain in awe of nature, its spectacular landscapes and wildlife. We aim to travel in ways that are respectful and sustainable. All of our itineraries are hand crafted to be unique, and to take you somewhere different. So whether you are one of our loyal, frequent travellers, or new to the pages of a Blue Dot brochure, enjoy the journey. We hope it inspires you as it does us.



*Add it all up and we think you will agree...*

## IT'S VALUE THAT MATTERS

We're certainly not a low-cost provider. In travel, low costs mean low quality and our customers, rightly so, demand good quality and more importantly, value. When all of the inclusions are taken into consideration, we represent good old-fashioned value-for-money.

## MOST OF OUR TOURS INCLUDE:

- International and internal flights
- Accommodation
- Transfers
- Most meals
- Quality guiding
- Tipping
- A tour leader from Australia
- Entrance fees



## HOW ARE WE DIFFERENT?

For starters, we don't travel to "mainstream" destinations. There are hundreds of travel operators that compete with the mass-market tourist destinations, however, mainstream is not for us. Rather, we prefer to explore lesser-travelled countries and regions where the cultural experience is far more rewarding and where crowds are far fewer.

Plus, we only take small groups. Our average group size is around 12 and this means a more personalised and flexible service. It also means a far more enjoyable offering in our view. (The thought of getting on a bus with 50 others just doesn't work for us).

As a smaller, boutique travel business, we have a "care-factor" that is hard to replicate at bigger travel companies. The owners of Blue Dot Travel are hands on. Not only do we plan and develop the tours, but we also manage the customer service. Plus, our tour leaders are selected carefully. They must not only be organised and good at making decisions, they must also be good company and fun. Laughs are very important.

Finally, each and every one of our tours (we have over 50 itineraries) are tailored by us – for us. In conjunction with our in-country team, we plan our itineraries around what we want to see, not necessarily what's easy to see. Nothing we offer is "off-the-shelf". This means you will see the core sights and occasionally tourist destinations but you

will also experience some of the hidden gems which most companies simply won't provide.

We also try and provide special "Blue Dot" moments on a regular basis. This might mean visiting somewhere not available to the public, a meal in a local's remote home, a transfer from one place to another via untraditional means or some cultural experience that will stay with you forever.



## PRIVATE GROUPS

4 OR MORE PEOPLE



Not everyone wants to go on a group tour – even if it's a small group. That's why we offer most of our itineraries on a private group basis. So, if you have four or more people – family, friends or both – give us a call and we'll help put together something very special based on one of our 50 plus itineraries.



### Blue Dot Travel

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## WHO TRAVELS WITH US?

Our customers are well-travelled individuals who are seeking genuine, in-depth cultural experiences. In our average group we have a mix of solo travellers, couples and friends. Most, but not all of our travellers are of mature age – mainly between 55 and 79 years – with a moderate level of fitness. Age, however, is irrelevant because when you travel, what matters most is a positive attitude and love for an experience.

It gives us immense satisfaction to see so many of our travellers returning time and time again. Over 60% of our customers have done multiple tours with us and have referred many of our new travellers. We take this as a great compliment and thank our crowd of loyal travellers.

## EXPEDITION CRUISES

### AGENTS FOR LINDBLAD AND PONANT CRUISES

Many of our customers love the thought of expedition cruising. Expedition ships are smaller and more adventurous than the standard cruise. Plus, they'll take you to out of the way destinations like Antarctica, Svalbard, Galapagos and many lesser travelled destinations. Having experienced their products first hand, and as official travel agents for both of these cruise companies, we would be delighted to help you with your expedition cruising itinerary.



## HAVE YOU GOT AN IDEA FOR A TOUR?

Over the years, we've continually asked our travellers to provide suggestions on where they'd like Blue Dot to take them. We have certainly been listening and as a result, we've developed many tours as a direct result of customer interest. Do let us know if there is a destination you have in mind. We are more than happy to investigate on your behalf.



## TIPPING INCLUDED

Your tipping is included in all Blue Dot small-group tours. This means you don't need to worry about finding extra cash or worrying about what is the right amount to pay. You are always welcome to provide extra tipping face-to-face, if you felt your driver, guide or any other local went over and above the call of duty.

### Silver

Silver level customers enjoy a **\$400 DISCOUNT** on all small group tours after travelling with us more than three times.

### Gold

Gold level customers enjoy a **\$500 DISCOUNT** on all small group tours after travelling with us more than six times.

### Platinum

Platinum level customers enjoy a **\$1,000 DISCOUNT** on all small group tours after travelling with us more than ten times.

## OUR REWARDS SCHEME

We have an amazing level of repeat travellers with over 60% of our customers having travelled with us more than once. We are very proud of this statistic and like to reward our customers for their loyalty. We offer a three-tier loyalty scheme.



# OUR PLANNED TOURS AT A GLANCE

We have 7 new tours planned for 2021 and of course, we're repeating a few of our popular tours as well. For an in-depth itinerary complete with costs, visit our website. If you'd prefer for us to post you a copy, we're happy to use snail mail.

## 2021

These 2020 Tours – now postponed until 2021	Departs 2021
South Korea & Taiwan	May
Bulgaria, Moldova & Romania	Sep
Morocco in Depth	Sep
Cyprus, Crete & Rhodes	Oct
West Africa – Ghana, Benin, Togo, Senegal & Gambia <b>NEW TOUR</b>	Nov
For details on these 5 tours please visit our website – <a href="http://bluedottravel.com.au">bluedottravel.com.au</a>	

2021 Planned Small-Group Tours	Departs	Page
The Tigers of Central India	Mar	6
Central America – Nicaragua, El Salvador, Honduras & Guatemala <i>with Costa Rica Add-on</i> <b>NEW TOUR</b>	Mar	7
Portugal & The Azores	Apr	8
The Caucasus – Georgia, Azerbaijan, & Armenia <i>with Ukraine Add-on</i>	May	9
Canada's Atlantic Coast – New Foundland & Nova Scotia <b>NEW TOUR</b>	Jun	10
Madagascar & Reunion	Jul	11
Kamchatka <i>with Alaska Add-on</i>	Aug	11
Mongolia for the Nadaam Festival <i>plus 4 day Western Mongolia extension</i>	Jul	12
Corsica, Sardinia & Malta	Sep	12
Ireland in Depth – Plus Orkney & The Shetlands Islands <b>NEW TOUR</b>	Aug	13
Poland & The Ukraine <b>NEW TOUR</b>	Sep	14
The Caucasus – Georgia, Azerbaijan, & Armenia <i>with Ukraine Add-on</i>	Sep	9
The Stans of Central Asia <i>with South Korea Add-on</i>	Sep	15
The Australian Battlefields of WWI – Turkey, France & Belgium	Sep	15
Algeria & Tunisia <b>NEW TOUR</b>	Oct	16
Jordan & Oman <b>NEW TOUR</b>	Oct	16
Bhutan and Bangladesh <b>NEW TOUR</b>	Nov	17

Please note that all tours are subject to change. Visit our website for the latest, detailed itineraries. Please refer to our terms and conditions before making a decision to travel.

[bluedottravel.com.au](http://bluedottravel.com.au)

## अतुल्य! भारत Incredible India

See why we're so passionate about India on pages 18-22



## THE PHOTOS YOU SEE

Most of what you see in this brochure, on our website and all other promotional materials, are photos taken by us and our customers. This is not to big-note ourselves. Rather, we try and use photos of images that you will see on our tours. The vast majority are not professionally taken and not paid for. The main exception is when we are travelling to a destination for the first time.

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## TIGERS of Central India

DEPARTS  
MAR 2021

अतुल्य ! भारत  
Incredible India

**22 DAYS** Highlights of this fabulous tour include retracing India's Mughal and colonial eras on a historic trail through Delhi; reliving Mowgli's days in the Kanha and Pench forests with glimpses of the incredible wildlife that featured in the Jungle Book. The core highlight of the trip will be seeing Central India's wildlife on jeep safaris but there are many other reasons to visit.



You'll step back in time on a trail of Lucknow's landmarks that attest to its regal past and watch the blush of sunrise over the Taj Mahal – one of the world's seven wonders. You'll walk on the wild side at Ranthambore National Park – a wildlife refuge set against a backdrop of waterholes and ruined ramparts. Witness the legacy of Jaipur's feudal rulers with a sightseeing trail through the 'pink city' and in the state of Maharashtra the unique 5th Century monolithic rock-cut temple at Ellora as well as Ajanta's painted frescoes dating back to the 2nd Century BC.

For an exclusive glimpse into India, this itinerary offers a perfect mix of history, culture and wildlife – a chance to explore the landmarks of well-known cities like Delhi, Jaipur, Agra and Lucknow. Trace this history, trail through the lush forests of Kanha, Pench, Satpura and Ranthambore in search of the tiger and discover a rare legacy in stone at Aurangabad's ancient Buddhist rock-cut and frescoed caves.





# CENTRAL AMERICA

## Nicaragua, El Salvador, Honduras & Guatemala

(with Costa Rica add-on)

DEPARTS  
MAR 2021

NEW  
TOUR

### 21 DAYS Four countries. Similar, but different.

Nicaragua is the largest of the Central American countries by land size. Colonised on the Pacific coast by the Spanish and on the Atlantic coast by the British. Add an African-Caribbean influence with the indigenous peoples and you have a melting pot of cultures set against a backdrop of spectacular volcanic landscapes and well preserved colonial cities.

By contrast, El Salvador is Central America's smallest country by land size and the only country in the region without a coastline on the Atlantic/Caribbean side. Having said that, it has a high population density with around 7 million inhabitants living in an area less than half the size of Tasmania. With pristine National Parks, abundant wildlife, and a noticeable lack of mainstream travellers, it's a pleasure to explore.

Honduras is a predominantly Roman Catholic country also ruled by Spain from the 16th Century. After independence in the 1830s it was briefly annexed to Mexico and by mid the 1900s it was ruled – ever so corruptly – by the military generals of the army.

The country welcomed the US army during the contra war of its neighbours during the 1980s and was spared most of the turbulence that the others experienced. However, the historical drawcard here is the wonderfully preserved Mayan ruins, which you have the opportunity to explore.

There is a rich, cultural heritage in Guatemala that is unlike the other countries of the region. Its population is over 65% indigenous Maya Indians. Most of the population work in agriculture. Coffee, bananas, sugar, forestry & fish are the main exports.



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# PORTUGAL & The Azores

DEPARTS  
APR 2021

**20 DAYS** Portugal is a traveller's dream come true. You'll find fortified towns with cobblestoned streets, well preserved castles dating back to the medieval period, glorious beaches, food and wine to die for and magnificent coastal and inland scenery.

It has no less than 15 UNESCO-listed cultural and natural sights! All-the-more fascinating when you consider this tiny country is just 92,000kms – meaning it can fit into Australia over 82 times. The fact that it is a small country, means getting around and seeing the core sights is easy. You don't need to spend long days travelling from place to place. In the morning you can be on a beach, by lunch time in the mountains and in the afternoon, a vineyard! Plus, Portugal is relatively inexpensive in comparison with some of her European neighbours – especially the wine.

Once a medieval super-power due to its superior navigational skills, Portugal has history at every turn. It was visited – invaded – by the Romans, the Celts, The neighbouring Moors and Christians. Today, the country is primarily a Catholic society with over 80% of the 10.5 million inhabitants, identifying as being Catholic. Today, Portuguese is the 6th most spoken language in the world. This is mainly due to the

colonisation of countries like Brazil, Angola, Mozambique and even parts of India and the sub-continent.

On this tour you'll also visit some of the Isles off the coast in the Atlantic – Madeira, Sao Miguel, Faial and Pico in the Azores. The scenery on these volcanic islands will take your breath away, as will the fresh seafood at the numerous fishing villages on the coast.





# THE CAUCASUS

## Georgia, Armenia & Azerbaijan

(with Ukraine Add-on)

DEPARTS  
MAY 2021

**SEPTEMBER  
2021  
TOUR ALSO  
PLANNED**  
see our website for  
more details

**25 DAYS** Snow-capped mountains dominate the region and make for beautiful views with hilltop villages and green valleys. Georgia has an ancient culture and a unique alphabet found nowhere else in the world. Over the centuries all her neighbours have coveted her land. Turks, Persians, Mongols, Arabia and more recently, the Russians have invaded. Ethnic conflicts and periodical civil war has also left its mark. But nowadays, it is a peaceful country. The capital, Tbilisi will surprise you with its modern, very European café style society. Yet, leave the city and you may feel like you are travelling in medieval times. Georgia is developing an excellent reputation for quality wines. In fact, if you travel around the Western Asian region and order wine, it will most likely come from one of Georgia's largest wine producing regions. Tourists (not that there are that many) visit mainly for the scenic beauty of the higher Caucasus Mountain range, the highest point of which is over 5,000 metres.

The Republic of Armenia, a landlocked country in the Lower Caucasus, is a very small country at less than half the size of our own Tasmania and with a population of less than 3 million. Like Georgia, it is a Christian country with an ancient history. Armenia has the distinction of having the oldest Christian cathedral in the world! Once a part of the Soviet Union, independence was reclaimed in 1991. It is a

very "indigenous" country with 98% of the population being and speaking Armenian. Tourism is growing as infrastructure and services improve. Also, like Georgia, the countryside is beautiful with the jewel being the Alpine Lake Sevan at almost 2,000 metres above sea level – one of the largest freshwater alpine lakes in the world.

Azerbaijan, in comparison is a Muslim country. It also boasts an ancient culture with a history dating back to prehistoric times. Stone-age settlements are still evident. Most neighbours came, made their mark and then left at some stage. The country borders Russia, Georgia, Armenia and Iran. Her entire eastern border consists of the Caspian Sea. For many years, her economy has been based around the abundance of oil and gas reserves. The capital, Baku, could be considered a dynamic city. These three countries should be high on your list of must-see destinations.

Our tour also offers a 5 day extension to UNESCO-listed city of Lvov plus Kiev in the Ukraine, complete with a train journey from one to the other. Not to be missed!



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# CANADA'S ATLANTIC COAST

## New Foundland & Nova Scotia

DEPARTS  
JUN 2021

NEW  
TOUR

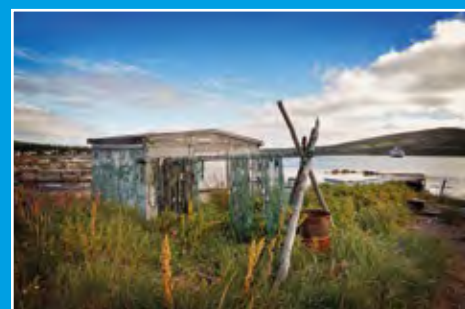
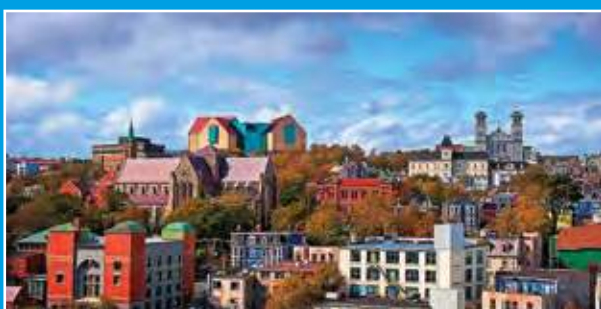
**16 DAYS** Canada is generally regarded as one of the most scenic places on the planet. The world's second largest country in area has many different landscapes from mountains, vast plains, ice-capped regions, thousands of lakes and an extensive rugged coastline.

Vikings landed in Newfoundland around a thousand years ago, however, Europeans first arrived in the late 15th century when Italian explorer Giovanni Caboto – on behalf of King Henry VII of England – documented bays full of fish and forests full of wildlife. By the early 16th century, the French were sending their own explorers and settled Quebec. Later the British were settling colonies around Hudson Bay. As was the norm in these times, the major Colonialists fought over territories and eventually in 1763, the Treaty of Paris – subsequent to the 7 Year War in Europe – ceded North America to the British.

Much like Australia, most of the population – about 90% – is heavily concentrated in one region – along the US Border. Canada grew steadily during the 20th century due mainly

to immigration. Her well-loved red and white maple flag was first raised in 1965 after the country started to cut legal ties with Britain. The Canadian constitution replaced the British Act eventually in 1982. Today, Canada is one of the richest nations due to mainly to its natural resources.

It's difficult to find an in-depth, small group tour for this region. On this 16 day tour, which could only be described as scenically spectacular, you will discover something quite special and unique. The landscapes are varied with a photo opportunity at every turn. The people are warm and friendly and will want to chat for as long as you have time (French or English will suffice). The history of the region is fascinating and you will learn about it in detail from your qualified guide. Throw in UNESCO-listed natural sights and an abundance of amazing food and, well, what more reason do you need?





# MADAGASCAR & Reunion

DEPARTS  
JUL 2021

**21 DAYS** Madagascar, 400 km off the East coast of Africa, is the world's fourth largest island (excluding Australia), a fragment of Gondwanaland left behind when the ancient landmass split to form the continents of Africa, India and Australia. It stretches 1600 km from north to south and is 650 km across at its widest point.

The most astonishing thing about the island is not its size however, but its flora and fauna, which are found nowhere else in the world. The island has been referred to as "nature's design laboratory", because

of the many unique creatures and vegetation, some of quite a primitive nature, which are found here. The terrain varies from tropical rainforest to

desert, from high stony plateaus to lush green islands with many amazing geological and geographical formations throughout. Madagascar has a whole range of unique animals and plants, which have evolved here separated from the rest of the world. The most notable are the lemurs of which around 30 species are described (depending on which book you read). We will visit a number of their known habitats and search both day and night, so that, with just a little luck we will see a fair number of these pro-simian primates. For the bird fancier there are over 250 species of which 106 are endemic, whilst for lovers of reptiles most of the world's chameleons are found here, in fact, the country is nearly as well known for its chameleon population as for its lemurs.

The flora has its own peculiarities, the vegetation varying greatly by climatic region – thorny scrub in the south-west, tropical rainforest along the

east coast, heathland and moss forests on the central plateau and savannahs in the western lowlands. The two best-known examples of these unusual plants are the fan shaped Ravinala, known as the Traveller's Palm, and the Baobab of which there are 10 different species. We will see many examples of these throughout while in the tropical forests we will see trees lush with ferns, fungi, mosses and orchids. Most of this unique flora and fauna, together with some now extinct species, were here when the first humans arrived some 1500 to 2000 years ago. The first inhabitants were Malay-Polynesians who crossed the Indian Ocean in large canoes from Indonesia and South East Asia. These early settlers mixed with later arrivals, African, Arab, Indian and Portuguese traders and French colonials have formed the current 18 official tribes, which are collectively termed the Malagasy.



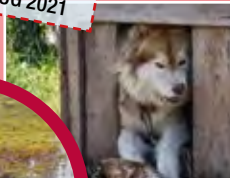
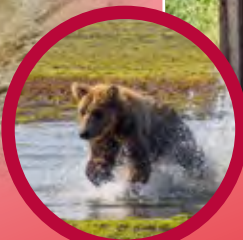
# KAMCHATKA (with Alaska add-on)

DEPARTS  
AUG 2021

**15 DAYS** Kamchatka, one of Russia's least explored but most scenically spectacular regions, is one of the few places left in the world whose name is unknown to most travellers. The peninsula is traversed by two active volcanic ranges in which there are over 160 volcanoes in varying stages of activity, with 20 or more being amongst the world's most volatile. The most powerful volcanic blast recorded in Kamchatka was in 1907 whilst the most recent extraordinary eruption was Mount Mutnovsky in 1994. Other thermal activity deep below the surface produces numerous hot springs, heated rivers and geysers. We will visit the most impressive of these, the "Valley of the Geysers" in Kronotsky National Park, discovered in 1941. Here the variety of volcanic phenomena to be seen is exceptional. The largest geyser, "Velikan", is equal to Yellowstone's "Old Faithful" hurling a column of steam and boiling water fifty metres into the air. Hundreds of others sporadically blast steam, mud and rainbow coloured water heavenwards.

The capital city and administrative headquarters of Petropavlovsk sprawls over the hills and sits in the valleys surrounding Avancha Bay, one of the largest and best-protected harbours in the world. Just 30km to the east the three "domestic" volcanic peaks of Koryaksky, Avachinsky and Kozelsky tower majestically above the city. Away from the volcanoes, Kamchatka is covered by large areas of mixed forests and plains of giant grasses, home to a vast array of wildlife, including brown bears and sable. Kamchatka came late to the Russian Empire. It was annexed by the Cossacks in 1697. In the following forty years the native inhabitants were reduced from some 150,000 to only 10,000. Today, the native people make up about 2% of the population. After WWII the peninsula took on new strategic importance. It became a base for military airfields and home to Soviet nuclear submarines. No foreigners were allowed anywhere near. Fortunately that all changed in the 1990s and today tourists are starting to appear – albeit slowly.

There's also an opportunity to add-on an Alaskan section for a greater hit of wilderness on the other side of the Bering Sea.



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# MONGOLIA for the Nadaam Festival

(plus 4 day Western Mongolia extension)

DEPARTS  
JUL 2021

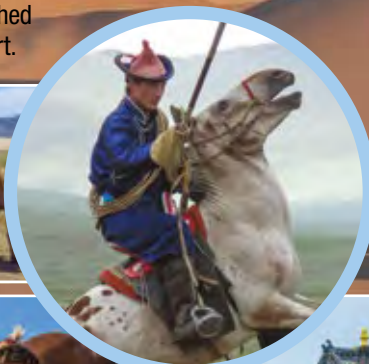
**20 DAYS** A trip through the Land of the Sapphire Blue Sky is something unique. If you're looking for a five-star type, cushy, comfortable holiday, then Mongolia is probably not for you. If you want to get off the beaten track then Mongolia is unmatched in its wild beauty and rawness.

On our three-week tour, you will be rewarded with a wonderful taste of what this country has to offer. Mongolia will be indelibly imprinted on your memory.

All your senses will be engaged – smell, hearing, taste and sight. You will see a night sky so clear that you'll be reminded that the galaxy is infinite as you camp in gers. It is one of the world's least developed, least-populated countries.

You will be blessed with the stunning views of a country so untouched that you know you've reached its true heart.

From the stark Gobi in the south, to the incredible rock formations and magnificence of Khogoryn Els (Mongolia's largest sand dunes) to the crystal blue lakes and rushing clear rivers of the West, it is a land serene, with a culture that is warm and welcoming.



# CORSICA SARDINIA & Malta

DEPARTS  
SEP 2021

**26 DAYS** If year-round sunshine and 7,000 years-worth of living history is your thing, the ex-British colony of Malta should be on your travel bucket list. This independent nation comprises three small Islands – Malta, Gozo and Comino which is uninhabited. It is a traveller's dream because you can take in everything within a small radius, sampling the architecture (both grand and quaint), a stunning fortified harbour, the rocky landscape, traditional hilltop towns, fishing villages, and the upbeat lively capital city, all against the languid backdrop of the magnificent Mediterranean.

Sardinia is the second largest island in the Mediterranean, presenting a rather rugged mountain-scape, balanced by placid bays. In rural parts, stone-walled Neolithic fortresses call Nuraghes can still be seen in the fields. Sardinian towns and cities, especially those along the coast,

have a rich tradition of shellfish and seafood while inland towns and cities are known for game and farm produce, most notably its capers, olives and pecorino sardo.

The sea around this large Mediterranean Island is among the most beautiful and transparent in all the world. The colour of the water on the Costa Smeralda has to be seen to be believed! You will love the pace, the sights, the people, the food and the culture of this very special destination. You will find Sardinia hard to leave.

The Island of Corsica is one of France's 13 regions. It lies directly north of Sardinia where it is easily reached by ferry. Its capital Ajaccio is the birthplace of Napoleon Bonaparte and his ancestral home is today used as a museum. Like other Mediterranean islands, Corsica was visited, conquered and highly influenced by

many people of the ancient world. The Greeks, Romans, Byzantines, Phoenicians, Genovese and Northern Africans all left their mark. France invaded and occupied in the mid 1700s. Today it relies heavily on agriculture and tourism. It is far less developed than many islands in the Mediterranean. People come for the weather, the food and the glorious scenery. Come join us on this spectacular Mediterranean experience!





# IRELAND IN DEPTH

## with Orkney & The Shetland Islands

DEPARTS  
AUG 2021

NEW  
TOUR

**23 DAYS** From the haunting beauty of the pure, unspoiled landscapes and the drama of the coastline, to the urban buzz of the country's dynamic cities mixed with the magic of thousands of years' worth of culture and history, The Emerald Isle is a country that never fails to surprise. We'll have you drinking Guinness in a traditional pub, strolling through quaint cobble-stoned villages, dancing to Celtic music, driving through stunningly beautiful rugged back roads and rugged coastlines. Of course, you'll also take in much history which might even be relevant to your own ancestry. Oh, we'll also be on the lookout for leprechauns!

Off the coast of Northern Scotland lies Orkney, steeped in history, going as far back as Neolithic times. The main island (Mainland) hosts UNESCO-listed sights which includes the breath-taking Standing Stones of Stenness, some up to six metres high.

Further north again lies the Shetland Islands. Being in Shetland is unlike anywhere else, a fact that's evident from the unique culture, dialect, heritage, even the place names. Experience a different world, one with over 100 islands, where wildlife is truly wild, otters and seals play in quiet coves, and the air is full of the sound of seabirds, crowding the jagged cliffs in huge and noisy colonies.



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# POLAND & THE UKRAINE

**26 DAYS** Poland, about half the size of France, has 7 bordering countries and the Baltic Sea on her north. Her borders have changed many times over the years, however, the original state started in 966 AD when a Slavic tribe called the Polans, established rule. In 1939 Poland was invaded by Nazi Germany and suffered greatly when more than 6 million people were killed – over half being Polish Jews. After the War, Poland remained a communist Eastern Block state with close ties to Russia.

**DEPARTS  
SEP 2021**

**NEW  
TOUR**

The solidarity movement which ended with Lech Walesa becoming president, means that today, Poland is a democratic nation. It is considered one of the most ethnically homogeneous nations on the planet with 97% of the population being and speaking Polish. It's known for beautiful towns and villages, cosmopolitan cities, green rolling hills and freezing winters. Thankfully summers and shoulder seasons are quite pleasant.



The Ukraine also has 7 bordering countries and is a land-locked nation. Her landscape is mainly fertile plains which is the main reason that other powers over the years have coveted the region. In medieval times, the region fell under the Lithuanian and Polish rule. Like Poland, her borders have also changed dramatically over time. Cossacks established the state in the mid 17th Century and allied strongly with Russia. After WWI and the Russian Revolution, Ukraine eventually became part of the Soviet Union. Parliament declared



independence in 1991. Ukraine has been left off the traveller's list for too long. There are many reasons to visit including her beautiful cities, towns and villages and her culture of writers, painters, song and dance, food (it's not just chicken Kiev), architecture and religion.

## THE CAUCASUS

**Georgia, Armenia  
& Azerbaijan**  
(with Ukraine extension)

**2ND TOUR  
DEPARTS  
SEP 2021**

**MAY 2021  
TOUR ALSO  
PLANNED**  
see more on  
page 9







# THE STANS

## of Central Asia

(with South Korea add-on)

DEPARTS  
SEP 2021

**26 DAYS** Central Asia or “The Stans” as the region is known to us Westerners, is a vast landlocked region of Asia, increasing in popularity amongst travellers who want to experience one of the world’s last great frontier lands. In Stalin’s time, the area was known as Turkestan. Soon after Independence, these former Soviet Central Asian Republics,

**Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan & Kazakhstan,** were defined as Central Asia. This is the common modern definition.

The Silk Road gave rise to unprecedented trade, but its true brilliance and unique place in human history

were the results of the interchange of ideas, innovations and philosophies that occurred amongst the very different peoples that used it. Our travels will encompass many of these historic places along with many other “story-book” destinations. Wonderful monuments, some restored, some not; museums full of ancient artifacts; colourful bazaars,

all combined with stunning landscapes, make this a memorable experience.

Uzbekistan has three standout historical places of interest – Samarkand, Bukhara and Khiva. All three are very special in their own way and no trip to Uzbekistan is complete without seeing their mosques, colourful markets, squares and other places of interest.

Turkmenistan is a wonderful mix of old versus new. There are the ancient ruins of Merv and Nisa and the ultra-modern capital Ashgabat which is like a combination of Shanghai, Dubai, Astana and Canberra all wrapped up in one.

The countryside of Kyrgyzstan looks more like a postcard than a postcard – if that makes sense! Snow-capped mountains with bright green fields in the foreground, yurts dotting the countryside, lakes, rivers and picturesque townships are to be found. Images that will stay with you forever.

Kazakhstan is by far the largest of the Stans countries in terms of area. Much of it is vast steppe land – almost desert-like. Almaty, with its Russian influence is a wonderful city to stroll.



# Australian BATTLEFIELDS OF WWII

## Turkey, France & Belgium

DEPARTS  
SEP 2021

**13 DAYS** We are proud to present a once-in-a-lifetime tour, taking in Gallipoli and the iconic battlefields of The Western Front in France and Belgium. We have carefully blended the itinerary to give a “snap-shot” of Australia’s military action while ensuring there is ample time to enjoy the incomparable delights of Istanbul and many other places of interest!

Joining the tour as expert commentator is *Major General Paul Irving\** (retired). Paul has a deep interest in military history having commanded both the 8th Brigade (which fought in the Battle of Fromelles) and the 2nd Division that fought at Gallipoli and the Western Front. He has visited the battlefield sites at Gallipoli and the Western Front on a number of occasions. Paul will help you explore the rich history of the Australian Digger’s involvement in the Great War or “the war to end all wars”, where the Anzac legend was born.

With him, you will visit the places which helped form our nation’s heritage, including the major sites on the Gallipoli Peninsula in Turkey and at Fromelles in France, where the Australians suffered what is still today, the darkest day in our military history. We’ll also visit Peronne, Hamel, Pozieres and Mont St Quentin – considered by many – as Australia’s greatest battle victory.

\*Subject to minimum 8 travellers.



**Blue Dot Travel**



# ALGERIA & Tunisia

**22 DAYS** This tour combines two of northern Africa's historical jewels – Algeria and Tunisia which share common borders and an intertwined history. Algeria is one of the most fascinating countries in North Africa, successively colonised by the Numidians, Phoenicians, Carthaginians, Romans, Byzantines, Umayyads, Abbasids, Fatimids, Almoravids, Almohads, Spaniards, Ottomans and, finally, the French colonial empire. On this tour we will visit Tipaza, with its ruins of a Phoenician trading post, Roman

**DEPARTS**  
OCT 2021

port and Byzantine churches. We will see the perfectly preserved Roman cities of Timgad and Djémila which provide insight into sophisticated urban living in the wealthiest of imperial Roman provinces. The Roman 'City of Bridges', Constantine, is encircled by the dramatic gorge of Wadi Rummel and proffers a dramatic history set in an equally dramatic landscape. Also visit the 'closed' valley of the M'Zab, where a traditional way of life survives. Little has changed since medieval times when this was a remote refuge from war and religious persecution. With the Sahara as a backdrop, the ancient Ksars or fortified strongholds, with their surrounding mud brick villages still hold on to traditions that have endured the desert sands for centuries.

Tunisia is a small but diverse country that lies across the Mediterranean Sea from Sicily with Algeria its western neighbour. First settled by the Berber tribes, Tunisia like Algeria, has hosted several cultures.

Sited close to present day Tunis, where our tour starts, the rich and powerful city of Carthage was founded by the Phoenicians in the tenth century BCE. Following its destruction in 146 BCE, Rome reestablished the city, which grew to a peak population of 500,000.

Our tour of Tunisia will see us visiting Berber oasis villages with distinctive troglodyte houses, Roman cities with fine imperial monuments like el Djem's huge amphitheatre, museums with magnificent antique mosaics and beautiful Islamic buildings constructed over 1,500 years ago. You'll encounter the fascinating ribats of Sousse and Monastir, built to defend Islamic Ifriqiyya from European incursions. From blue seas to sandy deserts, seaside cities and fishing villages, jagged hilltops and canyons, salt lakes, lush oases, and the world's greatest desert, these countries are sure to fascinate.

**NEW TOUR**



# JORDAN & Oman

**DEPARTS**  
OCT 2021

**20 DAYS** The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan is a small, landlocked nation with the exception of a tiny section of The Red Sea. It is mainly desert with around half of the country's population living in the capital, Amman. Most of the population are of Bedouin origin. Arabic is the official language but English is widely spoken. Ancient Semitic settlements – more than 4,000 years old – have been identified by archaeologists around the Jordan River. Since then, all the major powers of the region invaded at some stage and the resulting culture is evidence. Originally siding with its Arab neighbours, Jordan now lives in peace with Israel since signing a treaty in 1994. Wadi Rum and Petra are her two best known attractions but the country offers far more than this.

Oman is an independent sultanate on the Arabian peninsula. Covering a strategic location on the Arabian Sea, Oman was coveted by the great powers which came and went. In the late 1400s the Portuguese occupied much of the territory including the capital, Muscat. Almost 100 years later, the Ottomans drove them out and occupied the region for some 100 years. The Persians also came and went briefly. Since 1741, it has been self-governing. The country occupies just over 300,000 square kms and has a population of over 4 million, with the overwhelming majority being of Islamic

**NEW TOUR**



faith. Oman is famous for breeding its Arabian horses. It is not widely travelled to by Westerners. Muscat, Oman's port capital, sits on the Gulf of Oman surrounded by mountains and desert. With history dating back to antiquity, it mixes high-rises and upscale shopping malls with cliff top landmarks such as the 16th century Portuguese forts, Al Jalali and Mirani, looming over Muscat Harbour. Its modern, marble-clad Sultan Qaboos Grand Mosque, with 50m dome and prodigious Persian carpet, can accommodate 20,000 people.

Our itinerary takes you beyond the city to the spectacular landscapes and UNESCO listed sites of Salalah in the South.





# BHUTAN & Bangladesh

DEPARTS  
NOV 2021

**24 DAYS** Bangladesh is one of the most densely populated countries on the planet. Over 150 million people live in an area much smaller than Victoria! The country is predominantly Muslim representing over 80% of the total population. Hindus make up most of the balance.

Bangla culture is famous for being friendly and welcoming, and with tourism still in its infancy, you will feel this to full effect. Travel in Bangladesh is about meeting people and experiencing a different way of life, where rivers and waterways form the basis of everyday life.

About half the total area is actively deltaic and never higher than 10m from mean sea level. This flat low lying land is very fertile and is suitable for rice cultivation. The vast river delta area is home to the dominant plains culture.

NEW  
TOUR



In the northeast and the southeast the land is more hilly and dry, and tea is grown. The hilly areas of the northeast and southeast are occupied by much smaller tribal groups. Ganges and Brahmaputra are the two main rivers of Bangladesh, carrying tonnes of silt from the mighty Himalayas that eventually fertile the plain. Apart from these two rivers, there are hundreds of others comprising a very wide and complex river system. Sundarbans, the largest mangrove forest of the world, is situated in the southwest. Dhaka, the capital city, is bursting with nearly 17 million people (most of whom often seem to be stuck in the same traffic jam as you), is a gloriously noisy and chaotic place, bubbling with energy.

The Kingdom of Bhutan, known to the locals as Druk Yul, Land of the Thunder Dragon, is a small land-locked nation in the Himalayas. It borders India to the South and China to the North.

Mainly due to its physical location, Bhutan was never colonised or conquered and retains a strong sense of national identity. Nearly three quarters of the country is covered in forest. It's highest peak, Kulu Kangri, is over 7,500 metres. The country's population is very small at just 700,000. Most are Bhote Buddhists and ethnic Nepalese. The Taktsang monastery (known as Tigers Nest) is the country's best known icon but there are many more highlights on offer. While Bhutan may be one of the least developed societies, it may just be one of the happiest. The Gross National Happiness philosophy developed by ruler King Jigme Singye Wangchuk measures the well-being and happiness of the people, unlike material wealth measurements.

Two vastly different countries are waiting to be explored.



Blue Dot Travel

Go somewhere different



# INDIA

## on your terms

India is a study in contrasts; a historical backdrop for a modern-day industrial narrative, a traditional outlook co-existing with fresh, global lifestyles, an ensemble of ethnic disparities creating a cohesive, cultural identity.

Immerse yourself in a sensory potpourri; of colourful, exuberant scenes and folk, of tangible, delectable cuisines and flavours, of dialects and tongues exchanged like currency, and the ebb and flow of a billion people working through their daily routines!



अतुल्य! भारत  
Incredible! India



At Blue Dot, we're obsessed with India, so much so, that we've developed 8 itineraries for you to explore with family and friends when you want, on your terms and fully guided.

Each of these tours are vastly different from each other and cover a multitude of regions and cultures. Take one at a time or do them back to back. All you need is a group of 4 or more and we'll make it happen for you.

See our website for detailed itineraries and recommended travel periods.



## Tamil Nadu

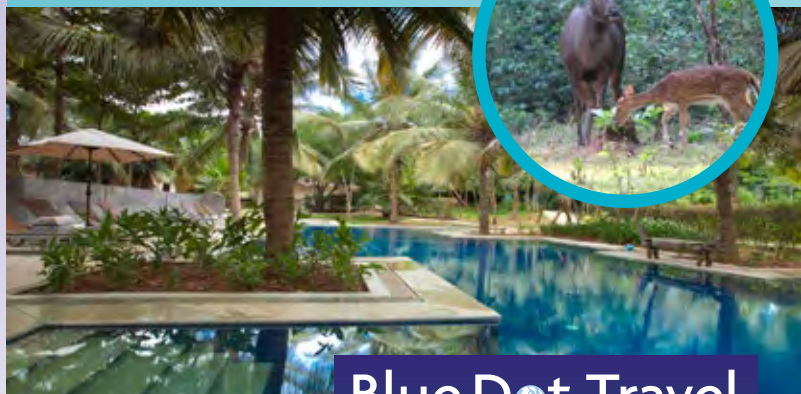
**10 DAYS** Tamil Nadu bears witness to a rich history of empires and dynasties who left their marks in stone temples – the state's major attractions. One can trace history and the evolution of architecture, dance and music by studying temple motifs, and the age-old traditions and rituals continue to this day – making for a lively, cultural experience. From Tamil Nadu's sandy beaches to its forested mountains, from the temple towns to its tea plantation hill stations, Tamil Nadu can offer a plethora of travel options for all ages!



## Southern India

### Beyond Temples & Backwater

**13 DAYS** There is so much more for the discerning traveller to explore, beyond Northern India's kingdoms and Southern India's temple trails. On this itinerary, you can tap into the urban pulse of Bangalore, retrace the history and traditions of Mysore, learn about the adventures of a saint who started coffee cultivations in India, capture the wildlife of Kabini and Wayanad with your cameras, smell the spices of Mopilah cuisine at Thalassery and unwind in the tropical beaches of Neeleshwar.



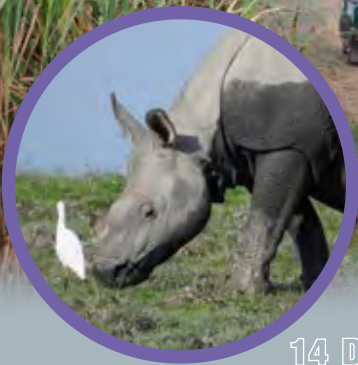
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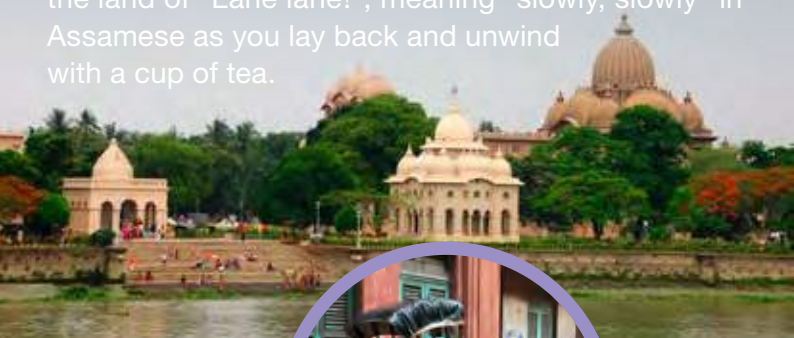
## Assam

Rhinos, Rivers  
& Remote Lands



**14 DAYS** Assam is the tale of a river that romances with the lands, the living and the lore. The River Brahmaputra carves itself through expansive grasslands and rice paddy fields and contains an array of remarkable river islands. Home to one-horned rhinoceros, many mammals and birds, the state takes you through the stories of successful conservation.

But diversity is not just limited to nature and wildlife here. A land that has always been welcoming and open to novelty; Assam's culture fashions out of many unique traditions that paved into its ethos with the passing of time. While you start your trip with the magnum opus of Kolkata city, you slowly slide away into the simple, unhurried cultural landscapes of Assam. Welcome to the land of "Lahe lahe!", meaning "slowly, slowly" in Assamese as you lay back and unwind with a cup of tea.



## Wildlife of Central India



**11 DAYS** The central Indian forests has inspired many writers over the centuries including Kipling and Forsyth to name a few. The thrill of tracking predators such as big cats or wild dogs on game drives is unmistakable. Doing so amidst bamboo forests, teak dominated landscapes and the mixed vegetation of these three different parks simply adds to the experience.

Exploring these well-kept tiger reserves includes a canoe on the river, walking inside the core jungles, and jeep safaris. This journey will allow you to get a deeper insight into the Central Indian wilderness at the heart of India – the popular, well-explored Kanha National Park that features on every wildlife enthusiast's list, the Pench corridor that forms a continuum with Kanha, and the offbeat Satpura National Park that is emerging as a veritable sanctuary for wildlife today, each with their own stories.

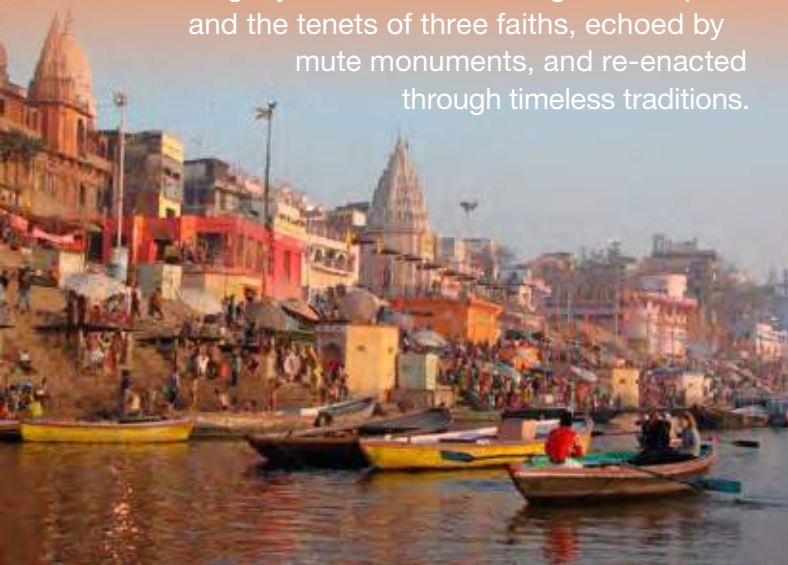




# Ancient India

River, Religion & Dynasty

**11 DAYS** Most ancient civilisations trace their origins to river valleys. The fertile plains and perennial water supply lured the nomadic herdsmen to settle down, cultivate the land, and the surplus produce led to the establishment of cities, societies, priestly sects and empires. The Gangetic valley has the rare claim of having seen the rise of three major faiths: Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism! As you trail along the plains of the majestic Ganges, trace the legacy of those almost-forgotten empires and the tenets of three faiths, echoed by mute monuments, and re-enacted through timeless traditions.



# Ladakh

Mountains, Monasteries & Monks



**12 DAYS** Both Buddhism and the barren high-altitude mountains are common to this part of the world, yet you will be surprised by the subtle differences between landscapes, people, history and wildlife in the region. From high passes, to border villages, secretive wildlife, to ancient monasteries and ruins, this journey takes you not just into Ladakh and its remoteness but also into insights of how fragile it still is environmentally and geographically. Yet, every step and every drive add to experiences unmatched and incomparable.



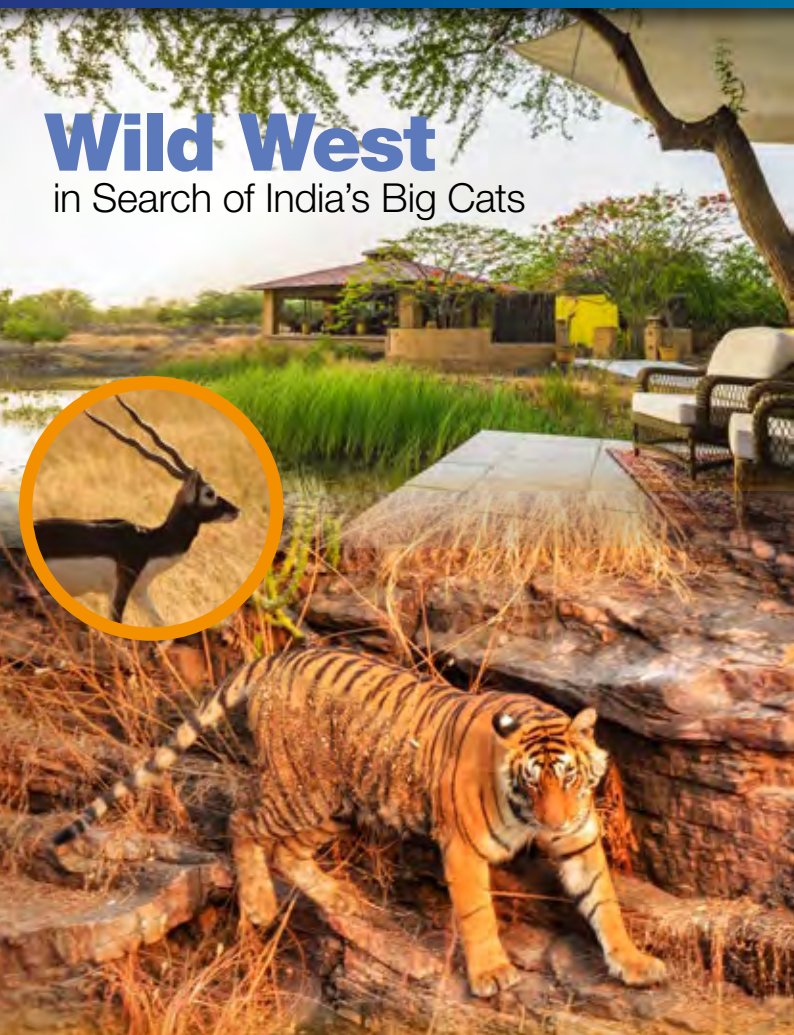
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## Wild West

in Search of India's Big Cats



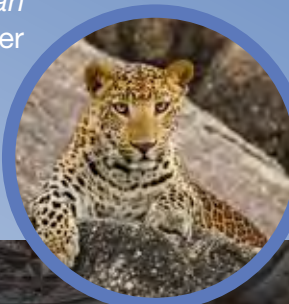
**15 DAYS** For wildlife-lovers, nothing is as alluring as the big cats of India, including the royal Bengal tiger and the Asiatic lion. These big cats once roamed freely across the Indian subcontinent, but trophy hunting and habitat destruction has endangered populations, which are restricted to a few habitats, today. Gir in the state of Gujarat is the last refuge for the Asiatic lion, offering a chance to glimpse these rare creatures in the wild.



## Rajasthan the Hinterland



**9 DAYS** Most people visit the desert state of Rajasthan for its imperial heritage; beautiful palaces, historic forts, regal havelis or mansions, and it is indeed, a resplendent route to journey. Yet who built these grandiose structures, who immortalised battle stories in song and dance, who told stories of the ancient feudal lords, and who sustained these fiefdoms of old? With *The Hinterlands Of Rajasthan* itinerary, you can retrace the dustier routes that the riches of ancient feudal kingdoms travelled by, to hear the history from the folk who have borne it to present-day.





# RESPONSIBLE Travel

## Key to our philosophy:

- Our small groups have less impact on the local communities and the environments that we visit.
- Where possible we believe in putting money directly into the communities that we visit by using locally owned and run accommodation and eating locally produced food.
- Our preference is to use locally owned partners in our destinations and using local guides and drivers.
- We endeavour to ensure that our practices help in the environmental conservation of the areas we visit.
- We review our itineraries to ensure that our included activities do not have a negative impact on animal welfare.
- We provide our clients with reusable metal water bottles to help reduce the level of plastic in our environment.
- We encourage our travellers to purchase from local suppliers, as well as supporting social enterprises, local trade, arts and crafts.
- We provide our clients with advice on how to respect the social, cultural and religious beliefs of local communities.

Tourism is one of the most important and largest industries on the planet. It employs more people worldwide than any other, with millions of local families relying on tourism for their daily needs. Now, more than ever, it is important for us to continue travelling and supporting these communities, whilst doing so in a responsible way.

As tourism becomes a truly global industry, we recognise our obligation to operate our tours in a responsible and sustainable fashion. We view this not only as an environmental issue but an economic and social one as well. Above all, we are committed to the well-being of the communities and the natural environment that we are there to experience. We also believe that by following these policies we can provide a more rewarding and interesting experience to you our clients.



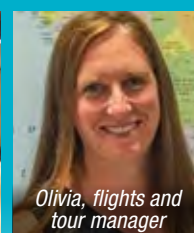
Brett & Kate, owners & tour leaders



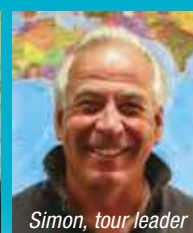
Brod & Joanne, owners & tour leaders



Angela & Paul, tour leaders



Olivia, flights and tour manager



Simon, tour leader

## MEET THE BLUE DOT TRAVEL TEAM

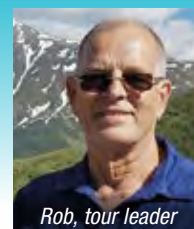
Providing we have 10 or more travellers on any small group tour, we add a tour leader from Australia. The role of this individual is not to act as a guide, rather to maximise the enjoyment for all whilst on tour. They will liaise with the guides, help plan where necessary and sort out any issues that might arise on the run. (Heh, we all know that things don't always go to plan when we travel).



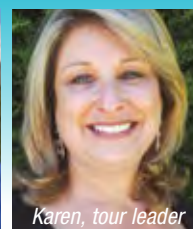
Gordon, tour leader



Karl, tour leader



Rob, tour leader



Karen, tour leader



Isabelle



Priyantha



Sefi



Jonah



Tommy

Our in-country tour guides (not to be confused with the tour leaders from Australia) provide all the history, local knowledge, language and local culture. They are all locally qualified professionals whom you will learn much from.

## Blue Dot Travel

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# COME TRAVEL WITH US

IN SMALL GROUPS, TO UNIQUE DESTINATIONS

*"The tour leader was always available to help and guide us along the way when in need – a joy to be with, fun and laughter always completes an extraordinary days adventure."* MARG, WARRNAMBOOL

*"The Blue Dot tour was very well organised with an experienced host and caring locals on hand at every stop to help with airport transfers and check-ins, sightseeing, answering questions, plus remarkable wildlife spotters and guides. This was our first experience with Blue Dot Travel and we look forward to the next one!"* JOHN & DEB, SYDNEY

*"Blue Dot kept us up to date with all matters all the way. Nothing was left to chance. Small groups enables interaction with each travelling member creating a special experience within the group members."* JANELLE & ROGER, SYDNEY



## EMAIL, MAIL OR BOTH!

**We like to keep in touch with our travellers on a regular basis without bombarding you.** We use regular mail a few times a year (mainly for our annual brochure) and email a little more often. If we have both street address and email contact details, we can keep you in the loop about special deals, invite you to our information and trivia events plus alert you if tours are filling. If you'd like to update any of your details drop us an email to [kate@bluedottravel.com.au](mailto:kate@bluedottravel.com.au) This way, you won't miss out!

For complete itineraries **visit [bluedottravel.com.au](http://bluedottravel.com.au)**  
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