

TOP TRIPS

OUR PICK OF FIVE GREAT SMALL-GROUP ADVENTURES ACROSS THE GLOBE



Image: Aqua Amazon

AMAZON AHOY!

WHAT Wave goodbye to civilisation and sail off into the depths of the jungle aboard the luxurious *Aqua Amazon*. Settle into your boutique riverfront suite, enjoy your fill of Peruvian cuisine, then rise early and climb aboard a skiff to fish for piranhas in Charo Lake and see the prehistoric reptiles of Yacapana (Iguana) Island. On Yucurucho Lake marvel at the world's largest aquatic plant, the Victoria Regia water lily, then cruise to Puerto Prado Village, home of the Cocama Indians, and learn about their unique culture.

Experience the magnificent confluence of the Ucayali and the Marañón rivers as they merge into one of the world's most extraordinary waterways, the mighty Amazon.
WHERE Peru is located in the north-west of South America.
WHEN This seven-day trip departs from Iquitos every Saturday, year-round.
WHY The planet's largest river beckons.
HOW Go with Aqua Expeditions from about AU\$7185.
aquaexpeditions.com

QUIRKY LONDON UNCOVERED

WHAT Ditch the conventional walking tours and prepare yourself for a laugh-out-loud lesson on the secret, silly and salacious historical facts of London. See iconic landmarks and everyday sights with fresh eyes as you stroll through Covent Garden with your guide lifting the veil on the city's colourful past. Discover the hidden truth behind the statuesque lions in Trafalgar Square, search for Britain's smallest police station and spot the only street where cars drive on the right-hand side of the road. Whether you're a local or a first-time visitor, the Quirky London Tour is sure to bring a sunny twist to a rainy London day.

WHERE London is the capital of England.
WHEN This one-and-a-half hour tour departs every Saturday at 11.30am.
WHY Discover a funnier, wackier side of London.
HOW Go on the Quirky London tour with Insider London for about AU\$33.
insider-london.co.uk



Image: Will Boese

RETRO AFRICAN SAFARI

WHAT Jump in a kombi and turn your African safari into a radical journey, dude. With funky names like Beatrice, Piglet and The Dude, your unique ride will have you motoring through the Ugandan wilderness to your own beat (be sure to remember you iPod). Zoom into Murchison Falls National Park for an afternoon of wildlife spotting – elephants, leopards, lions and giraffes – with your knowledgeable guide. Stop for a picnic by the Nile River, before cruising towards the thundering base of Murchison Falls by boat, keeping your eyes peeled for crocodiles and hippos. Enjoy a scenic drive through Kaniyo Pabidi Forest, dodging sun-worshipping baboons on the roads to Ziwa Rhino Sanctuary, where you'll enjoy an up-close encounter with the endangered white rhino.
WHERE Uganda is located in central-east Africa.
WHEN This three-day private tour is available on request.
WHY African safari, retro style.
HOW Go with Kombi Nation Tours from AU\$835 per person, all-inclusive.
kombitours.com



CYCLING PAST CEYLON

WHAT Grab a bike and cruise the assorted landscapes of Sri Lanka. Scraping in at just over two-thirds the size of Tasmania, this petite island offers jungles, ancient ruins and famous tea estates all bound together by beaches inviting you to indulge in a post-pedal dip. Feel the city rush in Colombo and Kandy, and soak up the quiet life as you cycle the nation's back roads. You'll stay at hotels and guesthouses where dinner is dished from clay pots simmering over fire, and visit the spice groves that flavour your meals. When you're out of the saddle you'll be spotting leopards, checking out caves hiding Buddhist temples, watching thousands of flamingos stalking the shallows of a lagoon and spying whales and dolphins by the sea.
WHERE Sri Lanka is a small island south-east of India.
WHEN This 14-day trip departs throughout 2015.
WHY There's more to this teardrop-shaped island than tea.
HOW Join Exodus Travel's Cycle the Backroads of Sri Lanka tour from AU\$2565.
exodustravels.com



Image: Oler Malver

RIVERS OF VINO

WHAT There are laws against drink driving, but no one ever said anything about drink kayaking. Let the vines fuel your paddle-power as you glide along the rivers of the Douro Valley, one of Europe's oldest wine making regions and a UNESCO World Heritage site. Cruise between the riverbanks of Portugal and Spain, and wander through vineyards, orchards and lush 400-year-old olive trees in Quinta do Barracão da Vilaric. Soak up the old-world culture of the Cõa Valley, and marvel at the engraved Paleolithic drawings dating back thousands of years at Vila Nova de Foz Cõa. In the evenings swap your paddles for mouth-watering fresh produce and a glass of wine straight from the barrel.
WHERE Portugal is located on Europe's west coast.
WHEN This nine-day tour departs in June and September.
WHY Ditch the designated driver for a water-based wine adventure.
HOW Go with Natural Habitat Adventures on their Paddling Portugal's River of Wine tour from AU\$6664.
nathab.com