

# Five Best... Big Adventures

## 1 Africa

Two trucks carrying around 30 paying punters plus a motley crew of musicians set off from Johannesburg on Sept 26 on a 3,000km journey to Malawi, arriving in time for the Lake of Stars Festival of world music. Basically it's a party on wheels. The damage? £1,000 covers transport, game drives, meals, 17 nights' accommodation and festival tickets. Excludes flights. *Dragoman Overland* (01728 861133, [dragoman.com](http://dragoman.com)).

## 2 London-Sydney

In 12 weeks. En route, you'll only get a fleeting glance at the 20 countries you pass through, but this surely beats the 24-hour flight. Oz Bus's first departure on Sept 16 is full but there's a second on Sept 23 with more planned for 2008. £3,750 covers transport, accommodation and meals, plus around £350 for visas. 020-8641 1443, [oz-bus.com](http://oz-bus.com).

## 3 Central Asia

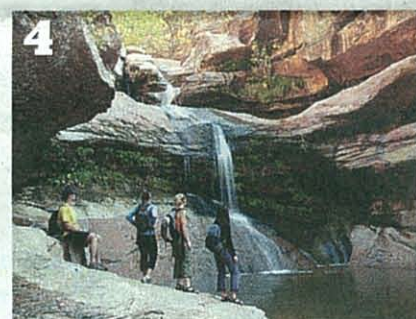
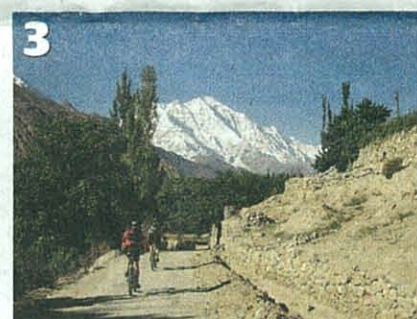
A 950km bike trip starting in the Tien Shan mountains of Kazakhstan, crossing mountain passes into Kirghizstan and China's Xinjiang province, finishing with a five-day descent of the Karakoram Highway in Pakistan – this is no ride in the park. You'll need thighs of steel. £1,795 for 25 days, Aug 11-Sept 4. 017687 73966, [theadventure.com](http://theadventure.com).

## 4 America

It's the 50th anniversary of Kerouac's On The Road this year. To do your own road trip – without the hassles of map reading or indeed driving – join Gap Year For Grown Ups' small group trip across six US states and 11 national parks. £1,210 for 28 days including accommodation, admission to all parks, but not flights. Departs San Francisco. 01892 701881, [gapyearforgrownups.co.uk](http://gapyearforgrownups.co.uk).

## 5 Nepal

Give overcrowded Everest base camp and Annapurna a miss and head for the spectacular Dhaulagiri Himal, an area little-travelled by locals, let alone other trekkers. The 27-day trek goes around the world's eighth highest peak and over the Kali Gandakhi river valley, the deepest on earth. The level is described as "challenging" and you'll need a head for heights for high pass crossings and a glacial traverse. Oct 8, £1,450 excl flights, 020-8545 9030, [worldexpeditions.com](http://worldexpeditions.com).



# BestOfTheNet

## One-stop shop for dos and don'ts

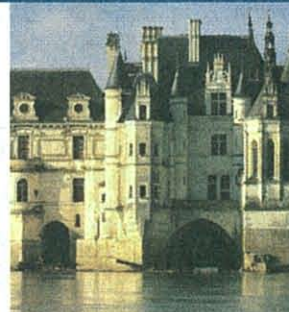
The internet is full of travel advice, but until recently most of it felt like a public service missive – well meaning (but often boring) sites by the Foreign Office ([fco.gov.uk/travel](http://fco.gov.uk/travel)) and the NHS ([fitfortravel.scot.nhs.uk](http://fitfortravel.scot.nhs.uk)) with helpful tips about visas and vaccinations. While sites with independent-minded advice, like the earnest material at [travel-journal.org](http://travel-journal.org), still have the feel of something you ought to be reading, rather than actually want to.

Sharing advice has long been possible, but until now you had to go hunting for it either by posting questions on forums such as Destination 360 ([destination360.com/forum](http://destination360.com/forum)) or scouring sites for user-generated tips, such as our own Been There ([ivebeenthere.co.uk](http://ivebeenthere.co.uk)). But in the last couple of weeks, along comes a site that arranges lots of handy user-generated advice, divides it all by destination and then...

and still teething, but its central idea – collecting a list of dos and don'ts for practically every destination in the world – seems so simple you wonder why it hasn't been done before. What's especially nice about the site is that it's more than just a repository of ravings from frustrated tourists hell-bent on venting their revenge. Thus far, the ratio of positive to negative information uploaded has been about three-to-one.

So what do travel dodos recommend? Top tips range from taking tram number 28 in Lisbon as one of the best (and cheapest) ways to see the city, to sampling *yam cha* (dim sum) in Sydney. I've done both and can vouch for them too. Even so, such is the nature of user-generated sites that not every bit of advice is worth taking. For every useful nugget posted there's some fool prepared to describe the

## the guardian reader offer



### Loire Valley and Monet's Garden by Eurostar

6 days from £399pp

Departures on selected dates July - October 2007

The Loire Valley is known as the Garden of France, and is one of the country's most beautiful regions. A traditional land of sleepy towns full of narrow streets, old-fashioned shops, markets, imposing cathedrals and opulent chateaux. Once the playground of royalty, now rural France in its purest form. Combine this with a visit to the house and garden of impressionist artist, Claude Monet, and you have a lovely destination for a tour.

#### Fully escorted price includes:

- Return standard class reserved seat on Eurostar from London Waterloo or Ashford to Paris. First class upgrades available
- Five nights' bed and breakfast at superior three-star hotels
- Three dinners
- Visit to Amboise, the site of Leonardo da Vinci's house
- Visit to Chartres
- Visits to magnificent Châteaux
- Visit to Claude Monet's house and garden
- Picturesque scenery
- Services of an experienced tour manager

## the guardian reader offer

### California & The Golden West



15 days from £1099pp

Departing on selected dates September 2007 - November 2007

A spectacular tour with all the very best sights of the Western USA, exploring its world-famous National Parks, intriguing native Indian history, amazing desert landscape lush forests and the lofty peaks of the Sierra Nevada, plus pulsating and unique cities.

#### Fully escorted price includes:

- Return direct scheduled flights from London Heathrow. Connecting regional flights available at a supplement.
- Staying in excellent quality three and four-star hotels
- Three night stay and tour of cosmopolitan San Francisco, America's favourite city and dominated by the instantly recognisable Golden Gate Bridge
- Guided tours of Los Angeles and San Diego
- Visit and stay in glitzy Las Vegas – the 'Entertainment Capital of the World'
- Visit four of the most famous National Parks in the world: the Grand Canyon, Bryce Canyon, Zion National Park and Yosemite. Each overnight stay and visit has been carefully timed to experience these awe-inspiring sights when the light displays them at their most beautiful
- Visit timeless Monument Valley, immortalised in so many classic 'westerns'
- See the Giant Sequoias of Yosemite