

SMALL GROUP TOURS



AROUND
THE GLOBE

2023-2024

Blue Dot Travel

Go somewhere different

bluedottravel.com.au

WELCOME

TO BLUE DOT TRAVEL

We've been thrilled to see the demand for international travel grow rapidly over the months. As a result, we've been busy ramping up our own plans and we have a great program for the balance of 2023 and all of 2024. In fact, we've even started developing initial plans for 2025!

This brochure presents a summary of our tours on offer over the next phase. All of the detail with dates, costs and inclusions is on the website. We've selected destinations from our suite of over 70 existing itineraries, based on their popularity. Plus, we've added a few new tours to lesser-travelled places that excite us and we hope will excite you too.

Since 2011, the same Blue Dot formula remains in place. We will continue to offer small-group, cultural tours,

RESPONSIBLE TRAVEL

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 for you.

KEY TO OUR PHILOSOPHY:

- Our small groups have less impact on the communities and environments we visit.
- Where possible, we believe in putting money directly into these communities by using locally owned and run accommodation, and eating at small-scale restaurants.
- Our preference is to use regionally owned partners in our destinations and employ 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 encourage our travellers to purchase from provincial vendors, as well as supporting social enterprises, markets, and arts and crafts.
- We advise our clients on respecting a community's social, cultural and religious beliefs.



to lesser travelled destinations around the globe! Our itineraries are hand crafted to be unique, and to take you somewhere different. Nothing we offer is off-the-shelf.

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.



FAMILY TOURS

As parents of well-travelled children, we know what kids want on a holiday. And we know what mum, dad and the grand parents want too.

We developed some family friendly itineraries designed for travel within school holidays. The beauty of these tours is that you can do as much or as little as you like but regardless, all the hard work is done for you. Hotels, transfers, guides, excursions and most meals have all been planned for you. You just have to pack and show up at the airport! Talk to us about tailored family itineraries.



PRIVATE GROUPS

Not everyone wants to go on a group tour – even if it's a small group.

That's why we offer 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.



WHY TRAVEL WITH BLUE DOT?

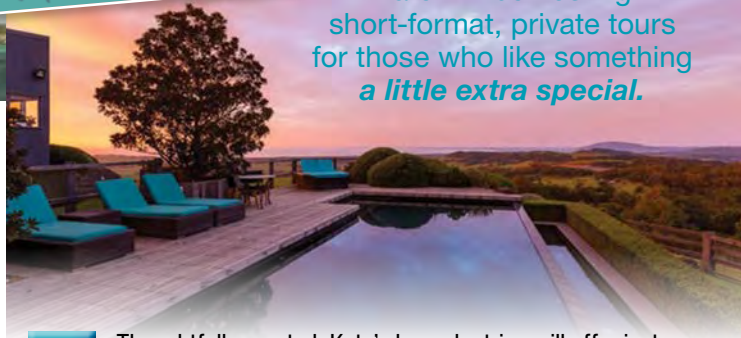
- Our small-group format provides a **more personal experience** with maximum traveller numbers from just 6 to 16 depending on the destination.
- We avoid mainstream destinations. Rather, we prefer to **explore lesser-travelled places** and regions where the cultural experience is far more rewarding and where crowds are fewer.
- Blue Dot caters for the 50yr plus traveller. We understand their needs and interests and fall into this category ourselves.
- **Over 65% of our customers have done multiple tours** with us. Plus, we have a very high level of referrals for which we are most grateful. This gives us immense satisfaction.
- **An Australian tour leader is provided on all international tours** with 10 or more travellers. They will look after you and act as a go-between for the travellers and the guide to maximise your enjoyment.
- 12 years of experience provides a **vast network of local ground operators and excellent guides**.
- When all of the inclusions are taken into consideration, we represent **good old-fashioned value-for-money**. We are very proud of the fact that 96 percent of our travellers rate us as "good" or "very good" for overall value for money.
- Tipping included on all international tours.
- Let us book your international flights – or book them yourself. Your call.
- Our Australian tour leaders are a wonderful bunch of caring folks with a passion to travel.



Kate's Teal Tours

WATCH THIS SPACE!

Kate will be hosting short-format, private tours for those who like something **a little extra special.**



NEW

Thoughtfully curated, Kate's bespoke trips will offer just the right mix of activities, dining & quality accommodation. Stay tuned!

Blue Dot Travel

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2023 Tours, SEP-DEC

Departs

The Caucasus – Azerbaijan, Georgia & Armenia	Sep
Portugal and the Azores	Sep
Japan in Autumn	Sep
Japan's Northern Honshu (or as add-on to above)	Sep
Algeria & Tunisia	Oct
West Africa – Ghana, Togo, Benin, Senegal, Gambia (plus Cape Verde add-on)	Nov
Sri Lanka In-Depth	Nov
Incredible Southern India	Nov

2024 Tours, JAN-DEC

Departs

Kangaroo Island & The Limestone Coast	Feb
Big Cats of Western India	Feb
New Guinea & Indonesia Ponant Expedition	Mar
South Korea & Taiwan	Apr
The Caucasus – Azerbaijan, Georgia & Armenia	May
Bulgaria and Romania (or as add-on to The Caucasus)	Jun
Uganda In-Depth with Tanzania Extension	Jun
Iceland In-Depth	Jun
Svalbard Arctic Expedition Cruise with Aurora	Jun
Faroe Islands	Jun
Greenland (Ilulissat)	Jul
South Aust to Western Aust – across the Nullarbor	Jul
Uruguay, Paraguay, Bolivia	Aug
Morocco In-Detail	Sep
Corsica, Sardinia & Malta	Sep
Japan in Autumn	Sep
Japan Northern Honshu (or as add-on to above)	Sep
Jordan & Oman with Saudi Arabia extension	Oct
Vietnam & Cambodia including Mekong Cruise	Oct
Bangladesh & Bhutan	Nov
The Guianas – Guyana, Suriname & French Guiana	Nov

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.

AT A GLANCE

OUR PLANNED TOURS

From July 2023 until December next year, we have over 28 tours planned so there is sure to be a destination or two that will inspire you to travel. If we have your email address, we can keep you in the loop with updates and any changes to our plans.



2025 Tours we are planning

Mongolia
Central America: Nicaragua, Honduras, El Salvador, Guatemala
Antarctica with Ponant plus South America add-on
The Stans of Central Asia
Madagascar
Ethiopia
Philippines Expedition
Egypt & Saudi Arabia
The Kimberley Expedition
Nagaland & India's North East
Others to come...

IT'S A LONG WAY OFF...

we're starting to think about 2025

Here are some of our preliminary plans. However, we'd love to hear from you if you have any ideas on where we could travel to. We will do our best to incorporate them depending on demand.

BIG CATS of Western India

NEW TOUR
DEPARTS FEB 2024

24 DAYS For wildlife-lovers, nothing is as alluring as the big cats of India. This journey takes us deep inside India's western wilderness. The region is highly diverse, with unique landscapes that are primarily dry and arid, dominated by the Thar Desert. Along with the desert are enchanting dry deciduous forests, shrubland, vast savanna grasslands and endless saltans.

A huge variety of wildlife live here, including three of the four Big Cats in the country – the Asiatic Lion, Bengal Tiger and Indian Leopard. We also have the opportunity to see four kinds of canids on this trip – Indian Wolf, Striped Hyena, Bengal Fox and Jackal. Along with these predators are other mammals such as the Asiatic Wild ass, blackbuck, spotted deer, sambhar deer and many more. Western India is also an essential destination on the Central Asian flyway and thousands of migratory birds congregate in the water bodies, making it an

absolute goldmine for birders. The arid saltans are dotted with lakes that are breeding grounds for flamingos, cranes and pelicans and a number of raptors.

This region is also home to some of the most elaborate architecture in the country. See the intricately carved marble of Jain Temple Hutheesing and witness the legacy of Jaipur's feudal rulers on a sightseeing trail through the "pink city". Throughout your journey, be welcomed by warm and colourful people who make India such a fascinating place to travel. Come with us, as we peel back the different layers of India for you.



NEW GUINEA & INDONESIA Ponant Expedition

DEPARTS MAR 2024

17 DAYS Board the ship in Cairns and Le Lapérouse will sail for Papua New Guinea, a fascinating land that is home to no fewer than 700 ethnic groups within a highly diverse yet mainly unexplored ecosystem. Your call at Tufi will be one of the highlights of your voyage. Dubbed the Scandinavia of the Tropics, you will undoubtedly fall under the charm of this picturesque region, with its deep 'fjords'

known locally as 'rias', which were formed through volcanic activity. In this unique setting, local Papuan tribes will share their customs, beliefs and artwork with you.

We'll then head north along the coast to Madang, nicknamed 'the most beautiful city in the South Pacific'. Within this stunning province exists great geographical diversity and 170 different languages are spoken. Its festival showcases this richness and offers colourful traditional performances or 'sing sings' by many of the cultural groups of the province. These include the mysterious Asaro Mudmen, who re-enact a warrior episode from

their history, wearing masks of mud, their bodies coated in clay. In the village of Kopar, situated at the mouth of the Sepik River, you will be welcomed with cultural performances and witness life in a traditional village. As you voyage across Western New Guinea you will experience Cenderawasih Bay, with an unforgettable opportunity to swim with whale sharks and in the spectacular Kitikiti Waterfall, surrounded by lush nature. You will then set sail towards the Kei Islands, located in the Maluku Islands.

These hidden gems surrounded by unbelievably blue water boast some of the most beautiful white-sand beaches in Indonesia. Before ending your cruise in Darwin, you will sail to the heart of Triton Bay. Located within a protected marine environment in the middle of the Coral Triangle, you will enjoy an unforgettable zodiac cruise through the spectacular rainforest-capped karst islands.



Blue Dot Travel

Go somewhere different

SOUTH KOREA & TAIWAN

DEPARTS
APR 2024

Unlike its neighbours Japan and China, Korea is not a popular tourist destination for Australians. In fact, apart from its capital Seoul, there are not many European travellers on the peninsula at all.

You'll notice in some places, European people may even be stared at. Locals are not being rude, they are simply inquisitive. The entire country is easy to get around – it's just 100,000 square kms (less than half the size of Victoria).

Seoul is a very modern capital city with around 10 million of the country's 48 million people. The rest of the population live mainly in the south and east. The western part of the country is quite sparse in comparison. While there is much to see and do in Seoul, you need to leave the capital to see this wonderful country; traditional villages, UNESCO temples and Buddhas, large and small cities, gorgeous countryside with hills full of native trees and rice paddies on what appears to be every spare piece of flat land.

Korea is a photographer's dream. There's also history galore. Much of Korea was ruled by the Joseon dynasty which lasted for over 500 years until the late 1800s. They left a mark which you'll find right in the heart of Seoul with the Gyeongbokgung Palace built in the 14th century. Learn about this and see what "K pop" culture, kimchi and Gangnam Style is all about!

26 DAYS The subtropical island of Taiwan is small, yet even with its population of 23 million, it doesn't feel crowded. Taiwan's indigenous tribes – of which there are ten officially recognised by today's government – are believed to have Polynesian ancestors, not Chinese. Having been ruled by the Dutch, Han Chinese and Japanese, Taiwan's culture is an interesting mix. Taipei, the modern, efficient capital, has wonderful food and café culture – if you like your dumplings, you've come to the right place! Taiwan is known as the "Beautiful Isle", and outside of Taipei, you'll find towering sea cliffs, dramatic gorges, tropical forests and mountains. We visit the beautiful Sun Moon Lake, the quaint village of Lukang known for its handicrafts and the scenic coastline of Tarako National Park.



BULGARIA & ROMANIA

DEPARTS
JUN 2024

14 DAYS This wonderful tour offers Medieval history, fabulous food and wine, picturesque country side and...Dracula! Bulgaria is a great mix of cultural influences and traditions. Greek, Roman and Turkish existence is clearly evident. It is a relatively small country with a population of just 7 million. For a small country however, Bulgaria packs a lot of interest for the traveller. In fact, it boasts 9 UNESCO-listed World Heritage sites. Caught up in both WWI and WWII and formerly part of the Eastern-Block States, Bulgaria is relatively fast growing in comparison with some of its neighbours and joined the European Union in 2007. You'll love the capital Sofia, a mix of old and cool. For a small country, Romania has a large population – around the same as our own at 23

million. It is surrounded by Bulgaria, Serbia, Hungary, Ukraine and Moldova with a small stretch of the Black Sea preventing it from being landlocked. Much of its landscape is picturesque with the Carpathian Mountains occupying the centre of the country.

There is a lot to see and do in this mainly Christian Orthodox country. The region of Transylvania is well known for its castles, churches and beautiful forested mountains. Around 30% of the country's workers are employed in agriculture. The quality of their wines has increased dramatically over the years, so much so, they are selling it all over Europe! The cities in the Transylvania region will surprise you with their cosmopolitan feel and beauty.



The Caucasus – **AZERBAIJAN, GEORGIA & ARMENIA**

DEPARTS
MAY 2024

TOUR HIGHLIGHTS

- The region's natural beauty – mountains, valleys, rivers & lakes
- Medieval villages where the way of life has not changed for decades
- Warm & friendly people
- UNESCO-listed sites throughout the region – monasteries, towns and monuments.
- Ancient, medieval & modern history
- Wonderful food and wine.

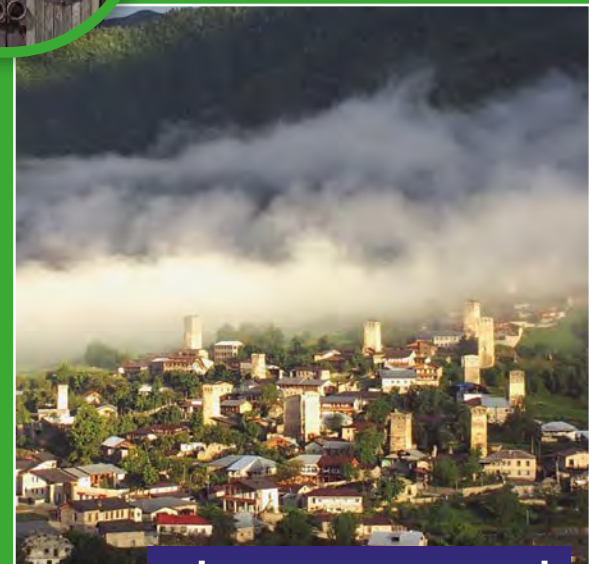
26 DAYS Snow-capped mountains dominate the region and make for beautiful views with hilltop villages and green valleys. Georgia has an ancient culture and a unique alphabet found nowhere else in the world. The capital, Tbilisi will surprise you with its modern, very European café style society. Yet, leave the city and you may feel like you are travelling in medieval times. 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.

Azerbaijan, considered a moderate Muslim nation, 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. For many years, her economy has been based around the abundance of oil and gas reserves. The capital, Baku, could be considered a rich and dynamic city.

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!

Tourism is growing as infrastructure and services improve. 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. These three countries should be high on your list of must-see destinations.



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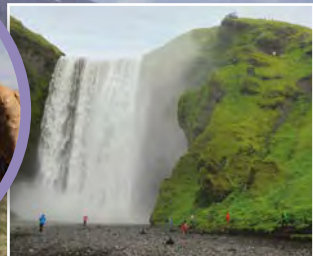


13 DAYS Whatever your perceptions of Iceland may be, they are possibly off the mark, or at least dated, as this small North Sea nation keeps on reinventing itself. Iceland is often called the Land of Ice and Fire. Its spectacular natural landscapes showcase the ancient geothermal forces have been at work for thousands of years. Iceland is known for its volcanoes, glaciers, fjordlands, mountains, lava fields, waterfalls, and hot springs. The island's interior is a cold and uninhabitable combination of sand, mountains, and lava fields.

From humble Nordic origins it has become one of Europe's leading eco-paradises, boasting the largest national park in the European Union – Vatnajökull where you'll discover pristine streams full of salmon, trails through glaciers, five-gaited Icelandic horses running wild, and bubbling pools of mud and sulphur to heal the body and mind. Many things in Iceland

remain exactly as the Vikings found them around 1,100 years ago, especially the raw and dramatic glacial fjords.

At about 100,000 square kilometres, Iceland is small – with a population of just 350,000 making it the most sparsely populated country in Europe. At 43.5 hours per week, they have the longest work week in Europe. The Icelandic language remains unchanged from ancient Norse. Iceland is warmed by the Gulf Stream and has a temperate climate, despite a high latitude just outside the Arctic Circle. Its high latitude and marine influence keep summers chilly, with most of the archipelago having a tundra climate. The major city & capital is Reykjavik which lies on the south west. Akureyri, a lovely city with great food and gardens, is the capital of northern Iceland.



SVALBARD ARCTIC EXPEDITION CRUISE

with Aurora

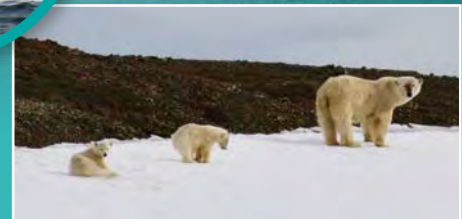
NEW TOUR
DEPARTS JUN 2024

12 DAYS Enjoy the best of Svalbard, a world of endless daylight. A land where polar bear sightings will delight, guillemot cries echo from the sea cliffs, and beluga whales rise from the sea. Explore tundra adorned with wildflowers and search for arctic fox, or discover historic camps of explorers and hunters. Push through pack ice to find walrus and bearded seals, or simply enjoy the breathtakingly beautiful Norwegian fjords.

ABOUT AURORA From the start, Aurora Expeditions was destined to be different. Established 30 years ago and founded on a passion for adventure, exploring wild places and sharing the experience with friends, Aurora has a preference for small-group, personal expeditions. Each expedition is accompanied by an experienced team who are world class. Remote area specialists, their onboard lectures entertain and expand your knowledge. Whether you're joining an Aurora cruise for the first time or returning for another adventure, their mission

remains the same – to explore wild places that stir the soul, offer personal attention on unforgettable expeditions and welcome new friends into the Aurora family.

YOUR SHIP The Greg Mortimer is the first passenger vessel to feature the revolutionary ULSTEIN X-BOW®, providing improved stability in rough seas, enhanced ship speed and reduced environmental impact. The ship showcases other unique features such as custom-designed hydraulic platforms, sea-level Zodiac platforms for efficient loading off the ship, two jacuzzis and much more! The ship averages just 132 guests so your experience is more personal than larger vessels. Blue Dot has secured a limited number of cabins for this specific departure. Most cabins have balconies with full glass views.



GREENLAND (Ilulissat)

DEPARTS
JUL 2024

5 DAYS The Nordic settler Eric the Red gave Greenland this misleading description of it being green, in a bid to attract more settlers. However, it is far from being green and is in effect the world's largest island and almost entirely covered in ice. It also has the lowest population density of any country/state. The scenery could only be described as stunning but words don't do it justice.

For around 4,500 years, Inuit pioneers and adventurers have been drawn here, summoned by the northern lights, and to do battle with ice crevasses and polar bears. These days it's more about enjoyment: deep sea fishing, whale-watching (20 species of whale – notably fin, humpback and minke), Arctic cruising, dog-sledding, mountaineering, bird-watching (especially white-tailed eagles with wingspans of 2.5 metres), and marauding herds of musk ox. Sadly, we can't guarantee you will spot them all, but looking is half the fun.

Blue Dot Travel's Greenland tour with 4 nights in Ilulissat is planned to run in conjunction with our June 2024 Arctic expedition cruise to Svalbard.



THE FAROE ISLANDS

DEPARTS
JUN 2024

5 DAYS The Faroe Islands are not on many Australians' travel list. They should be because they are a hidden treasure! Every village seems to be perched on the most picturesque bay overlooking the Atlantic. The houses are quaint. There are waterfalls at every turn. Salmon is abundant. There are sheep everywhere and their wool makes fabulous jumpers – famous in many parts of Europe.

The early history of the rugged and rocky Faroe Islands is shrouded in as much mist as mystery, but it was probably settled by Norsemen in the 800s, who introduced the area's signature sheep and goats. While once a Norwegian asset, these fishing islands have been under Danish control/support since 1388. Having said

that, The Faroe Islands is a separate self-governing state. The 18 islands of Faroe are roughly halfway between Great Britain and Iceland with a population of around 50,000 people. The official language is Faroese which is a Germanic language that descended from Old Norse. Since they are within the Kingdom of Denmark, the locals generally converse in Danish, but most also speak English.

Absence of other distractions has led to a strong music culture here, with hearty music festivals in summer. Despite its remote location, The Faroe Islands has excellent infrastructure. A number of tunnels make it easy to traverse the mountain ranges, and a further two connect the islands. Between navigable roadways and its small size, The Faroe Islands create an unforgettable road trip with extraordinary views at every turn.



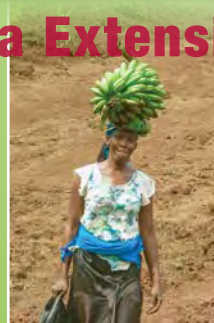
Blue Dot Travel

Go somewhere different

UGANDA IN-DEPTH with Tanzania Extension

19 DAYS If you like close encounters with wildlife, friendly people and stunning scenery, Uganda might just be the best place to visit in all of Africa. In fact, this wonderful country offers the complete African wildlife experience with the added bonus of the gorillas. There are 10 national parks covering a significant percentage of the countryside. In the North East, you can spot the big cats, the savannah animals and an amazing variety of birdlife. Down west you'll see a plethora of elephants, hippos, chimps and more. And then there's the mountain gorillas. Sadly, there are only about 900 of these majestic primates left in the wild but you are highly likely to see them in their natural habitat on this tour.

DEPARTS
JUN 2024



Put simply, Uganda offers a wildlife experience second to none. However, it's not all about the wildlife.

Churchill was right... Uganda is the pearl of Africa! With stunning scenery, much of the country is on a plateau which ascends to over 5,100 metres on Mount Stanley in the south – the 3rd highest peak in Africa. The landscape is a combination of jungle, grasslands and land that has been cleared for farming. Uganda shares Lake Victoria – the largest tropical lake in the world – as its eastern border with Kenya and Tanzania. Uganda is a landlocked nation about the size of Victoria. It is predominantly a Christian country with 80% of the 30 million people being of Christian faith.

The West first took real notice of Uganda in the early 70s when the dictator Idi Amin took power. Dubbed "the butcher of Uganda", Amin was a military official who, after seizing power, was responsible for the expulsion and murder of hundreds of thousands of people – namely any one who did not agree with his ways. He died in exile in 2003. Today, the country is at peace. Visitors are attracted by the gorillas which are protected from poachers around the clock. While the recent past of this struggling nation cannot be ignored, it is well and truly open for business. You will be greatly rewarded by visiting. Not just for the gorillas, but also for the people, the magnificent scenery and the culture.



URUGUAY, PARAGUAY, BOLIVIA

DEPARTS
AUG 2024

18 DAYS Wedged between Argentina and Brazil, the small nation of Uruguay is often overlooked by travellers on their tours of South America. This makes it the ideal place to experience everyday 'not made for tourists' moments. Whether it's strolling the cobbled streets of UNESCO-listed Colonia, or sipping maté in the cosmopolitan capital Montevideo, the laid back culture welcomes travellers. Uruguay's boutique-style wine country is making its mark on the global map and must be enjoyed alongside delicious picada, a traditional snack.

Even further off the "gringo trail", at the heart of the continent, is the landlocked country of Paraguay. The capital, Asuncion, is the ideal place to learn about the history and culture of the region with its many museums and galleries. Yet just beyond the city, you may feel as though you have stepped back in time, visiting artisans' workshops set against a rural backdrop. It is a country of contrasts and one that not many of your friends will have visited.

Celebrated for its colourful history, fascinating customs, and jaw-dropping landscapes it's easy to see why Bolivia and travel are a match made in heaven. Over 60 percent of Bolivia's population is of indigenous descent, with a further 30 percent from mixed indigenous and European origins, making it the most indigenous country on the continent. There are wonderful Incan ruins to be explored, yet the Spanish colonisation can still be strongly felt: the "white city" of Sucre is a UNESCO-listed site. The phenomenal Salt Flats are a photographer's dream and must-do experience in Bolivia. So too is the monumental Lake Titicaca, the world's highest navigable body of water at 3,800 metres above sea level, its waters reflecting the Andes ranges. If you're looking for the things that South America is known for – ancient Incan ruins, colonial architecture, UNESCO-listed sites, and epic landscapes – in the places lesser travelled, this is the trip for you.



MOROCCO In-Detail

DEPARTS
SEP 2024

23 DAYS Morocco. Just saying it conjures up the aroma of delicious tagines, images of bustling souks, snow-capped mountains, medinas (ancient walled cities) and camels. It is all of these things and so much more. The Kingdom of Morocco is about twice the size of Victoria and sits on the North East Atlantic coast of Africa with the Mediterranean Sea directly north. Its location on the continent, coupled with its resources, meant it received much attention from European powers over the centuries: Portugal, Spain and France have all played their part

with the latter claiming Morocco as a protectorate state from 1912-1956 (Treaty of Fez). The Western Sahara (once Spanish) remains a highly contentious area in the deep south where the local, mainly indigenous Sahrawians, reject Morocco's sovereignty over this vast desert region.

Many people think Morocco is mostly desert however, there are fertile valleys, oasis gorges, vast cedar forests and much of the country is mountainous – the Atlas Range averages over 3,500m and the highest peaks are snow covered for much of the year. Casablanca is the largest city of Rabat has around 1.6 million inhabitants.

Ninety nine percent of the population are Sunni Muslims of Arab, Berber or Arab/Berber ancestry. There is a very small Christian and even smaller Jewish population that have had some influence on the region. Morocco is famous for its arts and crafts – pottery, metalware, leather goods and rugs can be found in almost every souk and shopping always involves haggling over the price.

Our tour of Morocco will cover off the must-sees along with plenty of lesser travelled destinations. It is a comprehensive itinerary which covers most regions.



CORSICA, SARDINIA, MALTA

24 DAYS

If year-round sunshine and 7,000 years-worth of living history is your

thing, Malta should be on your travel bucket list. This independent nation – an ex British colony – 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 an 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 birth place of Napoleon



DEPARTS
SEP 2024

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.



Blue Dot Travel

Go somewhere different

JAPAN in Autumn

DEPARTS
SEP 2024

20 DAYS Japan is truly a delight for the traveller. A country where meticulous care is taken in every walk of life, from the long-preserved cultural traditions to the high-tech modern cities and even the food on your plate. This tour includes the best of everything Japan has to offer, as well as some Blue-Dot special picks. It is designed for both newcomers and those who wish to re-visit and follows a leisurely pace starting and ending in Tokyo.

The hi-tech speed and efficiency of the bullet train will whisk you from Tokyo to the serenity of Kyoto's zen gardens in less than three hours, where temples and culture surround you. Be moved by the tragic history of Hiroshima and the sacred island of Miyajima. Step back in time in the UNESCO-listed township of Shirakawago with its thatched roof houses and immerse yourself in ancient culture with the Taiko drummers of Sado Island.

14 DAYS After the first visit to Japan, many of us come back feeling that we barely scratched the surface. This itinerary allows you to delve deeper into the lesser travelled, but equally rewarding side of Japan in the Tohoku region, the Northern area on the main island Honshu.

Very few western travellers visit the Tohoku region, so the experience is akin to visiting Japan 30 years ago before tourism exploded in the major cities. We'll visit small traditional

villages like the mountainous hot spring village of Nyuto Onsen, with its collection of rustic wooden buildings and Ouchi-juku, a collection of traditional thatched buildings from the Edo Period, both dating back 300 years.

This region is rich in Samurai history and we'll visit authentic samurai residences where the direct descendants of the samurai families still live. It is also home to some of Japan's original castles with excellent examples Hirosaki and Tsuruga. As one of the least densely populated areas of Japan, Tohoku is known for its beautiful mountainous scenery, virgin beech forests, volcanic peaks and lakes. We'll enjoy gentle hiking at Goshikinuma, a cluster of five

volcanic lakes, each with its unique colour ranging from reddish-green to cobalt blue; and at Shirakami Sanchi, the largest virgin beech forest in East Asia, and a UNESCO-listed area. In fact, this region is home to three UNESCO-listed sites, the most impressive being the vast array of temples in Nikko, where 103 of the buildings and structures as well as their natural setting has been declared a World Heritage site.

On our travels, we'll stay in a mix of hotels and traditional Ryokans, some with naturally occurring hot spring baths on site. Come and join us for a step away from modern life, to wander amongst breathtaking natural beauty and to gain a fantastic insight into Japanese history, culture and traditional customs.

JAPAN'S NORTHERN HONSHU or as add-on to Japan in Autumn

DEPARTS
SEP 2024



VIETNAM & CAMBODIA including Mekong River Cruise

27 DAYS On this fascinating tour, we visit the historically intertwined countries of Vietnam and Cambodia, taking in bustling metropolis cities, ancient kingdoms, world heritage sites, and the spectacular beauty of Halong Bay and the Mekong Delta.

Travelling with Blue Dot you'll experience these fascinating cultures from many unique perspectives, with 8 days spent onboard a boutique river cruise on the Mekong Delta, a slow-paced rail journey into the mountains and a delightful cruise into Ha Long Bay. Of course, we will also spend time on land amidst the beautiful people of these countries. With its intriguing history, terraced rice fields, floating markets, French-influenced food, and scenic waterways, Vietnam has so much to offer the traveller. As a communist country, Vietnam has no official religion, but people are free to worship if they want to, and many follow what's called the "Three Teachings" of Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism.



Two of Vietnam's largest rivers, the Mekong in the south and the Red in the north, end at the South China Sea in a huge swampy delta. These regions are home to much of the country's population and provide fertile ground to grow rice and crops. On this journey, we will cruise the serene waters of both the delta and UNESCO World Heritage listed Halong Bay in northeast Vietnam, which consists of more than 1,600 islands and inlets. We'll also visit the fascinating hill tribes and villages around Sapa, enjoy the lively colour and markets of Hanoi and explore the bustling Ho Chi Minh City.



NEW TOUR
DEPARTS
OCT 2024

Cambodia is about twice the size of Tasmania and has a population of over 14 million. From the 9th to the 15th century, the country was the centre of the Khmer Empire. It became a French protectorate in 1863 and then part of French Indochina a few years later. The decades following their independence in 1953 were nothing short of turbulent. The People of Cambodia have emerged from their turbulent past with what can only be described as an unbreakable spirit. They will leave their impression on you as equally as their most famous tourist attraction, the stunning temples of Angkor Wat.

With a population who are 95% Buddhist, the religious sites and temples are of the best in Indochina, whilst their major cities of Phnom Penh and Siem Reap are chaotic and charismatic. Physically, the country is picturesque with fertile valleys, along the mighty Mekong River.



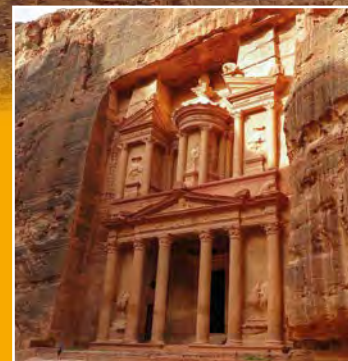
JORDAN & OMAN with Saudi Arabia Extension

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, and Arabic is the official language. 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, yet Jordan remains a safe haven within the region. Known for their hospitality, Jordanians have welcomed travellers for centuries. Wadi Rum and Petra are the 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 km and has a population of over 4 million, with the overwhelming majority being of Islamic faith. Oman is not widely travelled to by Westerners, yet offers a rich heritage and stunning natural beauty. Muscat, Oman's port capital, sits on the Gulf of Oman surrounded by mountains and desert. With history dating back to antiquity, it mixes modern high-rises with 16th-century landmarks and the impressive Sultan Qaboos Grand Mosque. Beyond the capital, desert oasis and UNESCO-listed sites form the backdrop for the ancient Frankincense trade route.

Saudi Arabia is an undiscovered, culturally rich destination that is completely off the tourist trail. It is home to Mecca and Medina, and is laden with World Heritage sites. Be one of our first travellers to discover this emerging destination, on our 6 day Saudi Arabia extension.



NEW TOUR
DEPARTS
OCT 2024

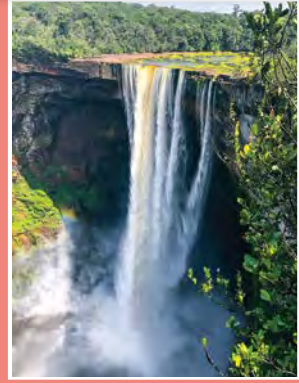
Blue Dot Travel

Go somewhere different

THE GUIANAS OF SOUTH AMERICA:

Guyana, Suriname, French Guiana

DEPARTS
NOV 2024



21 DAYS

Perched on the Atlantic Coast between Brazil and Venezuela, each of these countries offer something very special and,

as very few travellers visit these nations, they come with huge bragging rights! While they are all part of The Guyana Shield (the greater Amazon Basin), they differ in that they were colonised by different European cultures who have all left their mark. They each provide indigenous culture with Amerindian history, along with colonial history – mainly Dutch, French and English but the Spanish and Portuguese were also there at some

stage. African slave labour was used across the region and a strong Indian and Javanese influence is evident resulting from the plantations of sugar and other crops. Add the distinctly Caribbean feel and you have a melting pot of people, like no other. 80% of the region is tropical rainforest and pristine rivers with unique wildlife including the giant ant eater, giant beavers, jaguars and a plethora of birdlife. Collectively, they are often referred to as “The Guianas”. The colonial capitals are

all gems. In fact, Paramaribo – Suriname’s capital – with its beautiful timber buildings in the old town, is UNESCO-listed. Iles du Salut (or Devils Island as it is more widely known), where the book Papillon is set, is not to be missed. Georgetown, French Guiana’s Space Centre and Rainforest River lodges are also highlights of the trip.



BANGLADESH & BHUTAN

NEW TOUR
DEPARTS
NOV 2024



25 DAYS Bangladesh, the Land of Bengal, is a South Asian country marked by lush greenery and many waterways. It is one of the most densely populated countries on the planet with over 150 million inhabitants living in a fascinating way with their environment. About half the total area of the country is no higher than 10m above sea level, which has led to a unique river-based way of life. The Ganges and Brahmaputra are the two main rivers of Bangladesh, carrying tonnes of silt from the mighty Himalayas. Apart from these two rivers, there are hundreds more comprising a very wide and complex river system.

Bangladesh is home to the largest mangrove forest in the world, the Sundarbans, best explored as the locals do: by boat. The hilly areas of the North and South-East are lush green landscapes of terraced tea plantations, occupied by smaller tribal groups. The capital city Dhaka, with nearly 17 million people, is a gloriously noisy and chaotic place, bubbling warm and welcoming, and with tourism still in its infancy, there are wonderful opportunities to get to know the locals.

The Kingdom of Bhutan, known to the locals as Druk Yul, the Land of the Thunder Dragon, is a small landlocked nation in the Himalayas. Mainly due to its physical location, Bhutan was never colonised or conquered and retains its strong sense of national identity. Nearly three quarters of the country is covered in forest. Its 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 wellbeing and happiness of the people, rather than material wealth measurements. If you’re the sort of traveller who enjoys connecting with friendly locals, in a place where you’re unlikely to bump into many tourists, then this is the trip for you.



KANGAROO ISLAND & The Limestone Coast

NEW
TOUR
DEPARTS
FEB 2024

the wildlife park to hear of the extraordinary efforts from locals to rescue and treat injured wildlife during the recent bushfires.

In South Australia, we'll explore the scenic Fleurieu Peninsula, the Coonawarra wine region, and the crater lakes at Mt Gambier. The Fleurieu has a great maritime history, once being the centre of the 1,800's Murray River paddle steamer industry. The region boasts incredible natural features, including the Coorong National Park and the Murray Mouth (where the Murray River enters Lake Alexandrina and onto the Southern Ocean). You will be in excellent hands with your local tour guide and driver Bill.



14 DAYS Coastal journeys don't get much more spectacular than this one. Beginning in Melbourne and ending in Adelaide, you will journey west along the Great Ocean Road and the Limestone Coast taking in some of Victoria and South Australia's most iconic and spectacular scenery. Along the way, you will visit heritage sites, gorges, sinkholes, National Parks, wine-growing regions, and seaside villages. There will be extraordinary wildlife encounters and plentiful gourmet offerings. We'll have stops in Lorne, Mt Gambier, Robe, Port Fairy, and Kangaroo Island. During our stay on Kangaroo Island, we'll visit



ACROSS THE NULLARBOR South Australia to Western Australia

DEPARTS
JUL 2024

14 DAYS Crossing the mighty Nullarbor is quite an experience. Vast, forbidding and raw, the land of 'no trees' is home to a plethora of limestone caves, soaring sea cliffs, and red sand desert...interspersed with indigenous and pioneering history.

The drive between Ceduna on South Australia's Eyre Peninsula and Norseman in Western Australia is around 13 hours, a distance of 1,200 kilometres, so we'll have a few stops along the way. We'll drive

the world's longest straight bit of road, known as the 90 Mile Straight, 146.6 km between Caiguna and Balladonia. We are likely to meet a veritable host of characters. From the feral camels, kangaroos and wombats who call this desert home to the sunburnt holidaymakers, truckies, and adventure-seeking tourists on bikes, there'll be a smorgasbord of people watching on our journey. One thing is certain; we will surely be mesmerised

by a thousand shimmering mirages. We'll also be able to watch whales and their calves frolic in the protected bays of the spectacular Great Australian Bight.

Once we reach the southern tip of Western Australia, the landscape changes. The Southwestern corner of Western Australia is a pocket of lush green forests, farmland, rivers and a rugged coastline contrasting the stark landscapes of the rest of the state. Fertile soils provide foodies with the best fresh produce and world-class wineries, while its waters are rich with marine life.



Blue Dot Travel

Go somewhere different

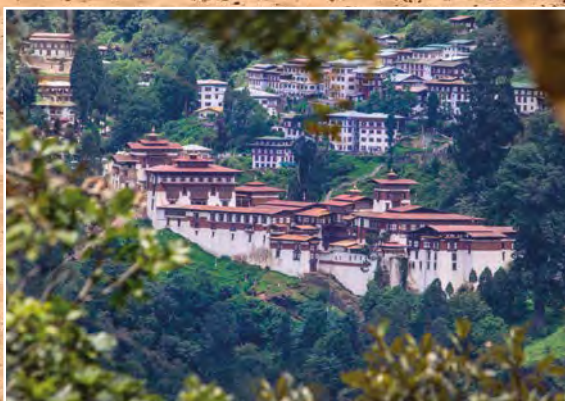
COME TRAVEL WITH US

IN SMALL GROUPS,
TO UNIQUE DESTINATIONS

"Our trip to Sri Lanka was a wonderful adventure. There is culture, history and wildlife to be enjoyed and with a knowledgeable local guide the food and way of life can also be experienced. I seriously suggest you go there with Blue Dot if you have an opportunity" JENNY, VIC

"I have never experienced a local guide with such depth of knowledge about her country and its history, she was top notch, the best" DOUG, NSW

"I felt they made the trip personally for me. I felt we were very blessed being in their care in a strange land. We were kept briefed on what the next day contained and no question was too difficult. Overall, the best guide and driver I have had in my travels" MARGARET, VIC



MEET THE TEAM AT BLUE DOT TRAVEL

When we have 10 or more travellers on any international small group tour, we add a tour leader from Australia. Their role is not as a guide, rather to maximise enjoyment for all.

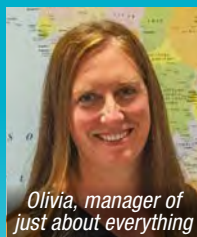
They'll liaise with the guides, help plan where necessary and sort out any issues that might arise. (Heh, we all know that things don't always go to plan when we travel).



Brett & Kate, travel tracers



Brod & Joanne, our brains trust



Olivia, manager of just about everything



Karen, tour leader



Simon, tour leader



Gordon, tour leader



EMAIL, MAIL OR BOTH!

We like to keep in touch with our travellers on a regular basis without bombarding you. 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

For complete itineraries **visit bluedottravel.com.au**
enquiries@bluedottravel.com.au or call on (02) 9906 5770
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