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Where to Go When
**INTRODUCTION**

We’d so nearly booked to come in early June. I’d thought: that’ll be nice, surely? Start of summer, decent weather before the crowds descend, no? Well, not quite. As we sat sipping grappa on a high, sunny terrace, with a view of the spiky Dolomites spearing a cloudless blue sky, I was glad we’d waited until the start of July. By now, unlike in early June, the salubrious, red-ingham mountain huts and handy cablecars were all open for business; the high passes were mostly free of snow; the multifarious activities were all available; the wildflowers were rampant. Yet it still wasn’t busy. We raised our little glasses again. Saluti! A local toast to perfect timing.

Of course, if we were ski buffs, our timing would have been completely wrong. In that case, February or March would have been our months for these north Italian slopes; then, the winter chill is less fierce and the powder is at its best. But different strokes for different folks. Which is where this book comes in.

‘Where to go when?’ is the most important question in travel. Maybe there’s an experience you’re desperate to have, and you want to make sure you have it when the conditions and circumstances are just right. For instance, there’s no point dreaming of Peru’s Inca Trail, then turning up without a permit in February (when it’s closed) or July-August (when it’s busiest).

Or maybe you have set dates for your next holiday – stuck with two weeks in October? With such restrictions, you need to know which destinations will offer your desired sun, sights, surf or wildlife-sightings when you’re free to visit (FYI, try Greece, Jordan, Fiji and Namibia respectively).

Either way, this book will give you options and advice – and maybe make you consider places you’ve never considered before. Indeed, it’s particularly suited to the confused or inspiration-seeking traveller. The book is divided into 12 chapters, one for every month, and at the start of each, we’ve included a handy flowchart. Answer the questions and follow the strands to help drill down the type of trip you want: do you want to chill out or challenge yourself? Do you want to find cultural sites, active exploits or your inner self? Do you want a quiet beach or a crazy one? We’ll give you a wealth of ideas.

We’ve selected 360 places that cover all bases, from family-friendly escapes to hardcore adventures and plenty in between. And we’ll tell you when are the best times to visit each one: maybe because it’s hosting a mustn’t-miss festival; because it’s cheaper and calmer before peak season; because it’s when the manta rays/polar bears/butterflies are in town; because the weather is just so very good. Whatever type of trip you’re looking for, whichever month you can get away, and whether you’re a hammock-swing or roadtripper or raver, we’ll tell you exactly where to go.

By Sarah Baxter & Paul Bloomfield
Find your inner glow – and your appetite – on a winter-walk break in Tasmania, India.

Head for Austria and waltz in the wintry glamour of Vienna’s famed ball season.

Snag a slice of winter sun on Miami Beach and its surrounding state of Florida.

Enjoy fabulous food, walking and wallabies while the sun shines over Tasmania.

Get a cultural kick in classic surrounds with the diverse acts of the Sydney Festival.

Cruise the Ayeyarwady River and explore the temples of Bagan under a warm sun in Myanmar.

Soak amid the steam and hot springs of Budapest, Hungary, the city of thermal baths.

Learn to speak Spanish in Guatemala’s charming cultural hub, Antigua.

Run with the A-list in one of Switzerland’s world-class winter-sports resorts.

Explore fairy-tale castles amid the mountains of Transylvania, Romania.

Ride waves, scan volcanoes, birdwatch or simply relax on Lanzarote and Fuerteventura.

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January

Switzerland

Botswana

Tanzania

Florida, USA

Sydney, Australia

Las Vegas, Nevada

Slovenia

Antarctica

India

Grenada

Tanzania

Canada

Bulgaria

Colombia

Myanmar (Burma)

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Where to Go When

December

SOUTHERN PATAGONIA CHILE & ARGENTINA

Why now? Go to the wild ends of the Earth as spring turns to summer. Jagged peaks, gargantuan glaciers, pumas stalking guanacos across vast landscapes – everything is epic in South America’s uttermost reaches. Including the weather: you don’t want to mess with Patagonia in the austral winter. Come in December, as spring slips into summer but before peak tourist season bites. Top billing goes to Chile’s Torres del Paine National Park, which demands to be explored on foot, on the eight-day circuit or four-day ‘W’ trek for views of the granite towers and Los Cuernos (the ‘horns’). In Argentina, 197ft-high (60m) Perito Moreno Glacier calves massive icebergs, while south of the ‘Land of Fire’, Tierra del Fuego, the Americas finally peter out at Cape Horn.

Trip plan: For a two- or three-week itinerary, fly from Santiago to Puerto Montt and board the Navimag ferry for a four-day cruise through fjords to Puerto Natales. Hike Torres del Paine and gape at the ice giants of Los Glaciares National Park in Argentina, then head south to Punta Arenas (via Magellanic penguin colonies) and Tierra del Fuego.

Need to know: Patagonia gets busier as December progresses; book accommodation and ferry tickets early. Nationals of UK, USA, Canada, Australia and New Zealand currently don’t need visas for either Argentina or Chile; however, a reciprocity fee may be payable. Check with an embassy before travel.

Other months: Dec-Mar – warmer, trekking season; Apr-Aug – cold, many hotels closed, trails snow-covered; Sep-Nov – spring.

Glacier Express

Switzerland

Why now? Ride the world’s most scenic railway.

In a country famed for efficiency, the idea of boarding a train that takes over seven hours to travel a mere 180 miles (290km) seems crazy. Yet the narrow-gauge line between Zermatt and St Moritz – billed as ‘Europe’s slowest express’ – does just that, and passengers revel in the pace. The scenery that glides past the picture-windowed panoramic coaches is sensational, starting with the 14,692ft (4478m) Matterhorn, passing snow-clad firs and the lovely Matter, Rhône and Rhine valleys, cute villages and hilltop castles such as Reichenau, and crossing the lofty Landwasser Viaduct before pulling in at chichi ski resort of St Moritz. The magnificent Alps landscape is at its most spectacular in winter – with the bonus of fantastic skiing at both ends.

Trip plan: The Glacier Express departs around 9am daily from both Zermatt and St Moritz. Seat reservations are mandatory, even if you have a Swiss rail pass. Book in advance at www.glacierexpress.ch/en.

Need to know: Keen to continue your Swiss rail odyssey? Board the Unesco-listed Bernina Express at St Moritz, a 90-mile (145km), four-hour ride across 196 bridges and through 55 tunnels to Tirano in Italy. Other months: Mid-Dec–Apr – winter timetable (one departure daily), May-Oct – summer timetable (three departures).