

LONELY PLANET'S

BEST IN TRAVEL

2012

**THE BEST TRENDS, DESTINATIONS, JOURNEYS
& EXPERIENCES FOR THE UPCOMING YEAR**



MELBOURNE ✪ OAKLAND ✪ LONDON

FOREWORD

WELCOME TO 2012. IT'S GOING TO BE A CRACKER, AND YOU HOLD THE REASONS WHY IN YOUR HANDS – 10 COUNTRIES, 10 REGIONS AND 10 CITIES THAT OFFER THE VERY BEST IN TRAVEL FOR 2012, PLUS TOPICAL TRAVEL LISTS SPANNING THE GLOBE.

Best in Travel starts with hundreds of ideas from everyone at Lonely Planet, including our extended family of travellers, bloggers and tweeters. Once we're confident we have the cream of 2012's travel choices, the final selection is made by a panel of in-house travel experts, based on topicality, excitement, value and that special X-factor. As with last year, our top 10 countries, regions and cities are ranked in order. Our picks tend to generate plenty of debate, and we're looking forward to hearing what readers think of the selections.

Where came out on top? It's no surprise that London, celebrating its Olympic year, is the essential city. Uganda, a rising adventure sports and wildlife-spotting destination, claimed the top country spot. Coastal Wales, beautiful and wild, is the pick of regions around the world.

Everywhere we've chosen has something special to mark it out for this year. Canada's Maritime Provinces stand out in 2012 due to their links with the *Titanic* centenary, and the impact this short-lived vessel had on other locations is noted on p196. Others have a buzz about them that we picked up on the road and couldn't keep to ourselves: step forward Croatia's Hvar Island, Stockholm and Santiago de Chile. And some places are

worth visiting before the crowds get there – we're looking at you, Darwin and Bhutan.

If you want to know what the travel trends are for 2012 then look no further. As you might expect, the hottest topics are included in our Best Things to Do in 2012. We bring you best places to Glamp (combining glamour and camping), Sleep with Celebrities and find some Intrepid Romance. And, as everyone's looking to get the most bang for their buck, our list of Best-Value Destinations is also recommended reading.

One other thing: in choosing countries, we aren't sticking to the formal definition but rather including places that travellers experience as a distinct destination. New Caledonia is a territory of France, and Taiwan is not recognised by the United Nations, but we've included them as 'countries' because they are culturally and geographically separate identities.

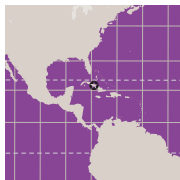
Whether you're planning on watching football in Ukraine, avoiding the Apocalypse on the Ruta Maya or finding surprises in cities like Orlando or Bengaluru, you'll find everything you need for 2012 right here. All you need to do now, as a wise man once said, is go.

Tom Hall, Lonely Planet Travel Editor

LONELY PLANET'S TOP 10 COUNTRIES



030
BHUTAN



034
CUBA



038
NEW CALEDONIA



042
TAIWAN



046
SWITZERLAND



by Oliver Smith



01 UGANDA

- ✦ **POPULATION** 34.6 MILLION
- ✦ **FOREIGN VISITORS PER YEAR** 800,000
- ✦ **CAPITAL** KAMPALA
- ✦ **LANGUAGES** ENGLISH, SWAHILI
- ✦ **MAJOR INDUSTRY** AGRICULTURE
- ✦ **UNIT OF CURRENCY** UGANDAN SHILLING (UGX)
- ✦ **COST INDEX** BOTTLE OF NILE SPECIAL BEER UGX 2500 (US\$1), SHORT BODA-BODA (MOTORBIKE TAXI) RIDE UGX 5000 (US\$2), DORM ROOM UGX 12,000 (US\$5), GORILLA-TRACKING PERMIT PER DAY UGX 1 MILLION (US\$500)

WHY GO IN 2012? THE FUTURE IS NOW

Uganda is the Cinderella of East Africa. While (not-so-ugly) sisters Tanzania and Kenya became big-name safari destinations, attracting visitors from around the world, Uganda's invitation to the party somehow got lost in the post.

It's taken nasty dictatorships and a brutal civil war to keep Uganda off the tourist radar, but stability is returning and it won't be long before visitors come flocking back. After all, this is the source of the river Nile – that mythical place explorers sought since Roman times. It's also where savannah meets the vast lakes of East Africa, and where snow-capped mountains bear down on sprawling jungles. No wonder Winston Churchill called Uganda 'The Pearl of Africa'.

Not so long ago, the tyrannical dictator and 'Last King of Scotland' Idi Amin helped hunt Uganda's big game to the brink of extinction, but today the wildlife is returning with a vengeance. With a bit of luck you will find all the A-listers of the African wilderness – lion, leopard, elephant, hippo, gorilla and chimp – but for now you won't spot busloads of gawping tourists. Murchison Falls National Park is emphatically open for business after years of unrest in northern Uganda, while other national parks have promised to scrub up and unveil new accommodation for 2012. This year Uganda also celebrates the 50th anniversary of its independence; Kampala, one of Africa's safest capital cities, is bound to see off the event with a bang. Still, Uganda still isn't without its problems. Human rights abuses aren't uncommon, and the country breathes a collective sigh whenever President Museveni thinks of another ruse to stay in power for a few more years. But now, as ever, explorers in search of the source of the Nile won't leave disappointed. Just make sure you discover it before everyone else does.



4CORNERS IMAGES © LPI

NO SUCH THING AS MONDAYITIS ON THIS WORK COMMUTE



'...you'll discover a Switzerland with art, attitude and an insatiable appetite for adventure. Goody two-shoes just doesn't get a look in.'

by Kerry Christiani



10 SWITZERLAND

- ★ **POPULATION** 7.6 MILLION
- ★ **FOREIGN VISITORS PER YEAR** 8.6 MILLION
- ★ **CAPITAL** BERN
- ★ **LANGUAGES** GERMAN, FRENCH, ITALIAN, ROMANSH
- ★ **MAJOR INDUSTRIES** MECHANICAL AND ELECTRICAL ENGINEERING
- ★ **UNIT OF CURRENCY** SWISS FRANC (SFR)
- ★ **COST INDEX** CUP OF COFFEE SFR3.50-5 (US\$4-6), MIDRANGE DOUBLE HOTEL ROOM SFR150-300 (US\$178-355), ONE-DAY SKI PASS SFR55-75 (US\$65-89), SLOPESIDE FONDUE IN A COSY ALPINE CHALET SFR20-30 (US\$24-36)



DAVID TOMLINSON » LPI

WHY GO IN 2012? EPIC JOURNEYS AND ECO ANGELS

Whether it's economic growth, political stability or sustainable snow, little-miss-perfect Switzerland always finishes at the top of the European class. With its model railways, chocolate-box towns and outrageously beautiful mountains, the country

LONELY PLANET'S TOP 10 CITIES



114
GUIMARÃES



118
SANTIAGO



122
HONG KONG



126
ORLANDO



130
DARWIN



by Tom Hall



01 LONDON, ENGLAND

★ **POPULATION** 7.8 MILLION

★ **FOREIGN VISITORS PER YEAR** 14.6 MILLION

★ **LANGUAGE** ENGLISH

★ **UNIT OF CURRENCY** BRITISH POUND (£)

★ **COST INDEX** PINT OF REAL ALE £2.80 (US\$4.55), BUDGET DOUBLE HOTEL ROOM £70-90 (US\$115-148), SHORT TAXI RIDE £10 (US\$16.30), CHEAPEST TICKET FOR OLYMPICS £20 (US\$32.40)

JANE SWEENEY *PHOTOGRAPHY*

WHY GO IN 2012? LONDON'S OLYMPIC YEAR

London is a pugnacious so-and-so, and after a little light sparring with the world's great cities in 2011 (did someone mention a royal wedding?), it's going for the knock-out blow in 2012. The Olympics are riding into town, with London becoming the first city to host the games three times, and a whole swath of the capital is being transformed in the process.

Forget the usual rule of an Olympic city: overpriced rooms that are booked out before a flurry of last-minute deals. London will be popular, but it has room for everyone, whether you get in quick with an early-bird hotel deal, stay a few miles out and travel in for the day, or blag a stay with a Londoner in a surprising suburb.

London's east will be thrust into the spotlight (and Shoreditch, Hoxton and Dalston are all worth exploring by night), but the rest of the capital will be rolling out the red carpet, too. Even if sport's not your bag, it's still worth visiting – queues at some of the world's best museums and galleries should be a little shorter as the Games divert everyone's attention.



by Meg Worby



10 DARWIN, AUSTRALIA

★ **POPULATION** 124,800

★ **FOREIGN VISITORS PER YEAR** 157,200

★ **LANGUAGE** ENGLISH

★ **UNIT OF CURRENCY** AUSTRALIAN DOLLAR (AU\$)

★ **COST INDEX:** STUBBIE OF BEER A\$7 (US\$7.30), CUP OF COFFEE \$AU4.50 (US\$4.70), MIDRANGE HOTEL DOUBLE ROOM A\$100-200 (US\$104-208), DORM BED A\$24-33 (US\$25-34.30), ENTRY TO KAKADU NATIONAL PARK A\$25 (US\$26)



ANDREW WATSON © LPI

WHY GO 2012? TRIP THE TOP-END FANTASTIC

It was once easy to dismiss Darwin as a frontier town full of brawling fishermen, dreamy hippies and redneck truckers. Raggedy and transient, it's always been a place to lose yourself, find yourself or reinvent yourself – the kind of place that attracts