

A YEAR OF ADVENTURES

A GUIDE TO THE WORLD'S MOST EXCITING EXPERIENCES



MELBOURNE | LONDON | OAKLAND

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PACK YOUR SENSE OF

ADVENTURE!

It's time to put some excitement into your next journey. *A Year of Adventures* takes you to over 250 amazing destinations, where you'll experience wild places and adrenaline-fuelled activities – at the time when they're at their best. Choosing the right time of the year can turn a good trip into an incredible one. Scheduled events, rainy seasons, peak tourist times, migration patterns...they're all critical factors when planning your trip. We've organised experiences by month and week of the year, so you're ensured the best chance of glimpsing tigers in India, ski touring the Haute Route, or catching the perfect wave in Indonesia.

The diversity of activities covered in this book caters to all passions and ability levels. You'll find inspiration for all times of the year, all around the world, whether it's an ultramarathon requiring almost superhuman endurance in Greece, or the more sedentary but just as heart-pounding pursuit of whale watching in Mexico. The last page of each week lists some additional events that occur around that time of year, with links for more information.

At intervals through the book we've also delved a bit deeper into four of humankind's favourite physical activities – cycling, jumping, paddling and walking. Whichever your passion, these sections will help you find the best place and time to ride, bungee jump, kayak and hike.

While the word 'adventure' might conjure up images of scaling mountains, sailing the globe solo or surviving on a desert island, it doesn't have to mean

extreme. Visiting an exotic part of the world, taking in the view from a hot air balloon or shooting wild animals (with your camera) are all about experiencing something new and out of the everyday. So make some time for adventure – any time of the year. They'll be the experiences you'll never forget.



JANUARY

WEEK.01

GO: QUEENSTOWN, NEW ZEALAND

[ABOVE] ↗
Pinch yourself to check it's not a dream as you take in the sweeping vista over Lake Wakatipu out to the Remarkables.

[RIGHT] ↗
Feel the need for speed? Try bobsledding at Lake Placid to rocket your body into the 4th dimension.



WHY NOW? GET STARTED ON AN ADVENTURE BEFORE THE SUN'S EVEN RISE ON THE REST OF THE WORLD

One of New Zealand's proud claims is that it's among the first lands on earth to see the sun rise on the New Year. Get an early adventuring start, then, by beginning the year in the South Island town of Queenstown, where the adrenaline flows as fast as the water in its churning rivers. This self-appointed 'adventure capital of the world' has one of the finest settings ever handed a town, hugging the shores of Lake Wakatipu and looking across to the aptly named Remarkables mountain range. Yet it was neither water nor peaks that spawned Queenstown's reputation for thrills; it was an elastic band.

In 1988 the world's first commercial bungee jump began operating from the Kawarau Suspension Bridge, 23km from Queenstown. For those who fancied it – and there were queues of them – this was the opportunity to plunge 43m towards the Kawarau River without worrying about a landing.



➤ JANUARY

WEEK.02

[ABOVE] ➤ Find your own *Lost World* dreamscape high on the Venezuelan mesas.

[RIGHT] ➤ White-water sledding. It's kind of like this, but by yourself and without a raft. Are you crazy?!

DO: TREK TO RORAIMA



COUNTRY Venezuela **TYPE OF ACTIVITY** Trekking

FITNESS/EXPERTISE LEVEL Moderate fitness required.

WHY NOW? Be thankful it's the dry season (December to March); at other times of the year it really rains.

DESCRIPTION Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's *Lost World* was a place frozen in time, a plateau so removed from the world that dinosaurs continued to roam atop it. The inspiration for Sir Arthur's tale were the sandstone *tepuis* (mesas) of the South American jungles, and particularly the tales of exploration then emanating from the *tepui* Roraima.

Stretching 34 sq km across the borders of Venezuela, Guyana and Brazil, Roraima is the highest of the *tepuis* – its plateau is at about 2700m and its tallest peak at 2810m – but it is also the easiest to ascend. A trek to this massive table mountain provides some of the most memorable experiences a trip to Venezuela can offer. The hike up the steep walls is fascinating, and the top of the plateau is nothing short of otherworldly.

It will take a minimum of five days to do the round trip, and you'll need camping equipment and food. Be prepared for a strenuous trek and some discomfort, including plenty of rain, cold and *jejenes* (a biting gnat).

Gather up guides and porters (independent trekking is not allowed) in the village of Paraitepui and walk for two days to the plateau, where the scenery is a dreamscape evocative of a science-fiction movie: impressive blackened rocks in myriad shapes, gorges, creeks and pink beaches. Few living organisms have adapted to the inhospitable conditions of the barren, rocky plateau. Those that have include curious endemic species such as a little, black frog that crawls instead of jumps, and the *heli amphora*, a carnivorous plant that traps unwary insects in beautiful, bucket-shaped, red flowers filled with rainwater. Plan on staying at least two days on the summit to allow time for exploration.



JANUARY

WEEK.04

GO: PATAGONIA, ARGENTINA/CHILE

[ABOVE] ↗
The 'end of the earth'
is the beginning of
an adventure of fire
and ice.

[RIGHT] ↗
A mere six-hour flight
and you can be making
the world's most
southerly snowman...



**WHY NOW? COME TO PATAGONIA NOW WHEN IT'S AT ITS
APPROACHABLE BEST, SNOW-TOPPED NOT SNOWBOUND**

Patagonia is the literal end-of-the-earth, a raw and rugged place where South America tapers away to a chilly nothing. The star feature of this great southern land is the tail end of the Andes, the longest mountain chain on earth. Assaulted by wind, snow and ice for millennia, the Patagonian Andes are not especially high – they average 2000m – but they've been blasted into an array of peculiar mountain shapes, from the Torres del Paine, which look like a hand of broken fingers, to the 1.2km-high domed summit rock of Monte FitzRoy that so intoxicates climbers. Hidden beneath FitzRoy is the South Patagonian Icecap, the world's third-largest icecap (behind Antarctica and Greenland). From it springs a host of glaciers like tributaries, including the pin-up of world ice, 60m-high Moreno Glacier. Stand in awe for a while as it noisily calves seracs into the milky waters of Lago Argentino.



SEPTEMBER

WEEK.04

GO: CORSICA, FRANCE

[ABOVE] ↗

Corsica is crisscrossed with trails linking the coast with its mountainous interior.

[RIGHT] ↗

Swap your pinstripe suit for a thermal one and conquer the world's highest peak from above.



WHY NOW? THE HIGH TOURIST SEASON IS OVER, THE BAKING SUMMER HEAT IS ON THE SLIDE AND THE SEA'S AT A PLEASANT 23°C

For such a small island (less than 200km long and less than 90km wide), Corsica offers adventure in large doses. The lush mountains and multitude of well-marked trails are ideal for hiking and horse riding alike, while 1000km of coastline with clear warm waters and top diving makes it a water-lover's paradise.

As famous as Corsica itself is the trans-island GR20 trekking route, stretching 168km through the granite ridges of the island's interior. To walk its entirety you'll need at least two weeks, but if you fancy something shorter, you can try the selection of Mare e Monti (Sea to Mountains) and Mare e Mare (Sea to Sea) trails that crisscross the island. Although less publicised than the GR20, these routes take in some spectacular mountain and coastal scenery, with the added bonus of ending each day comfortably in a village.



➤ **SEPTEMBER**

WEEK.04

[ABOVE] ➤

Surfers, grab your boards when the Silver Dragon roars.

[TOP RIGHT] ➤

Only for those with true grit – a Simpson Desert cyclist forges a path across the sand.

[BOTTOM RIGHT] ➤

You'll need wings on your feet – and lots of training – to run in the footsteps of Pheidippides.

DO: SURF THE QIÁNTÁNG BORE



COUNTRY China **TYPE OF ACTIVITY** Bore surfing

FITNESS/EXPERTISE LEVEL Surfing supremos only.

WHY NOW? To coincide with the year's largest wave.

DESCRIPTION A spectacular natural phenomenon occurs when the highest tides of the lunar cycle cause a wall of water to thunder up the narrow mouth of the Qiántáng River from Hángzhōu Bay in southeastern China. It is the largest such tidal 'bore' in the world, creating a wave so mythical that the Chinese call it the Silver Dragon.

Up to 3km wide and more than 7m high, the wave travels up to 40km/h, and the roar of it can be heard from about 20km away. The Qiántáng Bore occurs regularly through the year, when the highest tides occur at the beginning and middle of each lunar month, though the traditional time to witness it is as part of the Mid-Autumn Festival, around the 18th day of the 8th month of the lunar calendar. This date varies on Gregorian calendars but falls around the end of September a number of times before 2015. This is usually one of the highest bore tides of the year.

The Qiántáng Bore can be dangerous enough to watch – it was once said to have swept 10,000 people away – but it's also been attempted by surfers. In 2008 the Silver Dragon Surfing Championship was inaugurated, bringing in selected world-class surfers to ride the beast.

The Qiántáng River is one of up to 100 rivers around the world that experience these surge waves. Others include the Amazon, Dordogne and Severn Rivers. The latter, near Gloucester in England, is the heartland of bore surfing. Waves occur here over a four- or five-day period each month, and have been surfed for almost 10km.



JUNE

WEEK.04

GO: BOVEC, SLOVENIA

(ABOVE) ↗

It's like shooting through a washing machine.

(RIGHT) ↗

Adrenaline junkies unite for BASE jumping.



WHY NOW? COME AS SUMMER SHRUGS THE ALPS FREE OF SNOW, AND PUMPS WATER INTO THE SOČA RIVER

Aspiring to become a Queenstown of the north, the small Slovenian town of Bovec has a great deal to offer adventure-sports enthusiasts. With the Julian Alps above, the Soča River below and Triglav National Park at the back door, you could spend a week propelling yourself through the outdoors without ever doing the same thing twice.

There are up to a dozen adventure companies organising all kinds of sporting activities in Bovec, including ice and rock climbing, skydiving, potholing, bungee jumping and, in winter, sleighing. But the holy adventuring trinity here is undoubtedly rafting, hiking and skiing. The rafting season on the beautiful 96km-long Soča River runs from April to October. Rapids on this river, which is coloured a deep, almost unreal, turquoise, range from easy to extreme (grades one to six). Rafting trips last for about 1½ hours and cover a distance of 10km. You can also go it