Off the Beaten Track: Southeast Asia

Cambodia’s up-and-coming adventure centre, Mondulkiri offers walking with a herd of elephants, ziplining over a waterfall, quad-biking, and authentic encounters with indigenous Bunong people.

Upper Ayeyarwady (Myanmar)
While the crowds cruise the southern stretches of the Ayeyarwady, adventurous souls head north to the serene stretches between Bhamo and Mandalay. Local ferries drift from town to town, mobbed at stops by vendors, breaking the trip at sleepy settlements such as Katha, where writer George Orwell was posted in the 1920s by the imperial police force.

Ko Tarutao (Thailand)
The island heart of a peaceful marine national park, Tarutao is so far south it’s practically in Malaysia. But with gorgeous reefs and beaches, inexpensive national park lodgings and low-key backpacker bungalows, it’s a top castaway contender.

Mondulkiri Province (Cambodia)

Tham Klong Lor (Laos)
A watery underworld awaits at this 7.5km-long cave explored by longtail boat. Daylight recedes as you putter deep into the darkness and bulbous-shaped calcified sculptures decorate the vaulted ceiling.

Siargao (Philippines)
Famous for its surf breaks, this Catholic island in northern Mindanao is blessed with pretty coves, sand-dusted beaches and laid-back villages. Nearby Camiguin has hikes and off-road motorcycling on the slopes of four volcanoes, and reef dives offshore.

Ulu Temburong National Park (Brunei Darussalam)
This pristine tract of primary rainforest, reachable only by boat, is one of the few remaining expanses of the truly wild jungle that once covered all of Borneo.

Ataúro Island (Timor-Leste)
If you’ve made it all the way to Timor-Leste, take one more hop over to this blissfully undeveloped isle off Dili for excellent snorkelling, diving, hiking and hammock-swinging.

Togean Islands (Indonesia)
The blissful Togean Islands are an unadulterated vision of the tropics. Wander blinding white-sand beaches fringed by coconut palms and enjoy world-class snorkelling and diving on majestic coral reefs.