

Culture's never been so exciting

The Traveller's 2010 brochure has 31 new tours – from the wonders of Wessex to the Turquoise Trail in Mexico.

The UK's leading cultural specialist, The Traveller, continues to offer informative adventures packed with historical insights and archaeological treasures in its **new 2010 brochure**. Each of the **31 new tours** offers either an inventive new slant on a popular destination, or a new destination altogether. No other cultural operator boasts such an unusual, or adventurous, collection of trips.

Better yet, every group tour comes with the bonus of lectures from a leading luminary: colourful experts whose knowledge of a destination is unsurpassed, and canny string-pullers who can open doors to sites otherwise closed to the public. They've even been known to dictate Foreign Office bulletins.

Here are 10 of The Traveller's most exciting new tours for 2010:

>>Historic **Wessex**

Learn more about the enigmatic "dream country" beloved of Thomas Hardy. This trip tells tales of King Arthur at Glastonbury, pauses at the Iron Age Badbury Rings and visits all sorts of West Country castles, cathedrals and dockyards, before a final sojourn in Bath.

Departing 9 August, the 5-day tour with Don Bryan, a Southern England historian and blue badge guide for 16 years, costs £950 pp.*

>>Destination **Siberia**

Swap summer for Siberia's steppes and tundra. You'll visit Mafia warlord cemeteries, stay in tribal villages, admire surreal monuments and stop at Vladivostock, a port that's a third of the world away from Moscow. A Dr Zhivago-style ride on the Trans-Siberian train also features.

Departing 9 August, the 18-day tour with Russian art historian Dr Alexey Makhrov costs £3,895 pp.*

>>**Balkan Treasures of Bulgaria**

Bulgaria's as inexpensive as it is historic, and as quaint as it's beautiful. Few know of this land with roads connecting three continents, Danube frontier fortresses, gold finds, Thracian palaces, Orpheus myths, rose fields, rugged mountains and a thriving wine industry.

Departing 9 May, the 9-day tour with Byzantine specialist Rowena Loverance costs £1,290 pp.*

>>**Tibet: The Upper Kyichu**

The Upper Kyichu, or Lhasa, River is one of Tibet's least-developed areas. In this place of nomad encampments, sky-burial sites, wildflower meadows and high-altitude gompas, follow drainage basins through juniper forests to find the river's source in remote Lhari.

Departing 27 April, the 17-day tour with Tibetan specialist Bradley Rowe costs £2,990 p.*

>>**AD410: The Year That Shook Rome**

24 August might be a routine date to most of us, but in 2010 in Rome it's the 1600th anniversary of a first-ever fall to foreign hands. The German warlord Alaric was to blame; marking the date, this tour follows Alaric's path to the Eternal City via Ostia and Ravenna.

Departing 17 August, the 10-day tour with David Stuttard, a classics expert and regular radio personality, costs £1,950 pp.*

>>**Egypt & The Book of the Dead**

Books of the Dead were collections of spells to guide the deceased in the afterlife. Find out how the unique step pyramid at Saqqara was the origin of the Books, and see tombs at the Valley of the Kings with funerary verses still contained inside. Luxor, Aswan and Alexandria also feature.

Departing 30 October, the 16-day tour with Carol Andrews, formerly of The British Museum's Department of Egyptian Antiquities, and an expert on the Book of the Dead, costs £2,220 pp.*

>>**Greek Drama: Politics & Myth**

Here's a new take on Greece: a cultural tour examining sites like Athens, Corinth and Mycenae via their roles in Greek tragedies. You'll learn not just of the mythological element of plays by Euripides, Aeschylus and Sophocles, but also their subtle political messages.

Departing 12 July, the 10-day tour with David Stuttard, a Roman classics expert and regular radio personality, costs £2,225 pp.*

>>**Cultural Tour of Bhutan**

Hidden in the Himalayas, Bhutan is also overshadowed by its much larger neighbours India and China. It shouldn't be: inaccessible for years, the 'Land of the Thunder Dragon' boasts an ancient Buddhist culture, gorgeous scenery and the world's only ban on tobacco sales.

Departing 25 April (rhododendron season), the 13-day tour with Himalayan historian Zara Fleming costs £2,885 pp.*

>>**Syria: Land of Zenobia**

Plotting a unique course up the Euphrates, this tour includes rare early-civilization sites like Halabiyah, the fortress-city of legendary Queen Zenobia. The group will also get to admire sunrise over Palmyra's pillars, pick through the souks of Damascus, and be one among the few who set foot in Mesopotamia, the land between the Euphrates and Tigris rivers.

Departing 2 October, the 12-day tour with Paul Collins, a curator in the British Museum's Department of the Middle East and world expert on Assyrian history, costs £2,275.*

>>**Mexico: The Turquoise Trail**

The British Museum's current major Moctezuma exhibition was curated by Colin McEwan, and it's the man himself who leads this corresponding tour. It follows the import route of the Aztec's fabled mineral – south from the USA through old ceremonial sites, mariachi lands, Tequila Valley and Oaxaca, and finishing in the (now underground) pyramids of Mexico City.

Departing 16 September, the 15-day tour with Colin McEwan costs £3,250 pp.*

* All prices – except those for 'Historic Wessex' – include flights from London plus taxes, transport throughout the tour, B&B and other meals, and the services of a tour guide, manager and expert lecturer. Those for the Wessex tour include transport, B&B and guiding.

Call The Traveller on 020 7269 2770 (www.the-traveller.co.uk).

NB: An additional benefit when booking with The Traveller is that clients can, if they wish, undertake 'private views' of relevant British Museum collections (the company remains closely affiliated with the museum) before many of its tours.

Ends – 11 December 2009

Notes for Editors: The Traveller (020 7269 2770; www.the-traveller.co.uk) is the UK's leading specialist in historical, archaeological and cultural tours. With an average group size of 12, its tours are informal and entertaining, and don't require prior knowledge of the subject or destination.

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