

incentives & meetings

Purrfectly Memorable

Add a wild dimension to your incentive travel program with these all-inclusive animal encounters of the unusual kind

by Chris McBeath



Uganda
Rwanda

GO BANANAS FOR GORILLAS

"Safari Partners are fantastic end-to-end trip providers," says New York-based Priscilla Tan who used the company's services for a group of Harvard MBA students who enjoyed a gorilla trekking adventure through Africa's forgotten forests. Offering four styles of travel from camping to high-end luxury, this outfitter can tailor trips to budget and preference while delivering one of the most sought-after, up-close but not-too-personal wilderness experiences. The world's remaining 700 or so gorillas take refuge on the borders of Uganda and Rwanda and finding them can involve treks from 15 minutes to 8 hours. Book early: gorilla trekking permits are limited to daily quotas. One percent of Safari's sales go to African water, education and health projects.

Seasonality: All year (best times: Jan-Feb and July-Oct)

Cost: Starting \$883/person sharing/3-day trip

Gorilla Permit: US\$750/person

thesafaripartners.com



Darwin was Here

With its blue-footed boobies, seaweed spitting iguanas and massive tortoises, the Galapagos is the stuff of legends; it's no wonder these extraordinary creatures inspired Charles Darwin's theory of evolution back in 1835. Today, the island's one-of-a-kind species and vegetation are the archipelago's raison d'être. Operating four expedition vessels, Ecoventura's competitively priced itineraries combine comprehensive land tours with snorkeling and kayaking activities. "Our small guide-to-guest ratio makes venturing into this magical realm one of the most authentic and educational experiences available," says Doris Welsh, Ecoventura's marketing director. Various 'eco' practices also make this company a responsible choice for your clients or your company.

Seasonality: Year round

Cost: From US\$540/person (US\$75,000 charter)/8-day trip

Galapagos Park Fee: US\$100

ecoventura.com



Galapagos
Islands



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British
Columbia

Holy Spirit

In First Nations' mythology, "Raven made one in every ten black bears white to remind the people of a time when glaciers covered this land." Known today as The Great Bear Rainforest, the northerly shores of British Columbia are home to the white kermode, or spirit bear, alongside their black bear siblings. Award-winning eco-outfitter, Blue Water Adventures, offers sightings of grizzly bears, eagles, orca (killer) whales and a host of other coastal wildlife. "Our limited group size, coupled with a crew that includes experienced biologists and local First Nations' guides, creates a very enriched learning experience," says Erin Boyle, Blue Water Adventures spokesperson.

Seasonality: May-Oct

Cost: \$4750-\$4900/person/8-day trip

bluewateradventures.ca



DO NO HARM, LEAVE NO TRACE

"The World Society for the Protection of A (WSPA) recognizes that safaris can be a good opportunity to experience wild animals in their natural environment, provided we (humans) understand that it is us who is the visitor in their habitat, and that we remember to put the animal's welfare needs first," says Neena Dhaun, WSPA international media officer in London.

- Use a reputable operator. Some may cost more, but you'll be employing professional guides who understand the species' behaviour and needs.
- Ensure tours have guidelines such as limiting the number of viewing vehicles at any one time, keeping a respectful distance, no chasing, no startling flash photography, no feeding, and animals under stress may panic or become dangerous.
- If a guide is unresponsive to your concern, report them to the company.
- Before you sign on the dotted line, consult wspa-international.org

Glamp it Up

Ever since *March of the Penguins* hit the big screen, these fascinating tuxedoed birds have become a hot commodity, and ever more hip when *Happy Feet* tapped into our hearts. An accredited CarbonNeutral® company, Kensington Tours has masterminded a "glamping" (glamorous camping) style adventure at the only luxury safari camp based in the interior of Antarctica. In the 24 hours of continuous daylight with polar explorers as guides, your groups will hike across ice caves, sledge, abseil and get intimately close to the world's largest emperor penguin colony. "The customized extras exceeded my expectations," says Mark Taha, senior solution strategist with CA Technologies in Thornhill, Ont. "Each one of my clients personally thanked me for this once-in-a-lifetime experience."

Seasonality: Nov-Jan

Cost: From \$52,000 (€40,000 as listed on website)/person/8-day trip

kensingtontours.com



Antarctica

