

Tour ANTHOLOGY

Take a ski expedition all the way to the North Pole, help save New Zealand's grey faced petrels, learn polo in Argentina or take the family with you to China, South Africa or to stay overnight at Sydney's Taronga Park Zoo. Some of the best things in travel can happen on a tour.

POPS OF COLOUR IN THE SNOW
Brightly painted houses stand out in Longyearbyen, the world's most northerly town in Svalbard, Norway.

Trek the Arctic

NORTH POLE LAST DEGREE SKI EXPEDITION

Test the limits of your physical endurance with this 14-day trek to the North Pole. The trip starts at 78 degrees north latitude in Longyearbyen, Norway, the world's most northerly town some 1,300 kilometres from the pole. The group has two days to explore Longyearbyen and do some warm up skiing before being flown on a charter plane or helicopter to 89 degrees north. The next eight days are spent on skis traversing large pans of flat ice, maneuvering around open water channels and climbing pressure ridges ranging from one to five metres in height. On day 12 the group will reach 90 degrees north – the geographic North Pole – and celebrate with Champagne, photographs and a satellite phone call home to share the moment with friends and family. On the final day the everyone is collected by helicopter and flown back to 89 degrees to board the return flight to Longyearbyen for a well-deserved hot shower and a lie down.

Polar Explorers assures participants that they don't need to be Olympic athletes to complete the North Pole trek, but they'll obviously need to be in good physical shape and prepared to push themselves physically and mentally. The more training and preparation before the trek, the safer and more enjoyable it will be for everyone. Novices can complete the five-day Polar Shakedown Training course (€3,000/about A\$4,054) before the expedition to learn the basics from clothing and equipment to sled pulling, safety systems and travelling over the ice.

This tour isn't everyone's idea of luxury. You'll be dragging a 30-40 kilo sled behind you for up to 10 hours a day in temperatures as low as -35 degrees celcius. And at the end of the day you'll have to pitch your own tent and melt snow to make a hot drink and prepare dinner. But you will get to stand on top of the world.

DATE: 14-day tour with tentative departure date of 14 April, 2012.

PRICE: €29,400 (about A\$39,738)

INCLUDES: ski equipment, sleds, sleeping gear, all food while on the trek, charter air transport from Longyearbyen, experienced guides.

WEBSITE: polarexplorers.com

Flyover the Arctic

NORTH POLE HELI-EXPEDITION

If you don't think you're up to the physical challenge of a trek to the North Pole EpicQuest can take you to the top without ever getting your feet wet. This tour

DATE: five-night tour departing 22 April, 2012.

PRICE: US\$20,000 (about A\$19,578)

INCLUDES: five nights accommodation, all air transport from Longyearbyen, all meals and beverages, experienced guides.

WEBSITE: epicquest.com

begins in Longyearbeyn and spends two days exploring the Templeford glacier by snowmobile, with one night aboard the Noorderlicht, a 1910 schooner frozen in sea ice. On day four the group takes a privately chartered airplane from Longyearbyen to the Barneo Ice Station which sits on the Arctic Ocean 30 to 60 miles from the pole, before boarding a helicopter to take them on the final leg.



Conservation

NATURAL NEW ZEALAND IN STYLE

Spend 18 days enjoying the best luxe experiences New Zealand has to offer and take part in a unique volunteer project to help endangered native birds. The tour starts and finishes in Auckland and includes a day of sailing around the Bay of Islands, a private helicopter flight to Rotorua via Huka Falls, fishing on Lake Tarawera, wine tasting in Blenheim, whale watching in Kaikoura,

DATE: 18-day customisable tour departing at any time.

PRICE: A\$29,050

INCLUDES: 17 nights luxury accommodation, internal plane and helicopter flights, all activities, most meals.

WEBSITE: handsupholidays.com

heli-hiking on the Fox Glacier and a heli-flight over Milford Sound. Accommodation is in some of New Zealand's famous luxury lodges including Eagles Nest, Treetops, Grasmere and Cape Kidnappers. Three days in the middle of the tour are spent volunteering at the Cape Kidnappers and Ocean Beach Wildlife Preserve caring for native

birds such as kiwi, Cook's petrel and grey faced petrel, and maintaining the sanctuary. The seabird chicks need to be handfed a sardine smoothie on alternate days until they fledge and can be released to head out to sea.

Sport

ARGENTINA POLO PROGRAMME

In Argentina horses are an intrinsic part of the culture and polo is a national obsession, so there is nowhere better to learn the ancient sport. The 13-day tour starts in Buenos Aires where you'll have three days to explore the architecture, see a cabaret performance and take some tango lessons.

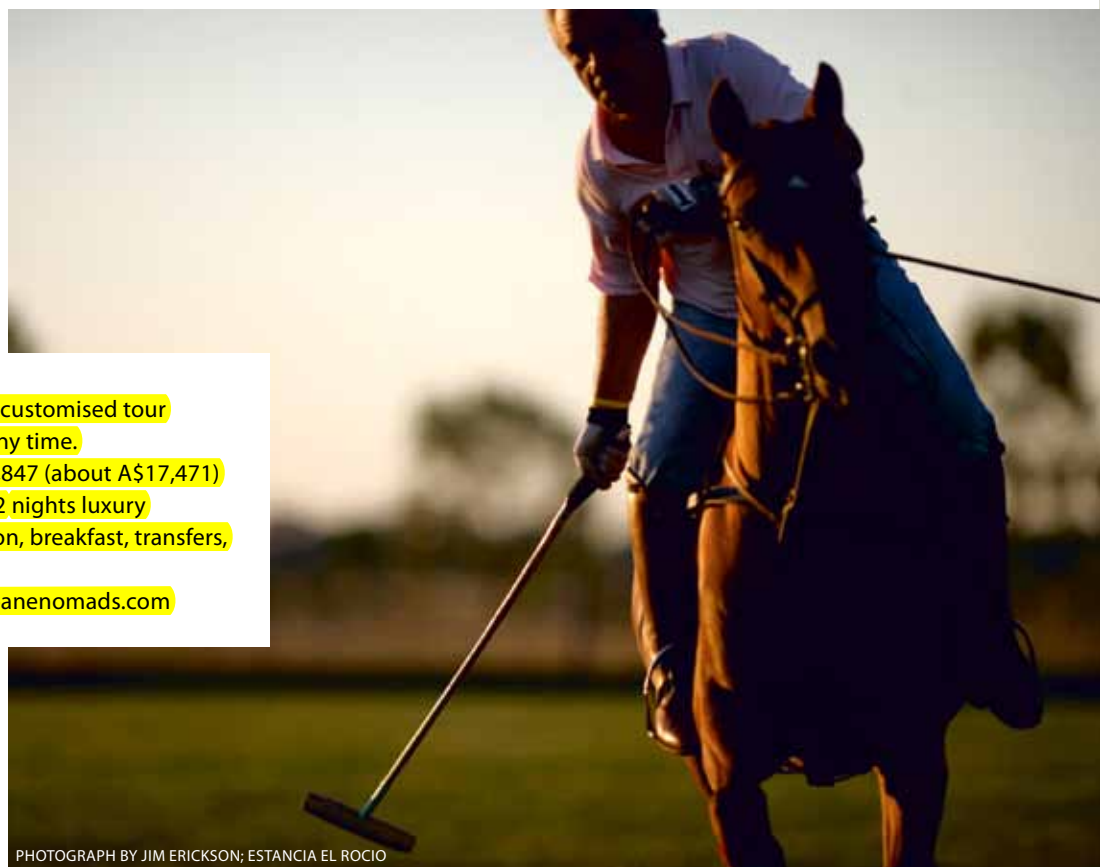
The next three days are spent at the El Metejon Polo club in intensive polo clinics with former Argentine champions. There are 60 horses to choose from and the clinics cater for all levels of experience. Guests then travel to Cordoba, the horse capital of Argentina, to spend four days at the Estancia el Colibri, a working ranch with its own polo club. Tours taken in November and December each year can be customised to include tickets to the Argentine Open, one of the most prestigious events on the international polo calendar.

DATE: 13-day customised tour departing at any time.

PRICE: US\$17,847 (about A\$17,471)

INCLUDES: 12 nights luxury accommodation, breakfast, transfers, polo clinics.

WEBSITE: urbanenomads.com



PHOTOGRAPH BY JIM ERICKSON; ESTANCIA EL ROCIO

China

FAMILY TOUR OF CHINA

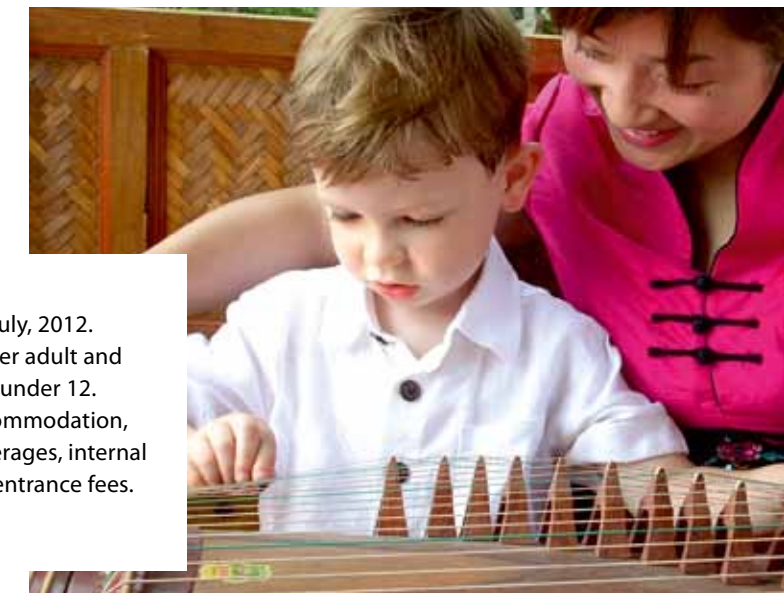
See the sights of Beijing over four days and enjoy special children's activities like traditional Chinese kite flying, dressing in Chinese opera costumes, a visit to an exclusive children's athletic school, seeing the pandas at the Beijing zoo and shadow puppet and kung fu performances during dinner. In Xi'an participate in a dumpling making and noodle throwing class, followed by a visit to the Terracotta Warriors and a bike ride around the top of the city wall. Ride a traditional bamboo raft down the Li River in Guilin before the tour ends in Shanghai with VIP tickets to an acrobatic show.

DATE: 10-night tour departing 13 July, 2012.

PRICE: US\$8,210 (about A\$8,037) per adult and US\$7,465 (about A\$7,308) per child under 12.

INCLUDES: 10 nights five-star accommodation, bilingual host, most meals and beverages, internal first class flights, all land transport, entrance fees.

WEBSITE: imperialtours.net



South Africa

A FAMILY ADVENTURE IN SOUTH AFRICA

Receive a special family welcome at the Cape Grace hotel, Cape Town, with a children's turndown service, gingerbread making and African story time. Visit the Two Oceans Aquarium, ride the cable car up Table Mountain and take a cycling tour of a local township over the next

DATE: eight-day tour departing daily.

PRICE: from A\$6,630 per adult, A\$5,925 per child 11-17 and A\$3,980 per child under 10.

INCLUDES: seven nights luxury accommodation, most meals, internal flights.

WEBSITE: abercrombiekent.com.au

four days. Visit the Cape Winelands where adults will taste local wines while children learn to bake bread. Fly to the MalaMala Game Reserve where each family is allocated a ranger who will organise activities such as animal tracking, basic survival skills and bush cooking. Spend the next three days on game drives and night safaris searching for the Big Five.



Sydney

TARONGA ZOO ROAR AND SNORE

Spend the night among the animals in a luxury safari tent at Sydney's Taronga Zoo. Guests can get up close to some of the zoo's friendliest animals for feeding and photo opportunities once the zoo has closed for the day. Enjoy dinner overlooking the harbour followed by a night safari around the zoo to see which animals are active after dark. There's a 6am wake up call on the second day for two exclusive behind the scenes tours. The tour ends at 9am when the zoo opens, but families can stay for the rest of the day.

DATE: overnight tour every Friday-Sunday night and every night during NSW school holidays.

PRICE: A\$930 for two adults and two children (must be over five).

INCLUDES: overnight accommodation; refreshments, dinner and light breakfast, parking.

WEBSITE: taronga.org.au

