

ESCAPES

OUR PICK OF FIVE GREAT SMALL-GROUP ADVENTURES ACROSS THE GLOBE



Iceland Beyond the Wall

WHAT: Venture beyond the wall and into the extraordinary landscape of HBO's *Game of Thrones*. Dig your feet into the icy terrain where the demonic White Walkers slaughtered the men of the Night's Watch. Sneak into the cave christened by Jon and Ygritte and, if the memory of their dalliance makes you hot enough to melt an iceberg, there are copious glaciers nearby to chill you right back down. There aren't any Wildlings waiting to disembowel you, but tales of trolls and hidden people lurk within Iceland's rich folklore. You'll

visit waterfalls, bubbling mud pools and geysers, and if the gods are on your side you'll glimpse the northern lights snaking through the sky.

WHERE: Iceland is a Nordic island.

WHEN: This five-day trip is available until 30 April, 2014.

WHY: Enter the realm of the seven kingdoms, without the fear of beheading from friend or foe.

HOW: Go with Iceland Travel from around AU\$695.

www.icelandtravel.is

Tibetan Mountain Trek

WHAT: Join Khampa nomads on a 180 kilometre pilgrimage as they worship the holy Kawa Karpo mountain. Strap your gear on to a mule and traverse moss-laced forests, alpine meadows and panoramic mountain passes strewn with prayer flags. You'll encounter holy springs where pilgrims drink water that has melted from sacred slopes, and creep through thinning air to brush heights of 4810 metres on the legendary Shola Pass. Spend the night in a deluxe tent in a pasture, share a local shelter with Tibetan pilgrims or wind down with salty yak-butter tea in a traditional farmhouse. Your voyage starts and ends in Shangri-la, though you're bound to find your own patch of paradise along the way.

WHERE: Kawa Karpo straddles the border between China's Yunnan province and Tibet.

WHEN: Contact Whistling Arrow for departure dates for this 17-day trek.

WHY: Revere one of the world's most holy mountains.

HOW: Go with Whistling Arrow from around AU\$4230.

www.whistlingarrow.com



Boutique Threads in Tel Aviv

WHAT: Caress the inner fabric of Israel's fashion scene on the coat tails of an industry expert. Skirt down the alleys of Tel Aviv with your guide, Galit Reismann, and uncover hidden boutiques housing the city's trendiest designers. Snap up unique prints or simply meet the hot new names of Israel's fashion world. You'll see a side of Tel Aviv so cool most of the locals are out of the loop. Whether you're a design-loving dame or a fashion-conscious fella, Reismann's tours are tailored to your taste and bound to please. So indulge your crush on asymmetry, bundle up in a ball of cashmere or tickle that foot fetish and return home with a work of art.

WHERE: Tel Aviv is located on the Mediterranean coastline of western Israel.

WHEN: Contact TLVstyle to arrange a one-day tour.

WHY: Get lost in style.

HOW: Go with TLVstyle from AU\$75 for a group or AU\$300 for a private tour.

www.tlvstyle.com



Burmese Sailing Sojourn

WHAT: Sail beyond the tourist trail and into island life. Weave through the 800 little-explored isles of Myanmar's Myeik Archipelago on board a catamaran. Sprawl on deserted beaches and snorkel with tropical fish and hawksbill turtles without a soul in sight, except for that leggy octopus slinking your way. Dig into a Burmese feast of *mohinga* (noodle soup) and *gyin thohk* (ginger salad) or compete with the whale sharks and fish for your fare. Anchor at Bo Cho Island and meet the Sea Gypsies who live a nomadic life in their handcrafted wooden boats. Make sure you brush up on your

sailing lingo, because it's all hands on deck.

WHERE: The Myeik Archipelago in Southern Myanmar consists of more than 800 islands strewn through the Andaman Sea.

WHEN: This nine-day trip departs from Yangon every Saturday from January to early April and from mid-November to the end of December.

WHY: Visiting Myanmar is an opportunity to experience part of Asia that has changed little since British colonial times.

HOW: Sail away with Intrepid Travel from AU\$2295.

www.intrepidtravel.com



Zeppelin Highs in Chantilly

WHAT: Feast your eyes on Paris and beyond from the cabin of a high-tech zeppelin floating 300 metres above the ground. Wave goodbye to the gargoyles of Notre Dame and drift over the bones of buildings dating back to the days of Julius Caesar. Creep over the village of Auvers-sur-Oise, which offered a feast of inspiration to the impressionist painters van Gogh, Monet and Pissarro. Today the town draws the arty and the legless who pay homage to blisteringly boozy liquor at the Museum of Absinthe. Swoop by

dense forest and past manicured gardens peppered with bronze statues before hovering over Chateau de Chantilly, the fabled birthplace of whipped cream.

WHERE: Flights depart from Pontoise airport, about 40 kilometres from Paris.

WHEN: This one-hour trip departs every day except Monday.

WHY: Enjoy a view the Impressionists could only dream of.

HOW: Go with Airship Paris from AU\$640.

www.airship-paris.fr