



Date: 9 September 2010
On behalf of: Travelzest plc LSE: TVZ.L
For immediate release

Travelzest tips off travellers on what's hot for 2011

Travelzest, the UK holiday retailer with integrated boutique tour operations, is already gearing up for 2011, and its destination experts are advising travellers on where they think the travel hot spots will be.

Says Jack Fraser, Chief Operating Officer: 'Following the ash cloud and airline strikes, we saw a strong trend towards no-fly holidays. Towards the end of the year however, there was a return to longer-haul travel, with destinations that provide stronger buying power to the pound seeing increased popularity.

"Experiential travel will be important to holidaymakers in 2011. Travelzest has seen a move away from single-centre beach trips to multi-centre itineraries that incorporate more authentic and memorable experiences. As ever, affordability will be a key factor – consumers are making the most of added value incentives, as well as improved buying power due to stronger exchange rates in long-haul destinations," he adds.

Here are Travelzest's destination experts' tips and insider knowledge of lesser-travelled parts of the world, with examples of the authentic experiences they can craft for you:

Malaysia Experience

Sarawak, Borneo

Reasoning: The lesser visited of Malaysian Borneo's two regions, Sarawak is a natural treasure trove with cascading waterfalls, the largest cave chamber in the world, spectacular limestone formations and pristine beaches. Culturally colourful with 27 ethnic groups and a kaleidoscope of festivals and events, the Land of the Hornbill also offers exotic wildlife such as the orang-utan and the largest flower in the world, the Rafflesia. It even has its own 2,377m mountain to rival Sabah's Mount Kinabalu, and it's less crowded.

Sample trip: A 12-night Sarawak itinerary costs from £1,799 pp (two sharing) including mountain climb, flights (Heathrow), transfers and 12 nights' B&B. Call Malaysia Experience on 01249 467 164 (www.malaysiaexperience.co.uk).

The Tapestry Collection

Western Sicily

Reasoning: This part of Sicily offers a distinctively different experience from that of the east and is less-crowded. North African influences dominate Western Sicily with beautiful examples of Byzantine mosaics, couscous on the menu (there is an annual couscous festival), and well-preserved medieval towns.

Moorish architecture stands alongside *baglio* - traditional, ancient Sicilian farmhouses characterised by thick walls, courtyards and arches, only to be found in Western Sicily. Flights are cheaper to Western Sicily than to Eastern Sicily, too.

Sample trip: Seven nights' B&B at the Baglio Fontana (with swimming pool) including flights (Gatwick), breakfast and car hire costs from £759 pp (two sharing). Call The Tapestry Collection on 020 8995 7787 (www.thetapestrycollection.com).

Faraway Holidays

The Philippines

Reasoning: The Philippines saw a rise in popularity in 2010 following the political unrest in Thailand. The central region – in particular Bicol – remains relatively unknown in the UK, yet offers deserted beaches and fantastic natural parks. At Donsol Bay, experience an exciting wildlife experience discovered by the locals in the late 90s: the chance to swim and interact with surprisingly tame whale sharks, some of which

are 10 metres in length. Donsol also offers firefly watching, the grumbling Mount Mayon Volcano, lakes, caving, cycling and hiking opportunities, as well as a great stop-off point for serious divers heading for the Manta Bowl at Ticau Island.

Sample trip: A 10-night trip inclusive of flights from London, B&B, a Mount Mayon Volcano tour, island tour, cycle hire and a full day of whale shark and manta ray interaction, with English speaking guide, costs from £1,649 pp (two sharing). Call Faraway Holidays on 01249 467163 (www.farawayholidays.co.uk).

Captivating Cuba

Baracoa

Reasoning: It's a time-lost area in Cuba's far east, where women wash clothes in the river, and farmers shake coconut trees (it's the Cuban capital of coconut and cocoa production). Founded on 15 August 1511, next year is Baracoa's 500th anniversary, and it's increasingly popular with families in search of authenticity rather than a resort. Playa Nibujón is a locally-loved (and only locally-known) beach, with no tourist facilities whatsoever. A mountain behind makes it a seductive spot, and offers good walking for those keen to earn their time on the beach. If you're really serious, rent a bike in Baracoa and cycle the 20km journey.

Sample trip: Five nights in Baracoa and one night in Havana is from £1,030 pp with flights and transfers. Call Captivating Cuba on 08444 129917 (www.captivatingcuba.com).

The Best of Morocco

Suite satisfaction

Reasoning: The move away from conventional accommodation in Marrakech meant maison d'hôtes, dars and riads were all the rage. Now there's something new: suites – super-stylish digs in the fashionable Gueliz quarter with your own housekeeper who will shop and cook for you, and provide a world-class laundry service for free. A short, cheap taxi ride gets you to the Djemaa el Fna and its tumblers, sorcerers, story-tellers and snake charmers.

Sample trip: A four-night stay is from £490 pp (based on two sharing a two-bedroom suite) including flights from London and private transfers. Call The Best of Morocco on 08450 264 585 (www.bestofmorocco.co.uk).

About Travelzest

Travelzest plc (LSE: TVZ.L) is a dynamic travel group, with a collection of online and call centre travel retailers with integrated boutique tour operators that have operations in over 5 countries in Europe and North America. Included in the Travelzest family of companies is holiday.co.uk, flight.co.uk, travelzest.com, itravel2000.com, The Cruise Professionals, Best of Morocco VFB Holidays, Peng Travel, Faraway Holidays, The Malaysia Experience, Tapestry Collection, The Wow House, Captivating Cuba, JMB Travel, and Fair's Fare. Travelzest is traded on London's AIM Exchange under the symbol TVZ.

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Enquiries:

Travelzest plc

Jack Fraser/Stuart Morris

0844 335 6623

lorag@travelzestplc.com

Travel PR

Sarah Belcher

020 8891 4440

s.belcher@travelpr.co.uk

Notes to Editors:

The Travelzest group currently comprises:

Canadian Operations

itravel2000 itravel2000.com

The Cruise Professionals www.cruiseprofessionals.com

UK Operations

Travelzest Holidays www.travelzest.com

Holiday.co.uk www.holiday.co.uk

Flight.co.uk www.flight.co.uk

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