

9. RELAX IN PROVENCE



1 Sail round Ha Long Bay, Vietnam

This is one of the most affordable ways to see a natural wonder of the world – an all-in day trip from Vietnam's capital, Hanoi, is about £40. This includes the bus journey (about three and a half hours each way), a boat trip out to the limestone islands and lunch on board. Just book at any travel agent in the centre of Hanoi. And don't forget your cossie.

2 Lunch on the Isle of Skye

The Three Chimneys is a tiny restaurant in a former fisherman's cottage whose ingredients all come from the island or nearby Lochalsh. Regularly cited as one of the world's top 50, it offers a seven-course tasting menu (£90 per person) including oysters, langoustines with tattie scones, crab with green apple and nasturtium, and a hot marmalade soufflé. threechimneys.co.uk

3 Camp in the Empty Quarter

Rub' al Khali, the Empty Quarter on the Arabian Peninsula, is the largest sand desert on Earth. Hud Hud Travels sets up the most comfortable camps surrounded by mountains, canyons and plains. Tents have proper beds and starlit showers (as you might expect at a cost of £730 per person per night), and excursions are conducted on camels for those who want to explore the dunes slowly (or there are Jeeps for fans of air conditioning). hudhudtravels.com

4 Learn to dance in Cuba

Dance company Ballet Folklórico Cutumba offers lessons in Cuban son and salsa in Santiago de Cuba and organises club nights in Havana. Plus, trips around the country can be arranged, trying or watching various dance forms and experiencing local styles

of music. A three-day package costs £480 (including flights from Havana). esenciaexperiences.com

5 Shop for antiques in Paris

Paris has the biggest flea markets in the world – from the seven-hectare Marché aux Puces de St-Ouen at Clignancourt to the smaller Porte de Vanves. Antiques specialist Stuart Paterson will not only whisk you round the best bits, but arrange for your purchases to be shipped back home – all while you're lazing at the perfect little Marais hotel, Pavillon de la Reine. Rooms start at £365 a night. pavillon-de-la-reine.com; stupat@gmail.com

6 Explore Spitsbergen from a ship

Basecamp Explorer's ship, *Noorderlicht*, is based all year in the frozen fjords of Norway, hemmed in by ice. Overnight packages start from around £835 per person and while its ten cabins are not superluxurious, they provide a base from which to explore the Arctic wilderness from February until May, climbing glaciers and traversing mountain passes by dog sled or skidoo. basecampexplorer.com

7 Click with the bushmen in Botswana

Jack's Cap and San Camp, owned by the charismatic guide Ralph Bousfield, are in the middle of the biggest salt pans in Africa, the Makgadikgadi. From here, go with San bushmen into the desert, learning about bush life and traditional lifestyles, or head out on safari to spot unusual creatures such as desert lions, brown hyena, porcupines and meerkats. Prices from £710 per person per night, staying in stylish colonial tents filled with antiques and four-poster beds. unchartedafrica.com

4. LEARN TO DANCE IN CUBA



From far left: La Bastide de Marie, Provence; downtime in Havana

8 Explore the Dolomites in privacy

San Lorenzo Mountain Lodge in the Italian Dolomites was once a 16th-century hunting hideaway. It's now a stylishly decorated gourmet retreat for private groups, run by a charming couple. You can keep it just the two of you from £1,995 a day or invite friends for an extra £82 per person a day. With mountains and forests all around, there's plenty to do, from hiking, biking and mushroom-hunting in the forests to skiing – just ten minutes away by helicopter. Or you can just float in the heated pool, admiring the views and tucking into porcini soufflés and wild-boar tagliatelle. sanlorenzomountainlodge.com

9 Relax in Provence

Stay at La Bastide de Marie: a farmhouse converted into a superchic boutique hotel.

Spoil yourself at the spa, hang out in olive groves, then go on a tour with a local painter to discover the spots that inspired Picasso, Matisse and Chagall. From £315 a night. labastidedemarie.com

10 Lie on a beach in Mozambique

Situated on 200 metres of private beach on a protected wildlife peninsula, Pambele is on a stunning part of the African coast, surrounded by reefs, deserted beaches and seas teeming with fish. The fully staffed private house sleeps ten adults and four children (from £3,920 a night all-inclusive) in five wooden, thatched villas, and comes with a catamaran and speedboat for excursions to marlin fish, dolphin and whale-spot, or picnic on one of 100 little islands nearby. pambele.co.mz

11 Watch glaciers calve

Glacier Bay in Alaska has some of the world's most impressive glaciers. The only yachts allowed to stay there overnight are those owned by American Safaris. Week-long trips start from £1,154 per person per night. From the intimate yachts, see huge ice walls falling off glaciers, explore icebergs from kayaks and, if you're brave, take a dip in the icy water. un-cruise.com/alaska-cruises

12 Fly-fish on the Tweed

The Boathouse, a five-bedroomed, self-catering cottage in Northumberland, is not just surrounded by spectacular countryside, but fronted by 1,000 yards of the River Tweed, renowned for its salmon fishing. It starts at £1,000 per week and, for non-fishers, there are fine beaches at nearby Bamburgh

and spectacular clifftop walks at St Abb's Head. crabtreeandcrabtree.com/The_Boathouse-propertyid:11647

13 Track gorillas in Rwanda

Tracking gorillas in the Parc National des Volcans is the highlight of staying at Virunga Lodge (from £384 per person per night), but its hilltop position, with views over the Virunga volcanoes, shimmering lakes and misty tropical forests, is pretty special, too. There are 10 gorilla families in the area (of the 800 or so mountain gorillas still left in existence); once one has been found, you have just one precious hour to spend with them. volcanoessafaris.com

14 Swim with penguins in Cape Town

At the very tip of the African continent the