

# QUOTE

"Tourists now have more comfortable options for a stay in the Sacred Valley, allowing them time to acclimatise to higher altitudes and enjoy the scenery. In 2014, Inkaterra opened the Hacienda Urubamba"

# Mapping out a year of discovery

## 2016 HOTSPOTS

It's time to plan new adventures, says **Sarah Marshall** as she suggests holiday hotspots for the year ahead



### Best for culture

#### **Stratford-upon-Avon** Warwickshire

Shakespeare's plays continue to impress and entertain audiences worldwide, with his works translated into more than 75 languages. This year, attention will be firmly focused on his birthplace Stratford-upon-Avon, marking the 400th anniversary of his death on April 23 with a series of new openings and special exhibitions.

Learn about Shakespeare's personal life through artefacts on display at a re-imagining of his former family home, New Place, where he lived for the last 19 years of his life and wrote 26 major works. Then delve further into his past by visiting Shakespeare's Schoolroom & Guildhall at King Edward VI School, which is open to the public for the first time.

The Royal Shakespeare Company (RSC) will be staging productions throughout the year, along with a new discovery tour, *Page To Stage*, giving a behind-the-scenes look at the famous playhouse and an opportunity to explore the RSC's store of 30,000 costumes. Visit [shakespeares-england.co.uk/shakespeare-2016](http://shakespeares-england.co.uk/shakespeare-2016) for more information.

### Best for safari

#### **Botswana**

Excellent wildlife sightings, a commitment to conservation and a good range of luxury accommodation options make Botswana a top safari destination. Next year, on September 30, the country will celebrate 50 years of independence, prompting Lonely Planet to declare it the number one destination to visit in 2016.

Discover the Okavango Delta, a Unesco World Heritage Site, from the comfort of the newly renovated 12-tent Belmond Eagle Island Lodge, where activities include game drives and boat trips through the ever-changing waterways.

The Okavango's unusual topography has resulted in various animal adaptations, such as swim-

ming lions. Stay at private concession Duba Plains, where film-makers Dereck and Beverly Joubert famously documented the resident pride.

Botswana also has one of the highest populations of endangered wild dog and Belmond's Khwai River Lodge, on the border of the Moremi Wildlife Reserve, is a good place to track them.

Africa specialist The Ultimate Travel Company ([www.theultimatetravelcompany.co.uk](http://www.theultimatetravelcompany.co.uk); 020 3051 8098) tailor-makes a one-week luxury safari from £7,515pp, with three nights at Duba Plains, two nights at Khwai River Lodge and two nights at Eagle Island River Lodge. Includes meals, activities, transfers and flights from London.

### Best for adventure

#### **Peru**

Peru has always been a bestseller in South America, and bookings are set to further soar when British Airways launches a new direct flight from Gatwick to Lima on May 4, from £561 return.

Capital city Lima has a lively gourmet scene; experiment with flavours at award-winning Central ([centralrestaurant.com.pe/en/](http://centralrestaurant.com.pe/en/)), where the menu is based on ingredients foraged from Peru's different altitudes, or sample national dish ceviche (raw fish cured in citrus juice) at Chez Wong ([facebook.com/ChezJavierWong](http://facebook.com/ChezJavierWong)).

Inca citadel Machu Picchu is undoubtedly one of Peru's highlights, with passes for the popular Inca Trail selling out months in advance. Tourists now have more comfortable options for a stay in the Sacred Valley. Last year, Inkaterra opened the Hacienda Urubamba and in August Explora will launch new property Valle Sagrado on the site of an ancient corn plantation.

The Ultimate Travel Company ([www.theultimatetravelcompany.co.uk](http://www.theultimatetravelcompany.co.uk); 020 3051 8098) offers a ten-day private Highlights Of Peru tour visiting Lima, Cusco and the Sacred Valley from £3,125pp – saving £1,540 per couple if booked by February 29. Includes direct BA flights from London.

## Best for wildlife

### India

The cinema release of Disney's *The Jungle Book* in April will put the spotlight on India and its most famous animal resident – the Bengal tiger. These highly endangered creatures are notoriously difficult to spot, but Exodus ([www.exodus.co.uk](http://www.exodus.co.uk)) will be giving it a shot on a 16-day escorted Land of the Tiger tour, with various departures between October and April. The trip costs from £2,429pp (two sharing), including accommodation, most meals, guides, 15 game drives and flights.

Rudyard Kipling set his novel in the region now known as Madhya Pradesh. Village Ways ([village-ways.com](http://village-ways.com)) offers a ten-night trip through the area – visit the teak forest of the Satpura tiger reserve, the hill station of Pachmarhi and stay in Sakata in the migratory corridor between Pench and Kanha tiger reserves. The trip costs from £1,352pp (two sharing), including full board accommodation and activities. Flights extra.

## Best for scenery

### Utah USA

This year, America's National Park service celebrates its 100th anniversary. The state of Utah is home to a "Mighty 5" parks, and with Delta's new daily direct flight from Heathrow to Salt Lake City operating from May 2 (from £754 return), it's even easier to reach.

Marvel at the wind-sculpted sandstone structures in Arches National Park, explore the towering hoodoos in Bryce Canyon, or discover a 100-mile warp in the Earth's crust at Capitol Reef.

After dark, the sightseeing continues at several designated International Dark Sky Parks.

During the winter season, Utah is a favourite destination for skiers and snowboarders. The recently opened Cherry Peak Resort, near Logan in northern Utah, features three triple chairlifts and a 1.25-mile run. Visit [www.visitutah.com](http://www.visitutah.com).

## Best for foodies

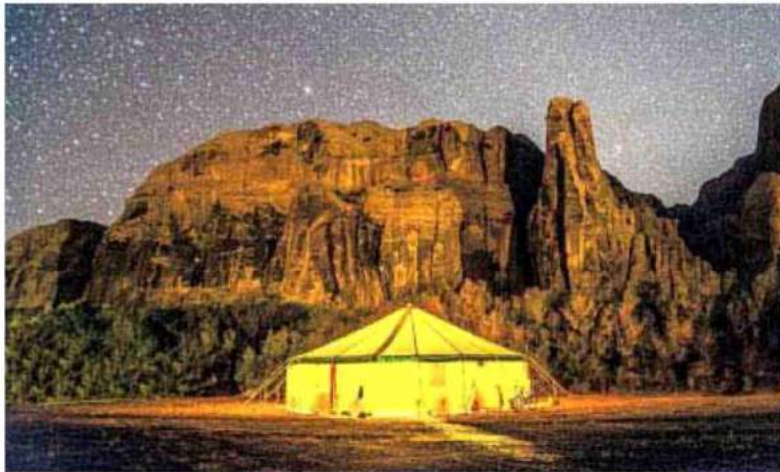
### San Sebastian Spain

As the European Capital of Culture 2016, this city will host a series of talks, exhibitions and events throughout the year. (See [dss2016.eu/en/](http://dss2016.eu/en/) for a full programme.) But the main draw continues to be the fantastic range of restaurants and bars available, many of which regularly appear in The World's Best 50 Restaurants list.

Pura Aventura ([pura-aventura.com](http://pura-aventura.com)) is running a new ten-night Basque Foodie Adventure visit.

A new ten-night Basque Foodie Adventure, visiting producers and sampling products from the coast to the highlands.

Highlights include a visit to millennia-old salt-pans, where harvesters collect salt for Michelin-starred chefs, a pintxo making class in Pamplona, and a visit to the hallowed San Sebastian supper club, the Gastronomic Society. Prices start from £1,995pp (two sharing) including several meals, guides and excursions. Flights to Bilbao are extra.







Stargazing in Utah, sampling Peruvian specialties in Lima, spotting an elusive Bengal tiger in India or discovering the delights of pintxos in Spain's San Sebastián – what will be your travel highlight of 2016?