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# TRAVELLER

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## THAILAND

7 ways to see the best  
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THE LUXURY ISSUE

*Exclusive*

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Summer Palace to a remote Seychelles island  
— the ultimate rooms with a view



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# Travel talk

Ask the experts • The (not so) rough guide • Survival guide • Tell it like it is • Bookshelf • Best of the blogs

## Ask the experts

Our panel offers advice on getting the most out of your honeymoon and how to safari in South Africa on the cheap

**Q** I'm getting married this summer, and my fiancé and I are planning our 'trip of a lifetime' honeymoon for early 2017. We would like to go away for six to eight weeks and have a budget of about £7,000 — we also have 100,000 British Airways Avios points. We'd love to go to Australia and Japan and perhaps one other Asian country (potentially Indonesia or Sri Lanka). We're after a mixture of beaches, nature/adventure, cities and culture. What itinerary would you suggest?



**David Whitely, regular contributor:**

The big savings will be made on the flights. Go through a specialist agent such as Trailfinders or Round The World Flights, which can dig out complicated, cheap tickets not searchable online while helping with itinerary-plotting.

The Avios may be useful for otherwise-expensive Australian domestic or intra-Asian short hops (they can be used with Cathay Pacific, Qantas, Japan Airlines and Malaysia Airlines).

Otherwise, you can save money by allocating more time to cheaper destinations like Indonesia or Sri Lanka. Be moochier there, and more in blitz mode for Oz and Japan. Avoid trying to 'do' a whole country too — you'll spend all your time and money getting from A to B. For Australia, in particular, pick two or three bases (such as Sydney and one of the reef towns), with maybe the odd day trip from them. Beaches, nature, cities and culture are easily covered by your two main targets — perhaps look at more budget-friendly Asia as a chance to enjoy a bit of honeymoon relaxation time. [trailfinders.com](http://trailfinders.com) [roundtheworldflights.com](http://roundtheworldflights.com)



**Rob McDonald, British Airways:** We'd recommend Kuala Lumpur and Japan. The cost in Avios and cash will depend on dates and destinations, but there are ways to make the budget work harder. You could use Avios on reward flights — a return trip to Tokyo would need around 78,000, plus the carrier charges applicable. Alternatively, put them towards the trip, and also earn them on the booking.

Avios can be used for upgrades, hotels, car hire and experiences, as well as flights, so consider using these on the ground in the more expensive destinations. In this case, you could certainly make significant savings on hotels in Japan. [ba.com/executiveclub](http://ba.com/executiveclub)

### GET IN TOUCH

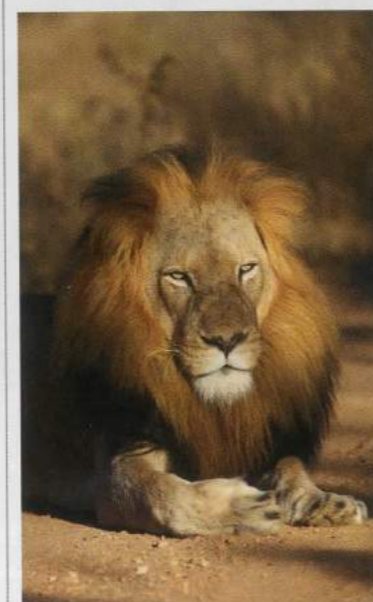
If you're in need of travel advice, email our team: [inbox@natgeotraveller.co.uk](mailto:inbox@natgeotraveller.co.uk)

**Q** I want to visit several South African parks this year but I've heard access is expensive — how can I keep costs down?



**Sam Lewis, regular contributor:** Little-known to international

travellers, the Wild Card offers amazing value, giving access to most of Southern Africa's premier game parks, reserves and conservation areas. As it's an 'annual access' card, many people who are just going for a few weeks overlook it. The card allows free entrance into all South Africa's national parks with a tiered pricing system that depends on which group of parks you buy into. You can expect to pay around R3,000 (£138) per year, per couple but you only have to spend around five days in Kgalagadi or Kruger to have paid for it. Plus membership comes with the chance to book discounted rates at participating game lodges and safari accommodation throughout the region. [wildcard.co.za](http://wildcard.co.za)



IMAGES: GETTY

### BEST BEDS FOR AMAZON WILDLIFE



**Inkaterra Hacienda Concepción, Peru:** Wake to the sound of howler monkeys and river otters in a thatched cabana near the Madre de Dios River. [inkaterra.com](http://inkaterra.com)



**Cristalino Jungle Lodge, Brazil:** Bed down in the southern Amazon in luxe bungalows, relax on a floating deck on the Cristalino River and trek in the jungle. [cristalinolodge.com](http://cristalinolodge.com)



**Chalalán Ecolodge, Bolivia:** Operated by San Jose natives, the Tacana-style cabins are built along the Laguna Chalalán, deep in Madidi National Park. [chalalan.com](http://chalalan.com)

### IN NUMBERS

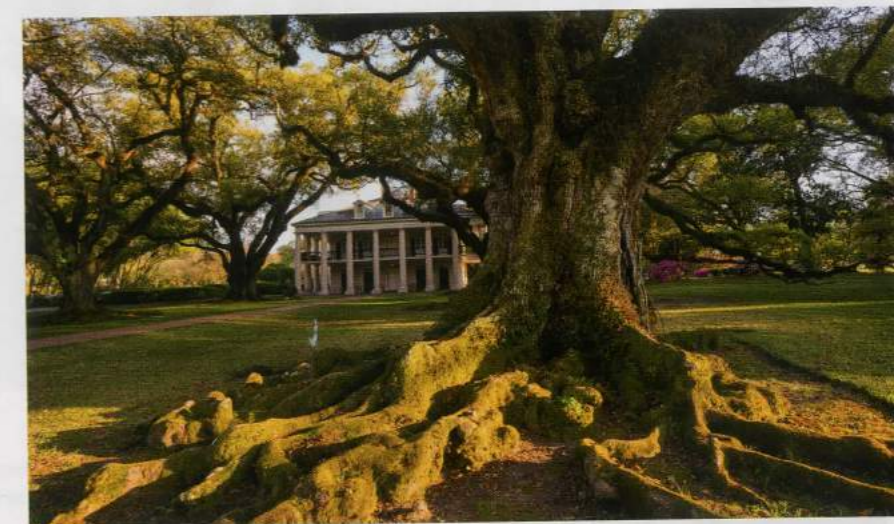
# £7,000

The staggering cost per night for a suite aboard *Seven Seas Explorer* (launching July), although you also get a car and guide when in port and unlimited in-cabin massages. [rssc.com](http://rssc.com)

## The (not so) rough guide to

How to make the most of a trip to the land of bayou and bourbon

# the Deep South



Moss-curtained cypress trees and reptile-populated swamps against which rise the creaking neoclassical columns of a crumbling oak mansion: an image of the Deep South that's familiar from the novels of Tennessee Williams and Anne Rice, plus a host of films featuring, variously, Civil War intrigue, hillbilly hoedowns and even voodoo vampires (see right). But where to come to best experience this fabled landscape?

Most tour operators point travellers to Plantation Alley, a stretch of Mississippi-flanked road between New Orleans and Baton Rouge; the site of 30 Antebellum mansions backed by sugar cane fields. To 19th-century steamboat passengers, these riverfront plantations must have been an imposing, nay terrifying, sight (depending on which side of the Mason-Dixon Line your politics lie). Standout sights include Oak Alley Plantation — a National Historic Landmark mansion with two rows of towering, Spanish moss-shrouded oaks leading to the Mississippi. This aside, this area is now largely blighted by heavy industry and trailer park poverty.

Instead, make for the Cane River National Heritage Area, in and around the Louisiana city of Natchitoches. Deep inside Creole Country, this 70-mile web of old highways linked by truss bridges, connects country stores and 10 plantation houses with riverfront Creole communities whose ancestors hailed from French settlers and African slaves. Natchitoches, the setting for the movie *Steel Magnolias*, is choked with historic churches, cotton mercantile buildings and mansion museums. But to get deep into bayou country, exchange wheels for paddles. Half an hour north west of New Orleans, the Manchac Wetlands takes in hundreds of acres of cypress trees and marshes, punctuated by the floating ghost-town remains of once-thriving logging communities. For the ultimate swamp experience, take to the bayou after dark on a guided kayak or canoe trip, and spot glinting gator eyes between the gnarly boughs of overhanging cypresses. [louisianatravel.com](http://louisianatravel.com)

### THE DEEP SOUTH ON SCREEN

**Gone with the Wind:** This 1939 Civil War romantic classic was largely shot on set in LA but the book it's adapted from is based in and around Clayton County, outside Atlanta.

**A Streetcar Named Desire:** This famous 1951 Tennessee Williams book adaptation ramps up the melodrama using New Orleans' Gothic streetscapes.

**Deliverance:** The menacing 1972 flick best known for the phrase 'squeal like a pig' and a pair of duelling banjos was filmed on the Chattooga River.

**Down by Law:** The 1986 comedy-noir prison-escape drama sets gritty New Orleans and its swampy backwaters against a whiskey-soaked Tom Waits soundtrack.

**True Blood:** The vampire-kitsch TV series that channels Anne Rice novels for the post-Buffy generation. The exterior of Bill Compton's house was first shot at the Roseneath Plantation, near Shreveport, Louisiana.