

ASK THE EXPERTS

NEED ADVICE FOR YOUR NEXT TRIP? ARE YOU AFTER RECOMMENDATIONS, TIPS AND GUIDANCE? OUR EXPERTS HAVE THE ANSWERS...

THE EXPERTS



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Clockwise from left:
16th-century stone
chariots in Hampi, India;
Kazakhstan's Katon-
Karagay National Park is
home to the shimmering
Yazevoye Lake; Fanad
Head lighthouse in
County Donegal, Ireland



I travelled to Uttar Pradesh a few years ago to see the Taj Mahal. Could you recommend some equally dazzling sites in lesser-known states? I'd consider heading further south, perhaps to Karnataka. The state is best known for the ruins at Hampi, one-time capital of the Hindu Vijayanagara empire. Less famous is Pattadakal — a cluster of 10 medieval temples set against the Malaprabha River. The grandest, eighth-century Virupaksha, was commissioned by Queen Loka Mahadevi in honour of her husband King Vikramaditya II, a member of the powerful Chalukya dynasty. With its sprawling courtyard and towering gateway, it typifies the UNESCO-listed site's signature blend of North Indian Nagara and South Indian Dravidian styles, its intricate reliefs recounting Indian

epics. 5 Senses Tours offers a four-day package taking in both Hampi and Pattadakal. From £225 per person, including private transfers, B&B accommodation, guides and entrance charges. [5senses.com](https://www.5senses.com)
Travel 650 miles north to Gujarat and the city of Vadodara, home to Laxmi Vilas Palace, an exquisite slab of honeycomb built by Maharaja Sayajirao Gaekwad III. Finished in 1890, the Indo-Saracenic masterpiece is four times the size of Buckingham Palace and remains the world's largest private residence. It's home to the Gaekwads, Vadodara's erstwhile royal family. Step onto the Venetian mosaic floors of the Darbar Hall, where cultural performances unfold beneath Belgian stained glass windows. Entrance tickets that include a private guided tour are available from INR 800 (£8). [gujarattourism.com](https://www.gujarattourism.com)

If mythology and mysticism intrigue you, head for the emerald forests of Tripura's Jampui Hills in the northeast of India. Known to the Indigenous Tripuri tribes as Subrai Khung — the 'Abode of Shiva' — Unakoti lures visitors with its 1,000-year-old rock carvings. The most striking is a 30-foot-tall depiction of the Hindu god Shiva who, according to local legend, discovered a group of slumbering deities here and turned them into stone as punishment. Matted locks cascading, he lies surrounded by sculpted figures of Hanuman, Ganesha, Durga and others. Northeast Indian outfit Curtain Call Adventures offers three-day, small group tours from INR 35,000 (£315) per person, including transfers, tent accommodation and meals. [curtaincaladventures.com](https://www.curtaincaladventures.com)
POOJA NAIK

IMAGES: GETTY; ALAMY

I have a teenager who was recently diagnosed with ADHD. Do you have any tips for flying long-haul? ADHD symptoms like feeling easily distracted and forgetting everyday tasks mean careful preparation is essential before you travel. Try making a packing check list with your teenager to make sure they don't forget anything important, and help them pack with plenty of time to spare. Boredom can be painfully stressful for people with ADHD. When flying, I carry items in

my hand luggage to keep my mind stimulated, including my Nintendo Switch, an e-reader, puzzles and noise-cancelling headphones. I also download lots of my favourite TV episodes onto my phone. You could ask your teenager to pack a 'flight survival kit' of their own. Be sure to include charging cables and a fully charged power bank. If you can select your seats, ask your teenager for their preference. If they struggle with hyperactivity, an aisle seat offers freedom to move

around, while a window seat, or a seat between family members, might help if they struggle with overstimulation. Bear in mind that if your child takes ADHD medication, you'll need to check if it's allowed at your destination — contact the embassy in advance to confirm whether they have any regulations. Medication must be carried in cabin baggage with a prescription or a note from your child's GP or psychiatrist. Find UK embassy contact details at gov.uk
ANDY WASLEY

I'd like to go horse-trekking in Kazakhstan. Could you suggest a guided trip with a responsible organisation? Exploring a country from the saddle is about as good as it gets. Sadly, these animals are regularly overworked and maltreated in the tourism sector, so choosing a responsible operator — who not only looks after the horses' welfare but also works to benefit the local community and environment — is key. In Kazakhstan, horses are typically raised for meat and

milk, which means finding one to ride can be a tricky business. There's one company I know and trust to act responsibly: Unicorn Trails, whose horse experts approve each ride themselves. They offer an intrepid, 17-day trip in eastern Kazakhstan's Katon-Karagay National Park. It begins and ends in the city of Ust-Kamenogorsk, where you can soak up local culture and learn more about Kazakh history at the Ethnography Museum. You'll spend 12 days in between in the saddle,

roaming the 2,471sq mile park's lakes, forests and peaks, and wild camping at night. There's a fair amount of galloping across grassland, so the trip's best suited to experienced and confident riders, although Unicorn can cater to the less proficient, too. June, July and August are the best months for riding, with temperatures of 27C and fewer insects around. From £2,409, including accommodation, transfers, meals, entrance fees and permits. [unicorntrails.com](https://www.unicorntrails.com)
ABIGAIL BUTCHER



I've always fancied spending the night in a lighthouse. Can you suggest some stays in Ireland?

There's something so romantic about the idea of being tucked up in a tower as the ocean heaves and dances outside, absorbing the stories of a structure that has kept ships safe for generations. Try Clare Island Lighthouse in Clew Bay, just off the coast of County Mayo. It's reached by a short ferry crossing, adding to the drama, and it's possible to stay in the Tower House, where a spiral staircase leads to a circular bedroom in the original light tower. From €300 (£250), sleeping four. Two-night minimum stay on weekends in peak months. [clareislandlighthouse.com](https://www.clareislandlighthouse.com) Otherwise, try getting in touch with Great Lighthouses of Ireland — an initiative working with local communities to sustain Irish lighthouses along the west coast's Wild Atlantic Way. While you can't stay in the towers themselves, several feature characterful keepers' cottages available for rent. You'll find two at St John's Point in County Donegal, for example, both with open fires and ocean views from the kitchen sink. From €225 (£187), sleeping four. Two night minimum stay. [greatlighthouses.com](https://www.greatlighthouses.com) On the east coast, Wicklow Head Lighthouse is an octagonal rod of granite an hour south of Dublin. The historic, high-arched windows of its top floor overlook the Irish Sea. This lighthouse is close to off-radar beaches like Silver Strand and Hanging Rock, and an unusual base for exploring the domed peaks of the Wicklow Mountains. From €400 (£334), sleeping four. Two night minimum. [irishlandmark.com](https://www.irishlandmark.com)
PÓL Ó CONGHAILE