

Breaking new ground

Break away from the **well-trodden** luxury travel route **without leaving** the luxury behind

The Simien Mountains, Ethiopia

The world's greatest explorers may have plotted the course, but they were carried by their crew. From Wilfred Thesiger blazing a trail across Arabia with his caravan to Sir Walter Raleigh cutting across oceans in his galleon, voyages of discovery have rarely been a solitary effort.

If your feet are itching to walk lesser trodden paths, take a cue from history's most successful travellers and employ the services of experts to do the hard work. Thankfully many of the world's top travel firms are increasingly offering destinations off the beaten track, with the needs of today's discerning traveller in mind.

ETHIOPIAN EXPLORER

This year, luxury travel operator Scott Dunn expanded its Africa portfolio to include Ethiopia. Emerging as one of the hottest destination for history buffs,

Ethiopia's ancient ruins rival any of those belonging to its better-known cousins. But Ethiopia is more than a relic to the past; it boasts dramatic scenery, wildlife parks teeming with life and a mosaic of contrasting cultures.

Andrew Dunn, Founder of Scott Dunn, said, "We are very excited to be venturing into Ethiopia and believe it's very much a destination to watch. The diversity of our new itineraries enables our guests to create an experience that blends the country's unique culture with its incredible wildlife and believe even African enthusiasts have the opportunity to see a fresh side to the country."

Scott Dunn suggests two routes, or you can use their expert local knowledge to tailor your own adventure. The first recommended route showcases the contrasts of Ethiopia, from fascinating churches and castles to rugged mountains and serene bamboo forests. This Northern

circuit of the country offers an insight into historic Ethiopia as well as its bustling modern cities.

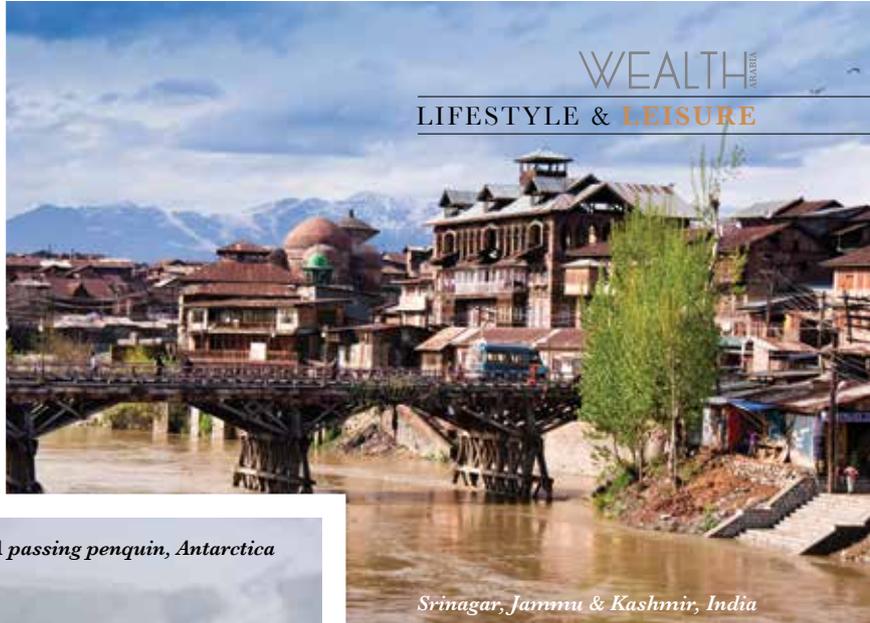
For those wishing to explore further afield, a second itinerary will take you from the source of the Blue Nile to the remote villages of the Omo Valley, where native tribes continue an ancient way of life. Highlights include visiting rock hewn churches in Lalibela, exploring island monasteries in Lake Tana and learning about little known but ancient civilizations in Gondar.

KASHMIR UNVEILED

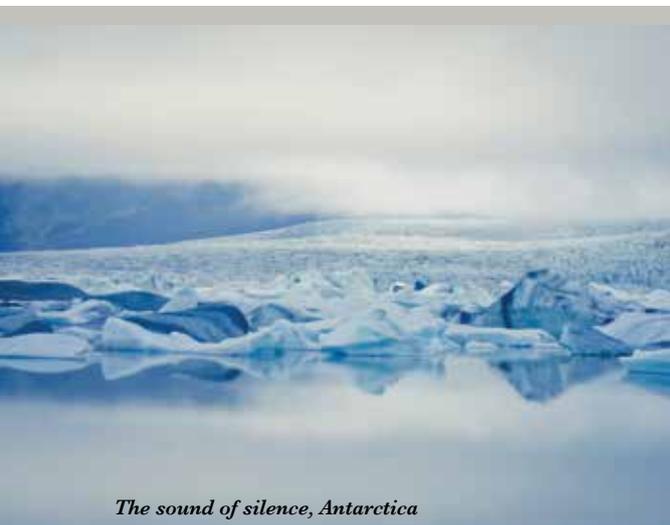
At last, Kashmir is back on the traveller's map after being off limits for almost quarter of a century. Cox & Kings, which has been escorting travellers around the sub continent for more than 250 years, has reintroduced tours to this destination of cultural, religious and historical significance – set against the timeless



Traditional Kashmiri houseboats



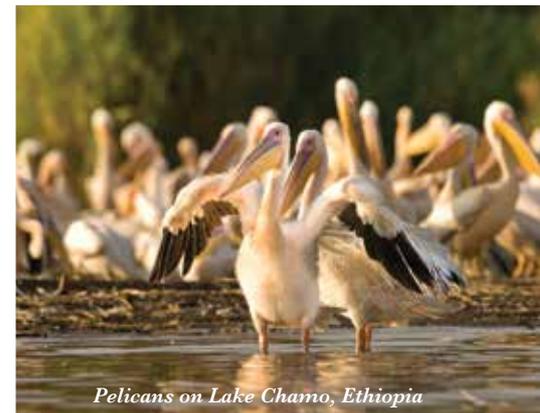
Srinagar, Jammu & Kashmir, India



The sound of silence, Antarctica



A passing penguin, Antarctica



Pelicans on Lake Chamo, Ethiopia

majesty of the Himalayas. While India remains, quite rightly, a top destination for travellers, this sliver of mountainous paradise has been waiting to welcome a new generation of explorers.

Cox & Kings' Chief Executive Officer, Peter Kerkar said, "I am delighted that at long last, we are able to offer Kashmir to our clients again. Previously, this stunningly beautiful region had been one of the most popular areas in India for Cox & Kings' travellers. Changes to the British Foreign & Commonwealth's travel advice, coupled with signs of investment and infrastructure improvements to the region, have enabled our return to the region and we are promoting escorted and private tours around Srinagar and the Dal Lake."

Cox & Kings offers chauffeur-driven tours starting in Srinagar, a culturally-rich city steeped in history, famed for its soothing scenery, Mughal gardens

and charming traditional houseboats. Highlights can include a stay at Karan Mahal, a luxury camp set amid the grounds of Srinagar's royal summer palace, with breathtaking views of the city's renowned lakes and mountain range, backed by acres of forest.

Travellers can also indulge in a two night stay aboard a traditional Kashmir houseboat, and take a 'shikara' cruise across the Dal Lake to explore narrow canals and waterways, colourful floating gardens and markets and isolated villages that have remained unchanged for centuries.

According to Balaji Kandasamy, Cox & Kings' India Product Manager, there is increased interest in more obscure areas. "People want good standard hotels, but are more open-minded about venturing away from the crowds and see some of the Indian subcontinent's hidden gems," he said. "A lot of our clients have travelled to the region with us before and want to

return to explore places off the beaten track wanting local and authentic experiences."

BREAKING THE ICE

If you have ever wanted to visit another planet, the closest you can get is Antarctica. The great white continent has been luring travellers to its eternal winter wonderland for centuries, for experiences that are truly out of this world.

These days, one can experience the haunting beauty of its glistening wilderness from the comfort of a luxury cruiser, in the company of environmentalists and wildlife experts who can help you navigate the grandeur of an untamed region that still belongs to nature.

Luxury travel companies such as Audley Travel offer tailor made trips, which can include whale watching, tracing some of history's most intrepid explorers to Drake's Passage and Elephant Island, walk among penguin colonies, swim in thermal springs, or simply enjoy the silence. 