

COUNTRY LIFE[®] TRAVEL

Take
the
family

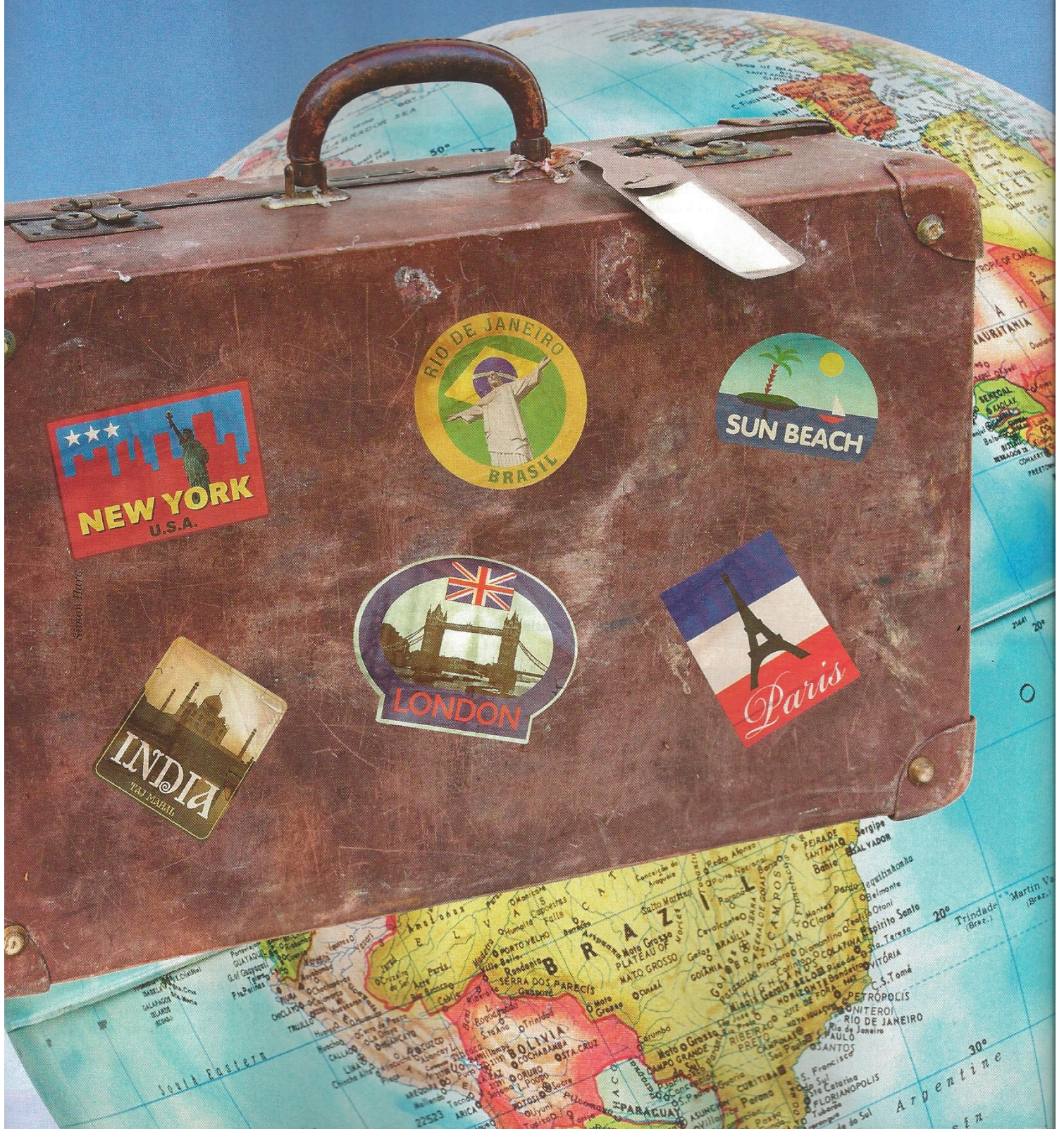


WINTER 2012/2013

Around the world

Tour (operators) de force

Take the stress out of planning the trip of a lifetime and leave it to the experts, for whom nowhere is too far-flung and no request too outlandish. Here, we pick the best travel companies around and find the places they do particularly well



Simon Heath

The Far East Cox & Kings

Why As you'd expect from the oldest travel company in the world (established in 1758), you get an unrivalled level of experience, with expert guides on hand at every stage, even when you disembark on arrival 0845 564 8306; www.coxandkings.co.uk

The Caribbean Elegant Resorts

Why The company will reserve everything from restaurants and golf tee-off times to concert tickets and a nanny. Speak to Alison Gearie, who has worked with Elegant Resorts for 24 years 01244 897991; www.elegantresorts.co.uk

North America Abercrombie & Kent

Why Wildlife and nature are where A&K excel. Go well off the beaten track in the safest of hands—up mountains and glaciers, in forests and down rivers, by horse, seaplane, boat or bicycle. The company has the highest guide-to-guest ratio in the western states 0845 485 1693; www.abercrombiekent.co.uk

Central and South America Cazenove and Loyd

Why The company says if it can't solve a problem, it can't be solved. For a real adventure, go riding in Argentina—see one of the largest waterfalls in the world, a rare advancing glacier and the highest peak outside the Himalayas 020-7384 2332; www.cazloyd.com

The Americas Scott Dunn

Why Originally ski experts, the company has now gone off-piste. America, its latest adventure, is receiving widespread acclaim. Each of its UK representative spends at least four weeks a year in their specialist region, so they really do know it inside out 020-8682 5000; www.scottdunn.com

Africa and India & Beyond

Why Find out about your guide before you go, from their likes and dislikes to where they grew up. You can also check out all their latest articles and sightings through the company's wildwatch website (www.wildwatch.com) www.andbeyond.com

'Everything, even your preferred blend of tea, is taken into account when planning your trip'

Asia Ampersand Travel

Why Every member of the team has either lived, worked or travelled at length in the countries they represent. Talk to founder and MD James Grace-Jayasundera—he knows everything there is to know 020-7289 6100; www.ampersandtravel.com

Europe. Powder White

Why Powder White has 46 chalets in St Anton, Val d'Isère, Courchevel, Verbier and Meribel, where private transfers, in-chalet ski fitting and private skills sessions on the slopes are just the beginning. Go heli-skiing in St Anton or husky sledging in Verbier 020-8877 8888; www.powderwhite.com

East Africa The Safari Collection

Why Stay in the best lodges, with access to lesser-known parks. Take a helicopter ride or go horseriding in the Aberdares. The company is owned and run by one of Kenya's most famous safari dynasties, the Carr-Hartley family, which personally hosts the privately guided adventures 00 254 020 502 0888; www.thesafaricollection.com

Italy Bellini Travel

Why Owner Emily FitzRoy is the person to talk to about Italy, as her connections are unrivalled. Guests can dine at private country estates and city palazzi, often with the owners themselves as hosts 020-7602 7602; www.bellinitravel.com

Russia and Eastern Europe Exeter International

Why Go backstage at the Mariinsky (Kirov) and Bolshoi theatres, get insider access to the Grand Kremlin Palace in Moscow and meet a former KGB colonel or Russian cosmonaut 020-8956 2756; www.exeterinternational.co.uk

Antarctica Brown + Hudson

Why Stay on an ice shelf, go penguin watching and breathe in the cleanest air you're ever likely to inhale. Everything, even your preferred blend of tea, is taken into account 020-3358 0110; www.brownaandhudson.com


Asia Red Savannah

Why No member of the team has fewer than 10 years' experience. Founder George Morgan-Grenville has 24 years in the business under his belt, and was previously group managing director with Abercrombie & Kent 01242 787800; www.redsavannah.com

Europe Kirker

Why Culture and music are what the company does best. It hosts its own festivals, in the UK, Italy and at sea, and these are well worth considering 020-7953 1899; www.kirkerholidays.com

The planet Earth

Why If you have to ask, you're just not in the know. Membership is by invitation only, and there are fewer than 150 members, so the team can devote itself entirely to your needs. You say jump...  www.earthlondon.com