

Mahout Camp on the Mekhong, Thailand

Why go?

On the Northern border of Thailand, wedged between Laos and Myanmar, the Golden Triangle is a must. Although it's a long trip from Bangkok to Chiang Rai (two hours' flight and two hours' drive past the rice paddies), it's well worth it to go to Elephant Mahout Camp.

Where to stay?

The luxurious Anantara Golden Triangle overlooking the mighty Mekhong River is all about elephants. You'll find beautiful exotic gardens, an infinity pool with

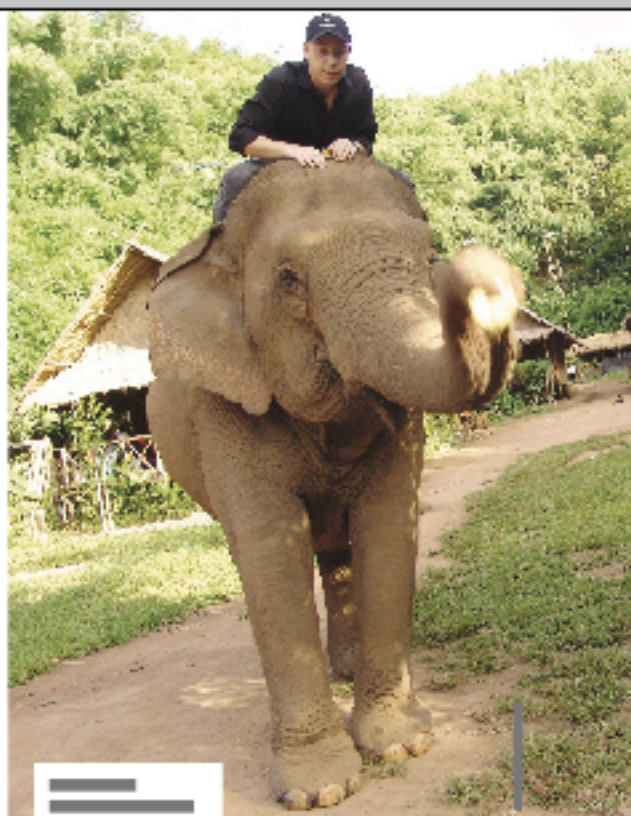
fantastic views and open ensuite bathrooms featuring huge baths sprinkled with orchid petals.

What to do?

Pick up the art of 'ele-driving' on one of the four friendly female elephants. Take a day-long 'crash-course' and learn to feed the gentle giants, ride bareback, steer and even give instructions in Thai. There's also a spa, several restaurants and excursions to the brand new 'Hall of Opium' museum - a fascinating look into the area's infamous past.

Any tips?

If you like a touch of adventure, hire a car and drive yourself from Chiang Rai to take in the gorgeous landscapes and even drive to the border of Myanmar for a day visit.



Doggie Days in Alberta, Canada

Why go?

Winter honeymooners should head to the Canadian Rockies where snow falls thick on the stunning Rocky peaks from November to March. Bizarrely it's considered low season so rates are cheaper and it's really quiet. Canmore, near Banff, is a real hidden gem.

Where to stay?

Go self-catering in the spacious chalets at Mystic Springs Chalets & Hot Pools. Each is about 1,000 sq feet, with a full kitchen, dining area, living room, bedrooms and bathrooms! There's also Canmore's largest outdoor hot pool, on-site massage, concierge service, and a vast selection of DVDs to borrow.

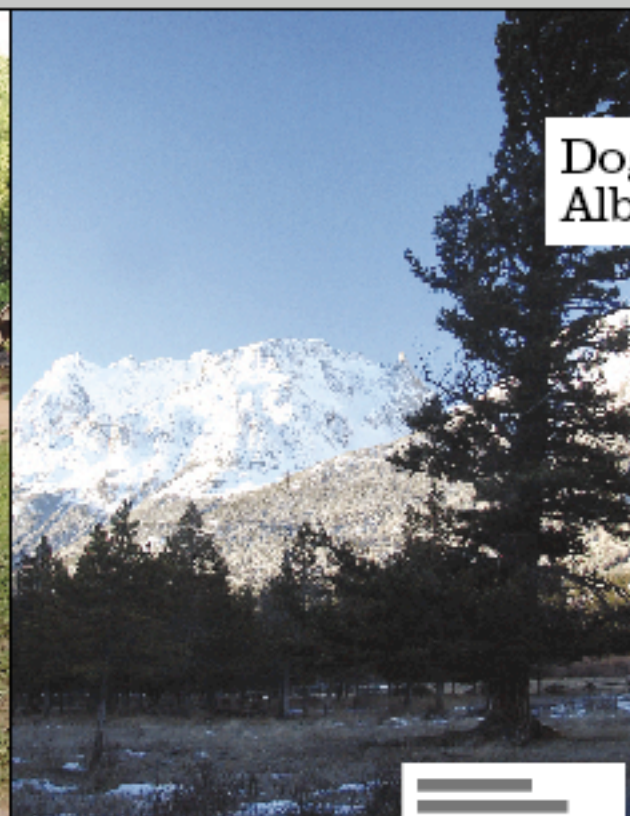
What to do?

Canmore is a quaint town where you'll find everything

from brilliant skiing to cosy restaurants and days out with the husky dogs. Join in the fun with Snowy Owl Dog Tours (www.snowyowldogtours.com). With them, you'll be taught the basics of 'mushing' with a team of gorgeous dogs, while your other half nestles under a duvet in the sled!

Any tips?

When it gets really, really cold (-31°C) you should buy some warming pads to slip into your gloves and shoes - and come with the right equipment!



Diving in Oman

Why go?

Wedged between Yemen, Saudi Arabia and the Indian Ocean, Oman's coastline is unspoilt and offers some of the world's best diving spots. Most of the country is arid desert and rugged mountains, but the real attraction is the ocean, which is teeming with marine life.

Where to stay?

Book a suite at the ultra-chic Chedi, a modern boutique-style hotel in the capital Muscat. The rounded domes, arches, tall windows and white-washed walls give it a real Arabian nights look with candles twinkling in the water features at night. They even have Bulgari toiletries!

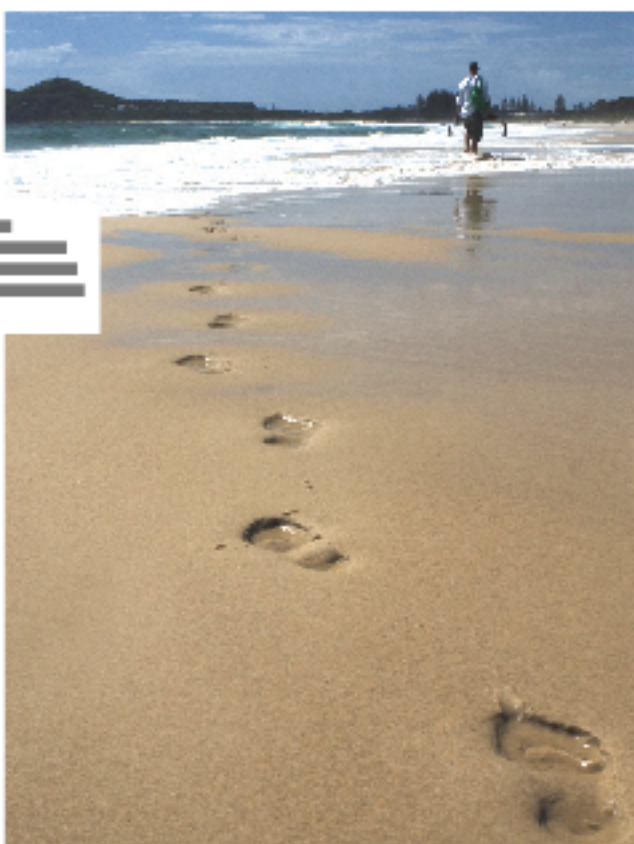
What to do?

Go diving with Global Scuba (www.global-scuba.com) like Prince Charles does or head to Musandam on the

Northern tip of the Peninsula where you'll see everything from reef and whale sharks to sunfish, barracudas and turtles. There's also plenty to see like the Sultan's palace, the Muttrah souq and just taking in the atmosphere of the 900-year-old city.

Any tips?

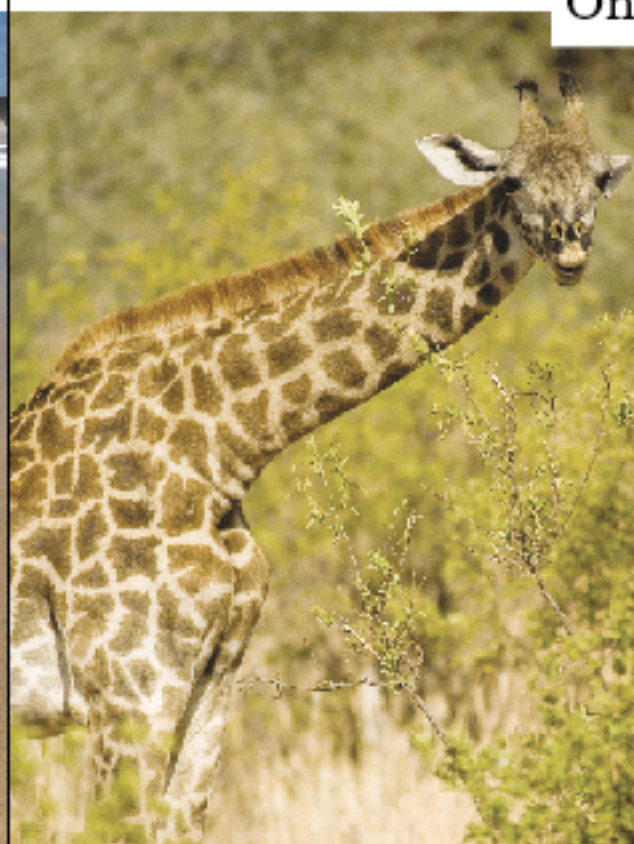
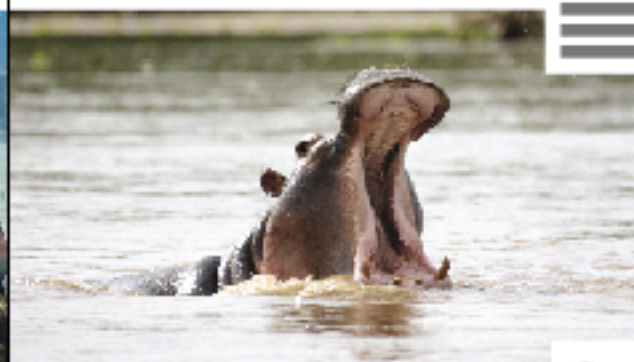
At the souq, remember to haggle. Pick up Pashminas, silks, silvers and at the gold souk, check the overhead signs - if it's fake they must declare it! At sundown join the locals at Qurum beach.



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On Safari in Tanzania

Why go?

The Selous is about the size of Switzerland and only has a handful of camps, which means a whole world of safari to yourself. No queuing and no seeing other cars when you're out on a game drive - a rarity.

Where to stay?

Stay at the newly refurbished Beho Beho camp. The staff are ready to look after you as if you were family. The overhaul has turned the once basic bandas into luxurious rooms with gorgeous design in the midst of the African bush. And there are only eight rooms. It's hardly what you'd call crowded!

What to do?

Go for game drives, of course. For a few thrills, go

for a cruise on Lake Tanganyika where the tiny boat will zoom over hippos and past the crocodiles. Back on dry land, follow the graceful giraffes, watch the lions in awe and if you're lucky, you might even catch an elephant on your doorstep in the middle of the night.

Any tips?

Bring plenty of mosquito repellent and pack sensibly - it's dry, dusty and hot, so comfort is key.

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