

TOP 10 WONDERS OF THE WORLD

Ever wanted to experience the best wonders of the world? Now you can; I have put together a list of my top 10, these are not the official list, of course, however, I feel that the list I have collated does offer something a bit different.

SIT BACK AND MARVEL AT...

Machu Picchu



IN HOT TUBS WATCH THE...

Northern Lights in Iceland

Picture draping sheets of neon coloured light dancing across the sky and you've imagined the Aurora Borealis, or the Northern Lights as they are commonly known. This natural phenomenon is caused by collisions between electrically charged particles and solar winds in the high altitudes of the Earth's atmosphere. These lights appear in many colours from red and yellow to blue and violet, with hues of green the most common. The lights also appear in many different forms, decorating the sky in snaking lines, arcs of colour and shooting rays. With its remarkable landscapes and Arctic winter conditions, Iceland is a great place to watch the Northern Lights between September and March, when there are more hours of darkness. As you'd expect of a country situated close to the Arctic Circle, Iceland can get mighty cold so what better way to enjoy this natural spectacle than from a bubbling hot tub with a warm beverage in your hand as the lights slowly waltz overhead?



TAKE A MICROLIGHT FLIGHT OVER...

Victoria Falls

Forming a natural border between the neighbouring countries of Zambia and Zimbabwe, Victoria Falls is an awe-inspiring natural beauty with the world's largest sheet of water thundering over a wide, basalt cliff. The usually placid Zambezi River forms the Falls as it morphs into a raging torrent at its full width that plummets into a transverse chasm below a vertical drop. Its indigenous name of Mosi-oa-Tunya translates as 'the smoke that thunders' and it's an apt description for the columns of spray that rise from the depths of the gorge as more than five hundred million cubic metres of water drop from the edge of the Falls at the height of the rainy season. It's said that the noise of Victoria Falls can be heard from 40km away. For the best views of Vic Falls, head to the sky for an exhilarating Microlight flight.



BY CANDLELIGHT VISIT...

The Rose City of Petra

Carved from the dramatic pink-hued cliffs of a mountainous desert landscape, the ancient city of Petra is Jordan's leading attraction and one of the New Seven Wonders of the World. In prehistoric times the Nabataean city was an important caravan centre on the route between Arabia and Egypt, and today a vast network of elaborate tombs, temples and ingenious water management system remains in a remarkable state of preservation. Nothing can quite prepare you for the sight of the exquisite Treasury facade slowly revealing itself as you make your way through the narrow and deeply cut canyon leading to the city's entrance. It's even more magical visited in the late evening, guided by candlelight and enveloped by the sounds of Bedouin pipe music gently floating on the breeze.



FLOAT IN A HOT AIR BALLOON ABOVE...

Cappadocia

The curious geology of Toblerone-shaped pinnacles and Neapolitan-coloured rock formations rising from the stark plains of Anatolia is the stuff of fairytales. Inspired by the natural erosion of the landscape, thousands of years ago humans began to carve out a spectacular chamber and tunnel complex from the soft rock, forming entire troglodyte villages in Cappadocia with rock-hewn churches, cavernous living quarters and storehouses. The iconic pointy fairy chimneys hint at the extraordinary, chiselled homes beneath, used as a place of religious refuge by Christians fleeing persecution from Rome in the 4th century. Days could be spent exploring the underground dwellings but for an unforgettable view of the Göreme Valley and its chimneys opt for a leisurely hot air balloon ride at sunrise, gently drifting over orchards and vineyards as the growing light changes the colours of the volcanic terrain.



ENJOY A SCENIC FLIGHT ACROSS...

Mount Everest

Located on the border between Nepal and Tibet, the towering peak of Mount Everest is one of the world's tallest mountains and one of the most well-known. The mountain range is estimated to have formed over 60 million years ago as the Indian and Asian tectonic plates pushed up against one another, and the rocky summit continues to grow 0.25 inches each year with this movement. It has been known to the local indigenous peoples for centuries, whose name for the mountain means 'goddess of the universe', but was not identified by the Western world until 1841 with a British survey led by Sir George Everest. Today hundreds of intrepid climbers attempt to scale the towering peak each year but to appreciate the sheer scale and breath-taking mountain vistas truly, take an early morning scenic flight from Kathmandu.



MAKE A SIDE-TRIP TO...

Abu Simbel

Located on the western bank of Lake Nasser, the two massive rock-cut temples of Abu Simbel are a UNESCO World Heritage Site and one of ancient Egypt's most impressive sights. Built-in the 13th century to commemorate a victorious battle and immortalise Pharaoh Ramses II, the temple features four gigantic statues of Ramses himself, carved into a cliff face and unblinking as they purvey the entrance into Egypt from Africa. A Swiss explorer discovered the temple in 1813, buried deep in sand, and over a century on had to be moved from its original location as the High Dam in Aswan threatened to submerge the temple in what became Lake Nasser. The temples of Abu Simbel are best reached on a return flight from the Nubian city of Aswan with a few hours dedicated to exploring the inner sanctuary and marvel at the bas-reliefs.



RISE EARLY TO WATCH SUNRISE OVER...

Angkor Wat

With its five lotus-shaped towers, three-tiered galleries and intricate bas-reliefs that decorate much of the immense temple, Angkor Wat is the glittering jewel in the Angkor Archaeological Park crown. Occupying a rectangular-shaped area of 500 acres and surrounded by a moat, it's the largest of all of Angkor's temples and one of the best-preserved - in fact, it's the largest religious monument in the world. Designed as the earthly representation of Mount Meru, the abode of the ancient gods in the Hindu faith, and dedicated to Vishnu, Angkor Wat gradually transformed into a centre of Buddhist worship and featured exquisite sculptures of heavenly nymphs alongside free-standing statues of Buddha. Watching the sun creep up from behind the temple's iconic silhouette and its image mirrored in the lily-strewn pond below is the best way to start your exploration of this incredible site.

WATCH SUNSET AT THE...

Taj Mahal

Its architectural perfection has earned the Taj Mahal its reputation as being the most beautiful building on the planet. Completed in 1653 under Shah Jahan as a memorial and ever-lasting tribute to his beloved wife who died during childbirth, the complex consists of the impeccably symmetrical domed marble tomb surrounded by four minarets, attractive gardens leading to the tomb, and two red-sandstone buildings. Some 20,000 artisans from across India, Central Asia and even Europe worked on the project that required elaborate decorative elements including inlays of precious stones and exquisite marble screens. Stunning at any time of day, the visual beauty of the Taj Mahal reaches its peak at sunset when the sky turns a soft glow of orange and pink, transforming the white marble surface into a delicate rose hue.

SPEND A NIGHT AT THE...

Great Wall of China

Stretching some 20,000 km from the Yellow Sea in the east to the Gobi desert in the west, the Great Wall of China is the world's longest human-made barrier measuring seven metres wide and up to 14 metres high. Snaking its way along forested mountain ridges, the Wall is more than 2,000 years old and punctuated by watchtowers that would have housed soldiers and stored food and weapons. It may not be visible from space, as the popular myth would have you believe. Still, it's no less spectacular with wild, ruined sections meeting perfectly restored portions that beautifully display the true might and achievement of China's ancient emperors. Spend a night beside the Wall for the chance to watch the sunset and rise the following morning, bathing the Wall in varying light for optimal photography opportunities without the day-tripping crowds.

I have lots and lots of ideas for making a destination, a little more adventurous; I would with lots of small companies who can tailor your trip to your own requirements.