

CONCIERGE

What's hot around the region

FAR FROM THE MADDING CROWD

Even though mass travel has made the world significantly smaller, there are still corners of the Earth that are only just beginning to attract the attention of travellers. Here are two at the top of our 'must see soon' list.



GÖREME, TURKEY

In the heart of the Cappadocia region in central Turkey, the village of Göreme has been inhabited since Roman times, though it was not until it became an integral part of the hippy trail between Istanbul and India that it lurched into the view of international tourists. Surrounded by fantastic rock formations known as "fairy chimneys" these minaret-like structures formed by the wind and rain score the landscape, housing hotels, restaurants and churches. The village itself is a laidback haven from which expeditions exploring the surrounding landscape can be launched.

When to go: Freezing cold in winter and baking hot in summer, the best time to go to Göreme is skirting these extremes between March and May and August and November.

Getting there: Turkish Airlines flies from Bangkok, Singapore and Hong Kong to both Istanbul and Ankara. Connect onto a domestic flight to the city of Kayseri. Göreme is a 40-minute taxi ride from the airport.

Where to stay: There is an array of accommodation in the village, the best being hotels housed in the fairy chimneys. These include Kismet Cave House and Legend Cave Hotel.

Things to do: The Göreme Open Air Museum is a fantastic collection of ancient churches and frescoes within walking distance from the village. In addition, there are plenty of excursions to the nearby underground cities used by early Christians escaping persecution. The Cappadocia is one of the best places in the world to take a balloon ride: a 45-minute escapade over the stunning landscape. Typically taken at dawn, there is something extraordinary about the sun rising over this arid moonscape.

Useful websites: www.thy.com, www.gototurkey.com

FREETOWN, SIERRA LEONE

Being bottom of the UN's Human Development Index and having become synonymous with bloody civil war, Sierra Leone is one of the least likely African candidates to be on the cusp of a tourism boom. But with a new and stable government, and having been crowned one of the safest capitals in Africa, the city of Freetown is poised and ready for holidaymakers. With a five-km stretch of unspoiled coastline, Freetown joins the likes of Rio de Janeiro, Cape Town, Los Angeles and Sydney as one of the planet's greatest cities by the sea. And if you get sick of the city, there is a plethora of islands dotted along the coast and finding a deserted beach is never hard.



When to go: Although December is the best month since the wind blows down from the desert and dries the country out, travelling between November and May ensures you miss the rainy season which comes with unbearable humidity. Temperatures average 30°C.

Getting there: Kenya Airways flies from Bangkok to Freetown via Nairobi three times a week. The airport is in the city of Lungi, which lies across the Sierra Leone River from Freetown. Taxis can easily ferry you round, or you can opt for a helicopter ride for just USD 70.

Where to stay: Accommodation in the country is still fairly primitive and although five-star resorts are planned, visitors should be prepared to rough it a little. The website www.visitsierraleone.com features some of the better options, although there is always a peaceful stretch of beach to be found on which you can bunk down under a mosquito net.

Things to do: Freetown was built in 1787 by freed slaves and the National Museum is a good place to get to grips with the remarkable history of this city. With some of the best fishing in Africa, the capital is a haven for seafood and there are numerous restaurants serving up the day's catch. Boats are available to rent from Cackle Bay in Murraytown. Alternatively, 4WD vehicles are available for an inland trek. Bureh to the south has the best waves for surfing.

Useful websites: www.kenya-airways.com, www.visitsierraleone.com