

Goa away the ultimate sun holiday

Reader Allison Perreira went on a once-in-a-lifetime trip round India



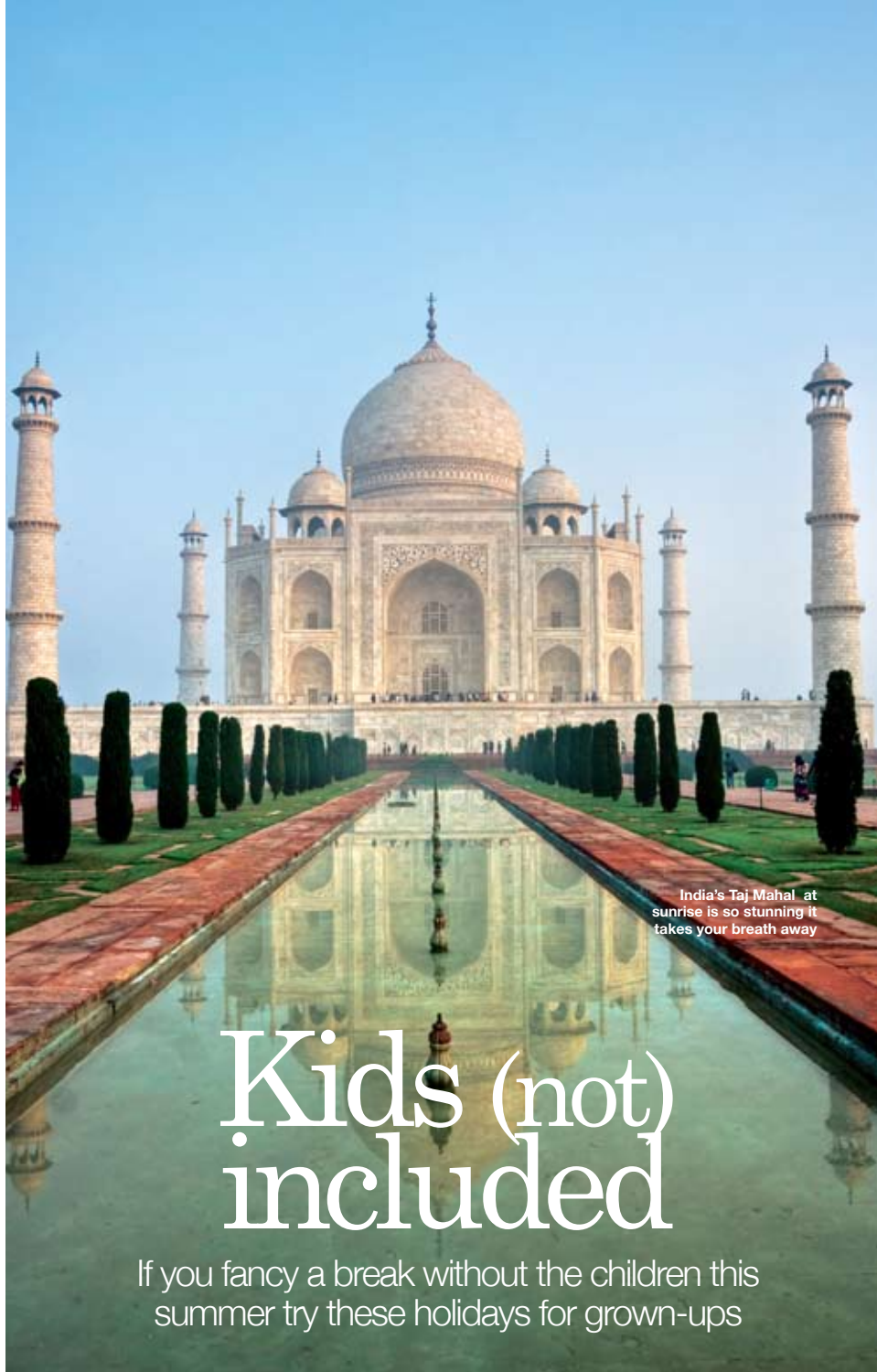
India always comes top of the list of must-see places. So, feeling adventurous, I booked a tour to find out what all the fuss is about.

In need of a little relaxation, my boyfriend

and I started our trip with some downtime in Goa. A haven for hippies in the 1960s, Goa has kept its laid-back vibe. There we chilled out on the beautiful Palolem beach in South Goa. And for a taste of Goa's lively nightlife we ventured up to the north and visited the Saturday night market in Arpora. And of course we couldn't visit Goa without sampling its famous fish curry.

Feeling revitalised, the next stop on our expedition was Jaipur. There we saw the city's magnificent forts and buildings, built from pink sandstone, which is why, our local guide explained, Jaipur is called the Pink City of Rajasthan. Booking our trip through a tour company was the ideal way to ensure our holiday was hassle free since everything, from internal flights and drivers to knowledgeable English-speaking local guides, was organised for us. All we had to worry about was making sure our cameras were charged so we could take plenty of pictures of our stunning surroundings.

Last, but definitely not least, we went to Agra. Here we saw why the Taj Mahal is regarded as one of the most majestic buildings in the world. Standing in a garden on the bank of the River Yamuna, the extraordinary white marble building looks especially stunning at sunrise. We felt as if we were in a fairy tale, and now India tops our list of must-see places too.



India's Taj Mahal at sunrise is so stunning it takes your breath away

Kids (not) included

If you fancy a break without the children this summer try these holidays for grown-ups

Relaxing on one of South Goa's beautiful sandy beaches



Getting there

Goaway has a 10-day tour of Goa beach, Jaipur and the Taj Mahal from £899. This includes accommodation, based on two sharing; international flights from Gatwick or Manchester; airport transfers; domestic flights from Goa to Jaipur; a private car with a driver, and a local guide for sightseeing, both of whom are English speaking. For details see www.goaway.co.uk or call 020 7258 7800.



Turkish delight an ideal city break

Reader Natalie Loftus combined urban chic with culture in Istanbul



My idea of the perfect holiday is somewhere with lots of culture by day, and plenty of nightlife. Istanbul, steeped in history and now one of the hippest cities in the world, sounded great.

Turkey's former capital, previously called Constantinople, Istanbul is the only city in the world to be situated across the borders of two continents, Asia and Europe. And its mix of influences gives it a unique feel of the old and new.

The city is built on seven hills, and is surrounded by water so we opted for a boat trip on the Bosphorus to take in the stunning views. Once we had our bearings we wandered to the Sultanahmet district, one of the oldest parts of Istanbul, and home to the city's most recognisable monument,

the Hagia Sophia, the Church of Divine Wisdom.

We also paid a visit to the Blue Mosque, the city's only mosque with six minarets, and so called because of the colour of its tiled interior and the light that shines through its windows. Then we spent the remainder of the day at Topkapi Palace, which houses the legendary harem.

After the day's sightseeing we went to check out what the city had to offer by night. And we didn't have to look far. Close to Taksim Square, in the heart of the modern part of Istanbul, is the Beyoglu area, which after dark comes alive with many vibrant bars and clubs.

A trip to Istanbul wouldn't be complete without some retail therapy so we headed to the Grand Bazaar – one of the largest covered markets in the world – in search of some bargains. With over 1,000 shops to choose from we found plenty of Turkish

goodies to buy. We managed to pack lots into our stay but we couldn't do everything, so that gives us an excuse to return soon.

Getting there

Pegasus flies to Istanbul from Stansted, from £39.99 one way, taxes and charges included. See www.flypgs.com. The Lush Hotel (www.lushhiphotel.com) starts from £44.50 per person per night, based on two people sharing. And for more information visit www.gototurkey.co.uk.



Take an evening boat trip along the Bosphorus for some wonderful city views

PHOTOGRAPHS: SHUTTERSTOCK; 4 CORNERS IMAGES

Caribbean charm perfect for a touch of romance

Tobago, a beautiful island just ideal for recapturing that loving feeling



Reader Jasmin Hyde went to Tobago with her husband Derek

To celebrate our fifth wedding anniversary my husband and I decided to leave the kids with their grandparents and go on a dream holiday to the Caribbean.

On arrival in Tobago it was a short drive to our beachfront hotel, the Coco Reef resort, set in 10 acres of tropical gardens. This is on the far west of the island, between two of Tobago's most stunning beaches, Store Bay and Pigeon Point. We also had our own private white sandy beach, Coconut Bay, which was perfect for sunbathing.

The service at the hotel was second to none, making it far too easy to get used to not lifting a finger. And it was a lovely place to unwind and enjoy the peace and quiet. We took advantage of the quality time together to go snorkelling in the crystal-clear water, indulge in a spa treatment and enjoy afternoon tea overlooking the ocean.

We even felt sufficiently laid-back – which we discovered is Tobago's trademark – to venture out of the hotel. We explored Fort Milford, on the most

westerly tip of the island and went to Buccoo Reef, a protected marine park, famous for its sea life and coral reef.

We enjoyed even more of the island's natural beauty with a hike through the lush rainforest reserve in the east, protected since 1776. And we were fascinated by a trip to the little fishing village of Charlotteville, in the northeast, where fishermen sound conch shells to announce the day's catch.

Back at the resort we treated ourselves to a cocktail at Bobster's Champagne Bar and watched the sunset as we toasted our anniversary and the married bliss we had rediscovered in Tobago.

Getting there

Seven nights' bed and breakfast at the Coco Reef & Spa in Crown Point, Tobago, with Cosmos Distant Dreams starts from £1,070, inclusive of flights with Monarch Airlines from London Gatwick. Call 0871 423 8423 or visit www.cosmos-holidays.co.uk to book.



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