

# YOUR 2011 TRAVEL HOT LIST

WHERE TO GO, WHEN TO TRAVEL AND WHAT TO DO ONCE YOU'RE THERE... *RED'S* HOLIDAY EDIT JUST MADE BOOKING TIME OFF A WHOLE LOT EASIER

WORDS LISA JOHNSON

## CHILE

Starting with the earthquake in February and ending with the ordeal of the 33 miners, Chile had a turbulent 2010. But the capital, Santiago, is back on its feet. It's also a more appealing prospect than before, thanks to the opening of the 15-room Aubrey in boho Bellavista. Move on to the Atacama Desert, one of the highest, driest and most bewitching places on the planet, where you can ride in the Valley of the Moon, watch columns of steam in the Tatio geyser field and gaze at flamingos at the Tara salt flat.

**WHEN TO GO:** October to April.

**DETAILS:** Tim Best Travel (020 7591 0300, [timesttravel.com](http://timesttravel.com)) offers six nights in Chile all-inclusive, from £2,400 per person, based on two sharing, with two nights at The Aubrey and four at the Tierra Atacama Hotel in San Pedro de Atacama. Extensions to the winelands of Patagonia can also be arranged.

**THIS PAGE:** Luxury eco-resort Tierra Atacama Hotel sits in the middle of Chile's Atacama Desert  
**RIGHT:** The romantic ruins of Laugharne Castle, south Carmarthenshire

## 2 CARMARTHENSHIRE, WALES

Overlooked, until now, as a drive-through county between the Gower peninsula and Pembrokeshire, beautiful Carmarthenshire is putting itself on the map. And the Dylan Thomas connection isn't the only thing going for it. Yes, the poet is thought to have written parts of *Under Milk Wood* in a shed near the Dylan Thomas Boathouse and the ruins of 13th-century Laugharne Castle, but we suspect the Toast sale shop in the gorgeous town of Llandeilo may be just as interesting.

Other treats in the county include an aromatherapy massage at Hurst House On The Marsh ([hurst-house.co.uk](http://hurst-house.co.uk)), a converted dairy farm with modern rustic interiors and a tasting menu; a ride through woods and streams from the Marros Riding Centre ([marros-farm.co.uk](http://marros-farm.co.uk)); and a toasted sandwich at Barnacles Beach Café overlooking the surfers at Pendine Sands (the starting point of a new 5.5-mile coastal path to Amroth). Stay at Great House in Laugharne, an atmospheric Georgian house with wood-panelled walls, sash windows, roll-top baths and high-backed velvet armchairs. The country-chic kitchen and dark-wood dining room are perfect for a house party.

**WHEN TO GO:** During The Laugharne Weekend literary festival in April ([thelaugharneweekend.com](http://thelaugharneweekend.com)).

**DETAILS:** Three nights at Great House from £855 for six (01865 764 087, [sheepskinlife.com/great-house](http://sheepskinlife.com/great-house)). From London, take the train to Carmarthen via Swansea ([firstgreatwestern.co.uk](http://firstgreatwestern.co.uk) and [arrivatrainswales.co.uk](http://arrivatrainswales.co.uk)), then hire a car ([enterprise.co.uk](http://enterprise.co.uk)). See also [discovercarmarthenshire.com](http://discovercarmarthenshire.com).





Le Moulin de la Tuilerie, Gif-sur-Yvette

### 3 PARIS & THE ILE DE FRANCE

Six months before its release, there is already a buzz surrounding Madonna's new film *W.E.* Forced into exile, Edward VIII and Wallis Simpson based themselves in Paris, where they spent the 1950s and 1960s. At weekends, they decamped to Gif-sur-Yvette, a village 23km south-west of the city, and 18th-century mill house Le Moulin de la Tuilerie. The mill buildings can now be rented and, while the couple's Paris home in the Bois de Boulogne is not open to the public, you can stay in style at Le Meurice, where they lived from 1937 to 1938.

**WHEN TO GO:** Any time.

**DETAILS:** Three nights at Le Moulin from £1,403 (sleeps 12), La Maison des Amis from £741 (sleeps four) and La Célibataire from £381 (sleeps two); (01628 825 925, landmarktrust.org.uk). Doubles at Le Meurice from around £568 (00 33 1 44 58 10 10, lemeurice.com).



Falmouth is a working fishing port - and has the restaurants to prove it

### 5 FALMOUTH, CORNWALL

Madonna has been spotted house-hunting here, and Pierce Brosnan enjoys pottering about on boats underneath the twin Tudor fortresses of Pendennis and St Mawes. The Bridgedeck is a five-star rental apartment on the marina. Grab some seafood at Rick Stein's new Fish & Chips restaurant and a cocktail at Eight Bar, then recover over breakfast at the Gylly Beach Café.

**WHEN TO GO:** During the Falmouth Oyster Festival in October (falmouthoysterfestival.co.uk).

**DETAILS:** One week at The Bridgedeck (sleeps six) costs from £595 (01749 870 230, chycor.co.uk). See also falmouth.co.uk.

### 4 ILHA DE MOÇAMBIQUE, MOZAMBIQUE

Barefoot luxury resorts such as Vamizi (Quirimbas archipelago) and Azura (Bazaruto archipelago) have already put Mozambique's 2,500km coastline on the map as a wild alternative to the Maldives, Mauritius and the Seychelles. Until recently, however, the only accommodation on or near the Ilha de Moçambique - a 2.5km-long island near Nampula that served as the Portuguese colonisers' HQ for four centuries - was of the guesthouse variety. So the opening of two luxury properties is great news.

Coral Lodge 15.41 (corallodge1541.com) has 10 en-suite villas in the dunes, an infinity swimming pool and a restaurant serving fresh fish under the stars. Twelve-chalet Nuarro (nuarro.com), down the coast on Memba Bay, is solar- and wind-powered, with a trainee chefs' programme, a school and clinic built with guests' donations. Both offer powder-fine sand, sunset dhow sailing and first-class diving.

**WHEN TO GO:** August to October, when humpback whales arrive on the coast with their calves.

**DETAILS:** Seven nights' full-board at Coral Lodge, including flights, transfers and a complimentary scuba dive, from £3,499 per person, based on two sharing. Seven nights' full-board at Nuarro, including flights, transfers and a complimentary massage, from £2,399 per person, based on two sharing. Both with To Escape To (020 7060 6747, toescapeto.com). Kenya Airways is due to introduce flights from Nairobi to Nampula in January, which should bring prices down.

### 6 LUANG PRABANG, LAOS

This former royal capital and Unesco World Heritage Site has nosed ahead of Siem Reap and Ho Chi Minh City as the go-to place in Indochina. The former French possession has a sleepy, colonial feel, with shuttered houses, wine bars and charming locals. Stay at the 23-suite Alila Luang Prabang, a renovated courtyard hotel, or try the nine-room Apsara Rive Droite - and drop in at the Ock Pop Tok weaving centre for a lemongrass cocktail.

**WHEN TO GO:** November to February.

**DETAILS:** Doubles at the Alila Luang Prabang from US\$325 (around £205) with Mr & Mrs Smith (0845 034 0700, mrandmrsmith.com). Apsara Rive Droite doubles from £135, with Inspired By Asia (01423 704 118, inspiredbyasia.co.uk).



The shores of the Mekong river, Luang Prabang

### 7 MIAMI, USA

There are a dozen reasons to visit Miami. If you're into the arts, there's Art Basel Miami Beach (but hurry, because it'll be over by the end of January) and Miami's New World Symphony orchestra academy's new Frank Gehry-designed home. Then there's Soho Beach House, a private members' club with rooms, which has just opened in a renovated 1940s hotel, with a new 16-storey tower. Staying in one of the 50 rooms gives you access to the club's facilities: the Cecconi's garden restaurant, the Cowshed spa, the 1940s Cuban bar, the 100ft pool lined with cabanas... Oh, and don't forget the year-round sun.

**WHEN TO GO:** During the South Beach Wine & Food Festival (February 24th-27th) or Winter Music Conference (around March 22nd-26th).

**DETAILS:** Doubles from US\$400 (around £254); (00 1 786 507 7900, sohobeachhouse.com).

### 8 SYRIA

Lebanon isn't the only hot spot in the Middle East - Syria is equally compelling. The big draw is its historical riches: the Roman ruins of the desert city of Palmyra, the 12th-century crusaders' castle of Krac des Chevaliers, the medieval souk in Aleppo and the Great Umayyad Mosque in old Damascus.

**WHEN TO GO:** Spring or autumn.

**DETAILS:** Black Tomato (020 7426 9888, blacktomato.co.uk) offers seven nights from £1,510 per person, based on two sharing, with three nights at the Beit Ak Bik, Damascus (beit-akbikhotel.com), one night at the Zenobia Cham Palace, Palmyra (chamhotels.com), and three nights at the Dar Zamaria, Aleppo (darzamaria.com), including flights, transfers, guide and entrance to some sites.

### 9 COLOMBIA

Finally considered a safe place to travel, Colombia is seriously hot stuff, with stunning national parks, gorgeous Caribbean beaches and beautiful colonial cities. Cartagena, an old walled seaport, was once the hub of both Spanish trade in New World gold and slaves and the Inquisition. Now it's a Unesco World Heritage Site known for its colonial mansions and churches - and the beaches of the Rosario Islands are only a two-hour boat ride away.

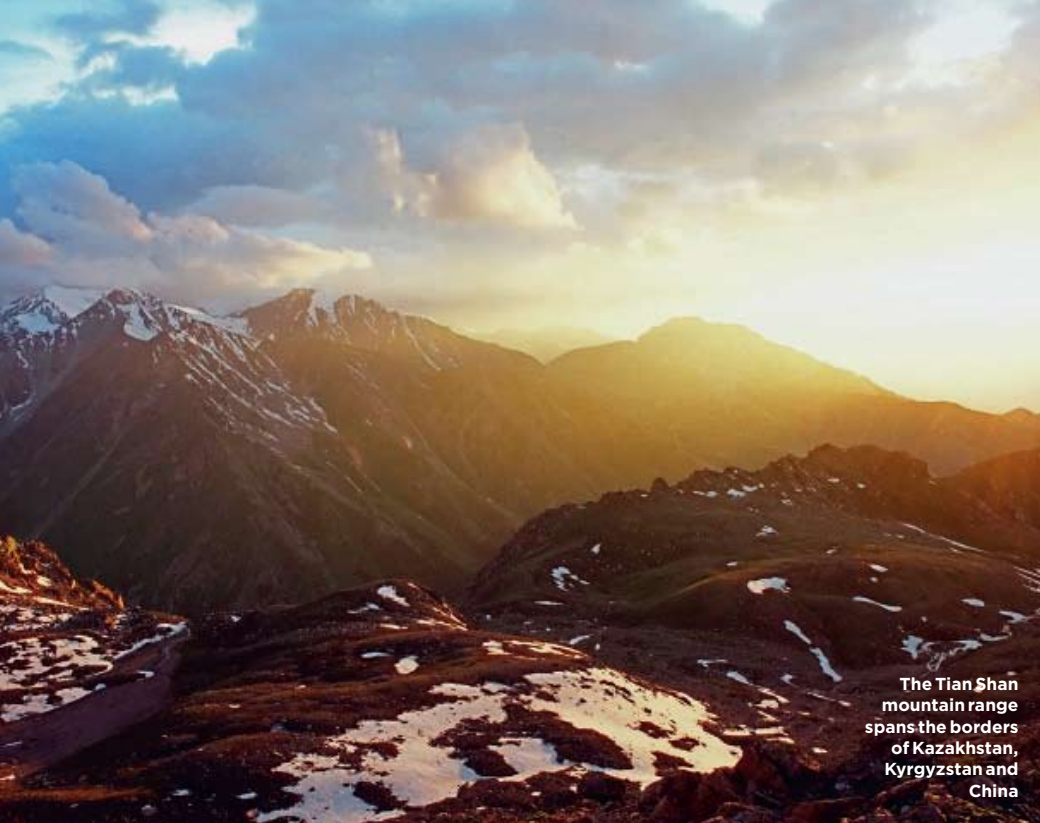
**WHEN TO GO:** December to April.

**DETAILS:** Original Travel (020 7978 7333, originaltravel.co.uk) has seven nights from £1,990 per person, based on two sharing, with flights, two nights at the Hotel de la Opera in Bogotá (hotelopera.com.co), three nights at the Ananda Boutique Hotel in Cartagena (anandacartagena.com) and two nights at the Hotel San Pedro de Majagua, the Rosario Islands (hotelmajagua.com). Alternatively, fly to Cartagena via Miami. ✈



The infinity pool at Coral Lodge, Ilha de Moçambique





The Tian Shan mountain range spans the borders of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and China

## 10 KAZAKHSTAN

Borat presented it as a backwater, but Kazakhstan is looking firmly to the future, and its Soviet and present-day capitals offer an intriguing mix of old and new to anyone seeking a city break with an edge.

Almaty is a blend of leafy boulevards, imposing Soviet buildings, designer shopping, European café culture and Asian fusion food, plus trekking or skiing in the Tian Shan mountain range. Toast your arrival at Boudoir (134 Bogenbai Batyr Street, 00 7 727 272 5555), a cocktail bar popular with the Kazakh elite. Astana, by contrast, is the definition of a space-age city, with a collection of surreal buildings that includes Norman Foster's Pyramid of Peace and the Khan Shatyr, a shopping, eating and entertainment complex housed in a giant transparent dome. Check in at the Radisson, where designer cars are parked randomly in the lobby.

**WHEN TO GO:** In winter, when snow turns the mountains into a fairytale.

**DETAILS:** Fly from London Heathrow to Almaty from £850 return with Air Astana (01293 596 622, [airastana.com](http://airastana.com)). Doubles at the Hyatt Regency Almaty from US\$400 (around £254) (00 7 727 250 1234, [almaty.regency.hyatt.com](http://almaty.regency.hyatt.com)) and from US\$500 (around £317) at the Radisson Hotel, Astana (00 7 717 299 0000, [radissonblu.com](http://radissonblu.com)).

## 11 MONTENEGRO

*Casino Royale* put this newly independent Balkan state on the map in 2006 when Bond and Vesper stayed at the 'Hotel Splendide in Montenegro' (actually the Grandhotel Pupp in the Czech Republic). Then came the redevelopment of Sveti Stefan (an island fishing village turned iconic 1960s hotel, pictured below) as an Aman resort, and of new Porto Montenegro, an ambitious marina-and-residential development in Tivat.

The country's natural assets – a 300km coastline of glorious beaches, a 17km inland bay, a mountainous interior with a vast lake (Skadar) – are undisputed.



For more relaxing retreats, go to... [www.redonline.co.uk](http://www.redonline.co.uk)

Fingers crossed the new wave of tourism won't ruin its beauty. Go now, and try sailing from the Palazzo Radomiri, a hotel in an 18th-century palace in Kotor.

**WHEN TO GO:** Spring or autumn.

**DETAILS:** Rooms at the Palazzo Radomiri from €100 (around £89); (00 382 32 333 172, [palazzoradomiri.com](http://palazzoradomiri.com)).


## 12 CESME PENINSULA, TURKEY

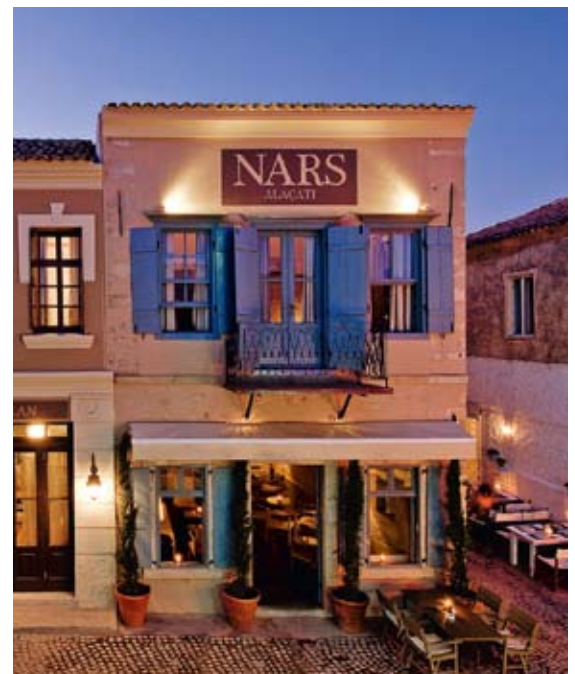
'Ten years ago, you wouldn't have seen one person on the streets of Alaçatı after dark,' says Hasan Türkay, restaurant manager of new boutique hotel Nars Alaçatı. Since 2000, however, the number of hotels has mushroomed and now, at 10pm on a September night, the main street looks more like one vast, outdoor café. 'The Istanbul crowd loves it here because it's less built-up than Bodrum and Antalya, and you get the cool breeze off the sea.'

Alaçatı is on the 36km-long Cesme peninsula, 45 minutes from the Greek island of Chios. The stone houses were built in the 19th century by Greek settlers, who once produced more wine in this small corner of Turkey than the whole country does today. Now a handful of locals are reviving the old traditions, and a tasting session at New World-style winery Urla Sarapçılık ([urlasarapcilik.com.tr](http://urlasarapcilik.com.tr)) is part of the experience. As is a windsurfing lesson at Alaçatı Beach Resort which, with its shallow water and sandy sea bed, is an ideal spot for beginners.

Most importantly, there are two beautiful boutique hotels in restored historic buildings to help you get the best from the peninsula. After two nights' winding down at the stylish Nars Ilica (with an aromatherapy massage, a soak in the thermal pool and a swim in the glassy-green sea from the hotel's beach club), transfer to the more rustic-chic Nars Alaçatı (pictured below) to shop for linens (at Ayşe'nin Dolabı) and soak up the nightlife (start at Yaya).

**WHEN TO GO:** May or September.

**DETAILS:** Rooms at Nars Ilica cost from €160 (around £142); (00 90 232 729 00 01, [nars.com.tr](http://nars.com.tr)) and at Nars Alaçatı from 250TL (around £110); (00 90 232 716 0900, [narsalacati.com](http://narsalacati.com)). Fly to Izmir via Istanbul with Pegasus (0845 084 8980, [flypgs.com](http://flypgs.com)), then hire a car or organise a transfer (€80 one way, around £71) through the hotel. 



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