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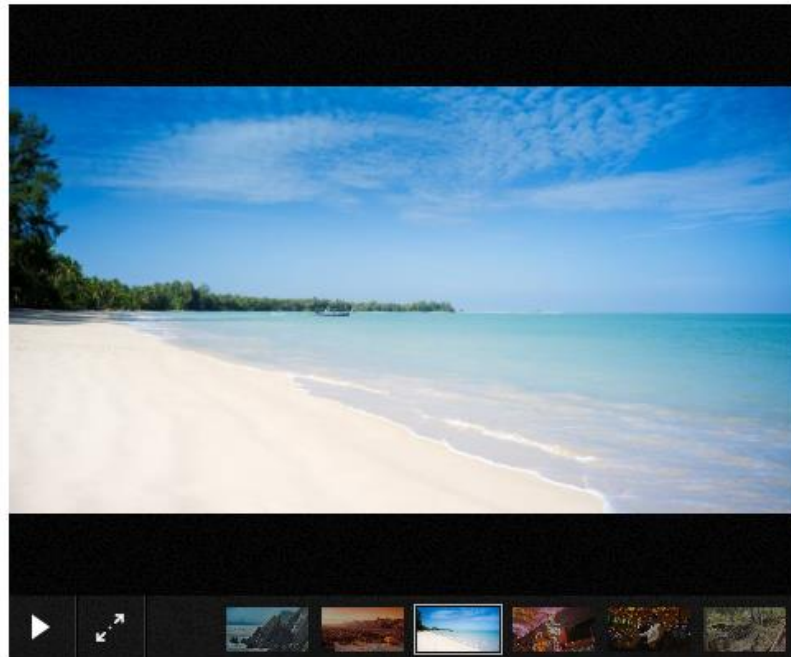


HOME » LIFESTYLE » TRAVEL » BIG READ

Bright lights and big cities: inspiring plans for the year

Sunday, January 05, 2014

Need inspiration for your holidays in 2014? From city breaks to family getaways to adventure destinations, Isabel Conway has 10 of the best at home and abroad.



Authentic Thailand

You can become an elephant owner for a day, engaging in local mahout life as you learn to care for healthy and happy elephants far away from Phuket's familiar mass tourism strip.

Visitors are taught how to clean, feed and look after Thailand's sacred animals, take a dip in a jungle lake with them, even dare to scrub their leathery hides and learn mahout-style elephant riding skills.

Less than an hour's drive from Phuket international airport on the edges of Khao Sok National Park lies stunning Sarojin resort (see www.sarojin.com). Two people sharing a luxury bungalow leading to the beach with a buffet champagne breakfast included, popular with honeymooners, pay approx €150 per night.

In 2014 Sarojin, one of Thailand's most beautifully situated hideaways will launch added "day in the life of a local" experiences.

Guests can respectfully shadow local people including a fisherman, a farmer and a monk. These tours are designed towards promoting responsible tourism through authentic encounters with the local community who also benefit financially from the enterprise.