

# Junglehook

Go green with an adventure through Asia's lush landscapes, writes Katie McGonagle

@katie\_mcgonagle

**W**hen Rudyard Kipling came up with childhood classic *The Jungle Book*, about a boy living in the wild among a cast of animal characters, it's no wonder he turned to India for inspiration.

The exotic jungle settings, not just of India but across all of Asia too, are teeming with tropical species, lush forest flora and more than a hint of adventure. Whether clients want to trek through the jungle and canoe along wild rivers, or relax in a rainforest lodge to spot wildlife from their own window, there's a back-to-nature adventure awaiting them.

If you want to help your customers embrace their inner Mowgli amid Asia's wildest landscapes, here are just a handful of the best options.

## ▶ THAILAND

**Save:** Few places do jungle adventures as well as Thailand, from the tropical playgrounds of Chiang Mai and Chiang Rai in the north to the lush landscapes of the south. One of the best-known is 'glamping' spot Elephant Hills, bordering Khao Sok National Park.

David Carlaw, head of faraway product at Premier Holidays, says: "Elephant Hills is one of our most popular destinations in Thailand. It offers a camp in the style of African national parks, but set in the Thai tropical rainforest, and is home to the world's only floating tented camp."

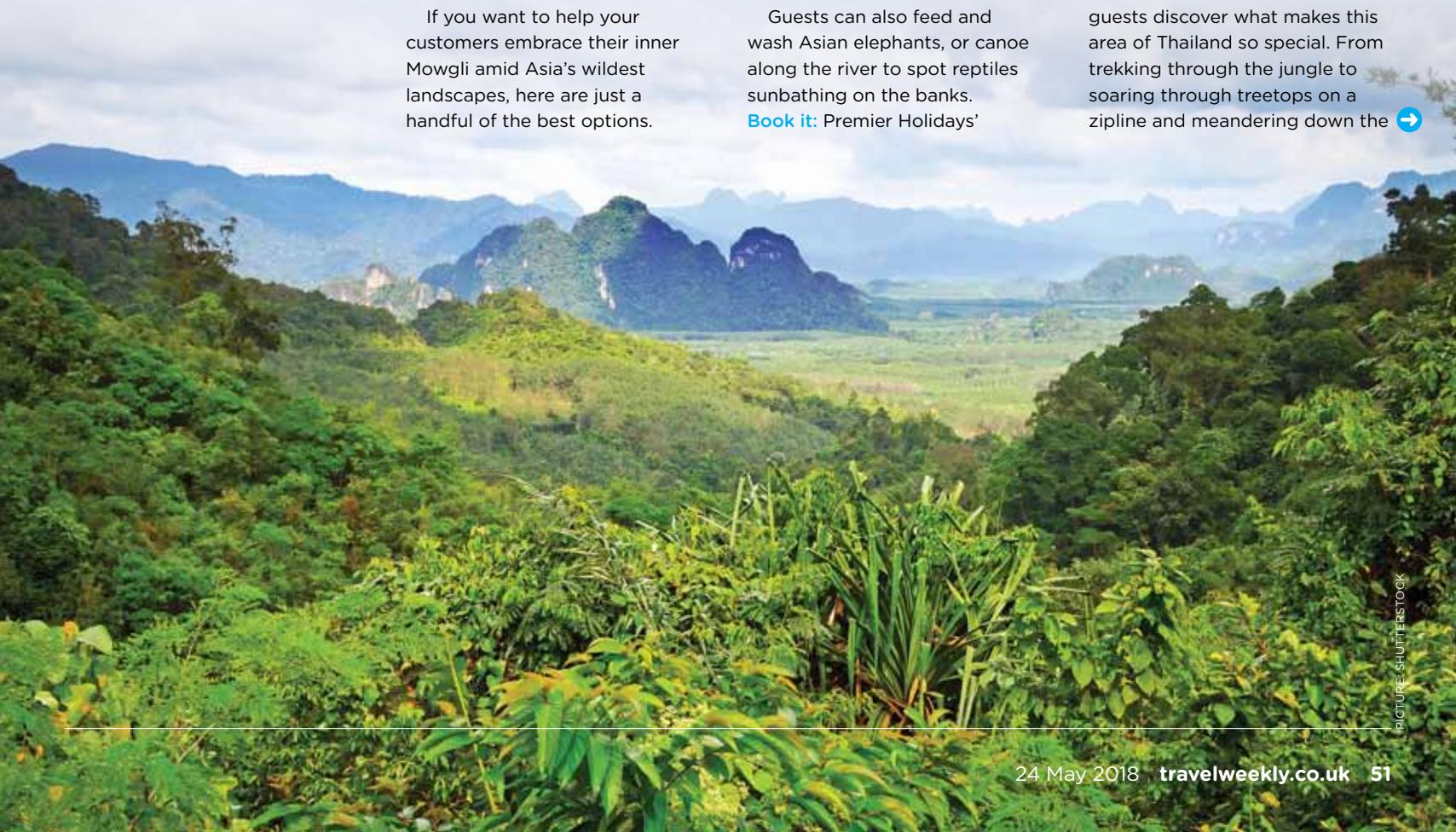
Guests can also feed and wash Asian elephants, or canoe along the river to spot reptiles sunbathing on the banks.

**Book it:** Premier Holidays'

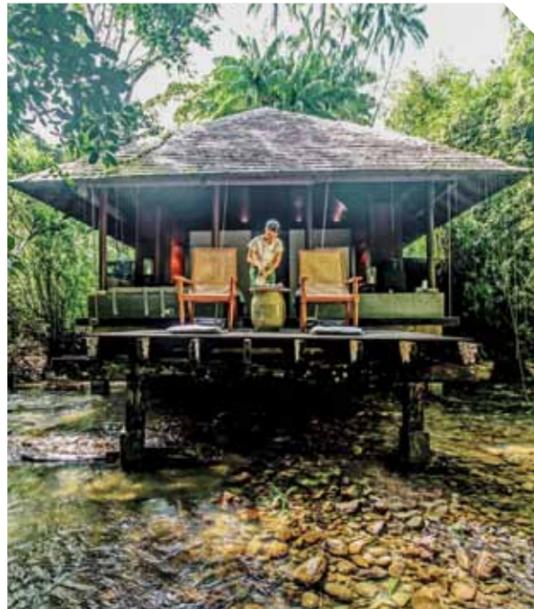
12-night trip to Thailand, staying in Bangkok and Khao Lak with two nights' full-board at Elephant Hills, starts at £1,399, departing September 30. The price includes Thai Airways flights and transfers. [trade.premierholidays.co.uk](http://trade.premierholidays.co.uk)

**Splurge:** Fancy swinging through the jungle like Tarzan? Ziplining in Khao Lak Lamru National Park is about as close as it gets, especially if it's followed by bamboo rafting down the river, just one of the excursions available at boutique hotel The Sarojin.

Resort owner Kate Kemp says: "Each of our jungle adventures is led by expert guides, who help guests discover what makes this area of Thailand so special. From trekking through the jungle to soaring through treetops on a zipline and meandering down the [→](#)



➔ River Sok, these are designed to help guests experience natural surroundings in a sensitive and responsible way.”



LEFT: The Datai Langkawi

RIGHT: Peacock, India



▶ MALAYSIA

**Save:** You'd expect wild landscapes and even wild animals on a jungle adventure, but how about world music? That's what awaits on Intrepid Travel's Sarawak Rainforest World Music Festival, which combines indigenous and international music at the three-day party (plus a night's homestay with one of the performers) with a host of animal-spotting opportunities.

The operator's southeast Asia destination manager, Andrew Dalton, says: "Sarawak offers incredibly rare treats for nature lovers. There's the chance to see orangutans at the Semenggoh Sanctuary, spot proboscis monkeys in the wild at Bako National Park and visit one of the world's largest cave networks to watch the exodus of millions of bats at sunset. The chance to see endemic wildlife among the beautiful tree canopies truly showcases the fascinating biodiversity in Asia."

**Book it:** The 11-day trip starts at £1,340 land-only, departing Kuching on July 22. The price includes a festival ticket and wildlife activities. [intrepidtravel.com/uk](http://intrepidtravel.com/uk)

**Splurge:** If the festival crowd isn't your client's thing, The Datai Langkawi's elegant atmosphere might be a better fit. Jennie Moore, product and purchasing manager at Kuoni, says: "It's a five-star luxury resort where nature is the focus. They even have a resident naturalist, and a nature centre providing extensive information on the local area."

Activities include an after-dark tour of the rainforest, mangrove trail with canopy walk, coral reef exploration, and jungle trails to natural pools and waterfalls. The resort will reopen this summer following a refurbishment. **Book it:** Kuoni offers a week's B&B in a Canopy Deluxe Room

from £2,399 in November, including Qatar Airways flights and transfers. Upgrading to half-board costs an extra £475. [kuoni.co.uk](http://kuoni.co.uk)

▶ INDIA

**Save:** The sights, sounds and smells of India can be overwhelming, so steer clients towards a guided tour - whether private or in a group - to benefit from the expertise of a tour director. The Goa Experience has released a new range of India tours including Kerala Highlights, which features a choice of a jungle walk or boat trip through Periyar National Park. Whatever the mode of transport, look out

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for wild Asian elephants, Malabar giant squirrels, bison, sambar deer and abundant birdlife, before heading off for another highlight - a houseboat cruise through the maze-like Kerala backwaters. **Book it:** Kerala Highlights costs

from £1,479 for seven nights with flights, accommodation with breakfast (full-board on houseboat), guide, private transfers and entry fees. [goalexperience.co.uk](http://goalexperience.co.uk)

**Splurge:** If you've got a bit of extra spending power, why not make the back-to-nature experience a little more comfortable? Cox & Kings tour The Jungle Book: Wildlife of India goes in search of the endangered Bengal tiger through the national parks of Kanha, Bandhavgarh and Pench, in Madhya Pradesh, totting up 13 expert-led safari drives. Better still, there's no need to rough it. Product manager Sue Livsey says: "The tour stays in luxurious Taj safari lodges, which each offer their own individual style and experiences. Although the highlight for many is spotting a tiger, there are other animals to be seen including gaur - a large, cow-like animal - leopards, sambar deer, langur monkeys and plenty of birds." **Book it:** The 13-day tour starts at £4,745 including BA flights, naturalist guides and full-board accommodation. [coxandkings.co.uk](http://coxandkings.co.uk)

▶ BALI

**Save:** Beach holidays and tropical

jungle foliage rarely go hand in hand, but in Bali, clients really can have the best of both by tagging a back-to-nature excursion on to a relaxing coastal stay. Head for the foothills of Mount Batukaru - rich with fertile, volcanic soil and dense, tropical forest - then learn about life in the Balinese countryside at the emerald-green rice terraces of Jatiluwih. It's not all hard work though: the tour stops at Yeh Panes Hot Spring on the way back.

**Book it:** Do Something Different's eight-hour tour, Jatiluwih Batukaru Mountain Nature's Best, starts at £40, including hotel pick-up. [dosomethingdifferent.com](http://dosomethingdifferent.com)

**Splurge:** If the thought of trekking through jungles for days at a time sounds a bit too hardy, why not sit back and let nature come to you? A cruise on *Star Clipper* through the Gili Islands, Lombok and Komodo means all passengers need do is hop off at their chosen port and find themselves immersed in tropical island scenery and one-of-a-kind wildlife. Mark Henderson, Travel 2's senior product and commercial manager for touring and specialist, says: "While on the cruise, you can explore stunning reefs and marine parks, but the

highlight has to be spotting the largest lizard on the planet, the Komodo dragon, on Komodo Island. The *Star Clipper* is the perfect way to explore these islands, getting off the beaten track while not compromising on comfort or style."

**Book it:** Travel 2 offers a seven-

night Bali cruise in an inside stateroom from £2,259, departing September 6. The price includes a night at either end of the cruise at the Grand Hyatt Bali, Thai Airways flights and private transfers. Upgrading to an outside stateroom starts at £399. [travel2.com](http://travel2.com)

WHAT'S NEW?

Back-to-nature experiences are popping up all over Asia, so where else can you take a walk on the wild side?

SRI LANKA

Canoe along a river surrounded by lush Sri Lankan scenery at Borderlands adventure centre at Cape Weligama, which opened last month at the luxury Resplendent Ceylon resort.



VIETNAM

Take in terraced rice paddies, remote villages and the untouched scenery of Pu Luong Nature Reserve on Mercury Holidays' new Walking Trails of Vietnam.



PHILIPPINES

Spot Yoda-like tarsiers in Bohol on Western & Oriental's new Philippines programme, then follow with the Chocolate Hills or volcano-in-a-lake Taal Volcano.



BORNEO

Trek through the jungle after dark on National Geographic Journeys' new Best of Borneo tour, sold by G Adventures, then hike to a volcano, see orangutans up-close and look for the world's smallest bear.



LAOS

Stay in a tented riverside villa or go foraging in the forest at the new Rosewood Luang Prabang in Laos, a jungle-set resort built around a natural waterfall.



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