



**KUONI** EST. 1906

# The Kuoni Travel Forecast 2016

# Italy

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The new Ben Hur film starring Morgan Freeman is being shot in Rome and Matera in Basilicata, southern Italy.

Matera, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, rests in a small canyon and is believed to be one of the first human settlements in Italy. One of its most famous features is the Assisi di Matera (Stones of Matera), its ancient town that is made up of houses dug into rock.

Matera will be the European City of Culture in 2019 and here Kuoni has introduced the Hotel Sant'Angelo for next year. It is part of the rebirth of the area after the local people were forcibly cleared

in the 1950s which now sees plenty of bars, restaurants and shops there thanks to the support of the local and national government, UNESCO and the film industry.

Given its striking and historic scenery and the fact that Francis Ford Coppola's grandfather came from the area, it is perhaps no surprise that Matera features in many films. Among the many movies shot in Matera are Christ stopped at Eboli, King David (with Richard Gere) and Mel Gibson's The Passion of the Christ.



# Costa Rica

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A new direct scheduled service on British Airways from May 2016 will make it easier to enjoy vida pura, the unofficial motto of Costa Rica. It translates literally as 'pure life' but the locals use it as a greeting, a farewell or to say that life is great.

Kuoni's touring team is working on a new itinerary to make the most of the volcanos, rain forests and beaches which mean that a quarter of the country is national parks and protected areas. British visitors to Costa Rica went up by almost 13 per cent in 2015 and this growth looks set to continue as BA's route adds to the existing direct flights from Thomson.



## Peru

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British Airways will have a direct flight to Lima from May 2016, a show of faith in the improvements to the Jorge Chávez International Airport which have almost doubled capacity there and cut check in times. Daytime flights will depart from London Gatwick throughout the summer months on Wednesdays, Fridays and Sundays. From October the service will be reduced to twice weekly.

It is the first direct flight there from the UK since Peru closed its airspace to British airlines during the Falklands War. Over the past year Peruvian cuisine has taken off in the United Kingdom, with ceviche now available in supermarkets and restaurants and pisco sours becoming a cocktail bar staple. The chance to sample this at source adds a gastronomic angle to the country's appeal.

# South Africa

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England's Ashes-winning cricketers travel to South Africa to take on the world's top-ranked Test side in December for a two-month tour. Alastair Cook's side will be defending a 15-year unbeaten Test record in South Africa while the home team can boast the world's fastest bowler in Dale Steyn.

An exchange rate of 20 Rand to the pound makes South Africa excellent value for British tourists, who can now fly on a British Airways Airbus A380 to Johannesburg which will host a Test match, a one-day international and a Twenty20 fixture at the famous Bidvest Wanderers Stadium.

# Kenya

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The relaxation of FCO warnings to Kenya will see the return of the safari and beach holiday next year, a combination which has long been hugely popular with British holidaymakers. The coastal resorts of Kenya are now back on sale and the area around the Masai Mara, arguably Africa's most celebrated wildlife habitat, is expected to see a much-needed reversal of the 30 per cent drop in tourist numbers in recent years.

Next year is the 50th anniversary of the release of the Oscar-winning film *Born Free* and Kuoni's support for the eponymous Foundation has created a unique safari holiday. This trip combines seeing big game with visiting the site where Joy Adamson, on whose book *Born Free* was based, lived and where she and her husband George released the lioness Elsa into the wild.



## India

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Travelling to India was made far easier and cheaper with the extension of the country's e-visa system to British citizens in August 2015 and the impact is likely to be felt next year.

This removes the need to make an appointment at the visa processing agency, which is often overwhelmed, or go through a laborious postal application which can take up to four weeks. The e-visa process is expected to take four days and travellers will be able to upload documents, pay the balance and track their application online.

The price of the visa has also dropped from £89.44 to £39, good news for the more than 800,000 British travellers who go to India each year.

## Burma

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Burma has been opening up to visitors in recent years but standards of service and comfort have not always kept pace. The big focus for 2016 will be the river cruise as it means that travellers can forget the issues of developing infrastructure and poor availability and simply hop aboard. There are now luxurious options available so travellers can relax in style as they cruise by fishermen who are doing it the hard way, rowing themselves with their legs, and enjoy views of jungles, gorges and plenty of rice paddies.





## Mauritius

Shangri-La's Le Tousserok Resort & Spa is due to reopen on 01 November 2015 after a six-month renovation and will once more be THE place to go in Mauritius. Every room will have indigenous local features combined with a chic boutique style.

Nearby are two idyllic islands, Ilot Mangénie – open exclusively to Shangri-La's guests and featuring a beach club and butlers – while Ile aux Cerfs has an 18-hole championship golf course that was designed by Germany's Bernhard Langer, two-time Masters champion and a Ryder Cup winner as player and captain.

The work is being done as part of a partnership between Sun Resorts and Shangri-La Hotels and Resorts.

Elsewhere in Mauritius, The Attitude Ravenala is a new all-suite hotel on Turtle Bay which opened in October 2015. There are ten restaurants and the unique Otentik Attitude programme allows guests to get to know the destination with cooking classes, dinner in a local home, market visits and culture and heritage tours.

## Japan

Japan produced one of the biggest surprises in the history of sport at this year's Rugby World Cup by beating South Africa. The Cherry Blossoms, who will host the 2019 World Cup, punched above their weight in that match and in further victories over Samoa and the USA and their country's tourism industry is quietly doing the same.

Japan does not attract a huge volume of visitors from the United Kingdom but Kuoni is tipping it as one to watch as they are receiving a growing number of requests for both tours and independent travel. Those who travel on their own will be able to reach Hakodate in Hokkaido, which Japanese citizens have voted their country's most attractive tourist destination, with greater speed and ease when the first direct shinkansen or bullet train service from Tokyo opens in March 2016 to cut journey times by more than a quarter.



# Vietnam

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Vietnam Airlines became the first carrier to fly a B787-9 Dreamliner non stop between South-East Asia and Europe when it opened its route from Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City to Heathrow in 2015. In Spring 2016 the service will go up from four times a week to daily, which shows an expectation that numbers of UK holidaymakers visiting Vietnam will grow, helped by British visitors being able travel visa-free until 30 June 2016.

Vietnam is evolving as a destination and, while it is still popular for culture and street food, Fusion Maia in Da Nang is an example of what else is on offer as it blends a five-star beach resort with a spa which has all-inclusive treatments.



Kuramathi Island Resort

# The Maldives

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We couldn't have a Kuoni forecast without mentioning our top-selling destination. Kuramathi is one of the larger islands in the Maldives and will be even more popular next year thanks to an exciting development at its most popular resort.

On 01 March 2016 brand new villas, pool and dining areas will open at the Kuramathi Island Resort. It has undergone an extensive renovation with new family accommodation and beach and water villas, some with private pools.

This refreshed look will give it a 5-star feel with 4-star prices and makes sure that Kuramathi keeps its reputation as one of the best-value islands in the Maldives and somewhere which is good for families and groups.



Keyonna Beach, Antigua

## Caribbean

A strong pound against the US dollar has made the Caribbean even more affordable to British tourists. Antigua has overtaken Barbados as Kuoni's top English-speaking Caribbean destination, which is down to a greater offering of good value 4-star hotels which are gaining popularity. Much of this growth was due to Kuoni's exclusive arrangement with the all-inclusive Keyonna Beach hotel.

British Airways added and filled almost 11,000 seats to the Caribbean in the Summer of 2015, an increase of 13 per cent. The increase in demand was due in part to the rebanding of Air Passenger Duty which brought the Caribbean on a level with the United States and thus reduced the cost of a trip.

## Greece

The new EasyJet flights from Gatwick to Kalamata allow passengers to head directly for Costa Navarino where the Romanos and its sister resort the Westin form a self-contained village. The resort, which is in the area of Mesinnia in the south-west Peloponnese, is less visited than many others in Greece and styles itself as the first high-end sustainable eco-friendly destination in the Mediterranean. It was awarded first prize in the 'Destination' category at the Tourism for Tomorrow Awards last year.

There are the first two signature golf courses in Greece, a dozen restaurants and a white sandy beach on the Ionian Sea. The spa at the Costa Navarino has olive oil treatments based on ancient local practices found on clay tablets which were discovered in the local Palace of Nestor.



Romanos Costa Navarino



Epcot

## USA

The battle between theme parks in Orlando will heat up in 2016 with Epcot and Universal Studios going head-to-head with new rides based on two of the most successful films ever.

Frozen Ever After is a dark ride based on the Disney film that has become a true global sensation and will open in 2016 in the Norwegian Pavilion at Epcot in Walt Disney World Resort, replacing Maelstrom.

It will feature scenes inspired by both Frozen and the animated short Frozen Fever and will have new lyrics for some of the original songs from the feature film.

There were plans for a Frozen ride prior to the film's release and the huge box office success, including the 'Sing-a-long' version, turned it into a priority.

At Universal's Islands of Adventure the Skull Island: Reign of Kong ride will also open next summer for an experience that the company describes as 'massive in every way'. The Incredible Hulk Coaster will reopen next summer with improved electromagnetic launch systems and queueing areas.

## Cruises – Star Clippers

Star Clippers will be launching fresh itineraries around Phuket, Sri Lanka and Singapore during 2016, the first time the company will offer Asian routes since 2010. In addition, Star Clippers plans to launch a new ship in 2016.

The Star Clippers' existing fleet of four-or five-masted Tall Ships combine the style and majesty of sailing from bygone days with facilities that are very much 21st Century and leave travellers feeling like they are on their own private yacht.

The new vessel, as yet unnamed, will be the world's largest Tall Ship afloat today and bookings for it are expected to open in the second half of next year.



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