

Chicago Tribune

TRIPS, TIPS & DEALS

Asia tour for gap-year travel

By PHIL MARTY | Chicago Tribune

Geckos Adventures, an adventure travel company that specializes in small group trips for travelers 18 to 30-something, has come up with an interesting option for newly minted high school grads who are taking a gap year before heading off to college. They've packaged several of their tours to turn them into a mammoth 60-day exploration of Asia starting Jan. 1, 2017, in Delhi, India. Nearly the entire month of January is spent in India, hitting the usual highlights, such as the Taj Mahal and Amber Fort, as well as other areas, including the backwaters of Kerala and the beaches of Goa. From India, the gappers will move on to Nepal, then Myanmar, Thailand, Vietnam and Cambodia. A group leader accompanies participants, but this is a trip that's aimed at confident, independent travelers. The cost is \$5,000 per person, which covers a wide range of lodging and transportation. Meals are extra, as is international airfare to and from the U.S. After completing the trip, travelers will get \$500 toward their college tuition. Info: 855-832-4853, tinyurl.com/hwn3ofp

Pinball road trip

Pinball wizards with lots of time on their hands can hit the road and tool around the U.S. thanks to a story and map on the Atlas Obscura website, which lists 37 pinball arcades that author Dylan Thuras thinks are among the country's best. Thuras starts the journey in Brooklyn, N.Y., at his local Sunshine Laundromat. Pinball machines sit across from the washers, but it's a back room that has the mother lode — 23 classic machines and a bar to boot. In Roanoke, Va., the Roanoke Pinball Museum holds more than 50 machines, with some from the late 1940s. In Las Vegas, the Pinball Hall of Fame has more than 200 games, though not all are pinball. Thuras gives capsule views of what he thinks are the 11 best sites. An interactive map points to all of them, including Logan Arcade in Chicago. Read all about it at tinyurl.com/h5ly6af.

Touring Kiwi country

Picturesque [New Zealand](http://www.newzealand.com) has been a popular filming site for major movies, ranging from "The Lord of the Rings" to Disney's more recent "Pete's Dragon." Tourism New Zealand's website has links to a variety of tour packages aimed at putting rabid movie fans into locations used for their favorite film. An example is the New Zealand Disney's Pete's Dragon Adventure, priced from \$2,499 per person, double occupancy. Among sites visited are Rotorua, the geothermal hotbed that was called Rotorua Redwood Forest in "Pete's Dragon." In Wellington, there's a visit to Weta Digital, which brought Pete's Elliott to life and has done a lot of work for other films. On the South Island, you'll find the mountains of Queenstown, which provided a backdrop for the dragon's flights. The package includes 10 nights' lodging and a six-day car rental, but airfare is extra. Check out this and other packages at tinyurl.com/jttr2u3.

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GECKOS ADVENTURES

Nepal is one of the destinations in a gap-year tour from Geckos Adventures.