

# 20 AMAZING MOMENTS...

EDITORS, EXPERTS, CELEBS AND FREQUENT FLIERS RELIVE THE MOST AMAZING TRAVEL EXPERIENCE THEY'VE EVER HAD - AND THEN DISH THE DIRT ON THOSE THAT ARE OVERRATED



## Colin Firth, actor

'I went to Loch Fyne when I was about to get married and have since met two actors who had their weddings next to the loch - it seemed imbued with an impossibly romantic glow.'

## Geri Halliwell, pop star

'Everybody wanted a photo of me when I left the Spice Girls. In Mauritius, lovely Sol Kerzner, the hotel owner, gave me back my life by flying me home in secret by private jet!'



## Katie Bowman, features editor

'I always thought Club Class a shallow extravagance until I was upgraded: the champagne, the flat beds, the free manicure, the sleep suit - it was all too much. Then Justin Timberlake got on board and I nearly died.'

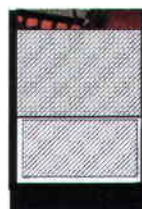
## Tara Palmer-Tomkinson, socialite

'Sir David Tang once flew me to Beijing for a private lunch at the Ming Dynasty Tombs! It was all very impressive.'



## Kelly Rowland, singer

'When I was in Cabo San Lucas, we hired a chef on our boat, who prepared these fish tacos. It sounds really simple but he put this sauce on them that was so good I ate seven. I asked him what was in the sauce but he wouldn't tell me - it was a family secret.'





**Heston Blumenthal, chef**  
'The most luxurious holiday I ever had was Christmas in Whistler at the Four Seasons. They take your skis from you and when you put your boots on, they bring you hot chocolate.'

**Jimmy Choo, shoe maestro**  
'Last time I was in Penang, I stayed at the Shangri-La Rasa Sayang hotel. It was magical - bathing in my balcony tub, with inspiring views of my home wrapping around me.'



**Yvette Myers, cabin crew**  
'I loved the spa music at Stoke Park Club (in Buckinghamshire). A massage can be ruined by plinky-plonky music, but here they play cool '60s lounge tracks, Bond classics, even birdsong. It made the experience for me!'

**Nuala Harvey, production editor**  
'I once peed to poetry at The Dorchester! They pipe it into the lovely Art Deco loos in the China Tang bar: style, function - and culture!'



**Roger Saul, founder of Mulberry**  
'I once met a Maharajah in Jodhpur who invited me to his estate. To mark his inauguration as head of the family following his father's death, he cut a goat's throat with his father's sword. It was one of the most moving occasions I've ever experienced.'



**Dita Von Teese, burlesque performer**  
'I was headlining at the MGM Grand in Las Vegas. They put me in their Presidential Suite, which is like 2,000sq m. It was pretty extravagant, with four bedrooms over two storeys and butler service - I've never even lived in a house that big!'



**Sally Howard, travel writer**  
'The Lomme Beds at the new Dubai Design Hotel are furniture's answer to the iPod, with loads of functions including light therapy, a shield against electromagnetic waves and - the best bit - a built-in massage system.'

**Laura Mercer, personal shopper**  
'Guests staying at The Mandarin Oriental Tokyo who've flown the red-eye are met by a car with slippers in the back. I couldn't believe it!'



**Liam Lambert, Mandarin Oriental**  
'On my honeymoon at Las Brisas Acapulco, a man came to our room to "change the flowers". Laden with a basket of pink hibiscus, he cleared the floating blooms from the pool, and replaced them with fresh ones. That's when I knew the true meaning of luxury.'



**Anthony Peregrine,**  
travel writer

'Torchlit dinner while on safari in the Namibian desert was startlingly beautiful – and then we got startlingly plastered!'

**Julia Buckley, travel editor of  
The London Paper**

'I'm a sucker for a good bathroom, so I loved Oxfordshire's Manoir aux Quat' Saisons. The tub was extra-long – and came with fresh sprigs of rosemary and handmade soap.'



**Susan d'Arcy, The Sunday Times  
luxury travel expert**

'On Oberoi's Nile cruise, I was given a private view of Edfu's amazingly preserved temple of Horus. To have its thousands of years of history all to myself was an utter privilege.'

**Steve Keenan,**  
*Times Online* travel editor  
'Andante Travels' Wessex weekends include a private tour of the inner circle at Stonehenge. Seeing it at dawn was unforgettable.'



**Amanda Hyde,**  
commissioning editor

'A weekend champagne tasting at a chateau in Reims with Veuve Clicquot was amazing. By the time we got to dessert, I was spouting adjectives like a wannabe Oz Clarke. It costs almost £2,000, but it was a once-in-a-lifetime experience.'

## AND THE OVERRATED...

LUXURY TRAVEL DOESN'T ALWAYS MEAN INDULGENCE AND IDLENESS. SOMETIMES IT CAN BE OVER THE TOP, OVER-PRICED AND DOWNRIGHT HUMILIATING. DON'T BELIEVE US?



**Nikki Tinto,**  
founder of i-escape.com

'I hate it when you get locked into having an ultra-rich seven-course supper on a hotel weekend. It's lovely for one night but not two!'

**Katie Bowman,**  
features editor

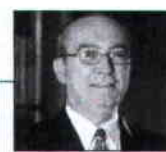
'Butler service is so overrated – I found it intrusive and embarrassing. He was always there, waiting to tie my shoes or something. He once walked in on me in the shower!'



**Larry Keegan, pilot**

'After a week on a cruise, I wanted to jump ship. Stepping onboard and waving goodbye to independence meant I couldn't escape the entertainment, which ranged from "Pirate Night" to a geriatric talent contest.'

**Ewan McGregor, actor**  
'I've travelled on private jets and they're very nice, but not too CEO-friendly. I don't choose to take them. The biggest luxury is travelling by bike on your own.'



**Liam Lambert,**  
Mandarin Oriental

'I dined at a renowned restaurant in the US. When the bill arrived, I was offered the choice of five pens to sign with: a Mont Blanc, a Cross, a Sheaffer... It was ridiculous. I think it's a shame when luxury tips over into excess – the concept loses its value.'



**Sally Howard, travel writer**

'Of course I fell in love with Angkor Wat on paper – the sublime bas-reliefs, the grand temple galleries and corn-cob turrets. And, like many, I hailed the 12th-century temple complex as the emblem of a nation piecing together its pride after the bloody toll of civil war. Sadly, if Angkor symbolises anything, it's Cambodian governmental corruption: its US\$20 entrance fee padding the pockets of a huge petrochemical company (which puts very little back into the crumbling site's upkeep) and lucrative local businesses owned by South Koreans, in return for giving bent Phnom Penh politicians kickbacks. Worst is the unmanaged tourist flux trampling this battered country's heritage underfoot.'



**Katie Melua, singer**

'I went diving in Barbados, but I'd never go back – I wasn't too impressed. It was too touristy and the divide between rich tourists and the locals was just too much, plus I felt there was a slight hostility towards visitors.'



**Nick Hughes, Kuoni**

'Airport lounges can be very hit and miss... Some are a genuine pleasure to escape to, but there are others that bring new meaning to the phrase "sardines in a tin".'



**Andrew Overton, Orient-Express**

'Many hotels deem it necessary to fit the latest, complicated gadgets to operate simple appliances, such as air-conditioning units. Guests are left frustrated having spent much time and many calls to reception trying to figure it all out.'