



Sailing from Alaska to Greenland for 23,400 euros: at the fair for special holidays you get everywhere with enough money

A tour through the Iraqi part of Kurdistan, sailing from Alaska to Greenland or by train through Mongolia? The world is open to travelers again after Covid, as shown at the Vakantiebeurs Bijzondere destinations in Amsterdam. Here, tour operators are aiming this

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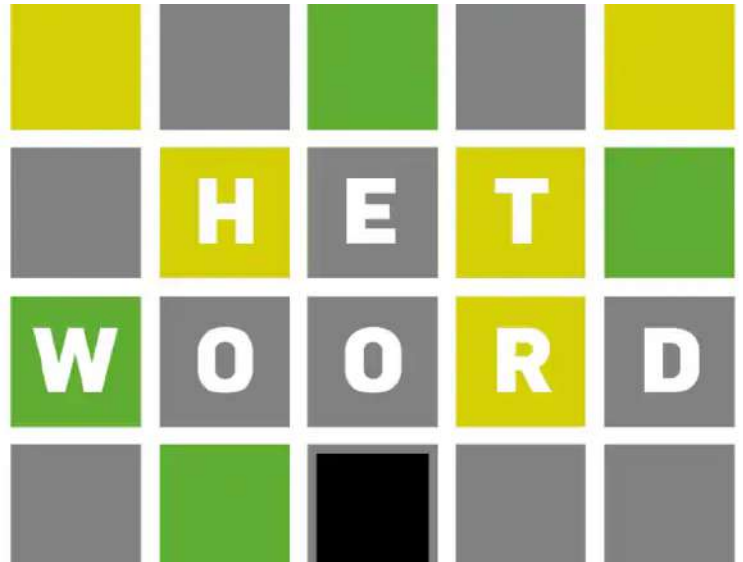
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weekend at adventurous tourists with deep pockets, often old.

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Long-rant train travel is all the rage, says Silvie Sweegers of Tiara Tours. „ More and more travelers find sustainability important.” For example, the tour operator offers a trip from Mongolia to China, over the last part of the Trans-Mongolia on purpose. „You start in the Mongolian capital Ulaanbaator and then travel to Beijing.” The costs are not too bad: 1200 euros. That is without the considerably less sustainable air travel there.

The Himalayan Express from Beijing to Llasa is also popular, she says. Due to the war in Ukraine, Tiara Tours had to completely reinvent itself, previously the travel agency was a specialist in the famous Trans-Siberian Express through Russia. „,Only Mr. Putin does not allow that anymore.”

Most unique trip on the stock exchange? Tecla Sailing! Travelers sail the North-West passage from Dutch Harbor, Alaska to Greenland by sailing ship. The



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cost: from 23,400 euros. „A lot of money, but you are away for 52 days and make a unique trip,” says captain Gijs Sluis. „You meet the local Inuit people, sail along sea ice and see polar bears, narwalts and belugas. In some places, only a hundred others have been ahead of you.”

Own doctors on board

Almost as adventurous: to the Falkland Islands, South Georgia and Antarctica. Passengers board in Ushuaia, the southernmost tip of Argentina, an expedition ship with space for 100 to 160 people, says Laurens Steijn of Birding Breaks. "Everyone has their own cabin, there are also doctors on board."

What makes the trip so special? „On South Georgia, an island 500 km long and 100 km wide, live a million penguins: king penguins, turban penguins and donkey penguins. With zodiacs, small rubber boats, we go ashore and you are in the middle of the *wildlife*. The penguins are wagging between you.”

Birding Breaks now offers the trip temporarily with 40 percent, reports Steijn. Incidentally, the price is still at least 8700 euros, again excluding flights.



Moulin Rouge! The Musical - incl. break drink

For €59.00



Photo on demand Pim Ras - Sifan Hassan

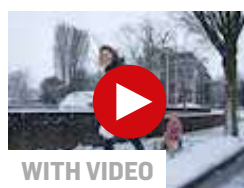
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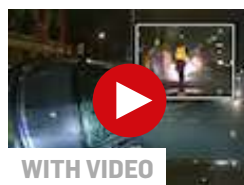
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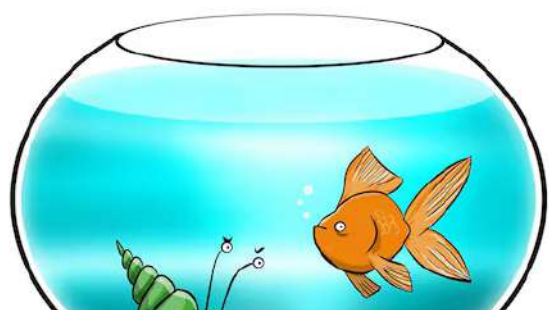


Iris (16) has not been to school for three years, now she pairs 70,000 children who are in the same boat



Some destinations are not bookable in practice. Contrary to what the Holiday Fair Special Destinations reported in advance, winter sports in North Korea are impossible. The country is currently [still almost closed to tourists](#). However, travel expert Maurits of World Experts offers alternatives, such as Pakistan. „That country would be very unsafe, but we only get to the *safe zones*. A group has just returned and people are very excited. The population welcomed them so kind and hospitable.”

World Experts has no problem traveling to countries with dictatorial regimes. „Journalists always start about that. However, politics should never be an obstacle to getting to know cultures,” he says. „In North Korea, people also go to work, the supermarket, to funerals and weddings.”



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Growing segment

Despite visa problems (see box below), there are 140 providers at the Beurs van Berlage in Amsterdam on Saturday and Sunday. That is more than last year but less than the record of 175 from 2020.

„Customized trips are a growing segment,' says spokesman Boudewijn Richel. „Our customers are often well-educated people. *Adventure travel* for young people aged 25 to 35 is also popular.” Yet there are mainly many seniors walking around, the category with enough time and money. Tour operators, especially those that offer the most expensive trips, recognize this in a chivalrous way.

What is striking is that there are also plenty of 'ordinary destinations' being touted, such as Curaçao and the Czech Republic. What about that? „The criterion is not the destination, but whether an organization delivers tailor-made trips,” emphasizes Richel. „There are also trips here in the Netherlands or Belgium. Traveling all Wadden Islands with a sailboat can be special, but regular package holidays do not belong here.”



The visitors have different dreams. Mother Jacqueline from Gemonde, Brabant, is looking for 'the ideal family trip for five people' with her 22-year-old daughter Elise. „We have saved for years for this. It should be adventurous, a mix of culture and nature and not too touristy.” In the meantime, they have gained inspiration. „Ecuador with the Galápagos islands seems ideal to us.”

Wolf and Suzanne from Gouda want to go to southern Africa after their trip through South America in November. „We hope to spot the Big Five, but also

to learn something about the local population.”

For the couple Wim-Jan and Lydia from Elst it will be Tanzania. Previously they already visited Namibia, Botswana and Uganda. „The people in Africa are so incredibly friendly. Despite being rich tourists, we have always felt welcome. We are also never ungently. ”



Visa problems affect African exhibitors
The Holiday Fair Special Destinations

is facing an unexpected problem this year: more and more visa applications from African and Asian exhibitors are rejected by the government. "Last year, for example, we had ten stands from Uganda, now only three," says spokesman Boudewijn Richel. The rejection rate for African countries has increased from 50 percent last year to no less than 90 percent now. „If there is already a wrong bracket in the documents provided, such as the wedding book, a rejection from The Hague will follow. The government sees people from African countries as potential criminals and immigrants.”

These are mainly countries such as Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda, or Asian countries such as Nepal. „All popular tourist destinations.” All rejections are seriously unjustified, says Richel. „It's about tour operators with a decent company who have often been coming here since 2012.” Several exhibitors had already incurred all the costs: booked stands, airline tickets, hotels. Many would also be at De Vakantiebeurs in Utrecht next week. „Some have lost 10,000 euros.” Richel hopes to be able to make agreements with the government by next year to prevent repetition.



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23 RESPONSES