

Something fishy:
Muscat Old Port



SURFING HIPPOS AND DRUNKEN NELLIES

Surfing hippos, elephants drunk on fermented iboga fruit, pristine rainforest and 700 bird species – Gabon is extraordinarily exotic and I cannot wait to explore this West African state. It's relatively wealthy thanks to oil, and is opening up to tourism. **CU**

Wildlife Worldwide (+44 (0)845 130 6982; www.wildlifeworldwide.com) has a 19-day tour from £4,395 per person. Contact World Primate Safaris (+44 (0)870 850 9092; www.worldprimatesafaris.com) and Green Tours (+44 (0)1298 83563; www.greentours.co.uk). Visit gabonnationalparks.com

WATCH AN INNER SANCTUM LIGHT UP

The temple of Abu Simbel is one of the most spectacular sights in the world. It is angled in such a way that, twice a year, its inner sanctum lights up: in honour of Ramses II's ascension to the throne (22 February) and his birthday (22 October). Crowds pack in before sunrise and watch the shafts of light slowly creeping through the rock-hewn inner Hypostyle Hall and through to the Sanctuary. Significantly, the sun illuminates statues of Amun-Re,

Re-Harakhte and Ramses the god, while the statue of Ptah, the god of darkness, remains in the shadows. **GK**

Abercrombie & Kent (+44 (0)845 070 0612; www.abercrombiekent.co.uk) offer an eight-night tour with costs from £1,926 per person, including BA flights and four nights at the Four Seasons in Cairo

GIVE UNTOUCHED OMAN A TRY

The focus may be on the neighbouring United Arab Emirates and glitzy Dubai, but Oman has its own big city,

Muscat, plus a great coastline, beautiful gorges, some terrific four-wheel-drive routes into the mountains and plenty of endless desert stretching back towards Yemen. And that's not to mention an almost unlimited supply of dramatic forts. **TW**

Oman specialist Shaw Travel (+44 (0)1635 47055; www.shawtravel.co.uk) offers packages, such as a nine-day tour with British Airways flights, from £1,585 per person

HOW TO GET THERE
For information on flights to all of these destinations, visit ba.com