



Rainforests and beaches



ASK JOAN

Your travel questions answered

My husband is really interested in the tropical forest and wildlife. What destination would you recommend which would give him some experience of the rainforest but also tropical beaches for relaxation for me? The shortest flight possible would be preferred. What is the best time to visit these destinations? CP, Dublin

Whether you go east or west we are still a long way from the nearest tropical zone. Probably the most easily accessible from here due to frequency of flights is Puerto Rico in the Caribbean, where the rainforests are managed by the US Parks Service. Thailand is easily accessible from here with flights via Dubai, Abu Dhabi and Istanbul.

Many people love Costa Rica for the combination of beach life and a well-developed eco-tourism industry. Hawaii also has that great mix of rain forest and leisurely life.

Agents that arrange such trips include Tropicalsky.ie, Topflight.ie, Travelmood.ie, Sunway.ie and Gohop.ie. The tropical zone hurricane and typhoon season typically runs from June to October.

I am persecuted by a German friend (16), who wants to travel Ireland with her friend (also 16) for a good week in the summer. How can they travel independently to see Ireland? From what I can see, they are too young to join the organised bus tours and

too old for summer camps. They are not seasoned travellers and not on a huge budget. Any ideas for German teens dying to experience the "promised land"? AB, Westmeath.

While the girls would not be able to stay in places such as An Óige hostels, they could take part in summer camps such as Killary Adventure Centre and Donegal Adventure Centre. They wouldn't be too old and an organised holiday would be better if they are not seasoned travellers.

The camps are ideal for teenagers as they will get to meet other teens, explore the areas, learn new sports and have great fun. The Donegal centre also specialises in surfing, which they might enjoy; a week there will cost from €420-€500. They could join an English language course, too.

Killary Adventure Centre is in a gorgeous location and the days will fly by. There are camps of four to seven days, from €270-€455. They include all tuition, accommodation and meals. They would be supervised by qualified instructors. The girls can be adventurous and take the bus to join the camps.

I y am very keen to do the Camino de Santiago via the French route. I will be able to get three weeks holidays maximum; would walking from St Jean de Pied de Port to Burgos work in this time frame? Also, to get home, would

flying from Madrid back to Dublin be the best option? I will be travelling solo and want an authentic Camino. JD, Dublin.

Three weeks would allow you to do up to three stages of the Camino de Santiago and you could get from St. Jean Pied de Port to Sahagún, assuming you can walk about 20-25km a day. Your access airport would be Biarritz, on Ryanair. There is a bus from the airport to Bayonne where you can get the train to St Jean Pied de Port, see train times on snfc.com.

From Burgos or Sahagún, you can take a four-hour train journey to Madrid for the return trip, which cost about €24. Times and prices on movelia.es. There is a number of travel agents in Ireland that can make all the arrangements for you. It would cost from about €520 a week, see caminoways.com, travalue.ie and maptravel.ie. Send your travel queries to Jscates@irishtimes.com.