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Apr/May/June 2015
Issue 94

& travel

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VALPARAISO,
CHILE

FIJI HOT SPOTS

TEE PARTY IN
SABAH

SOUTH AFRICA
ON TRACK

QUEENSTOWN'S
FINER THINGS

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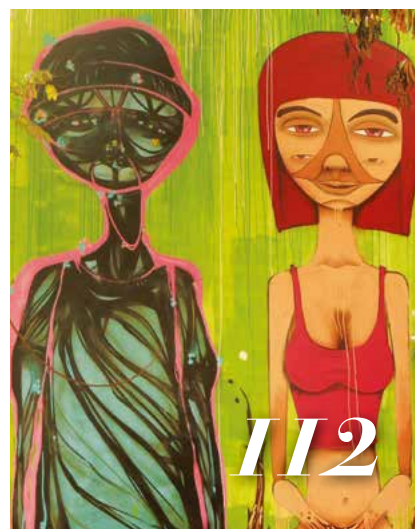
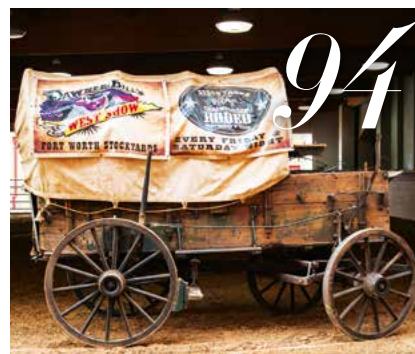
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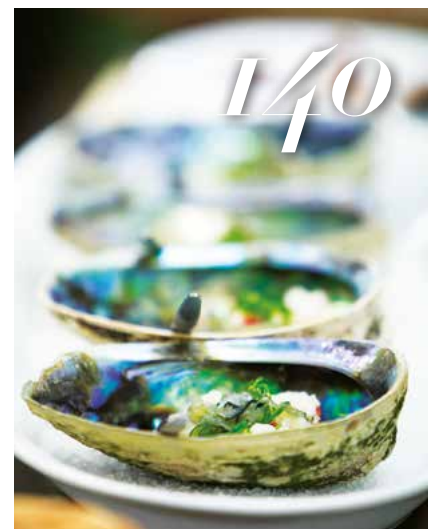
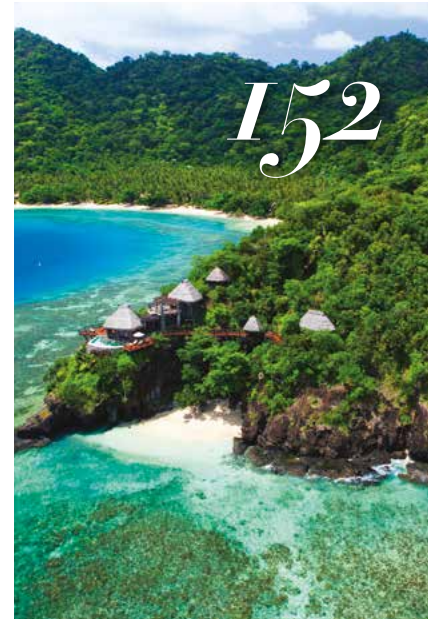
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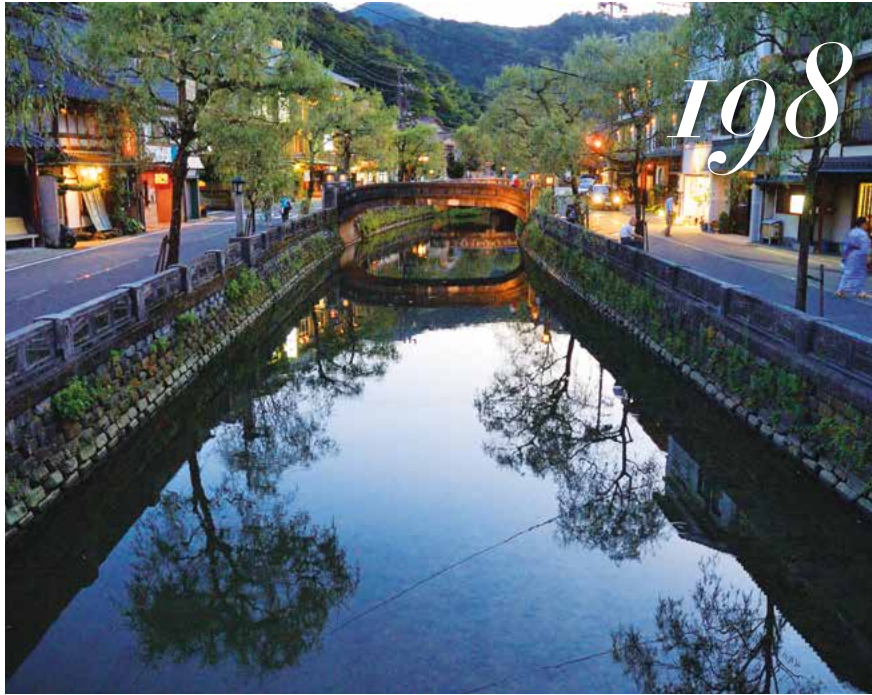
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WIN A FIVE-NIGHT TRIP TO QUEENSTOWN!

See page 18 for details or enter online at vacationsandtravelmag.com





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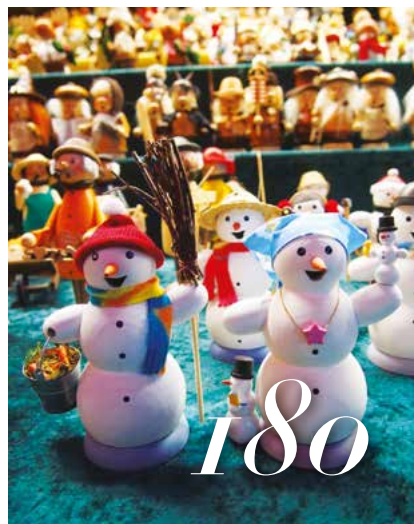
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Vacations & travel

PUBLISHER/EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
Anthony Gallagher

CONTRIBUTING EDITOR
Helen Hayes

PRODUCTION MANAGER
Lorraine Pan

CONTRIBUTORS

Joshua J. Smith and Robyn Smith, Sarah Dougherty, Helen Hayes, Raechel Termily, Mark Chipperfield, Flash Parker, Gary Walsh, Hugh McCrystal, Chris Walker, Ute Junker, Anne Majunder, Lisa Perkovic, Rob Grant, Aleney De Winter, Ben Groundwater, Daniel Resnik, Roshan Sukhla, Ewen Bell, Richard Holmes, Roderick Eime, Sue Wallace and Mike Smith

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61-2/9034-6000; inzen.com.au

ADVERTISING ENQUIRIES

Robert Manuel
61-2/9555-7477 or 61/412-762-243
robert@morrismedia.com.au

DISPLAY/CLASSIFIEDS ADVERTISING

Virginia Shirley
61/409-046-664
virginia@morrismedia.com.au

INDONESIA MEDIA REPRESENTATIVE

Rosmita Amircan
62/812-3600-2342
rosmita@morrismedia.com.au

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Zeina Bitar (Group Editor)
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Chief Strategy Officer: Reab Berry
Chief Financial Officer: Dennis Kelly
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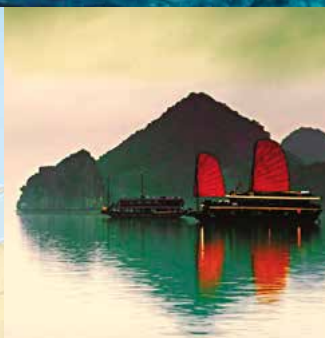
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from the editor-in-chief



BALI – APA KABAR

Let's face it, I love Bali and it was my first OS trip 30 years ago. Upon arrival, I was completely naïve and my eyes were wide open. Like any love affair, I have occasionally struggled with the relationship. I got struck down on day one, with the first of many travellers'

colds, which took a week to get over. Since then, I've persevered with 'Bali Belly' on occasions, and had more severe colds (mind you, both afflictions are not unique to Bali) than I wished.

Yet I still travel, and I've been hospitalised in Oman (dam quad bikes – broken shoulder and ribs), Bangkok and Singapore (severe gastric dehydration). Yet my worst food poisoning came from my hometown of Sydney, a seemingly harmless sausage roll in Mosman. I have only been mugged once, also in Sydney, at an ATM. I was wrenched to the ground where I looked up in shock, as my \$20 note sprinted away. Peril and mayhem lurks in every corner!

I will never forget my first Balinese satay sticks, *nasi goreng*, local *kopi* and the glorious stench yet delicacies of Durian. Kuta beach massages and sunsets, heaven, and I've partied for years at Double 6 and Paddies nightclub pre-terrorist attack, only to shed tears at the memorial of souls lost. As a seasoned traveller, I'm yet to find any location that rivals the sheer magic of Ubud. The Gods created its longitude and latitude, declaring it most beautiful. Its Hindu spiritualism sits within rice terraces and deep ravines where wind chimes evoke their mystique charms.

Regrettably, whenever tourism dies in Bali, be it terrorism or suggestions of boycotts due to Indonesian human rights concerns, the Balinese, whose very livelihoods depends on tourism, suffer. People lose their jobs and kids stop going to school.

Yet over one million Australians annually can't stay away. Given the lure of its fascinating culture, volcanoes, surf, sand, boutique and mega-resorts, as well as the world's best-secluded pool villas in jaw-dropping locations, it is understandable. Let's not forget shopping and delicious food. Bali is truly an integrated and sophisticated international citizen and one of the world's most popular eclectic holidays.

Yes, at times its humidity is oppressive, but that's the tropics. Traffic can be tedious yet not unique to Bali. And a European winter tourism season also competes with the school holidays of 250 million Indonesians.

My suggestion is to do a little research, avoid high season, peak-hour traffic and get away from the shopping congestion. Book that secluded villa or resort and discover the warmth, charm and magic of our friendly Balinese neighbours.

And while you're at it, don't forget to subscribe to our e-newsletter, download our app or visit our website vacationsandtravelmag.com

Safe travels,

Anthony Gallagher
Publisher/Editor-in-Chief



Gary Walsh has been travel writing since 1987, and has been travel editor of *The Age* and *Sunday Age* newspapers. He has written guidebooks for Lonely Planet and Fodor's, as well as

articles for newspapers and magazines throughout the world. Among numerous awards, he has been named three times as Australian Travel Writer of the Year by the Australian Society of Travel Writers. He was delighted to revisit his Irish heritage last year and travel the Wild Atlantic Way, but these days specialises in writing on southeast Asia.



Eighteen years ago, **Sarah Dougherty** came to Bali to take up an editor's job and fell in love with the island she now calls home. As an editor, publisher and one of Indonesia's

busiest food and travel writers, Sarah regularly contributes to a number of local and international publications, as well as publishing threesixtyguides Bali and 36obali apps. An enthusiastic cook, her passion for food and travel lead her to specialise in this field. She also contributes features when a great story jumps up and bites her on the ass.



Award-winning journalist **Ben Groundwater** is one of Australia's most widely read travel writers. He's a columnist and blogger for Fairfax Media, the author

of the travel memoir *Five Ways to Carry a Goat*, and is the co-star and producer of the web series *Beauty and the Backpacker*. Ben's work has appeared in the *Sydney Morning Herald*, *The Age*, *Lonely Planet* publications, *GQ Magazine* and *Rolling Stone*, and he once did a freelance sub-editing shift at *Dolly Magazine*. That wasn't a career highlight.



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Dreaming of the Mediterranean? Sometimes refined, often outlandish and ever enchanting, let the Mediterranean cast its dazzling spell with Captain's Choice's new release Silversea Luxury Voyages for 2016. Our abundant shore excursions are a cut above the rest – test drive a Ferrari along the coast of Ravenna, be seduced by the Flamenco in Barcelona and soar over Sicily's tempestuous volcano, Mt Etna by helicopter. The beauty of Croatia, Monaco, Greece and beyond is yours to explore across the myriad blue of the Mediterranean. With personal butlers for every suite and inspired fine dining on board, the only difficult thing will be selecting your favourite...



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travel talk



Dive into the Four Kings

For pure beauty, Indonesia's Raja Ampat (Four Kings) islands, come close to perfection, with some of the world's best diving experienced here. The territory within the islands is enormous, with almost four million hectares of land and sea home to 540 types of corals, 1,000 types of tropical fish and 700 types of molluscs. According to a report developed by The Nature Conservancy and Conservation International, around 75 per cent of the world's species live here.

The four major islands are Waigeo, Misool, Salawati and Batanta, offering experiences such as wreck diving, kayaking, exploring Wayag Island's karst islands, fishing using traditional Papuan techniques, trekking to waterfalls, snorkelling, sailing, seeing the Red Bird of Paradise, admiring the cave art in Tomolol, and watching the mysterious Sea Ghost. indonesia.travel



Love in the trees

To get away from it all, without really getting away from the comforts we crave, head for the hills, or in this case, Bilpin in the Blue Mountains, which has been hiding some phenomenal 'Love' Cabins at the Wollemi Wilderness Retreat. Take the Dream Cabin with its beautiful raw sandstone slabs, natural wood beams, polished concrete floors and a separate bath-house with hot-tub and rustic outside shower. The Love Cabin is a perfect rustic hideaway for a loved-up couple, while the Love Studio is a combination of bush elements and bohemian style. The Treehouse is like something out of a fairytale, with a spa, fireplace and floor-to-ceiling windows giving jaw-dropping views over the Bowen Creek Gorge. Then there's Wollemi Cabin – a timber slab cabin – and the largest property of them all, Wollemi House. If you can drag yourself out of your bush dream home, go for a walk through the idyllic forest.

lovecabins.com.au

*Photography by Jochen Spencer;
atraxarta.com.au*







Ancient luxury in Cappadocia

High in the volcanic mountains in the town of Uçhisar in Turkey, Argos in Cappadocia is a serenely beautiful and utterly unique hotel situated in six restored mansions connected by underground tunnels. Renowned for its luxurious style, each of the hotel's 51 spacious rooms and suites pay tribute to the region's ancient underground architecture and are individually designed and decorated with Turkish carpets and artefacts. Some rooms open onto balconies, terraced gardens and secluded courtyards with splendid views overlooking the Pigeon Valley and Mount Erciyes, with Splendid Suites also boasting a private in-suite swimming pool. Perfectly located for exploring Cappadocia's treasures, the hotel will also appeal to wine connoisseurs with a revered collection, housed in its own caves, showcasing bottles from its Kalecik Karasi vineyards amongst others.

argosincappadocia.com



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JORDAN & ISRAEL
Nov 2015

Discover two of the Middle East's most ancient and fascinating nations - Jordan and Israel, with historian Kenneth Park.
\$9,040 per person twin share.



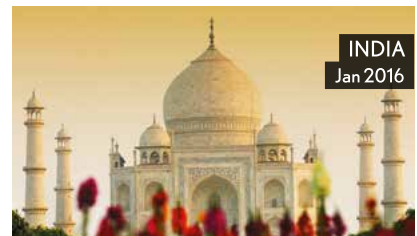
MOROCCO
Nov 2015

Join well-known cook, TV personality and self-proclaimed gastronaut Geoff Jansz on an exciting culinary and cultural journey to Morocco.
\$6,895 per person twin share.



TURKEY
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Travel with curator, lecturer and arts consultant Kenneth Park on an historian's journey through Turkey.
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INDIA
Jan 2016

Join award-winning author Claire Scobie on a literary journey through India, with two days at the Jaipur Literature Festival.
\$11,410 per person twin share.



WIN A FABULOUS FIVE-NIGHT VACATION TO QUEENSTOWN, NEW ZEALAND!

Vacations & Travel magazine and The Rees Hotel & Luxury Apartments Queenstown, is giving subscribers the chance to win a sensational trip to Queenstown including two return economy flights and five nights' accommodation.

THE REES HOTEL QUEENSTOWN: LUXURY FOR ALL THE SENSES

Many hotels promise a stellar location and spectacular surroundings and others the pampering of spacious suites with designer furnishings and fabrics. Still others hang their reputation on service – or perhaps an awarded dining room, top chef or fine wine cellar. Some boutique properties pride themselves on featuring a unique aspect such as their historic or artistic focus but very few fine hotels can boast all of these and still fewer manage to exceed guests' expectations in each of these claims.

The Rees Hotel Queenstown is such a property and is winning awards and

accolades around the world for its success.

Located on the edge of Lake Wakatipu, looking out to The Remarkable Mountains and just minutes from the scenic Queenstown centre, the mountain backdrop and lake views are ever-changing and always mesmerising. The Rees is central to the wide range of high quality, year-round attractions and activities offered by Queenstown and the broader Southern Lakes District. The Rees offers a free shuttle service from the hotel to the downtown area of Queenstown and water taxi services, fishing charters and jet boat companies all utilise The Rees Wharf to look after the needs of guests.

Accommodation options include 60 spacious hotel-style rooms and 90 luxury apartments, all with balconies overlooking the magnificent lake and mountains. Architecture and furniture designs were provided by local artisans of international reputation and the history of Queenstown's early settler and developer, William Rees, is enshrined in the valuable library and art available for guests to peruse as they sip the best of Central Otago wines and Bordeaux vintages from the masterfully stocked wine cellar. The Rees also offers incredible Culinary Series events.

The Rees Hotel has had continuing success, again winning the internationally prestigious US Wine



The prize includes

- Two return economy flights from Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, Adelaide or Perth to Queenstown
- Five nights in a Lake View one-bedroom apartment for two people
- Return airport transfers in Queenstown (to and from The Rees) and breakfasts for two
- One dinner for two (two tasting menus) at True South Dining Room

Spectator magazine award of excellence this year for the hotel’s True South Dining Room wine list of 100 or more quality wine selections that thematically match a restaurant’s cuisine.

The hotel now provides all local calls and over 150 on-demand in-room movies, as well as Sky (cable) channels complimentary, as well as the free Wi-Fi that has been offered by The Rees since day one.

Later this year The Rees will open five superlative Lake Front Residences on stunning Lake Wakatipu to provide an even more luxurious option for the discerning few. therees.co.nz



Entry is open to all *Vacations & Travel* subscribers, existing and new. To subscribe and go in the draw, fill out the attached card and answer three simple questions. Or, subscribe online at vacationsandtravelmag.com

Entries must be received by 30 June 2015, and the lucky winner will be notified by phone.

Terms and Conditions: Competition is open to residents of Australia only. Hotel stay is for two people and is valid until 30 June 2016. The prize is valid to be used and must be completed by 30 June 2016. The prize voucher must be provided at the time of booking. The prize must be redeemed all at once, and is only valid on the guest room type listed in the voucher. Rooms are subject to availability and blackout dates apply – from 24 December 2015-5 January 2016, and from 2-28 February 2016. Check-in time is at 3pm and check-out time is at 12pm.

The accommodation prize is based on twin share and must be taken on consecutive nights. The winner will be required to present a credit card at the time of accommodation check-in for security purposes. All other expenses, not specifically stipulated in the prize package as an inclusion, remain the responsibility of the prize winner and their nominated travel companion(s) as incurred. The Prize consists of two economy return air tickets, including taxes and charges, from Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, Adelaide or Perth to Queenstown. Connecting flights from other cities will be at the winner’s expense. No extensions are possible. Bookings must be made a minimum of six weeks prior to the prize being taken, and any hotel blackout dates will also apply to the airfares. The prize must be taken as stated and no compensation will be payable if the winner is unable to use the prize. Entries must be received by 30 June 2015, and the lucky winner will be notified by phone.

Vacations & Travel magazine will not be held liable for any loss or harm to prize winners. Travel insurance is the responsibility of all prize winners and we strongly recommend comprehensive cover.

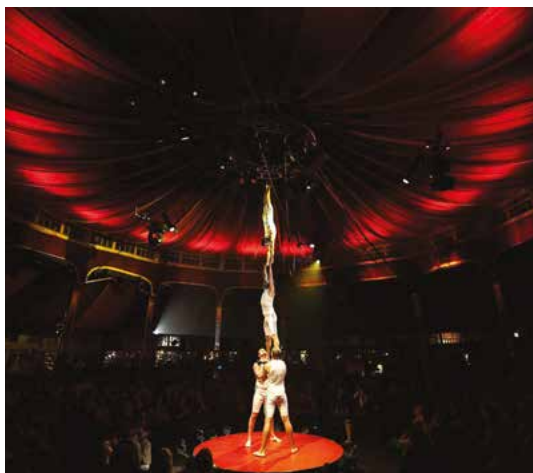


Kangaroo Island ‘FEASTival’

Not just another food and wine festival, the SeaLink Kangaroo Island FEASTival is an eight-day celebration of the rich history, spirit and character of Kangaroo Island staged through a series of themed gourmet events staged around the island’s natural pristine wilderness.

From 1-8 May visitors will enjoy a degustation of extraordinary dining experiences that highlight the fresh produce and globally-acclaimed wines and beverages that Kangaroo Island is renowned for. Hosted by Australia’s leading celebrity and local chefs, including beloved author Stephanie Alexander, there will be more than 30 individual events that are diverse, intimate and enhanced by the exquisite natural beauty of Kangaroo Island, to create a truly unique culinary experience for its guests.

tourkangarooisland.com.au/kifeastival



A cocktail of burlesque fun with Spiegelworld

Following their hugely successful Australian tour of *Empire*, Spiegelworld has brought its smash-hit Las Vegas show *Absinthe* down under and Australian audiences are falling head over heels for this spectacular, one-of-a-kind show. Inspired by the absinthe-drenched cabarets of late 19th century Europe and presented in a 700-seat antique spiegel tent, furnished with bevelled mirrors, plush velvet seating and a well-stocked bar, *Absinthe* is an adult-themed cocktail of circus, burlesque and vaudeville for a 21st century audience. After wowing Newcastle and Melbourne, *Absinthe*’s Australian season will continue in Brisbane from 2 June, in Perth from 11 July, and in Sydney from 15 September. absintheaustralia.com

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The Five Stans open up

One of the world's last remote regions, the five 'Stans' of central Asia is becoming something of a hot spot for Australian travellers. The chain of nations – Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan – are among the world's least known tourist destinations but are now being revealed in a 28-day experience with Perth-based Travel Directors' fully inclusive 'Five Stans Tour'. Travel Directors' unique itinerary will take in great steppes, magical deserts, fertile valleys and some of the world's highest mountains, while offering a taste of the region's fascinating culture and history. traveldirectors.com.au



The Long Paddock

One for the frustrated drovers amongst us, the Long Paddock Cattle Drive will move a mob of 500 cattle across the majestic Hay Plains in May. But never fear, riders can still indulge in luxury with locally-sourced gourmet food and wine and good old fashioned camp cooking. Offered for the first time in 2015, The Long Paddock Cattle Drive is an exclusive horse riding adventure limited to just 40 riders spread over two weekends in May. The all-inclusive adventure is open to anyone with a love of horses and caters for all levels of ability. With an instructor for every four riders, guests will develop their riding skills over the course of the weekend, and more experienced riders will rise to the challenge. thelongpaddock.com.au

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Shanghai to a tee

You don't need to be a golfer to enjoy a day at a Chinese golf resort with Helen Wong's new four-day 'Golf and Spa in Shanghai' itinerary. The four-day package from its 'Surprising Shanghai' program includes accommodation with daily breakfast and transfers to and from the hotel and also allows plenty of time to explore Shanghai's fascinating shops, bars, restaurants and attractions. A perfect fit for couples with different ideas on how to spend their leisure time, one person can test out the fairways while the other indulges at a luxury day spa. The refreshingly modern new program follows the launch of Helen Wong's Tours new-look China and Vietnam brochure for 2015-2016 aimed at appealing to a broader audience of Australian travellers. helenwongstours.com



Eurovision makes a splash in Vienna

The 60th Eurovision Song Contest, themed 'Building Bridges', will take place in Vienna, with the final on 23 May, 2015. For the first time in history, Australia has a representative, with Guy Sebastian doing battle with Europe's best and brightest. It is a serious matter for many countries, with Austria, the host country, finding their representative over the course of four prime time TV shows. The Opening Ceremony will be at City Hall on 17 May, with the Eurovision Village fan zone also opening then.

Last year's winner, Austria's Conchita Wurst, has put together a list of what to see and do in Vienna, with the Rathausplatz her favourite place, the Life Ball her event tip, Motto her favourite restaurant, Kärntner Strasse and Neubaugasse in the seventh district her tips for best shopping, and the night tour at the Museum of Natural History is not to be missed.

If in town during Eurovision, be ready to party, as this event is massive. austria.info

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V7303	17	22 Jan 2017 Colón to Valparaíso	US\$7,210 (c3)
V7304	23	08 Feb 2017 Valparaíso to Buenos Aires	US\$11,595 (c3)
V7305	11	03 Mar 2017 Buenos Aires to Rio De Janeiro	US\$5,385 (c3)
V7306	22	14 Mar 2017 Rio De Janeiro to Barbados	US\$9,325 (c3)
V7307	10	05 Apr 2017 Barbados to Miami	US\$4,190 (c3)

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Hot foot it to Tuscany

Enjoy breathtaking views of rolling hills dotted with villages, historic sites, local cuisine and the fine Tuscan wines that the central Italian region is famous for on a self-guided hike through the countryside and Renaissance towns of southern Tuscany.

Specialising in the 'art of slow travel', On Foot Holidays offers walkers self-guided tours across unspoilt areas of Europe. The seven-night 'Southern Tuscany' package is available from April through to November and will take walkers from Siena to the medieval hilltop town of Montepulciano, stopping at abbeys, ancient thermal baths and historic towns along the way, as they hike through some of the region's famous wine areas. To make the walk even more leisurely, walkers will meet up with their luggage each night in small, family-run B&Bs and hotels. onfootholidays.co.uk



Blazing Hannibal's Trail by Bike

Adventure travellers can follow in the footsteps of Carthaginian general, Hannibal, on a cycling tour through Spain, France and Italy with Ride & Seek. The epic 28-day bicycle tour will take riders across the Pyrenees, Alps and Apennines on roads featured regularly in the Vuelta a España, Tour de France and Giro d'Italia bike races. Conceptualised by an archaeologist and documentary maker and a bike guide who has lived in all three of the countries the tour traverses. Riders will be immersed in the cultural, culinary and historical delights of Catalonia, Languedoc, Provence, Piedmont, Tuscany and Umbria as they meander down these roads less travelled with a historian and archaeologist as their guide. rideandseek.com

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Orchestral manoeuvres in the dark at Ayers Rock Resort

Ayers Rock Resort is delighted to announce that for the first time the Australian Chamber Orchestra (ACO) will perform a series of intimate concerts led by Richard Tognetti at Ayers Rock Resort on Friday 30th and Saturday 31st October 2015.

The ACO Uluru Festival will feature ARIA winner William Barton playing didgeridoo, and ARIA nominee Steve Pigram lending his soulful voice and rhythmic guitar to harmonise with the ACO.

The ACO Uluru Festival will add another element to the spiritual heart of Australia, with a maximum of 380 guests being treated to a wonderful program. There will be three concerts over two days in the Uluru Meeting Place, as well as three exclusive dining events. ayersrockresort.com.au

Culinary capers in San Sebastián

San Sebastián is undoubtedly one of the culinary capitals of the world, with more Michelin stars per capita than most places on the planet, farmers' markets six days a week and hundreds of bustling *pintxo* bars. Now passionate foodies can take home a little of that Basque culinary expertise with a new state-of-the-art cooking school opening in one of Spain's grandest hotels – the Hotel Maria Cristina, a Luxury Collection Hotel. Working with Basque chefs and guides, the SSF Beronia Cooking School will offer a variety of innovative cooking courses from *pintxo* construction to haute cuisine that will satisfy even the most passionate foodie. sansebastianfood.com/en/cooking-school



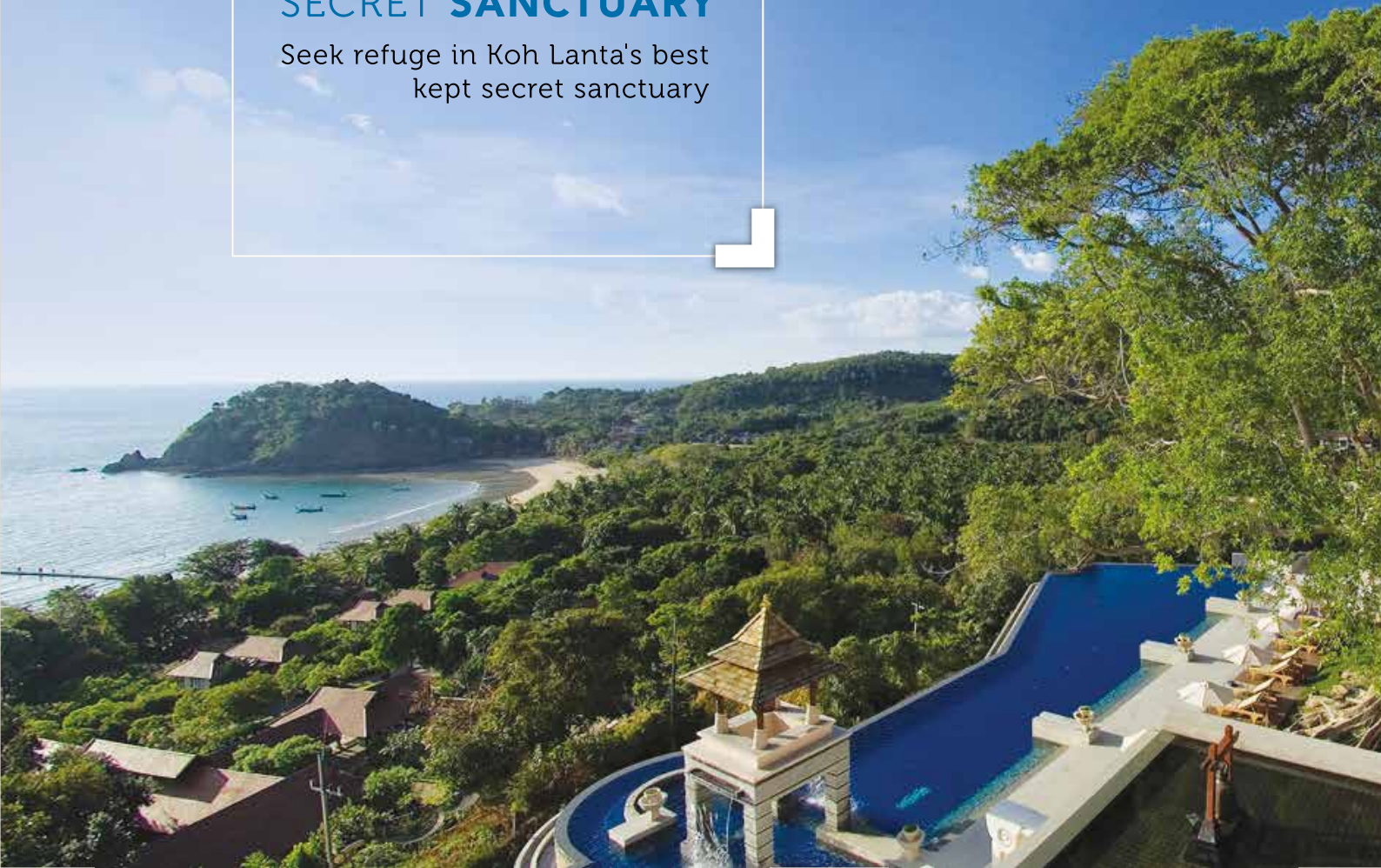


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Club Med's Maldives magic

Just a 40-minute speedboat ride from the Maldives international airport and five minutes from Club Med Kani Premium Resort, Club Med's brand new Finolhu Villas Resort is an exclusive eco-chic paradise. The stand-alone Resort will offer guests the most refined, luxury facilities and services available, plus access to the neighbouring Club Med Kani Premium Resort. Ecologically sensitive, the 22 Beach Villas and 30 Lagoon Villas boast their own private pools and terraces, with the Lagoon Villas perched on stilts above the crystal-clear turquoise water. The new Resort serves as testament to Club Med's commitment to offering travellers upscale, all-inclusive holiday experiences with a personal Villa butler on-hand to indulge their every whim. clubmed.com.au



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Desert days and nights

Trek 100 kilometres through the awe-inspiring Sahara Desert on a humbling and life-changing 10-day Moroccan journey with Discover Adventure tours. Departing 30 October and accompanied by Berber guides and a small caravan of camels, adventurous travellers can explore a vast, unforgiving landscape scattered with ancient fossils, wind-blown sand dunes, salt pans that create strange mirages in the distance and unforgettable star-strewn night skies. You'll stay in remote camps at night – or opt to sleep under the stars – with friendly hospitality, camp-fire feasts and Berber singing a real highlight. The trek also includes a free day exploring the sights and souks of Marrakech, which will provide a delightful contrast to those challenging desert days and nights. discoveradventure.com



Call of the Wild in Kakadu

Kakadu Tourism has launched an exciting range of programs for Kakadu's peak season in 2015 that will give visitors a unique perspective of the landscape through the eyes of local Indigenous guides and through the lens of celebrated Northern Territory photographer, Paul Arnold.

The 'Algothgarrng Experience' takes place on Yellow Water Billabong at night. The 90-minute cruise is hosted by an expert Indigenous guide who identifies the myriad of star systems visible and provides a narrative based on generations old Dreamtime stories. Three-hour Photographic cruises with Paul Arnold will run from April through the dry season with his photography philosophy being "Find it. Learn it. Shoot it." There are also fishing experiences with three-hour fishing trips giving anglers the chance to catch – and cook – the mighty barramundi, the 4WD 'Spirit of Kakadu Adventure Tour', showcasing the waterfalls, swimming holes and escarpments of Kakadu and the full-day 'Footprints of the Past' tour focusing on the Indigenous, European, mining and pastoral history of the region, concluding with sundowners at an exclusive private billabong. kakadutourism.com



Shamrock Travel

If you are considering a coach tour around Ireland, England, Scotland or Wales, there is one website that you simply cannot afford to miss. Shamrock Travel, established in Melbourne in 1989, has created what is effectively Australia's only true coach tour comparison site. England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales have been Shamrock Travel's key destinations for over 25 years, with the principles having hailed from Ireland before moving to Australia.

The site features all major operators; Trafalgar Tours, Insight Vacations, CIE. Globus and Cosmos, with all their programs laid out on the website in one easy-to-view platform. With a simple click of a button you can compare different operator's tours for the same destination, plus Shamrock have analysed all the key aspects of each tour, including hotel standards, inclusions, exclusions, optional extras, meal inclusions and so on. The end result is a simple, concise and impartially constructed comparison chart. shamrocktravel.com.au

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Ningaloo with A&K

June is the perfect time for lovers of marine ecosystems to explore pristine Ningaloo Marine Park and swim with majestic Whale Sharks. A&K's 'Pristine Waters of Ningaloo Reef' itinerary is a five-night tour, with guests flying over the rugged Cape Range National Park to the idyllic Sal Salis luxury wilderness camp where guided snorkelling, kayaking and bush walks are just some of the activities available. On day three guests head out by luxury boat in search of the majestic whale shark. Snorkelling with these incredible giants is an experience of a lifetime. Spend another day exploring the Cape Range National Park on a guided hike, snorkelling on the reef or simply enjoying the magic location of Sal Salis, before journeying to Exmouth and then spending the final night at The Richardson Hotel & Spa in Perth. abercrombiekent.com.au



Disneyland Resort turns 60

Three sensational new night time spectaculars will dazzle guests at the Disneyland Resort when the Diamond Celebration begins Friday, 22 May, 2015. Night time will glitter as never before when the latest technology and immersive special effects lift the 'Paint the Night' parade and 'Disneyland Forever' fireworks spectacular beyond anything seen in the past at Disneyland Park.

In Disney California Adventure Park, a new 'World of Color' show, 'World of Color – Celebrate' hosted by Neil Patrick Harris and Mickey Mouse will tell the story of Walt Disney and the Happiest Place on Earth through fountains, film, animation, a stirring musical score and amazing visual surprises.

In addition, the iconic Sleeping Beauty Castle in Disneyland and Carthay Circle Theatre in Disney California Adventure will glisten and gleam for the celebration, each with its own diamond medallion. The Disneyland Resort and surrounding streets will sparkle with Diamond Celebration décor and festive banners in shades of Disneyland blue. Since Walt Disney opened the gates to Disneyland 60 years ago, nearly three billion visitors have lived the Disney Dream. And that's worth celebrating. disneyparks.disney.go.com

Pretty Beach House reopens

After a two year hiatus being exquisitely restored, Pretty Beach House, just 90 minutes by car from Sydney Airport, has reopened. Located on a promontory in the Bouddi National Park and Broken Bay, Pretty Beach House combines world-renowned cuisine and tailored guest experiences including a 'welcome to country' indigenous smoking ceremony by the Darkinjung elder, mountain bike riding, helicopter day trips into wine country and discovering the glorious waterways on board the property's luxury sports cruiser. Proprietors of Bells at Killcare Boutique Hotel, Restaurant & Spa, Brian and Karina Barry alongside distinguished restaurateurs, Stefano Manfredi and Julie Manfredi Hughes, offer an all-inclusive luxurious escape, featuring original works by Arthur Boyd, Sidney Nolan and John Olsen. Pretty Beach House consists of the Main House and four pavilions, with each pavilion sleeping a total of eight guests. The Main House features an atrium-style bar and lounge area as well as Manfredi's open-plan Ambach Italian kitchen, where guests enjoy his world-class Italian cuisine. prettybeachhouse.com.au



TFE hotels

THE LIGHT ON THE HILL HAS BEEN RELIT

The famed Hotel Kurrajong Canberra reopens its doors this December

Originally opened in 1926, Hotel Kurrajong Canberra has been fully renovated, combining the spirit and style of the Roaring 20's with 21st century creature comforts. Home to Ben Chifley while in office, the Kurrajong's graceful architecture features deep verandahs, radiating courtyards and covered pavilions. At Chifley's Bar & Grill, award winning Executive Chef Michael Chatto's menu features superb hand selected meats and fresh local produce.

The light on the hill has been relit. Welcome to Hotel Kurrajong Canberra.

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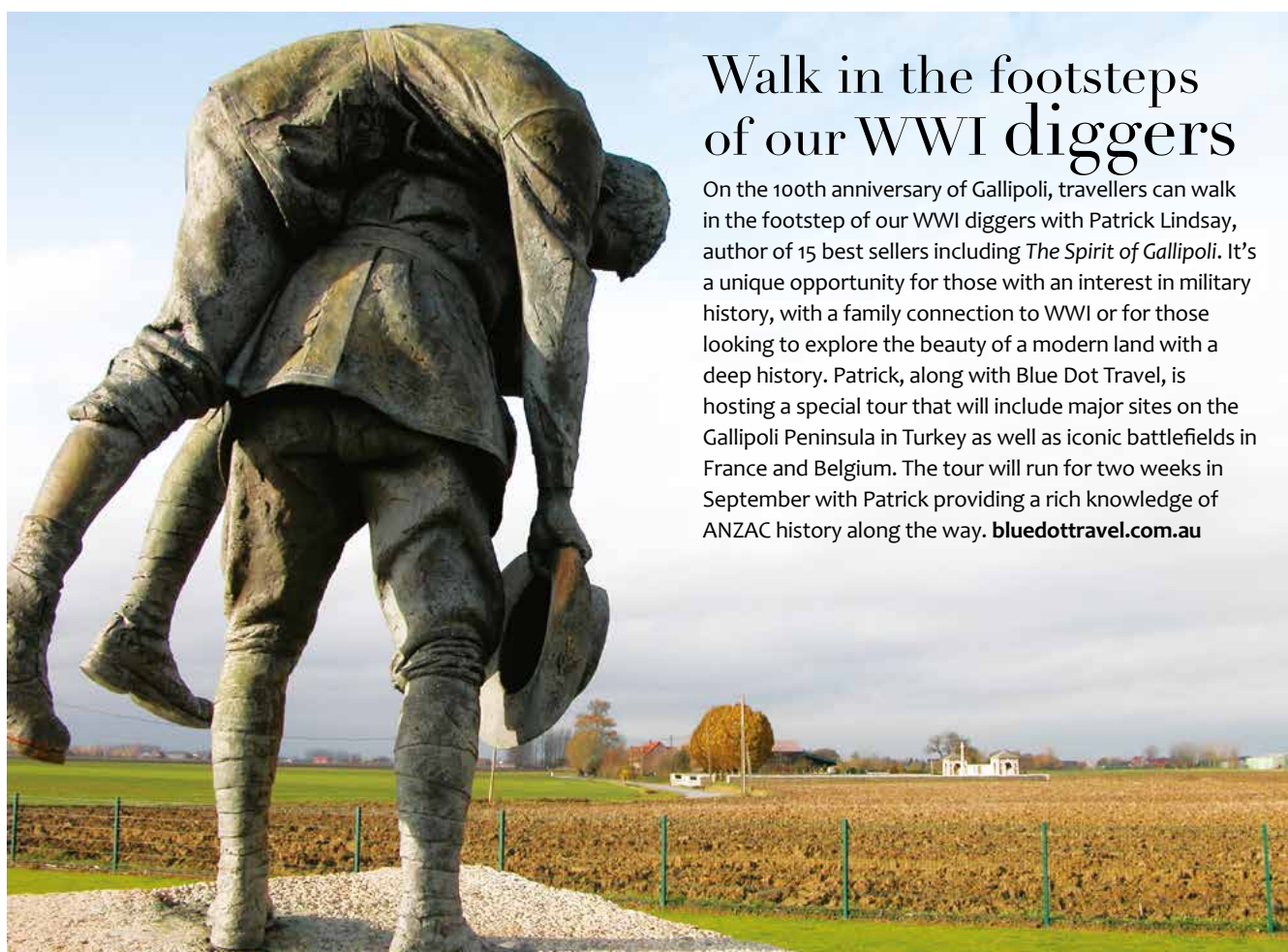




Perfectly Palm Court

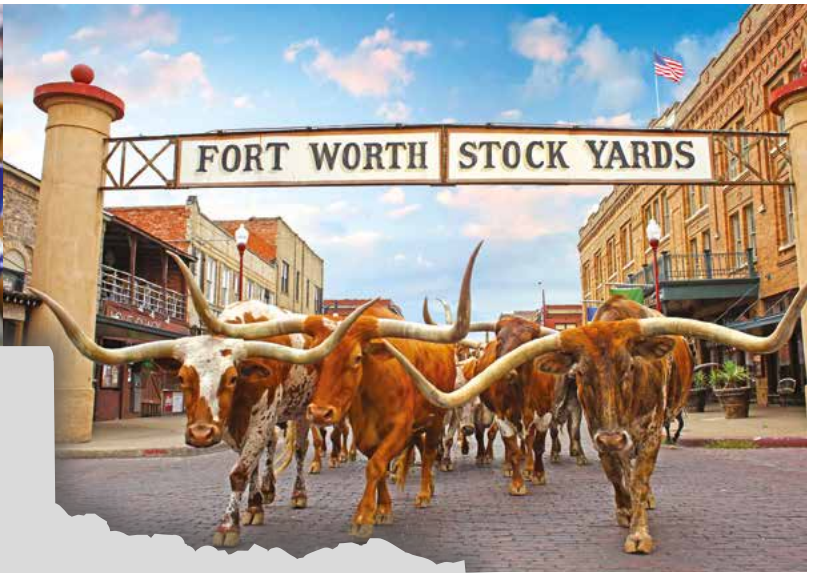
The Langham Auckland is an oasis of luxury with Palm Court as its exquisite centrepiece, serving an elegant à la carte menu and The Langham Afternoon Tea with Wedgwood daily. Start the day in style with a sumptuous breakfast such as pancakes with bacon, maple syrup and cream cheese or warm croissants with champagne and strawberry jam.

Should you wish to return for a daytime snack, the salmon poached in duck fat or the beef carpaccio with rocket, parmesan shavings, truffle oil and balsamic vinegar will undoubtedly tickle your fancy. The Langham Afternoon Tea with Wedgwood has two servings daily. Every day at 11.30am and 2.30pm, the most exquisite little treats arrive on three-tiered silver stands with clotted cream and homemade jams such as strawberry and Champagne and orange and Whisky. Beautifully served with Wedgwood tea and crockery, this is easily the finest afternoon tea in town. langhamhotels.co.nz



Walk in the footsteps of our WWI diggers

On the 100th anniversary of Gallipoli, travellers can walk in the footstep of our WWI diggers with Patrick Lindsay, author of 15 best sellers including *The Spirit of Gallipoli*. It's a unique opportunity for those with an interest in military history, with a family connection to WWI or for those looking to explore the beauty of a modern land with a deep history. Patrick, along with Blue Dot Travel, is hosting a special tour that will include major sites on the Gallipoli Peninsula in Turkey as well as iconic battlefields in France and Belgium. The tour will run for two weeks in September with Patrick providing a rich knowledge of ANZAC history along the way. bluedottravel.com.au



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Contours Travel picks its top ten in South America

Australia's longest operating Latin America specialist, Contours Travel, has released its top South American picks for 2015. Based on travellers' interest in exploring raw and lesser-known destinations around the continent, these 10 places are a mix of untouched nature reserves, historical sites and quirky picturesque towns.

Highlights include El Chaltén, Argentina, a quirky riverside mountain village set on the base of the majestic granite Fitz Roy and Cerro Torre mountains within the Glaciares National Park; Marbles Caves, Chile, a 6,000-year-old chamber with stunning geological formations featuring tunnels and pillars formed by crashing waves; and Tayrona National Park, Colombia, home to a pristine, untouched coastline with white sandy beaches and lush jungle, as well as well-preserved ruins of ancient Indian villages.

contourstravel.com.au



State of the union in Galena

For a slice of history, Galena, Illinois has it all going on. Best known as the home of war hero and former US President, Ulysses S. Grant, Galena's main street has charming 19th century storefronts filled with boutiques, galleries, restaurants and hotels – including the historic De Soto House where Abraham Lincoln and Grant used to hang out and where some ghosts still do. Take a tour on the Tri-State Trolley to learn about its mining and steam boat heritage. Nine of the Union's Generals came from Galena, the most famous being Grant. Don't miss visiting his home, presented to him by the town after he became President of the USA; it still has the original furniture in it as well as many items of historical interest. It will be standing room only in Galena from 9 April 2015, with several events to commemorate 150 years to the day when Confederate General Robert E. Lee surrendered to Ulysses S. Grant to end the civil war. Apart from history, Galena has some excellent wineries, spas and golf resorts.

galena.org



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Vasse Felix the Ultimate Winery Experience

One of Western Australia's most esteemed wineries, Vasse Felix, is the newest member of Ultimate Winery Experiences Australia, a collection of award-winning wineries offering experiences, beyond the cellar door, food and wine matching, wine education and gastronomy in spectacular locations.

Margaret River's founding wine estate, Vasse Felix, is known as one of Australia's leading labels for Cabernet Sauvignon and Chardonnay. The Estate is considered in the top echelon of winery destinations too.

Two bespoke experiences have been developed by Vasse Felix for UWEA; The Vasse Felix Original tour which takes guests behind the scenes of the label, showcasing production, offering historic insights and finishing with a private tasting of wines with gourmet morsels. The Vasse Felix Epicurean delivers the ultimate culinary journey, adding a food and wine pairing tutorial and a three course à la carte menu with matching wines to the Original tour.

ultimatewineryexperiences.com.au



Don't worry, be happy in Bhutan


The Kingdom of Bhutan has declared 2015 as 'Visit Bhutan Year' to celebrate His Majesty the 4th King of Bhutan's 60th birthday. To commemorate the occasion, a host of special attractions, events and festivals are taking place throughout this year across Bhutan.

This fascinating country, where being happy is actually a rule of life, has plenty of highlights, including Taktsang Monastery, known as Tiger's Nest, the Punakha Dzong fortress, the hot springs at Gasa in western Bhutan, over 23 treks throughout the country that can take anywhere from three-25 days to complete, Tshechu Bhutanese festivals, mountain biking and bird watching. visitbhutanyear.com



adventures from Mountain top to Ocean deep

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   www.sabahtourism.com



Melbourne Star

The Melbourne Star Observation Wheel offers unobstructed 360-degree views of Melbourne and the surrounding area, and has had well over 250,000 guests since it opened in its current form in December 2013. Choose one of the special All Star Experience packages, including one where you and your loved one can enjoy themed food and wine in a private cabin, The Cocktail Party for 14 people or the *Love is in the Air* High Tea package, with a *Strictly Ballroom* theme. You can ride the wheel by day, twilight or by night, giving different views of Melbourne every time. There's also a package where you can go for a hot air balloon ride in the morning, and enjoy the Star at night.

The Melbourne Star is the first, more complex, solid steel wheel design to be built in the world to this size. Located in the heart of Docklands and close to the city, Melbourne Star is one of Melbourne's easiest tourist attractions to reach and to enjoy. It's also wheelchair accessible. melbournestar.com



Ubud Food Festival

The Ubud Writers & Readers Festival, Southeast Asia's largest and most celebrated literary event has launched a new concept, the Ubud Food Festival – a three-day culinary extravaganza celebrating all things delicious and diverse in Indonesian cuisine. The Festival, on from 5-7 June, 2015, will feature a line-up of chefs from across the archipelago and the world, with the program spanning cooking demos, panel sessions, night markets, food tours, wine tastings, workshops on food writing, blogging and photography, as well as much more. The UFF is aiming to bring together people from the Asia-Pacific and other corners of the globe to explore one of the most diverse culinary landscapes in the world. ubudfoodfestival.com

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The TRUE NORTH's Kimberley Wilderness season runs from March until September each year. North Star Cruises pioneered adventure-cruising in this stunning region – nobody knows the Kimberley like we do! The TRUE NORTH is an Australian registered ship and is not required to exit territorial waters on domestic voyages – our Kimberley cruises are conducted entirely in the Kimberley!

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Peregrine's Arctic

Peregrine has launched its 2016 Arctic season with four brand new itineraries that offer unique and rare opportunities to see some of the most seldom visited destinations on Earth, including an Ice Camp at 89° north and Eurasia's northernmost archipelago. Barneo Ice Camp is incredibly remote, constructed each year to be a functioning Russian science and logistics station. After landing on the frozen runway from Longyearbyen in Spitsbergen, travellers will explore the Ice Camp by air via helicopter as well as on land and will meet resident scientists, pilots, mechanics, engineers and explorers.

Another new tour will see guests visiting one of the most remote and raw archipelagos in the world, Franz Josef Land, which consists of 191 islands in the north of Russia, while those chasing the Northern Lights will want to book in for the 10-day 'Arctic Express' tour to Greenland. These new itineraries feature alongside Peregrine's classic Arctic journeys to Svalbard, Greenland and the Canadian Arctic. peregrineadventures.com



Pink's Hollywood

It's like a Hollywood movie with a happy ending; Pink's Hot Dogs, Hollywood's favourite hot dog haunt, turns 75 this year. Pink's started off in 1939 when Paul and Betty Pink sold hot dogs from a cart on the corner at La Brea and Melrose Streets. The city fell in love with the tasty chili dogs and friendly service, and 75 years later, Pink's has become a Hollywood landmark and is internationally famous.

Pink's has been visited by many stars, including Orson Welles, Marlon Brando, Michael Jackson, Jay Leno, Steve Martin, Betty White and Aretha Franklin. Now run by Paul and Betty's family, Richard, Gloria and Beverly, Pink's has even expanded to ten locations in Southern California, Las Vegas, and Ohio. Its historic, fun atmosphere is considered a quintessential Hollywood experience, particularly for the late-night club crowd. pinkshollywood.com



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Awarded “Top Hotels for Romance - Asia and Maldives, Top Hotels - Maldives, and Top Luxury Hotels - Maldives” by TripAdvisor in 2015 Traveller’s Choice Award.

Awarded the “Leading Food & Beverage Resort” and “Most Romantic Resort” by MATATO in November 2014 Maldives Travel Awards.

Jiva Grande Spa is awarded “Favorite Overseas Spa Hotel” by Conde Nast Traveller India in the Readers’ Travel Award November 2014.

Awarded “Top 25 Best Leisure Hotels and Resorts” by SmartTravelAsia.com in 2014 Best Travel Poll Award.


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MALDIVES



Ride the waves in Indo

Surf travel is on the rise with keen board riders signing up to go with friends or family to some of the world's best waves in Indonesia. The Mentawai Islands in West Sumatra are on the hotlist, with Macaronis Resort an excellent place to base yourself, ensuring excellent surfing on legendary breaks like Greenbush, Bowls Right or Maccas and all the comforts of a great resort waiting when you get back from the surf.

Women are also getting in on the act with Surf Goddess Retreats offering women-only surf trips to Bali. Even beginners can go along, enjoying yoga and several spa treatments as part of the fun. Before any surf trip to Indonesia, or anywhere else for that matter, take out insurance with Indo Surf Travel Insurance – they even cover boards that snap in the surf – the only one to do so. macaronisresort.com; surfgoddessretreats.com; indosurf.com.au



Star gazing at Aoraki Mt Cook

The Hermitage Hotel is arguably the most scenically-located hotel in the world, on a valley floor in the shadows of New Zealand's highest mountain, Aoraki Mt Cook. Even the drive in is ridiculously scenic, and although the hotel itself is beautiful, nature's artwork is all-encompassing.

From the mountains and glacial valleys to the dark skies above, the tours offered are incredible. Book in for 'Big Sky Stargazing', with this region a designated International Dark Sky Reserve, one of only a few worldwide. Begin with an introduction and orientation in the Digital Dome Planetarium, then go to an outdoor stargazing site and be mesmerised by the spectacular southern sky looking through telescopes, astronomy binoculars and the naked eye. The 'Glacial Explorers' tour is also excellent, taking you up close to the Tasman Glacier – New Zealand's largest – and its icebergs, which tear off the glacier into the terminal lake. After these tours or any of their other options showcasing this wild part of the world, come back to your haven at The Hermitage, with fine cuisine, a range of accommodation to suit everyone and the glorious Aoraki Mt Cook always watching through the glass windows. hermitage.co.nz

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Gorillas in the mist

Raw Wildlife Encounters in partnership with The Jane Goodall Institute Australia and Raw Africa Eco-Tours gives travellers the chance to experience close encounters with gorillas and chimps in the wild while making sure that their travel dollars go to a good cause.

For the second year running, guests spend 15 days witnessing first-hand the interesting and successful projects that are being undertaken in Uganda by The Jane Goodall Institute. Raw travellers will visit the JGI Uganda/Ngamba Chimpanzee Island in the Murchinson Falls National Park, where they will experience close encounters with rhinos, chimpanzees and crocodiles, head off on a chimpanzee trek in the Budongo Forest, and look for the gorillas of Bwindi. Once guests witness these amazing primates, they'll understand what drove Dr Jane Goodall to dedicate her entire life fighting for their survival. Guests will also visit the inspiring Boomu Women's Group to gain an understanding of Ugandan culture and how communities live alongside wildlife. For every traveller on this adventure, departing 23 August 2015, a donation is made directly to support the work of The Jane Goodall Institute. rawwildlife.com.au/tours

YOLO at VOMO

VOMO Island Resort reopened its doors in March 2015 following an extensive renovation to build on its world-class reputation. All Hillside and Beachfront Villas received a total makeover to bathrooms and bedrooms featuring chic handcrafted furnishings made exclusively for the resort, with bespoke daybeds, coffee tables, mirror frames, cabanas, and new decks for the swimming pool and Rocks Bar. The resort's signature Rocks Bar received an upgraded bar as well, allowing guests to enjoy cocktails and the world-famous Fijian sunsets in style. May 2015 will see the debut of an open-air show kitchen emphasising healthy grilled fare with international influences from Japanese Robata to Tandoori ovens, and a raw bar offering local specialties from the Pacific Rim. This adults-only culinary theatre will be open on selected evenings throughout the week for dining and each evening for sunset cocktails and complimentary canapés. Also in May, a new state-of-the-art kitchen in the main house will be completed. vomofiji.com





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BILL PEACH JOURNEYS

Travelling solo in style.

Over time, Bill Peach Journeys has strived to develop an unrivalled level of excellence in taking privileged travellers to some of the most exquisite destinations throughout the world. While Bill Peach Journeys has had stunning success in taking clients to the heart of Australia by private aircraft and beyond, it is the single travellers' market that Bill Peach Journeys aims to continue to support and inspire to travel in 2015. Travelling solo is a liberating experience, and Bill Peach Journeys guarantee solo travellers will be treated as VIPs on every journey. They recognise the specific requirements of single travellers, and each year create a number of single supplement-free journeys, affording clients the benefit of their own room without extra costs. Enjoy the company of like-minded travellers, with the safety of travelling with an escorted group, but still retire to the comfort of your own personal space each evening. The 2015 Bill Peach Journeys collection sees single travellers truly spoilt for choice:

- A quintessential 13-day Icons of New Zealand Airruise uncovering the dramatic scenery of Auckland, Rotorua, Marlborough, Mount Cook, Queenstown and Doubtful Sound. No single supplement departure - Nov 2015
- A 12-day Great Australian Airruise by private aircraft through the Outback. Travelling in style to the outback towns of Longreach, Katherine, Kakadu, Darwin, the Kimberley, Broome and Uluru. No single supplement departures - May and Aug 2015

In 2015 Bill Peach Journeys is also delighted to offer a journey aboard the beautiful *Silver Shadow*.

- 14-day cruise through the turquoise waters of Alaska, where the breathtaking wilderness and spectacular wildlife are right at your fingertips. No single supplement departure - May 2015

Each of these spectacular journeys are single-supplement free, fully-inclusive, guarantee your own room and are a truly unforgettable travel experience.

billpeachjourneys.com.au







ANGSANA LĂNG CÔ

*Family Fun in breathtaking
Central Vietnam*

Nestled in the foothills of the Truong Son mountains in Central Vietnam, Angsana Lăng Cô looks out over a magnificent private beach on a crescent bay, creating an inviting and exhilarating location for that perfect vacation. With the *Live for Family Fun* offer, look forward to fun in the sun with your loved ones with an extensive list of exciting sports, cool activities and dining experiences to remember.

There is so much to do that guests are spoiled for choice. Embark on an aquatic adventure at the sports centre and engage in a thrilling snorkelling, parasailing or windsurfing session. Choose to kayak, jetski, or waterski or take a heart-thumping ride on an all-terrain vehicle (ATV) set amidst the lush tropical greenery and rugged mountain landscapes.

Further afield, jump on a bicycle from the resort and ride up the Hai Van Pass, an old highway that meanders over the mountains between Da Nang and Lang Co, offering breathtaking panoramic views of the sea and countryside. Explore the fascinating UNESCO heritage towns of Hoi An and Hue with daily complimentary shuttle services available to and from the resort.

If parents want some 'me' time, kids will love Angsana Kids Club, with supervised play and all sorts of outdoor activities. The kids will meet new friends and have a ball.

The *Live for Family Fun* package at Angsana Lăng Cô has many inclusions such as unlimited non-motorised activities as well as a choice of two fun motorised activities daily for up to four people aged 15 and above. Plus kids aged 12 and under dine for free from the Kids Menu (food only) for every paying adult at Angsana Lang Co. The package is valid with a minimum two-night stay up until 31 October 2105.

angsana.com/en/ap-vietnam-lang-co







KARMA KANDARA

Beyond Expectation

Situated along a dramatic clifftop setting that stretches down to an exclusive white sand beach, Karma Kandara is a jet set holiday destination in Bali that is favoured by families and celebrities alike.

A trendsetter in the hospitality industry for pioneering the all pool villa concept, Karma Kandara is one Asia's most glamorous getaways, consistently garnering the globe's most coveted awards including 'Best Beach Resort in Asia' by World Travel Awards and CNN Travel's 'World's 50 Best Beach Bars'.

Offering a sophisticated mix of expansive private residences that range from two to five bedrooms, each estate is fully appointed with a gourmet kitchen, spa-like en-suites and lush, tropical gardens. Designed for families and friends travelling together, Karma Kandara's premier villa collection, unparalleled ocean views and authentic Balinese hospitality attract the world's top athletes, politicians and entertainers.

As a true destination experience, guests and residents of Karma Kandara enjoy VIP access to a host of unmatched amenities. Connoisseurs appreciate the resort's portfolio of relaxed and gourmet dining options that include di Mare, one of the region's most celebrated fine dining restaurants. Featuring awe-inspiring, 180-degree views of the Indian Ocean, di Mare's contemporary open-air design provides an idyllic spot to indulge in a variety of dining pleasures including the classic champagne brunch, sumptuous wine pairing dinners and festive holiday-themed extravaganzas.

From dawn until the wee hours, guests are pampered with hedonistic delights including lounging within one of the island's most stunning infinity edge swimming pools, blessed with the resort's signature 'K'. For wellness enthusiasts, Karma Spa showcases two inspiring locations including bohemian-luxe clifftop bungalows and an oceanfront seaside tent. Karma Kandara's private beach club, Karma Beach Bali, offers clear turquoise seas and the hottest DJs from Ibiza and beyond.

www.karmaresorts.com







ALBATROSS TOURS

Celebrate this Christmas in Europe!

Imagine gliding across the snow-laden Alps on the magnificent Glacier Express train and then staying four nights over Christmas high in the Swiss mountains being pampered in a stylish spa hotel. Alternatively spend Christmas in a castle located in the Italian Dolomites dating back 2,000 years, celebrate the festive season by Lake Bled in glorious Slovenia or sipping steaming goulash in the 800-year-old Coaching Inn deep in the heart of the snow-covered mountains of Austria.

Now paint a picture of sleigh rides with snow bells and schnitzel and noodles with oodles of nostalgia, mulled wine and ginger biscuits in the festive Christmas Markets.

Albatross Tours has the largest range of European Christmas and New Year escorted tours ranging from six to 16 days, all with guaranteed group departures, relaxed schedules and designed specifically for the Australian traveller.

Each tour usually starts with in-depth visits to the more major cities but then, as Christmas approaches, they escape to the forest-covered mountains, medieval castles and specially selected hotels for three to seven nights to capture that essential European winter magic.

For example, on the 10-day German Fairytale Christmas tour - after two nights in the delightful medieval town of Rothenburg you'll stay five nights over Christmas in a picture-perfect hotel in the Bavarian Alps under the shadow of the romantic Fairytale Castle of 'mad King Ludwig'. Local excursions are included to ancient Nurnberg, Bamberg, Munich and three of Ludwig's magnificent castles. Alternatively the eight-day Austrian Christmas Break tour spends seven nights in a charming, chalet-style hotel and each day local excursions are made to the local villages and towns plus a highlight is a steam train ride up the dramatic Ziller Valley.

This is Christmas as it should be. Imagine all those picture-perfect Christmas cards with snow-covered forest paths, merry crowds and pink cheeked, laughing children wrapped in bright red scarves and woollen mittens. Towns and villages create a festive wonderland as they fill their old, cobble stoned, medieval squares with fabulous Christmas markets.

With an extensive range of truly festive Christmas and New Year Tours that focus on Germany, Switzerland, Austria, Slovenia, Italy and France you can make your Christmas dreams come true. Find out more by calling Albatross Tours on 1300-135-015 or go to albatrosstours.com.au





The YIN and YANG of Vietnam

BY JOSHUA AND ROBYN SMITH

Joshua Smith captures the essence of Vietnam through the lens on a two week trip from the Mekong region up to Halong Bay.



Upon exiting the Temple of Literature, located in the heart of Vietnam's capital city, Hanoi, my senses became conscious of the unabating sounds of the encircling traffic. The sound of horns and the motorcycle engines is intrusive and encompassing.

Having spent almost two weeks travelling throughout Vietnam by this stage, I felt I had become familiar to the movement and apparent chaos of the country. Why was the traffic noise so apparent now? It was in retrospect then that I realised the peace and serenity experienced was only apparent while inside the Temple. There was a complete absence of sound inside versus the all-surrounding and continuous noise out in the streets. I was feeling and experiencing a moment of Yin Yang.

Originating from Tao philosophy, Yin Yang is the necessity of balance of all things in life. Opposing forces which actually interact and complement each other. Vietnam is a cacophony of opposing forces, yet fluidity and balance is obtained in all facets of life. Yin Yang forms the essence of Vietnamese culture.

This concept is most evident when attempting to cross a busy Vietnamese street (is there a street in Vietnam that isn't busy?). Our advice on arriving: Keep together; move slowly; move with purpose. The motorcyclist will anticipate your course and navigate accordingly. Any sudden movements and the balance is broken. We soon learnt to maintain the equilibrium.

This is a country that has endured a long and tormented history of occupation, war and oppression. The contrast of lifestyle the north leads compared to the south is evident. While maintaining a harmonious and happy co-existence as one united country, there are still remnants of begrudging memories – if you look hard enough.

The architectural influence of the French colonisation can be experienced in a visit to Hồ Chí Minh's Central Post Office. Constructed in the early 20th Century by famous architect, Gustave Eiffel, its grand and ornate interior is matched by its traditional bright yellow exterior. Add it to your itinerary.

Equally remarkable is Hồ Chí Minh's Mausoleum, located in Ba Đình Square, Hanoi. Far from ornate and colourful, this grey marble and granite structure houses Vietnam's first president, affectionately known as 'Uncle Hồ'.

It's arguable that Yin Yang's influence is most evident in Vietnamese cuisine. The balance of flavours, textures, aroma and presentation unifies this country above all else.

A must try is the delicacy, Bánh Xèo with its pungent mix of fried pork and shrimp tangling with the sweet aroma of the rice batter pancakes. Combine this with herbs, sprouts and a tangy dipping sauce, and your worlds will collide.

A similar 'collision' can be achieved when a hot, humid and sultry day can be tempered down with a refreshing chilled bottle of Bia Saigon or a more traditional and highly popular, Cafe Sua Da (Vietnamese iced coffee).

Vietnam is perpetually on the move. For some it can be overwhelming. The trick when visiting this beautiful country is to locate it's Yin Yang. Whether it be a moment of silence, a recognition of your surroundings or a combination of flavours, once you locate its essence, if only for a second, Vietnam stands still. •

*** Joshua J. Smith used a Canon 1DX and three lenses; Canon EF 24mm f/1.4L II USM Lens, Canon EF 50mm f/1.2L USM Lens, and Canon EF 135mm f/2L USM Lens



STREETCARTS NAMED DESIRE

Clockwise from above: A farmer working his rice paddy fields in the Mekong Delta; A Vietnamese farmer from the Cai Be district hand feeding his prize rooster in the lead up to Tet celebrations (Vietnamese new year); Don't be put off by the roadside vendors, the food is fresh, fast and flavoursome. This food vendor is selling pork, served with fresh salad in a crispy baguette baked that morning; Cut flowers for sale in Hanoi; Motorbikes are ubiquitous in Vietnam and in Ho Chi Minh city they are the preferred mode of transport and often carry whole families; A colourful sweet stall trading in the Old Quarter, Hanoi

Opening spread: A farmer selling fresh fruit from her bicycle on the streets in Bãi Cháy





ONE CROWDED HOUR

Clockwise from above: Reading the wine list at the White Marble Wine Bar and Restaurant, situated in the heart of Hoi An's Old Town; Enjoying a few Beer Saigons after a hot and humid day sightseeing; The Reunification Palace in Saigon, the location of the South's formal surrender to the North. Replicas of the two communist tanks that stormed the gates in 1975 are on display in the palace grounds; Mae, now aged 84, survived four years of incarceration during the Vietnam War; A market gardener tends to his plots in the Tra Que Vegetable Village



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The real pleasure of travel is having authentic experiences. Nha Trang and Da Nang are both destinations on the list of top places to visit in 2015. To help you discover the destination we will share our local knowledge so you can uncover the myths of Central Vietnam for yourself, and have a truly memorable stay.

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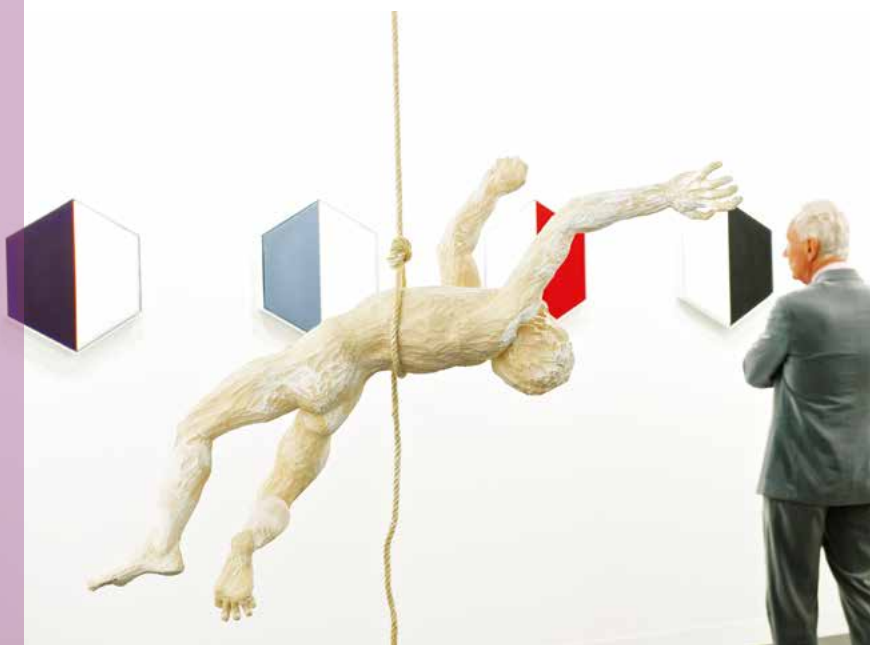


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Art Basel

Art Basel has been described as the 'Olympics of the Art World' with three shows throughout the year – Hong Kong (March 2015), Basel (June 2015) and Miami (December 2015). In Basel approximately 300 leading galleries from North America, Latin America, Europe, Asia, and Africa will show the work of more than 4,000 artists, ranging from the great masters of Modern art to the latest generation of emerging stars.

Every artistic medium is represented: paintings, sculpture, installations, videos, multiples, prints, photography and performance. Each day offers a full program of events, including symposiums, films and artist talks. Further afield, exhibitions and events are offered by cultural institutions in Basel and the surrounding area, creating an exciting, region-wide art week. Art Basel is on from 18-21 June, 2015. artbasel.com

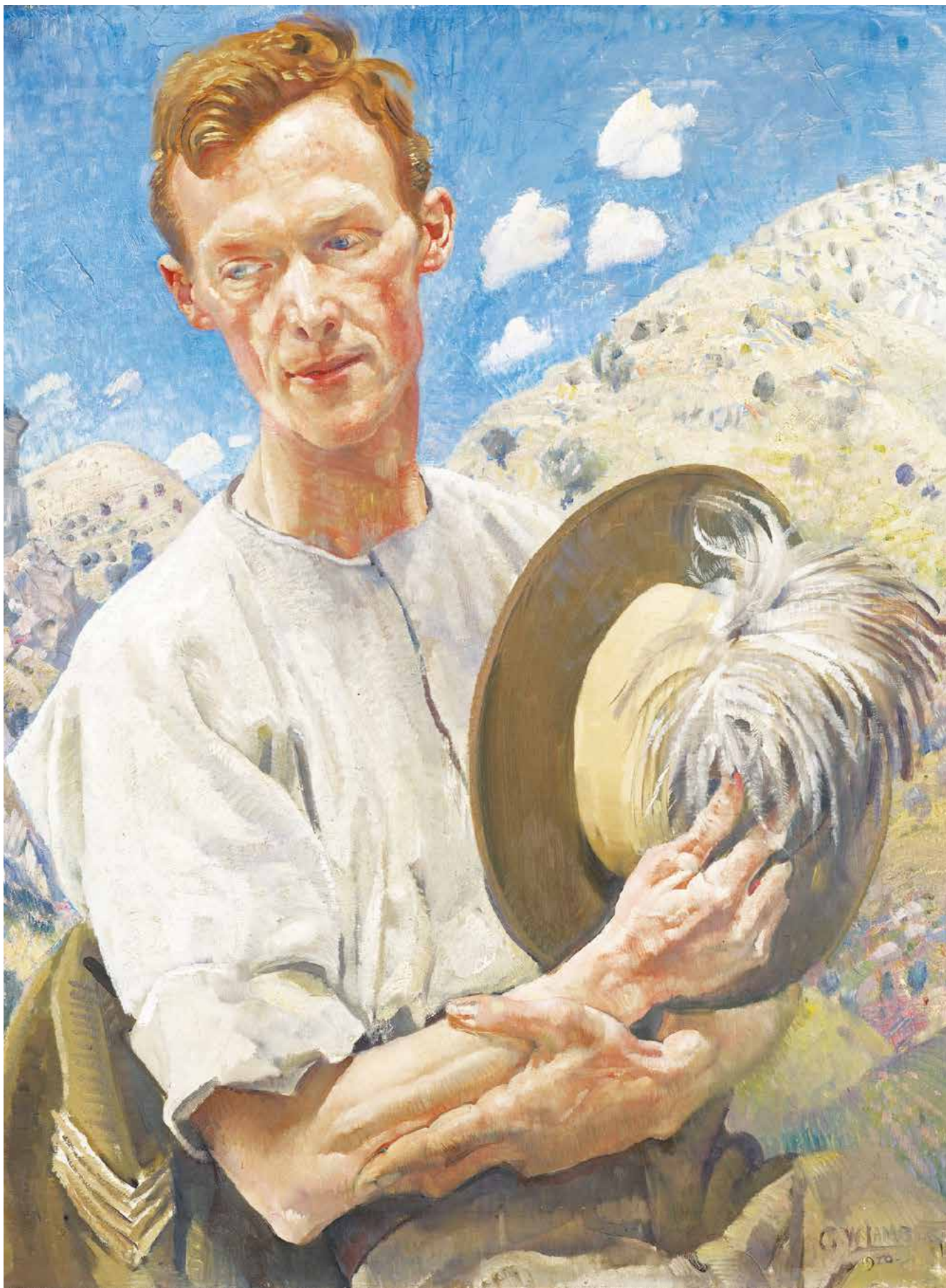
Above: Art Basel in Basel 2014. Galerie Eigen and Art. Berlin, Leipzig. MCH Messe Schweiz

Follow the Flag: Australian Artists at War 1914–45

To mark the centenary of the landing at Gallipoli, the National Gallery of Victoria is presenting *Follow the Flag: Australian Artists at War 1914-45*, a major exhibition showing the work of Australian artists who drew on their experiences of war between 1914 and 1945. The exhibition comprises a diverse range of works; including paintings, works on paper, photographs, sculpture, and vernacular art. Through the work of some of Australia's most well-known artists, such as Arthur Streeton, Russell Drysdale, Albert Tucker, Joy Hester, Frank Hurley and Max Dupain as well as soldier artists and unknown makers, it reveals the experiences of Australians actively engaged in the armed forces and those at home. Importantly it reflects the diversity of attitudes and experiences of this turbulent time in Australia and around the world. The exhibition is on from 24 April – 16 August, 2015. ngv.vic.gov.au

Below: Albert Tucker. *Australian 1914–1999*, worked throughout Europe and United States 1947–60 "Victory Girls 1943" oil on cardboard 64.6 x 58.7 cm. National Gallery of Australia, Canberra. Purchased, 1971 (NGA 71.42).
© Courtesy of Barbara Tucker

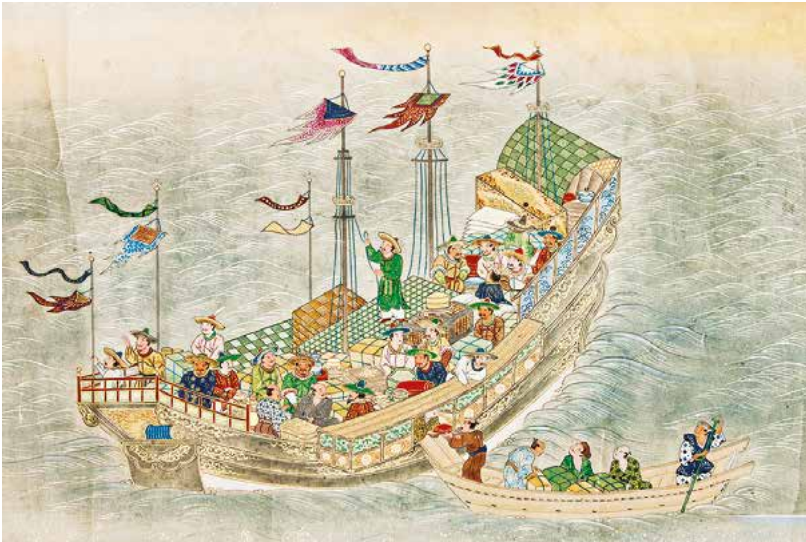




Above: George W. Lambert. English/Australian 1873–1930, emigrated to Germany 1875, worked throughout Europe and the Middle East 1900–21 “A sergeant of the Light Horse 1920” oil on canvas 77.0 x 62.0 cm. National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, Felton Bequest, 1921 (1182-3)

Treasure Ships: Art in the Age of Spices

The Art Gallery of South Australia presents *Treasure Ships*, which features the spectacular and exotic art produced for global markets in the age of spices. The exhibition, which displays art dating from the 15th to early 19th centuries, commences with the sea journey of discovery by Vasco Da Gama to India in search of spices and the establishment of the world's first multinational company, the Dutch East Indies Company. *Treasure Ships* presents the story of the slave trade, piracy and shipwrecks, as well as illustrating the astonishing beauty of Chinese porcelain, known as 'white gold', and vibrant Indian textiles created for export around the world. The exhibition will feature around 250 works of art borrowed from collections in Australia, Europe, Asia and the United States, including paintings, sculptures, textiles, ceramics, furniture, decorative arts, maps, early manuscripts and shipwreck artefacts retrieved from the *Batavia* and the *Gilt Dragon*, which sank off the Western Australian coast in the 17th century. *Treasure Ships* is on from 13 June – 30 August 2015. artgallery.sa.gov.au

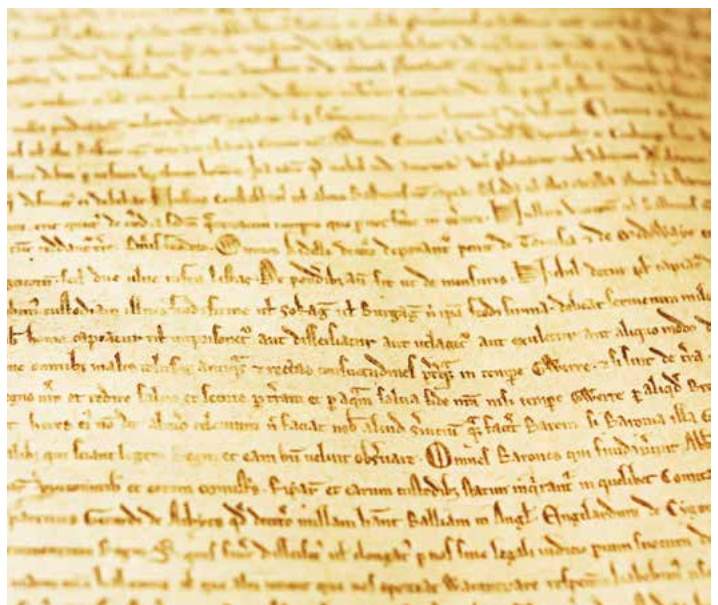


Above: *Japan Scenes of traders in Nagasaki, Mid 18th century, Nagasaki pair of hand scrolls, opaque watercolour, ink and gold on paper; box, wood, paper and ink 313.0 x 35.0 cm each M.J.M. Carter AO Collection through the Art Gallery of South Australia Foundation 2014 Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide*

Magna Carta: Law, Liberty, Legacy

2015 marks the 800th anniversary of the sealing of the Magna Carta by King John and his barons, and while it has had a few revisions over the centuries, it outlines the ideas of freedom, democracy and rule of law.

Until 1 September 2015, the British Library is hosting the *Magna Carta: Law, Liberty, Legacy* exhibition, which will explore the history and legacy of this globally-recognised document. Special self-guided Magna Carta trails (each two to three days in length) have been created to highlight significant destinations that weave the stories of this important period of medieval history, including Lincoln Castle, which has one of the four original Magna Carta – now housed in a new vault and Salisbury Cathedral, which has the finest of the four surviving Magna Carta documents. As part of the British Library's exhibition, the Declaration of Independence and the Bill of Rights will be on display – the first time they have ever left the USA. The exhibition is on until 1 September 2015. magnacarta800th.com



Above: *British Library Magna Carta. Photography credit Joseph Turp*



China: Through the Looking Glass

The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York is presenting *China: Through the Looking Glass* in the Anna Wintour Costume Center and the Museum's Chinese Galleries. The exhibition will explore how China has fuelled the fashionable imagination for centuries, resulting in highly creative distortions of cultural realities and mythologies. High fashion will be juxtaposed with Chinese costumes, paintings, porcelains, and other art, as well as films, to reveal enchanting reflections of Chinese imagery.

From the earliest period of European contact with China in the 16th century, the West has been enchanted with enigmatic objects and imagery from the East, providing inspiration for fashion designers from Paul Poiret to Yves Saint Laurent, whose fashions are infused at every turn with romance, nostalgia and make-believe. The exhibition will feature more than one hundred examples of haute couture and avant-garde ready-to-wear alongside Chinese art, as well a series of mirrored reflections illustrated with scenes from movies filmed by famous Chinese directors, and fashion from the 1700s to now. *China: Through the Looking Glass* is on from 7 May – 16 August, 2015. metmuseum.org

Above: Tom Ford (American, born 1961) for Yves Saint Laurent, Paris (French, founded 1961), fall/winter 2004–5. Courtesy of The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Photograph by Marcio Madeira, ©firstVIEW

in brief

Venice Biennale is on from 9 May to 22 November, with many major events including the 56th Annual Art Exhibition. Fiona Hall will be the official Australian artist at the Biennale, with over 200,000 people visiting the Australian Pavilion at the last Biennale to see Simryn Gill's work. labiennale.org/en

Dolce Vita? Italian Decorative Art 1900–1940, from the Liberty to Industrial Design is on at the Musée d'Orsay in Paris, from 14 April to 13 September.

In Italy in the early 20th century the decorative arts were used to interpret the desire for progress of a nation that had only just found its unity. Cabinetmakers, ceramicists and glass-makers all worked together with the leading artists, creating a veritable "Italian style". musee-orsay.fr/en

Marlene Dumas: The Image as Burden is on at the Tate Modern until 10 May, 2015. Dumas is one of the most prominent painters working today. Her intense, psychologically charged works explore themes of sexuality, love, death and shame, often referencing art history, popular culture and current affairs. tate.org.uk

ROOM to move in BALI

BY SARAH DOUGHERTY

With almost one million Australians visiting Bali last year, it remains one of our favourite destinations and with a slew of new resorts, villas, hotels and condos, visitors are now spoiled for choice.

What's your idea of a perfect holiday? A resort or a villa, a condo or hotel? A wild untamed landscape or an urban jungle with everything at your fingertips? Bali really does have it all.

While the number of visitors continues to grow so too do the amount of properties catering for them. Is it overpopulated, overdone, too much? Perhaps, but it has somehow managed, despite all the warnings, to seduce, beguile and reinvent itself while tenaciously holding on to its unique culture and traditions.

While chain hotels dominate the budget market, with names like Accor, Harris and Fave showing up in all corners of the island, the luxury market also is putting out the red carpet for guests seeking a more luxurious stay.

There are literally times when you have to

pinch yourself in Bali, especially if you find yourself in a stylish private villa, whether it is in a resort or self contained. Being surrounded by luxury, your every need anticipated, is a heady experience to say the least.

With some of the world's biggest names building increasingly luxurious properties, it is clear that on both ends of the scale, visitors are offered more choice than ever and can afford to shop around for the perfect fit for their dream holiday.

In the last couple of years we have seen both mega resorts and boutique properties opening. Names like InterContinental, Sofitel, W, St Regis, Sheraton and Westin have joined the likes of Alila and designers like Phillippe Stark. Penthouses have replaced palm trees as the benchmark and somehow, life for the Balinese goes on, largely unchanged.





NUSA DUA, ULUWATU AND JIMBARAN

While **Ayana Resort** added **Rimba** last year, a slightly more affordable resort next door, they have also upped the ante on their private villas for the luxury market. Formerly Ritz Carlton, Ayana and Rimba have claimed a beautiful promontory on Bali's south coast and its Rock Bar has become one of the most photographed landmarks on the island. Rimba's rooftop bar is a more casual and larger offering with great views, a pool for cooling off and sipping cocktails while watching the legendary sunsets.

Sofitel has opened on the shores of Tanjung Benoa, beside Nusa Dua, and added renowned beach club operators, Nikki Beach to the mix, together with a Philippines-based anti-aging facility, Vietura, adding value and variety. The French brand has brought its own version of chic to a large resort property complete with pool, bars, spas and restaurants.

The Ritz Carlton, Bali is the newest kid on this block. Offering a beachfront location, as do all the five stars in Nusa Dua, it scales a dramatic cliff face and offers both suites and pool villas.

Mulia is actually three properties in one, and it is big. With a hotel, a resort and villas, the resort is built on a monumental scale with a series of pools, restaurants, bars and recreation centres. It has become a drawcard for Asian and Russian tourists.

In soft opening stage, **Inaya Putri Bali** has transformed an aging resort into the signature property for the Indonesian-

owned group. The five-star property on a sprawling nine hectares will offer both suites and villas with seven towers of guest rooms - each built around its own pool, two wedding chapels, a shopping arcade and a host of food and beverage facilities.

Beyond Nusa Dua, climbing the cliffs towards Uluwatu, a number of new properties have opened including the luxurious **Pandawa Villas** with sprawling lawns that overlook an endless horizon. **Karma Kandara** is a hot favourite in this area with their Med-style Karma Beach Club. A new section opened recently offering more of their luxurious, self-contained villas with private pools. The spa here is a highlight and it is a hot destination for fairytale weddings as well.

Anantara opened its Uluwatu property last year and it is a stunning piece of design with spacious suites terraced down the cliff, panoramic views and some excellent restaurants and sunset bars.

BEDDING DOWN POOLSIDE

Clockwise from top: The Layar; Ritz Carlton; Mulia

Opening spread: Spacious villas, clifftop spa and a great beach club at Karma Kandara



HORIZONTAL HAPPINESS

Above: Alila Seminyak



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SEMINYAK

W Retreat and Spa Bali may be almost five years old but it still attracts the jetsetters to its penthouses, villas and suites thanks to its 'Wow' factor.

Where the once famous nightclub, **Double Six**, was located, a modern resort has now opened with restaurants, bars and chic interiors. Overlooking the beach, with a pool that runs the length of the property, the resort is part of a new wave of modern luxury. Decked out in white and shaped like a wave, Double Six is redefining the Seminyak beachfront.

Luna 2 has a reputation as the most expensive villa in Bali, although it is difficult to say that now. Behind the beachfront villa, the funky, modern interiors have earned it the moniker of 'cosmic spaces for shoot-the-mooners' and it is definitely out of the box. The **Lunaz studiotel** behind is fitted out with vibrant colour against white walls and packs some serious style but from US\$500 it can hardly be considered a budget choice.

PLAYING POOL

Clockwise from below: Waka Gangga; W; Anantara; Huu Hu



Hu'u Villas on the other hand, behind the trendy bar and restaurant on Jl Petitinget in Seminyak doesn't boast beachfront but still packs in some serious style. Ten modern, spacious villas with private pools come with kitchens, living areas, guest bathrooms and luxurious en-suites. Urban Bali at its best, the villas offer one and two bedrooms and a staggering penthouse with a library, designer kitchen, spacious deck and large pool. Starting at \$300 upwards, it's a great address. Doors open on the terrace to create adjoining villas as well, perfect for a crowd.

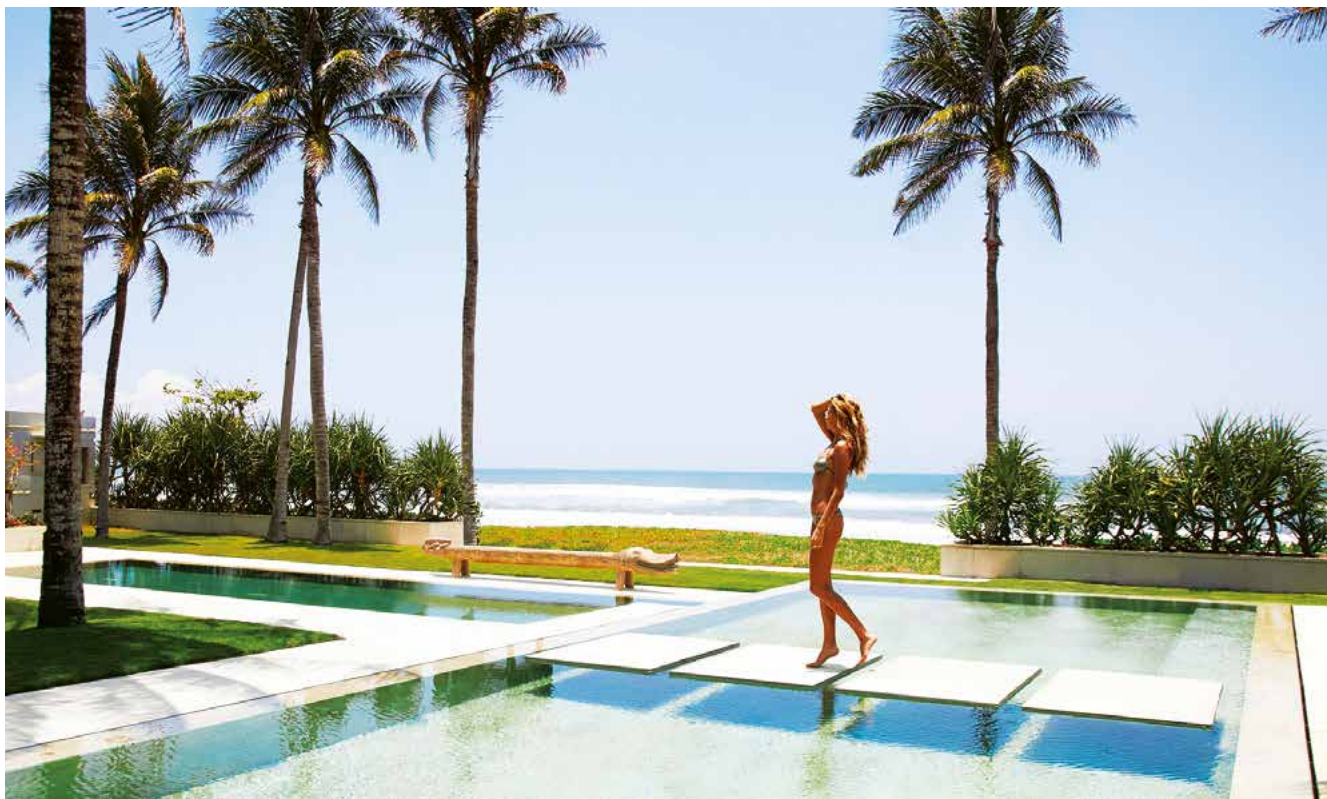
Beside Hu'u, a new **Alila Seminyak** will open its doors this year and Alila, a home-grown brand that is on the fast track, have thought of everyone, offering more affordable hotel-style rooms to glamorous villas and yes, penthouses.

The **Potato Head** family has branched out from restaurants and beach clubs into the hotel market and this one (opening in July) promises to be hot. Also on Jl Petitinget, the style stakes are being hotly contested on this strip. It isn't the Bali of old, rather a totally new and fresh concept that is totally on trend.

DOWN SOUTH

Designer villas dot the landscape along the Southern Peninsula. **The Layar** manages to combine modern architecture with Balinese materials to create beautiful, open spaces that blend into landscaped gardens and turquoise swimming pools. The seemingly effortless combination distinguishes many of the villa complexes that are now a popular alternative for travellers who want the best of both worlds; privacy along with resort services.





UNDER THE PALMS

Above: Villa Vedas



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RICH PICKINGS

From top: Rice terraces; Sofitel Nusa Dua

Another stand out in this area is **Villa Iman Jasa**, a modern, designer villa that looks as though it has dropped out of the pages of an interiors magazine. Both villas offer spectacular, though very different views, and a full staff to make you feel like a VIP.

UBUD AND BEYOND

Ubud hasn't escaped the sprawl either and a large new **Padma Resort** is still in the construction phase but is already shaping up as a mega resort.

In Sanur, a new **Maya Resort** is now in its soft opening stage. Smaller than its sister property in Ubud, it is a stylish, urban property on the sleepy beach offering contemporary guest rooms, villas and pool suites. It joins the new **Fairmont** in Sanur to offer a taste of luxury at reasonable rates.

In Lovina, Candi Dasa and Amed, both villas and hotels are opening up while Nusa Lembongan, the small island off Bali has seen possibly the biggest growth of all.

Le Pirate, on the smaller island of Ceningan, reached by a small bridge from Lembongan, is a little resort that offers great value for money. With a bidding system in place, the sooner you purchase a little private beach hut, the cheaper it will be. **Dream Beach Nusa Lembongan Huts** is also attracting attention while some of the villas on the hill, including **Villa Voyage**, owned by fashion designer Farah Khan, is a very personal and luxurious place to hang your bathers.

Urban, jungle, beachfront or mountains, Bali's landscape offers something for every kind of traveller, the reason why so many fall in love with Bali and keep coming back. •

Photography courtesy various establishments

CANGGU

Bali has always offered something for both ends of the market, in terms of budget and taste. Canggu and the surrounding areas are becoming a destination now as land prices head skywards. **Hacienda** opened last year in the rice fields and the Spanish feel blends perfectly with the verdant landscape. Five villas are laid out like homes with spacious kitchens, private pools and guest rooms with a personal touch. It is close to the surfing beaches and the new hipster cafes that have opened in the area.

Further afield **Waka Gangga** also opened last year following a total renovation. On the wild black sands of Yeh Gangga, Waka has put the perfect blend of rustic and modern together with signature style. **Waka Residences** will open next year.

Out here the villas get bigger and among them **Villa Vedas** has built a staggeringly beautiful five-bedroom villa overlooking the beach at Pereranan. Large enough to host weddings and events, you may never want to leave.

travel facts

GETTING THERE

Garuda Airlines flies from all major cities in Australia. Jetstar and Virgin Australia also operate regular flights.

- Garuda: garuda-indonesia.com
- Jetstar: jetstar.com
- Virgin Australia: virginaustralia.com

WHERE TO STAY

- Alila Seminyak Bali: alilaseminyak.com
- Anantara Bali Uluwatu Resort: bali-uluwatu.anantara.com
- Ayana Resort & Spa: ayanaresort.com
- Double Six Hotel: double-six.com
- Dream Beach Huts: dreambeachlembongan.com
- Hacienda: haciendabali.com
- Hu'u Villas: huuvillasbali.com
- Inaya Putri Bali: inayahotels.com
- Le Pirate Beach Club: lepirate-beachclub.com
- Luna2 and Luna2 studiotel: luna2.com
- Karma Kandara: karmakandara.com
- Maya Sanur Resort & Spa: mayasanur.com
- Mulia Resort Bali: themulia.com
- Padma Resort Bali at Ubud: padmahotels.com
- Pandawas Villas: pandawas-villas.com
- Potato Head: ptthead.com

- Rimba Jimbaran Bali: rimbajimbaran.com
- The Ritz Carlton, Bali: ritzcarlton.com
- Sofitel Bali Nusa Dua: sofitel.com
- Surf Goddess Retreats: surfgoddessretreats.com
- Villa Iman Jasa: villaimanjasa.com
- Villa Vedas: villavedas.com
- Villa Voyage: villavoyagebali.com
- W Retreat & Spa Bali: wretreatbali.com
- Waka Gangga: wakahotelsandresorts.com

GETTING AROUND

Getting around in Bali is by car, there is no public transport. Renting a car for self-drive is fine if you have the appropriate license and insurance. Otherwise drivers are available at rates starting from A\$60 per day. Taxis are cheap and are mostly happy to wait and bring you home again.

WHEN TO GO

Bali has two seasons, wet and dry. The best time to visit is from May to October (inclusive), outside of those months the weather is hot and humid.

FURTHER INFORMATION

Bali Tourism Board: balitourismboard.org

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Ametis Villa Bali

Ametis Villa Bali is the perfect place to stay in Canggu, a sleepy little village on the coast that is a refreshing change from the Kuta buzz. While a prestigious country club and several trendy dining venues have introduced a touch of luxury to the area, it still retains a timeless ambience steeped in Balinese tradition.

Ametis Villa Bali is a contemporary resort with 14 private villas in a beautifully landscaped compound. From customised furnishings to personalized amenities, including a personal butler, no detail has been overlooked and nothing is too much trouble. In the privacy of your villa, you can choose to enjoy a private cooking lesson or perhaps have a poolside candelight dinner – or both.

Ametis Villa also has the divine Ruby Spa, which has several treatment rooms delivering all kinds of pampering.

Whether you want to visit Canggu for its world-famous surfing breaks or its tranquil ambience, Ametis Villa Bali will add to the enjoyment of your Bali vacation. ametisvilla.com



Andari Bali Villas

Andari Bali Villas is a small boutique complex of six luxurious two- or three-bedroom villas tucked away down a quiet lane yet only 200 metres from the popular Blue Ocean Beach area of Legian/Seminyak. This area has become a cosmopolitan hub of private rental villas, stylish boutiques and shopping, and boasts some of the best restaurants in Bali.

Each villa has been individually designed with a theme of tropical, contemporary luxury. Behind carved Balinese doors is an oasis of calm, lush gardens, private swimming pools and relaxing bales. Each villa is finished to the highest standards, with a mixture of modern and traditional Balinese-style furniture and accessories.

All villas are fully staffed with housekeepers to cater to all your needs and the manager is on site to help with any queries. A pool boy, gardeners and security complete the Andari Bali Villas team, with the friendly driver available for tours and shopping. andaribalivillas.com



Bisma Eight

Bisma Eight is a boutique hotel set within the natural and cultural heart of Ubud. There are 38 spacious suites that all invoke a sense of place and a feeling of home, with touches like handcrafted Japanese-inspired soaking tubs, a large living area, and nods to Balinese art and architecture.

The 18 Forest Suites have sweeping panoramas of Ubud's verdant jungle, with the 10 Garden Suites featuring a private outdoor garden and vibrant greenscaping and the 10 Canopy Suites, located on the second floor of the main building, have private balconies and easy access to the property's dining options. Copper Kitchen & Bar is a contemporary kitchen serving food for the soul, or choose to dine in the Pool Pavilion, with food from the south seas. In between, enjoy coffee and a good book at the Library Café. All utilise ingredients from the herb garden on the roof of the property and the Bisma Gardens, an organic farm in the heart of Ubud. bisma-eight.com



Centra Taum Seminyak

A blend of modern and traditional Balinese influences, modern design, spacious rooms and a laid back, relaxing atmosphere welcome you at Centra Taum Seminyak Bali. The property is conveniently located in the heart of Seminyak with the beach at Petitenget, Kerobokan just a short walk away. Food and wine lovers are spoilt for choice with the numerous restaurants and bars around the hotel.

However, you don't have to leave the hotel to have a great time. Intimate in size and with an extensive swimming pool area, a sundeck and a spa and wellness area, you can be sure to find everything you need for some relaxation.

Travelling with kids is made easy by Centra Taum Seminyak with family-friendly accommodation offered through the option of a duplex as well as family residences.

The excellent service of Centra Taum is not a secret with the hotel having been awarded "Best Service Excellence" by the Indonesian Ministry of Tourism last year. centarahotelsresorts.com



Ocean Beach Hotel

Opened since November 2008, the apartment-style hotel comprises five levels of 115 spacious suites. All in contemporary style with natural stone, clean finish, in the shades of broken white and ocean blue, Inspired by the tropical Bali beaches, all the suites have a contemporary style featuring natural stone and clean finishes in shades of broken white and ocean blue. Suites from two bedrooms and up are replete with a kitchenette. Suites open to cool island breezes and the penthouses with an ocean view boast generous balconies with daybeds and private tubs, from which to enjoy views across the ocean. The hotel has two restaurants both with indoor and outdoor dining terraces. The Deck Cafe dishes up Mediterranean and Asian cuisine, while The Deck Seafood Grill opens for dinner serving its fresh seafood, delivered daily from the trawlers in Bena Harbor. The seaside location entices you to take in the view before the night's activities begin with its daily Sunset Cocktail Happy Hour. furamaxclusive.com



The Viceroy Bali

The Viceroy Bali is a boutique resort, owned and managed by an Australian family, featuring 25 luxurious one- and two-bedroom pool villas. It is a sanctuary in paradise offering absolute privacy and unparalleled tropical valley views, while only being located five minutes from the centre of Ubud.

The stunning villas are complemented by five-star facilities which include private heliport, gymnasium, yoga instructor and the Lembah Spa that focuses on traditional and renowned international treatments. CasCades fine dining restaurant is the centrepiece of the resort, serving European cuisine with an Asian twist and has an extensive wine list unrivalled by any other restaurant on the island.

Recently, Viceroy Bali was awarded 'Best Boutique Honeymoon Hotel in the World' by Boutique Hotel Awards in London. viceroybali.com

bite-size BALI

BY SARAH DOUGHERTY

Eating well in Bali is par for the course, with a plethora of cutting-edge eateries ensuring visitors won't go hungry.

What was once a simple island where a cheese jaffle and a banana pancake appeared on most menus, Bali today is considered a food mecca with a host of international chefs, award-winning restaurants and food to rival the most sophisticated dining destinations.

Two things that define the latest trend in Bali at present are Indonesian food reinvented, and celebrity chefs. With the likes of Luke Mangan, Robert Marchetti, Vincent Rae of Wategos, Stephen Skelly, formerly of The Pier in Rose Bay, and Maurice Terzini joining the likes of Jamie Oliver and homespun heroes like Chris Salans of Mozaic and Will Meyrick of Sarong, we are spoiled for choice.

Last year it seemed like Mexican was the new wave. This year perhaps it's crabs, or burgers, but certainly sophisticated Asian dining is hitting the high road for gourmets and gourmands.

One thing is a certainty; you will eat well in Bali, no matter if you reach for the culinary heights or want to sample something simpler.

HOME GROWN

Warungs are still the mainstay of Indonesian food and this can range from a simple roadside food cart to the staggering interiors of Merah Putih, opened last year in Jl Petitenget in Seminyak, arguably Bali's most fashionable food street. Offering two menus, a traditional and a baru or 'modern' selection, Merah Putih's culinary team combine both western and Indonesian chefs and, despite getting mixed reviews, there is no arguing it is a spectacular dining destination.

The team at Bali's much-loved La Lucciola launched their Indonesian eatery last year as well. Bambu is also located on Jl Petitenget and is home to some beautifully presented authentic Indonesian dishes that offer tastes



TABLES WAITING

Clockwise from below: Art on a plate at Kayuputi St Regis; Mama San; Mozaic Ubud

Opening page: Lovacore in Ubud



from the archipelago in a chic restaurant setting that combines modern and traditional design elements.

Mod-Asian menus have put Will Meyrick's Sarong and Mama San at the top of the popularity stakes, and a new venture in Ubud, Hujan Locale is attracting a host of new adventurers, with a modern twist on classic Indonesian food. In a bright and spacious modern dining room, timeless Indonesian recipes get a taste of Will's east-meets-west formula, winning rave reviews. Rumour has it he will open another Asian eatery this year in Seminyak as will Luke Mangan and Maurice Terzini, together with Motel Mexicola's Adrian Reed - stay tuned.

Chef Chris Salans at Mozaic Ubud, laid the blueprint for sophisticated east-meets-west dining incorporating Indonesian ingredients to create a twist on classic French recipes. Bali's most awarded restaurant, the degustation-only restaurant has maintained its reputation as one of Bali's best despite the overwhelming number of new openings.

Naughty Nuri's is another mainstay of Bali's dining scene. From its very simple warung-style eatery in Ubud, famous for Balinese-style ribs and potent martinis, the Batubelig version remains true to its roots but offers a more upmarket design and attracts queues of people lining up for their hot, sticky ribs.

Another stand out this year comes from New York pastry chef, formerly with Kudeta, Will Goldfarb, who has opened the dessert-themed Room4Dessert, conveniently located right next door to Naughty Nuri's in Ubud.

FINE DINING

Bali is without doubt home to some very sophisticated dining. Kayuputi at Nusa Dua's St Regis resort is as close to flawless as you'll find anywhere. Offering a classic French-style menu with a Japanese sensibility, diners can choose from a chef's pick degustation menu or à la carte. With a wine list to match and a large open kitchen, this is dining with real drama.

Chris Salans, at the previously mentioned Mozaic in Ubud also puts an individual spin on classic dishes, attracting diners from around the globe vying for a seat at the intimate garden restaurant where everything old is new again.

Locavore is the new hotspot in Ubud and quickly ranked number one on Trip Advisor for its locally-sourced menus that sparkle with vibrant colour and fresh flavours. A Dutch chef and an Indonesian chef, formerly with Alila Hotels, hit all the high notes in this simple dining room offering both à la carte and degustation menus, including some of the most spectacular vegetarian dishes you'll find anywhere. Everything is sourced locally apart from the butter and the olive oil. It is probably the Bali foodies' choice of the moment and good luck getting a reservation.

Stephen Skelly arrived from The Pier in Rose Bay, Sydney, with a healthy reputation and a simple approach to finding the freshest seafood and cooking it to perfection. In the heart of Seminyak, at the very end of Oberoi Road, you'll find Urchin, with its sophisticated menu of seafood, both cooked and raw, and some artfully prepared meat dishes as well.

Kudeta is another restaurant that has maintained its position as the place to see and be seen. Last year their latest offering, Mejekawi, opened upstairs offering a fresh approach to degustation dining with a big open kitchen turning out beautifully presented dishes with a nod to Indonesia.



5 Bedroom Grand Residence, Karma Kandara Resort, Bali, Indonesia



4 Bedroom Valley View Pool Villa, Karma Jimbaran Resort, Bali, Indonesia



1 Bedroom Lumbung Villa, Karma Reef Resort, Lombok, Indonesia

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SWEET TREATS

Above and right: Sweets forever at Mulia's Soleil; Teatro

Plantation Bar and Grill is the new kid on the block, opened by Robert Marchetti, formerly of Icebergs and Bondi Italian. At the sparkling new Double Six Resort, overlooking the beach, Plantation Bar and Grill has brought a classic steak house concept to Bali. With Gatsby-style interiors, soaring ceilings and a classic cocktail bar and (yes, another) open kitchen, Plantation Bar and Grill is all about the steak; dry-aged Angus imported from Australia and cooked over the coals. The mezzanine Sling Bar is a haven for the cocktail set while a discreet staircase takes you up to the rooftop where sunsets sing and the views are panoramic.

Two classics are worthy of a mention here. Metis continues to serenade us in French while the Oberoi Hotel's classic dining room, Kura Kura, offers one of the best, and possibly the least known, degustation dinners on the island with dishes that owe as much to the lab as the kitchen, the haute cuisine on offer here is worthy of superlatives. Reservations required.

Teatro is well deserving of a mention here. Located on Oberoi Road, it is the baby born of Indonesian chefs who did their time in high-end kitchens in Dubai. Another to add to the list of degustation dinners, it is an intimate restaurant serving just 24 covers a night, offering artful plating, divine dishes and a kitchen full of talented chefs.

EASY DOES IT

Very few of us want to dress up and head out for spectacular dining every night, so it is the casual dining that consumes most of our attention.

From the daytime menus at Kudeta and Potato Head to the rash of Mexican eateries that are worthy of our attention, including Motel Mexicola, a scene if ever there was one, Laca and the local boys who opened Taco Local, Bali



knows how to take it easy. Brand new on our scene is Holy Crab, opened by a young Jakartan armed with a food science degree from Los Angeles and The Butcher's Club, fresh from Hong Kong and turning up the volume on our burgers.

Hanks Pizza, in Oberoi Road, is another spin off from a team of Australian and New Zealand chefs, moonlighting from their day jobs. Its fun vibe, cheap prices, great drinks and gourmet toppings, ensures you're bound to find a crowd.

Barbacoa is another entry that rates a mention. With a South American feel teamed with some Balinese design ideas, the hero here is the wood-fired lamb and suckling pigs that spend most of the day rotating on an open fire. A large dining room, a great bar, comfortable booths and some classic cocktails, have proved a popular mix from former Sydney caterer, Adam Dundas-Taylor.

Mozaic also introduced a taste of the beach with Mozaic Beach Club, which continues the theme of classic French, with Asian ingredients, upstairs, and a popular beach club downstairs.

Another young couple decided to put their spin on sushi, which included bringing a chef from Justin Hemmes', Sushi e, in Sydney. A sushi train was what we needed in Bali and Sushimi gave us what we wanted. Fresh, delicious and affordable, there's often a queue outside this modern eatery in Jl Dhyanna Pura.

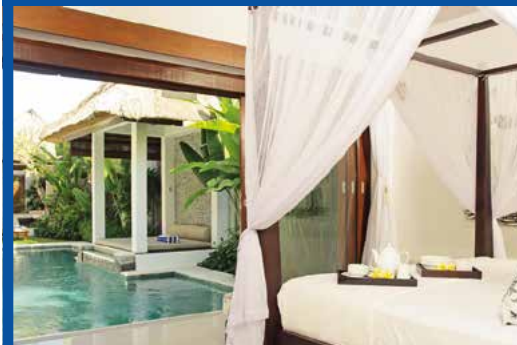
Its seafood restaurants have long defined Jimbaran dining and though the shine has faded under the thick cloud of smoke and endless parade of tourist buses, there are some

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leave as a friend

great alternatives here. Sundara, the seaside restaurant, cocktail bar and beach club at the Four Seasons Jimbaran, has hit on a winning formula; wood-fired ovens which turn out perfect steaks and brilliant seafood. House-made charcuterie is a stand out, and the view? Gorgeous. A long pool beside the beach means we can hang all day and enjoy the cocktails created by famous Barcelona shaker, Javier de las Muelas.

Cuca is also located in Jimbaran, bringing fresh flavours, organic produce and some fabulous dishes.

MUNCH ON BRUNCH

The brunch wars have literally taken us by storm and here is one meal you can devote a day to.

W has cornered the market in Seminyak with two brilliant all-inclusive Sunday brunches at the breezy Starfish Bloo and the more intimate Fire. Purchase the alcohol package as well and throw your bikini in your bag, this is definitely an all day affair to remember.

St Regis has been wowing us with stylish dining since their opening and now they offer two brunches; Bonneka, their all day dining room, hosts the brunch that staggered us at first, with the quality of offerings and the finest things in life. Then they took it up a notch with a champagne brunch at Kayuputih that will literally blow your mind. This really is as good as it gets.

If you have the family with you or want to enjoy more for less, try the Mulia next door or the Sheraton Kuta Resort overlooking the iconic beach.

Eating out in Bali is a culinary adventure whether it is dressed up or down. From an incredible line up of chefs and restaurateurs, both local and international, famous and not so, within the resorts and beyond, Bali has earned its reputation as a foodie's destination, which ticks all the boxes. •

Photography courtesy various establishments

travel facts

GETTING THERE

Garuda Airlines flies from all major cities in Australia. Jetstar and Virgin also operate regular budget flights.

- Garuda: garuda-indonesia.com
- Jetstar: jetstar.com
- Virgin Australia: virginaustralia.com

WHERE TO EAT

- Barbacoa: barbacoabali.com
- The Butcher's Club: facebook.com/butchersclubbali
- Cuca: cucaflavor.com
- Hank's Pizza: facebook.com/hankspizza
- Holy Crab: theholycrab.co.id
- Hujan Locale: hujanlocale.com
- Kayuputi: kayuputirestaurant.com
- Kura Kura: oberoihotels.com
- Locavore: restaurantlocavore.com
- Mejekawi: kudeta.net
- Merah Putih: merahputihbali.com
- Metis: metisbali.com
- Mozaic: mozaic-bali.com
- Mozaic Beach Club: mozaic-beachclub.com
- Naughty Nuri's: naughtynurisbali.com
- Plantation Bar & Grill: plantationgrillbali.com
- Room4Dessert: room4dessert.asia
- Sundara: sundarabali.com
- Sushimi: facebook.com/sushimibali
- Teatro: teatrobali.com
- Urchin: urchinbali.com

JUNGLE spree

BY RAEHEL TEMILY

Who better to let us in on the shopping secrets of Ubud than a local interior-stylist and travel writer?

Shopping in Bali is often centred on the overcrowded enclave of Seminyak with its surf shops and designer fashion boutiques. More and more chain stores are quietly creeping in, while the true spirit of Bali's artisan culture is becoming more elusive.

The little jungle-clad village of Ubud is actually a veritable treasure chest of special wares and rare, one of a kind finds, if you know what you're looking for and where to go.

Here we help you avoid the well-trodden tourist traps and give you an insider's lowdown on some of Ubud's best insider shopping secrets.

At first glance, the Monkey Forest strip seems like a typical hodge-podge of fairly forgettable yoga clothes and mala beads. But enter the right doorways and you'll soon realise that first impressions aren't always right.

The sprawling Macan Tidur on Jalan Monkey Forest is a mecca of genuine antiques and artifacts from around the region. It's like hitting the textile jackpot; elegantly wasted

and faded batiks hanging on the walls, fat folds of Bengkulu-style gold-threaded brocades and the rarer-than-hen's-teeth double ikat, which is woven only in the village of Tenggaling.

For interioristas that have an eye for style, you can't go wrong with the beautiful fabrics that make their way to this village from remote places around the region – from silk scarves through bolts of block-printed batik cloth and the intricately woven ikat.

These fabric lengths are super versatile around the house; I've used them as bed covers and runners, layered them up for decadent table settings, hung them on bare-wood walls and even made them into oversized cushion covers, which are always a talking piece when people pop over.

Still on Jalan Monkey Forest, Ikatbatik is worth a peek. Piles of indigo dyed fabrics in marine-imbued hues of cobalt blue, deep petrol and pale blue-greys are folded in fat piles. Owned by a super helpful and kind husband and wife team, Pak Kadek and Ibu



Lili, they're more than happy to help you navigate through the choices to find something that works for your budget.

Also sourcing handwoven textiles from far flung corners of the archipelago, Threads of Life on Jalan Kajeng 24 is worth a visit for discerning collectors. Their naturally-dyed cloth isn't cheap, but considering the level of workmanship and provenance of each piece, they'll stand the test of time.

WORKS OF ART

Clockwise from below: Kadek Lili the owner of Ikat Batik shows her indigo textile product; Kites for sale in Ubud; Treasures Gallery

Opening page: A dragon head bracelet from John Hardy



Back on Monkey Forest, A-Krea has a small but perfectly edited selection of buttery leather wallets and passport holders that make thoughtful (and chic!) gifts. Rumour has it that they are a dead ringer for the cult Hermés kind, albeit without the price tag.

Sometimes cheap and cheerful is exactly what you want, and Ubud has that in spades.

The Japanese-esque Kou on Jalan Dewi Swi sells just salt, soap and jam. As simple as it sounds, the elegant pared-back presentation makes you want to snap up one of everything. Just a few stores down, Nava does the kind of beautifully finished hand-carved wooden spoons and serving utensils that make you want to Pinterest them right then and there.

For kids that spend too much time on iPads and not enough time with their eyes towards the sky, a hand-painted Balinese kite is the sort of present that will hit the spot. Kite-makers are everywhere in Ubud, so keep your eyes peeled as you make your way through the streets for the brilliantly coloured butterflies, dragons, eagles and pirate ships.

If you're looking for jewellery, skip the ubiquitous stalls in the market heaving with mass-produced pieces and make a beeline for the serious craftsmen. Even if you don't buy, it's worth seeking them out just to see their craftsmanship and one-of-a-kind pieces.






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“stand-outs are the silver filigree work, strands of creamy Lombok pearls (from the very same farms that Autore source theirs from) and carved earrings from semi-precious stones”

Jean-Francois Fichot is the perfect starting point. The space itself is airy, light and spacious; making browsing a dream. It's all about original jewellery and covetable homewares, but the stand-outs are the silver filigree work, strands of creamy Lombok pearls (from the very same farms that Autore source theirs from) and carved earrings from semi-precious stones.

Treasures Gallery, right on the main street of Jalan Rayan Ubud and opposite Ary's Warung, is another interesting destination for those with an eye for style. A little jewel box of originality, it features work from international designers who produce their work in Bali, such as Carolyn Tyler, Lyn Fenwick and Tricia Kim.

For a totally different vibe, make your way out to the John Hardy compound, just 20 minutes out of town in the neighborhood of Mambal. With a show-stopping bamboo showroom as its centrepiece, this is one retail experience you

don't want to miss. With jewellery displayed on bamboo pedestals, bare feet de rigueur (yes, really, you'll have to take your shoes off) and their team of carvers, shapers and polishers all right there in the workshop crafting every piece by hand, it's an inspiring blend of activity and serenity.

This isn't just your standard shopfront. Every day sees a sit-down lunch for all employees and it's an abundant offering of organic, hand-harvested produce grown right there on the property. A true family affair, everyone eats together. And for those that are keen to join the feast, they take reservations. Just call and give them plenty of notice, because seats at this table are known to book out in a heartbeat.

Heading home from here with something special is easy. My favourite pick is a pair of hand-beaten silver goblets, *Game of Thrones* style. Practical? No. Going to make me smile every time I use them? Absolutely.

If you don't manage to snag a reservation at John Hardy's for lunch, Chef Will Meyrick's new culinary sweet spot Hujan Locale is a good option for a casual bite (yes, his famed Betel Leaf starters are on the menu). Pick up a copy of his cookbook, *Sarong Inspirations*, while you're there for your foodie friends at home. •

Photography by Putu Sayoga



travel facts

FURTHER INFORMATION

- Macan Tidur: Jl. Monkey Forest, macantidur.com
- Ikatbatik: Jl. Monkey Forest, ikatbatik.com
- Threads of Life: Jl. Kajeng 24, threadsoflife.com
- A-Krea: Jl. Moneky Forest, +62-361/972-802
- Kou: Jl. Dewi Sri, +62-361/972-319
- Nava: Jl. Dewi Sri, +62-81-2390-6251
- Jean-Francois Fichot: Jl. Suweta, jf-f.com
- Treasures Gallery: Jl. Raya Ubud, +62-361/975-979
- John Hardy: Jl. Banjar Baung, Desa Sayan, johnhardy.com
- Hujan Locale: Jl. Sri Wedari 5, hujanlocale.com

STYLE WARS

Top right: Street atmosphere in Ubud

Opposite page from top: John Hardy's bamboo showroom; Jean-Francois Fichot

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STRIKE
BOWLING

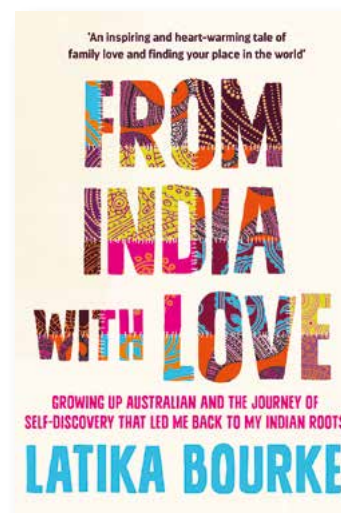
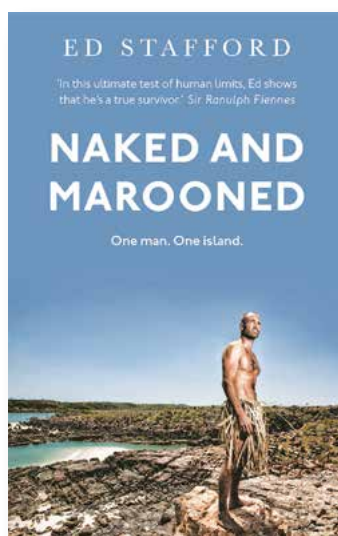
strikebali.com



COMPILED BY MARK CHIPPERFIELD

Naked and Marooned: One Man. One Island. One Epic Survival Story.

British adventurer Ed Stafford makes Bear Grylls look like Winnie the Pooh. Stafford made his name by walking the entire length of the Amazon in 2010. To follow that up, in 2012 the former army officer was dropped onto the uninhabited Pacific Island of Olorua with no food, water or survival equipment. *Naked And Marooned* records the 60 days he spent on the island and how he coped with isolation, illness, starvation, dehydration and fatigue. "I stood on the beach truly alone for the first time," he writes. "I had nothing with me to help me survive. All I had was my camera kit so that I could intimately record my self-inflicted sentence." This is one of the most compelling, manic and exhilarating books you are likely to read in 2015. **Ebury Publishing, RRP: \$19.99.**

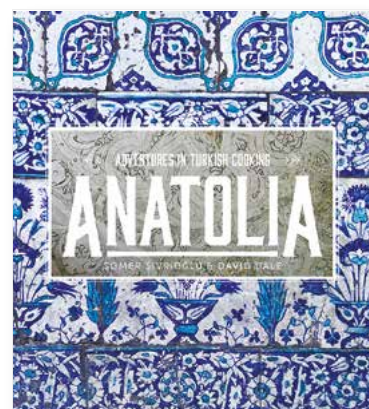


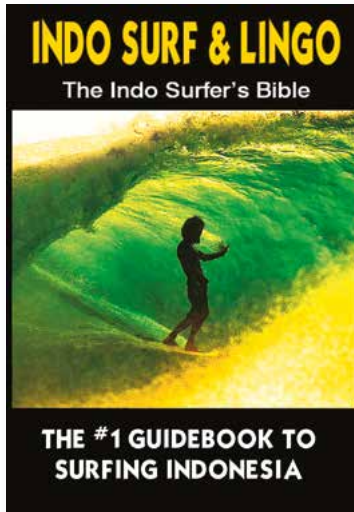
From India With Love

Latika Bourke is the national political reporter for *The Sydney Morning Herald* and *The Age* newspapers. But Latika's own story is as colourful and gripping as any political drama being played out in Canberra. At the age of eight months she was adopted from an Indian orphanage by an Australian couple, John and Penny Bourke, and grew up on the family farm in New South Wales. The Bourkes had seven other children and Latika grew up in a warm and loving environment with little interest in her Indian heritage. That all changed when she heard her name in the movie *Slumdog Millionaire*. This well-crafted book tells the story of her journey back to India and what she discovered there. **Allen & Unwin, RRP: \$24.99**

Anatolia

With the exception of Mexican food, no other great culinary tradition has fared as poorly overseas as that of Turkey. Anatolian cooking may date back 3,000 years, but is today often overshadowed by dishes from south east Asia, north Africa or European upstarts like France, Italy and Spain. In this 360-page book Sydney journalist David Dale and Turkish chef Somer Sivrioglu present Anatolian food in its full glory – from the banqueting dishes of the Ottoman Empire to spicy street snacks. The beautifully-illustrated book contains 140 recipes, with chapters arranged in the form of a typical Turkish eating day. *Anatolia* covers regional cuisine, ingredients and techniques – plus a food and accommodation guide for those visiting Turkey. **Murdoch Books, RRP: \$79.99**



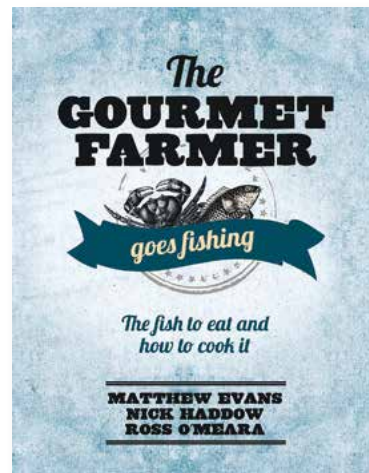
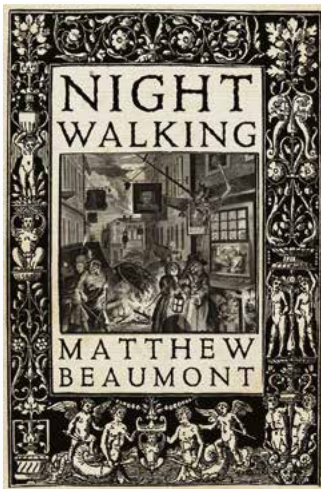


Indo Surf & Lingo: The Indo Surfer's Bible

Billed as “the #1 guidebook to surfing in Indonesia” this paperback is one of Australia’s untold publishing success stories. *Indo Surf & Lingo* has been in print since 1992 and is updated every year. The book contains everything the surfer needs to know about Indonesia, including maps, a description of each surf break, advice on health and safety and an introduction to Bahasa Indonesia. Author Peter Neeley has been surfing in Bali since the 1970s and his affection for the country, its people and the Balinese culture shines through on every page. As Neeley concedes, 35 years of mass tourism has robbed Bali of some of its innocence but there is still much to explore. “The magic is still there,” he writes. **RRP: \$29.95**

Nightwalking

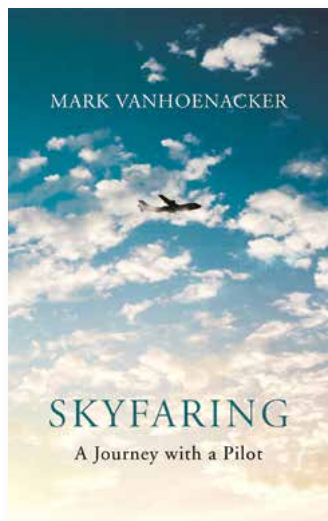
London is a city of writers. Chaucer, Shakespeare, William Blake, Charles Dickens, T.S.Elliot, George Orwell and Sylvia Plath are just some of the many literary figures who have navigated its streets. In this alternative history Matthew Beaumont, a senior lecturer at University College London, approaches the capital in its nocturnal guise, looking at the citizens who surface when the sun goes down and following the shadowy perambulations of its most famous poets, novelists and thinkers. In retelling the nighttime exploits of Thomas De Quincey, Dickens (a celebrated night walker) Blake and others, the author shines a light on some of London’s more neglected or forgotten aspects. “Cities, like cats, will reveal themselves at night,” said Rupert Brooke. **Random House, RRP: \$29.95**



Gourmet Farmer Goes Fishing

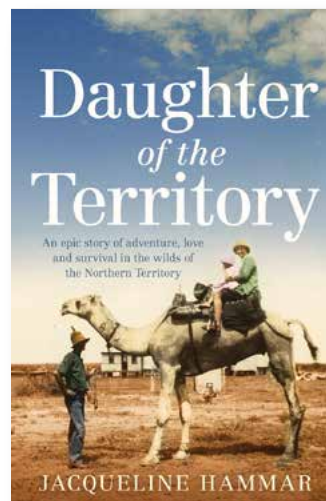
The popular trio who brought you *The Gourmet Farmer Deli Book*, Matthew Evans, Nick Haddow and Ross O'Meara, return with this new publication – a companion piece to the SBS-TV series *Gourmet Farmer Afloat*, a six-part series which follows their sea voyage around Tasmania. The new book contains 80 easy to follow seafood recipes, covering ingredients such as abalone, kelp, sea urchin, prawns, snapper, octopus and whiting. Evans is a former city restaurant critic who now runs a small farm in Tasmania and, in more recent times, has become a campaigner for sustainable seafood. These recipes show the reader how to prepare seafood the way it was supposed to be cooked, with an emphasis on flavour and simplicity.

Murdoch Books, RRP: \$44.99



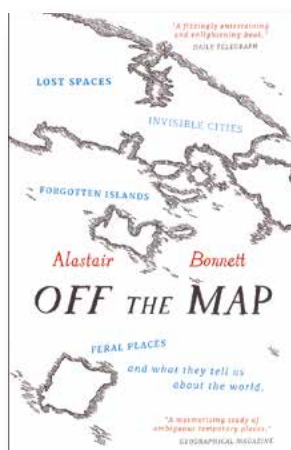
Skyfaring: A Journey With a Pilot

Computer technology and the constant threat of terrorism have helped to create a gulf between today's airline passenger and the flight crew. In this new book airline pilot and aviation romantic Mark Vanhoenacker attempts to bridge that gap, sharing his passion, fascination and sense of wonder for flying. In addition to working as a commercial pilot flying 747s and Airbus', the author has a talent for writing evocative prose. *Skyfaring* is a tour de force, covering every aspect of modern aviation from geography to politics, history, art, literature, meteorology and physics. "This is a man who is at once a technical expert ... and a poet of the skies," writes Alain de Botton. **Chatto & Windus, RRP: \$35**



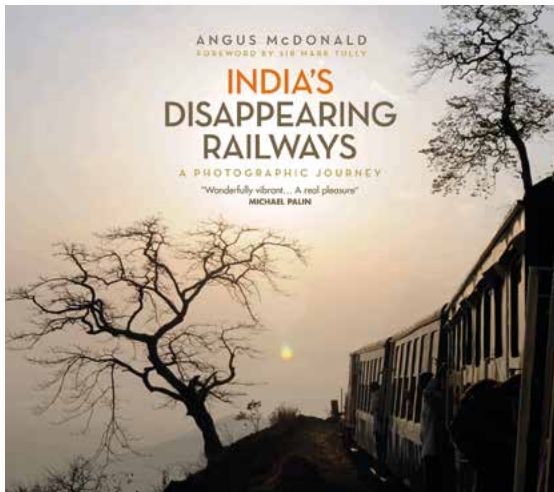
Daughter of the Territory

This book tells the amazing life story of Jacqueline Hammar. Born in Darwin in 1929, Jacqueline's childhood was spent in a succession of bush towns before she was sent to school in Darwin. After finishing her education in Brisbane during the war, Jacqueline met and married stockman Ken Hammar, and they moved to a vast property in one of the most inaccessible areas of Australia. With only a kerosene stove, scant possessions and a bed, Jacqueline lived a harsh and isolated existence. Her support allowed Ken to turn huge tracts of wilderness into a prosperous million-acre cattle station. Jacqueline's life story is remarkable. **Allen and Unwin, RRP: \$32.99**



Off the Map

In a world of Google Earth, in which it is easy to believe that every discovery has been made and every adventure already had, *Off the Map* is a stunning testament to how mysterious our planet still is. Author Alastair Bennett is a Professor of Social Geography at Newcastle University, and charts the hidden corners of our planet in this intriguing book, including forgotten enclaves, floating islands, hidden villages, secret military towns and New York gutter spaces. Whether you are an urban explorer or an armchair traveller, *Off the Map* will inspire and enchant. You'll never look at a map in quite the same way again. **Allen and Unwin, RRP: \$24.99**



India's Disappearing Railways: A Photographic Journey

India is a country in perpetual motion, but where travel (especially by train) is dogged by delays, petty bureaucracy and the crush of humanity. No one ever forgets their first train journey in India and Australian photojournalist Angus McDonald clearly treasured his experiences riding the sub-continent's network of narrow-gauge railways. This handsome, large format book is a homage to India's quaint but crumbling colonial infrastructure. As India modernises, these quirky branch lines in the Himalayas, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu and elsewhere are slowly vanishing. Taken over three years, these photographs are vibrant, comical and often tender. McDonald, an inveterate traveller who grew up in India, died in 2013 at the age of 50 and this project was completed by his English fiancé Catherine Anderson.

Goodman-Feil, RRP: \$59.95



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Explore the hidden paradise of the South Pacific archipelago, comprising of a vast group of 922 breathtaking tropical islands. Experience a culture, rich with traditional customs, art, dance and the panpipe music of 'Are Are'. See the fierceness of the World War II battles on land and underwater. Explore Honiara's cosmopolitan and colourful food market in downtown Honiara. Feel the spirit of adventure, enjoy a special piece of paradise or simply relax and discover a culture with a welcoming smile.

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SO SOLOMONS, SO DIFFERENT!

HUNTING velcro pygmies

BY FLASH PARKER

The best way to plan a first-time visit to Dallas and Fort Worth is to ask the locals.

One of the things that makes me a decent traveller is my willingness to get out and go after experiences all on my own. I've learned to roll with unexpected punches, and take a destination in stride. Fairly ironic is that as a travel writer, I often don't read guide books or prepare extensive itineraries. But now and then, when I'm stuck between preconceived notions and the reality of a place that is at once huge and diverse, I like to reach out for a bit of help, if only to maximize my time on the ground. And few places I've ever been are as big or as bold as Texas.

Before my plane took to the air for my flight to Dallas I took to social media. I was after the essential experience; I wanted to know where

I could find an iconic view of the city, a market awash in local colour, and a watering hole where tall tales flowed from native storytellers like beer from broken taps. By the time I arrived in Texas my Facebook page had blown up with recommendations both mundane and remarkable. It seemed like everyone who had ever lived in, heard of, or passed through Dallas and Fort Worth had an idea for me. One furtive follower suggested I spend some time with the Velcro Pygmies, known to frequent Dallas in the springtime. My request for more information about these mysterious pygmies went unanswered. I had tips, tricks, lists and an itinerary, but the experience was going to be realised in the way I interpreted this information.



ON A LACK OF TUMBLEWEEDS.

Much to my chagrin my first few moments in Dallas were not spent dodging cattle on dusty streets populated by tumbleweeds and maverick cowboys itching for a hitching post. Dallas was not the reel of scenes lifted from *Lonesome Dove* I expected it to be. Instead, the city was sleek, slick, and stylish. My on-the-fly sleuthing had failed to uncover a ramshackle saloon, but I knew I could find one if I looked hard enough. I was intent on kicking in a set of double doors with my brand-new cowboy boots and announcing myself as the new sheriff in town. I hailed a taxicab and asked the driver what he knew about the Wild West and the Velcro Pygmies; he raised an eyebrow as he looked at my reflection in the rearview mirror. "I think you should speak with the Old Monk," he said.

I settled into prime real estate at the Old Monk's bar. It was 4:30pm and the joint was already filled with the city's well-dressed, well-manicured, and well-mannered. I tossed my camera on the bar and hollered for something local. Riley the barman slid a frosty Deep Ellum IPA down the bar and into my hand. He nodded, I nodded. He didn't call me *pardner* or ask if I was from *around these parts*, but I didn't hold that against him. As I took to imbibing Riley scribbled notes on a pad of paper. He suggested I try the Capitol Pub, The Double Wide, and The Gin Mill. I asked for directions, so he drew me a map. I had trouble reading the map, so he offered to show me around.

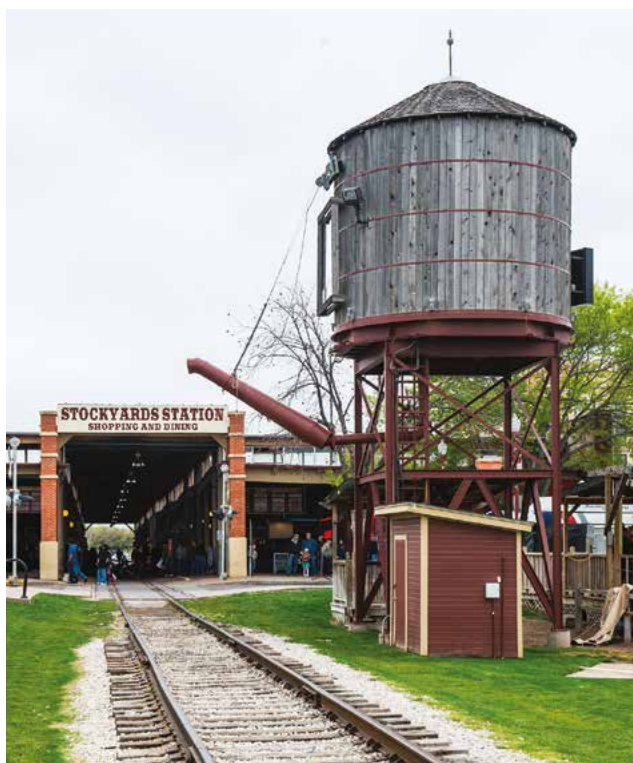
Before we could set out for the Capitol, a patron at the other end of the bar asked if she could offer her two cents worth. She bore a striking resemblance to Kate Capshaw, and her husband claimed he looked like Garth Brooks. Who was I to disagree? By the time I stepped back into the sun my itinerary had quadrupled in size, and I'd had more drinks poured for me than any visiting foreigner since Dirk Nowitzki. The next few hours saw me pulling pints of craft ale from the taps at the Capitol, waxing poetic with literary rebels at Heroes Lounge, and working through the Tex-Mex masterpieces at the Blue Goose Cantina. An evening stroll south along Greenville Avenue led me through a quaint residential neighbourhood and into Good Records, a vinyl playground where I was sure to discover the Velcro Pygmies. Alas, the sonically informed employees had never heard of them, but offered to turn me on to *Smile Smile*, *Calhoun*, and *The Rocket Summer*. I popped on a set of headphones, settled into a bean bag, lost myself in local music, wondering where I was going to end up next.

Next was clear across town, all the way to the Belmont Hotel on the outskirts of Oak Cliff. One tweeter mentioned the panoramic views of the downtown skyline, while another extolled the virtues of SMOKE, the modern smokehouse next door. Everyone else told me to be careful in this part of town. I took a martini to the patio and asked after Oak Cliff's tough reputation, when it seemed more hipster than hard-ass on the surface. "We like it that way," a fellow patio lantern told me. "If it didn't have a bad reputation, there'd be no space out here to watch the sun go down." Trusting that logic, I put myself at the mercy of the smoke pit in chef Tim Byres' kitchen. Even if Oak Cliff's streets were piled high with burning coals, I would walk across them for a taste of whole hog and blue cheese slaw.

BOOT SCOOTIN'

Clockwise from right: Having our boots shined outside the Pink Cadillac in Fort Worth; The donuts at Hypnotic Donuts in Dallas are out of this world; The White Elephant Cafe in Fort Worth; The Stockyards at Fort Worth

Opening page: Deep in the heart of Texas (bar country) in the Fort Worth Stockyards



SOME KIND OF WELCOME.

Rain and Texas go together like barbecue and peanut butter, which is to say not at all. Yet Dallas is a remarkably green place, and the sprawling Farmer's Market, just south of the Main Street District, is a showcase for what a little bit of wet weather can do. My original plan was to collect fresh ingredients and prepare a feast, but I doubted my twitter followers would be able to help me craft a dish out of Mole, prickly pears, and hominy kernels. My culinary repertoire is rather limited, and I have no idea how to use a molcajete. Instead I learned a little bit about Texas honey, nothing about Texas tea, and met a man who mates melons for a living.



I tucked into a long line at the Pecan Lodge, a market institution famous for southern barbecue. I waited an hour before ordering the Hot Mess; shredded brisket and sweet potato, with a side of mac n' cheese. I joined a fitness class in progress down at the other end of the shed, just so I didn't feel guilty about my mass consumption. I did have trouble focusing on the instructor, considering the class took place between the spicy pickle cart and the barrel-aged olive oil stand, while the sweaty couple in front of me discussed the ingredients destined to end up in their pork rind casserole. I was starting to fall in love with Dallas.

A gust of wind blew me clear past the upmarket boutiques, malls, and bistros of downtown and into the historic West End, where I found tourists posing for macabre photos on the "x" that marks the place where JFK was shot. Kids played on the grassy knoll while conspiracy theorists shared secrets outside the County Administration Building. I toured the Sixth Floor Museum and witnessed the place where Lee Harvey Oswald changed American history forever (a man outside hawking conspiracy propaganda tried to convince me otherwise).

I wondered aloud why the Dallas Arts District does not receive more national attention, and was told by a trio of acutely attuned Nasher Sculpture Center valets that southerners know how to keep secrets better than the rest of the country. Feeling culturally gratified, I decided to take a break from history and play on the freeway.

Klyde Warren Park is a multi-purpose space built over one of the city's busiest roads, buffered on one side by an armada of food trucks, and an open air library on the other. During one brief stretch I played a game of Frisbee golf, chased a gourmet slider with excessively colourful cupcakes, lost a game of chess to an 11-year-old prodigy (and a game of checkers to his nine-year-old sister), and was drafted into a soccer match. As I lay on the grass entirely overstimulated, I watched heavy gray clouds roll overhead. I switched off my phone, hushing the incessant twitter chirps, and decided that if my trip ended now I would go home happy.

PACHYDERMS AND COWBOY HATS.

By the time I arrived at the Deep Ellum Brewery it was 2pm and happy hour was nearly over. I self-guided through the beer list and asked the barman if the honey in the Oak Aged Doppelbock came from the Farmer's Market. He didn't know, but he pretended to care.

Zack Fickey, resident Event Planning Ninja, climbed the elevated platform and stood among the towering brew tanks as the fauxhemians and skinny-jeaned ne'er-do-wells gathered. Zack lauded Deep Ellum's uniqueness, praised its history, and called for everyone who loved the browbeaten neighbourhood to support local artists, and to drink good beer. I raised a glass with the rest of the crowd, and decided to vote for Zack if he ever ran for president. My tour ended when I bumped into Oscar, a Fort Worth native showing some out-of-towners a good time in Dallas' most unique cultural enclave. Oscar introduced me to his friends, and they invited me to Fort Worth.

I hesitated. I felt like there was so much more to see and do in Dallas. “We’re going to hunt down the Velcro Pygmies tonight,” Oscar said. “Have you ever heard of them?”

Oscar told me that Pygmies are nocturnal. We had time to kill before we went hunting, so we pulled on our boots and went mudslinging in the Fort Worth Stockyards. We helped a cowboy haul his saddle to the rodeo grounds, had our boots shined outside the Pink Cadillac, got lost in a children’s maze made of old fences, and bought tickets to a Randy Travis concert going down at Billy Bob’s, home to slot machines, bad attitudes, and the world’s largest belt buckle. We ordered pints of blood and honey at chef Tim Love’s White Elephant Saloon, and speculated on why a grown man would fill his bar with hundreds of porcelain pachyderms. A local musician named Ryan Riley sang a tune while Oscar and I ordered boom boom mushroom burgers from the Love Shack next door. Oscar and I talked at length of the differences between Dallas and Fort Worth. In Fort Worth, people still wear jeans and cowboy boots, men order whiskey on the rocks, and steak is not a dirty word. If Texas had been defined along musical lines, Dallas would be a saxophone, and Fort Worth would be a banjo. “I would have also accepted cowbell,” Oscar said. Twitter sent us for margaritas at Chimy’s (mine had a can of Red Bull sticking out of it), steak at Cattleman’s, barbecue at Railhead, and happy hour in the West 7th Cultural District, where we raised local Rahr Beers at the Durty Crow. We didn’t find a chuckwagon or have time for a campfire cookout, but given another couple of days I’m sure we could have.

It was late when our party arrived at Sherlock’s Pub & Grill in Arlington. I was growing ever anxious; we had talked little of the Pygmies, and I was beginning to doubt their existence. Oscar told me to close my eyes and allow my ears to guide me. The cacophonous sounds of 80s glam rock drew us to the stage, and I struggled to make sense of the kaleidoscopic light show, the smoke, and the endless tendrils of big curly hair that whipped from one side to the other. Velcro Pygmies frontman Cameron Flener teased the crowd into a frenzy and screamed



A MAN FOR THE PEOPLE

Above: A JFK Sculpture in the Sixth Floor Museum of the Book Depository

Lynyrd Skynyrd lyrics into the grenade-shaped microphone while the dance floor writhed below him. We had finally found the Pygmies. There was nothing left to do but dance.

I didn’t get a chance to ask the Pygmies if they like donuts. If I did, I would have invited them to breakfast at Hypnotic in Lakewood, a hip East Dallas food factory famous for their chicken biscuits and liberal use of bacon. For breakfast I had Kaye’s biscuit, with pepper jack, whipped cream cheese and fresh jalapenos, and the Evil Elvis and Canadian Health Care donuts. Owners James and Amy St. Peter sent me off with a snack for later, which I promptly ate while wandering around White Rock Lake. The surrounding park, adjacent to the Dallas Botanical Gardens, is a quiet oasis divided from the skyscraper infinity of downtown. I cast a few lines over the water with a fisherman named Miguel, and wondered if there was anything else I could possibly catch. My new friends and my amateur online tour guides had helped me see and experience more of Dallas in a 48-hour span than I ever thought possible. The pages of my notebook were stained with salsa, coffee, donut frosting, steak sauce, and spilled margaritas, personal Rorschach inkblots that represented individual memories from a whirlwind weekend. I flipped to a new page, filled my pen with fresh ink, and scribbled *where next?* along the first line. •

Photography by Flash Parker

travel facts

GETTING THERE

Qantas operates daily services to Dallas from Sydney on A380 aircraft. Qantas has a codeshare partnership with American Airlines and Alaskan Airlines for connecting flights within the US and Canada. [qantas.com](https://www.qantas.com)

Delta flies to Los Angeles with easy connections to Dallas. [delta.com](https://www.delta.com)

WHERE TO STAY

Dallas

- The Joule: [thejouledallas.com](https://www.thejouledallas.com)
- Fairmont Dallas: [fairmont.com/Dallas](https://www.fairmont.com/Dallas)

Fort Worth

- Omni Fort Worth Hotel: [omnihotels.com/fortworth](https://www.omnihotels.com/fortworth)
- The Worthington Renaissance Fort Worth Hotel: [marriott.com](https://www.marriott.com)

THINGS TO SEE

- Farmer’s Market: [dallasfarmersmarket.org](https://www.dallasfarmersmarket.org)
- The Sixth Floor Museum: [jfk.org](https://www.jfk.org)
- Klyde Warren Park: [klydewarrenpark.org](https://www.klydewarrenpark.org)
- Dallas Museum of Art: [dma.org](https://www.dma.org)
- White Rock Lake: [whiterocklake.org](https://www.whiterocklake.org)

WHERE TO DRINK AND DINE

- Old Monk: [oldmonkdallas.com](https://www.oldmonkdallas.com)
- Capitol Pub: [capitolpubdallas.com](https://www.capitolpubdallas.com)
- Smoke Restaurant Dallas: [smokerestaurant.com](https://www.smokerestaurant.com)
- Deep Ellum Brewery: [deepellumbrewing.com](https://www.deepellumbrewing.com)
- White Elephant Saloon: [whiteelephantsaloon.com](https://www.whiteelephantsaloon.com)
- Hypnotic Donuts: [hypnoticdonuts.com](https://www.hypnoticdonuts.com)
- Billy Bob’s Texas: [billybobstexas.com](https://www.billybobstexas.com)

FURTHER INFORMATION

- Visit Dallas: [visitdallas.com](https://www.visitdallas.com)
- Fort Worth Tourism: [fortworth.com](https://www.fortworth.com)



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A lap of OAHU

BY HUGH MCCRYSTAL

You don't need to travel to Maui or Kauai to experience the best surfing, food trucks and snorkelling that Hawaii has to offer; Oahu has it all.



For many Australian holidaymakers, Hawaii's Waikiki Beach is paradise. Routinely perfect beach weather, an abundance of well-priced bars and restaurants and more shopping than you can poke a stick at (hello, Ala Moana Center) all combine to make it a pretty satisfying all-in-one package.

But for those who'd like to stray a little from the well-worn path of hotel-beach-shops, we've put together a day trip – almost all the way around the island, no less. Not only is it more than possible to circumnavigate virtually the whole of Oahu in one day, but you'll have plenty of time to stop off often along the way to check out the sights and sample the local delicacies.

One tip before you set off: we'd recommend travelling on a weekday, as it's not unusual to encounter extreme gridlock on Oahu's main arteries during the weekend.

Travelling counter-clockwise around the island, a worthy first stop is Bailey's Antiques and Aloha Shirts. It's a veritable treasure trove of thousands upon thousands of vintage and new Hawaiian shirts, organised by colour, size, date of manufacture, and theme. Need a 1940s shirt with aeroplanes on it? You'll find it here. Some of the rarer antique shirts get up into four figures, pricewise, but there are plenty of bargains to be had as well.

Once you've found yourself some snazzy gear for the trip, it's time to hit the road. Head northwards to Hanauma Bay, a nature preserve about half an hour's drive from Waikiki. Bring your own snorkelling equipment, or hire it from stands right on the beach. Sea turtles, scores of brightly coloured tropical fish, and living coral are all immediately discoverable for a truly magical underwater experience.

Then head up the west coast along the Kamehameha Highway, which winds along the rugged Oahu coastline, where one minute you're driving alongside rugged green cliffs and



OVER THE FALLS

From top: View over Waikiki; Waihi Waterfall at Waimea Valley

Opening spread: View of Kuaola Cliffs from Fishpond, Oahu/Shutterstock



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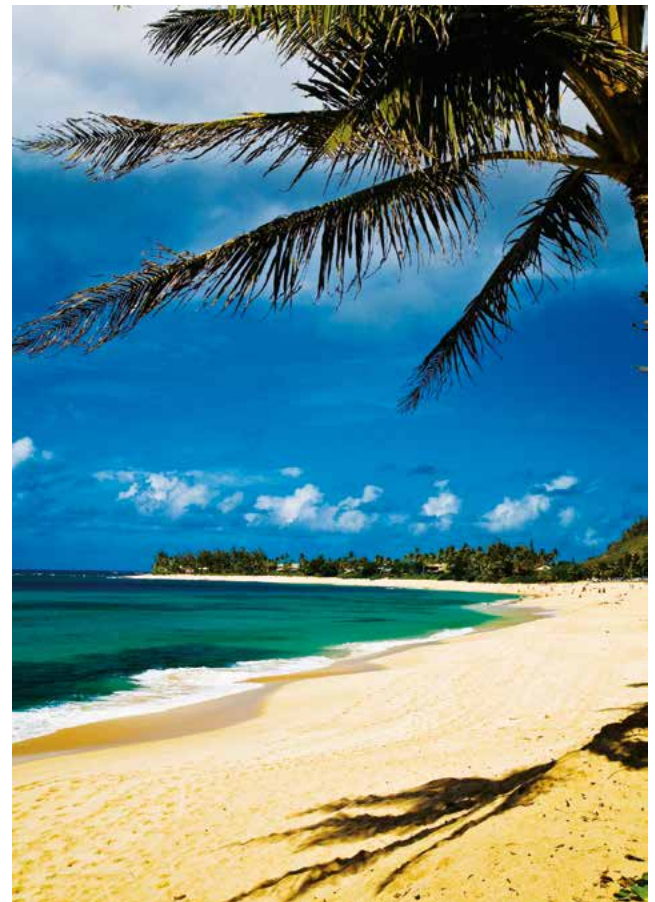
then past bungalows that line the beach on the other. In fact, the Kamehameha Highway might just be one of the best drives across the entire United States.

Along the Kamehameha Highway about halfway up the West Coast in the town of Laie is the Polynesian Cultural Center, a Polynesian-themed park that has simulated villages of South Pacific nations including Samoa, Fiji, Tahiti, Hawaii and more, and an evening show featuring dance, music and fire knives. It's been renowned as the best attraction on Oahu for years, for most of the Center's 50-year history in fact.

“Fresh shrimp, decadently sautéed in melted butter and garlic.”

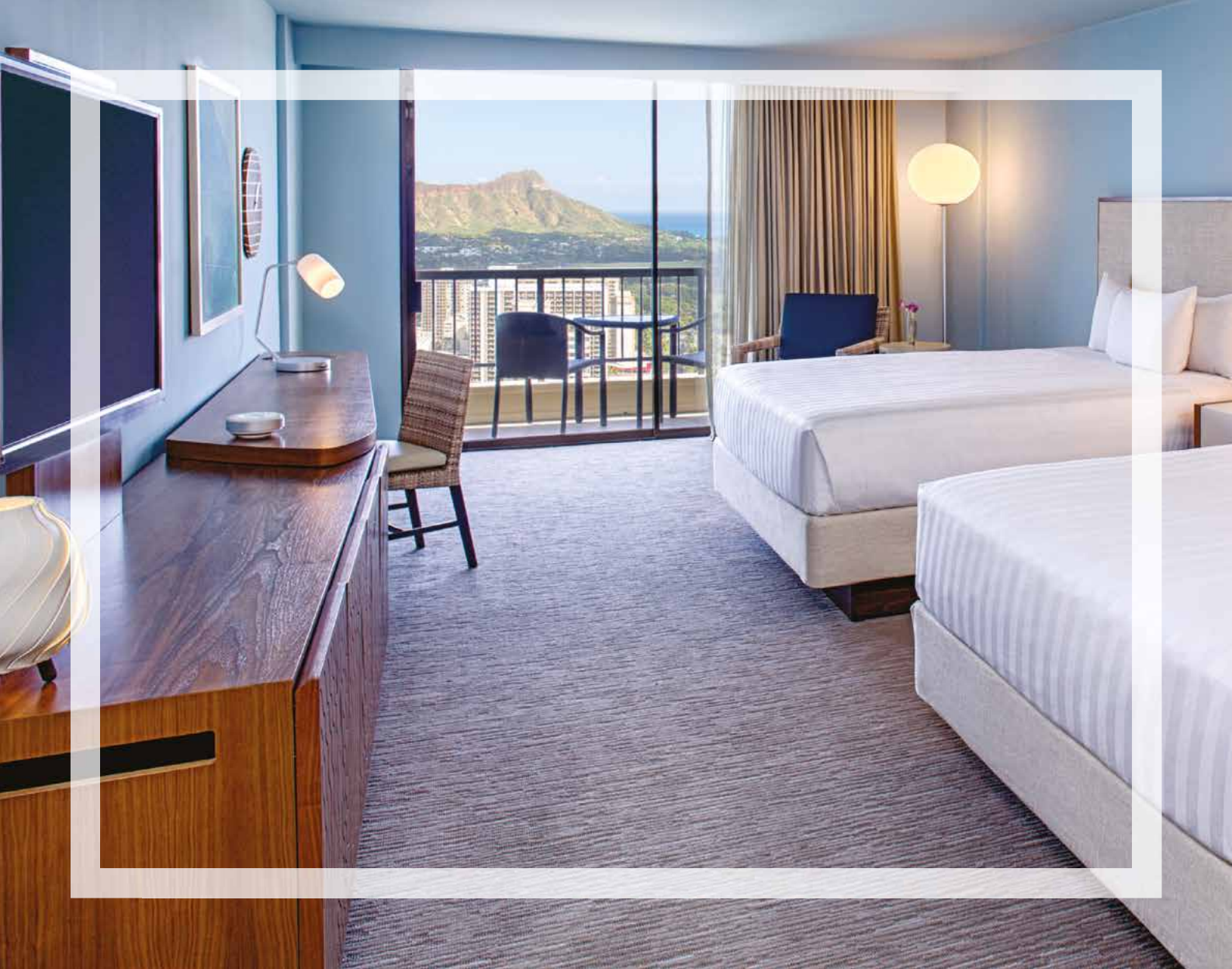


All that adventure's bound to leave you in need of some sustenance – it's time to get back in the car and find one (or more than one) of the North Shore's famous shrimp trucks! Fresh shrimp, decadently sautéed in melted butter and garlic, and served with a soft scoop of boiled white rice, it's just what you need to take the edge off that specific, gnawing hunger that always seems to follow ocean swimming. Shrimp Shack does the classics, and they do them very well. For \$10.75 a plate, you can dive into hot, buttery, garlicky shrimp,



TAKE A BITE OF OAHU

Clockwise from above: Shark cage diving; Turtle Bay at sunset; Couple enjoying garlic shrimp plates at a North Shore shrimp truck; Sunset Beach



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RIPE FOR THE PICKING

Clockwise from top: Stunning scenery is never far away on a drive around Oahu; Colourful surfboards in a rack on Waikiki Beach; Sharks Cove on the North Shore; Kahuku Land Farms on the roadside at Haliewa

“Waimea Valley, home to lush green forests, ancient Hawaiian archaeological sites, stunning botanical gardens and the Waihi waterfall”

accompanied by a \$2.75 fresh fruit juice float. It may not be the poshest lunch you've ever eaten but it'll probably be one of the most satisfying.

If you don't mind queuing, drive a little further along the road and stop at Kahuku, where the shrimp farms, and most of the shrimp trucks, are located. Giovanni's, a graffitied white monster of a truck that's hard to miss, is the most famous of the cluster of trucks here, and rightly so. It's been operating since 1953, so it's safe to say they know what they're doing.

Continue to make your way along the meandering coastline, which up in the North Western part of Oahu boasts spectacular views of the ocean – sometimes a little too spectacular, when narrow, single-lane bends start coming into play and you're less than a metre from driving on the sand!

Golfers should take a detour to highly-rated Turtle Bay, where you'll find two championship golf courses on the edge of the coastline. Here, try not to get distracted by the waves as you're putting for birdie and enjoy the views of long boarders riding perfect waves (and some cocktails and local fare) at The Point Sunset and Pool Bar.

Next stop? You're going to want to head towards the town of Haleiwa, to check out the Banzai Pipeline. The whole stretch of road from Turtle Bay to Waimea is alongside incredible surfing breaks, with names like Velzy Land (locals call it V-Land), Backdoor and Off the Wall. Then of course there is the world-famous Sunset Beach and Pipeline. The stage for countless international surfing competitions during winter, the sheer size of the Pipeline break is truly awe-inspiring – if not slightly terrifying. But if you can't be there in November/ December to watch the world's best surfers tackle these giants, it's worth a visit at any time of year.

A few minutes drive south from the Banzai Pipeline is the Waimea Valley, home to lush green forests, ancient Hawaiian archaeological sites, stunning botanical gardens and the Waihi waterfall, one of the grandest attractions on the island of Oahu.

Close by, there's plenty more to do in and the around the surfing town of Haleiwa, including more world-class snorkelling at Sharks Cove. While there's plenty of parking here, it's also extremely popular thanks to the abundance of sea life, so you may have to wait for a spot – but it'll be worth



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WILD COAST

Opposite page clockwise from top: Couple on a scenic drive of Oahu's North Shore; Pineapple fields; USS Arizona Memorial; Surfing at North Shore

it. Make sure you wear reef shoes, as the rocks are sharp. You can hire snorkelling gear across the road.

If snorkelling just won't give you the adrenaline rush you're craving, there are a number of outfits in Haleiwa offering shark-cage dives. Our favourite is North Shore Shark Adventures, who will take you a few kilometres out to sea, where you'll be plunged into the water inside a metal cage for around 30 minutes' worth of quality time with these toothy creatures of the deep. But if sharks aren't your speed, they also offer humpback whale encounters during the winter months, as well as turtle tours.

Pineapple is one of the biggest drivers of Hawaii's agricultural industry, and a trip around Oahu just wouldn't be complete without a stop at the Dole Plantation, which makes for a fascinating visit and is home to the world's largest permanent botanical maze. Starting from humble beginnings as a simple fruit stand in 1950, these days the plantation takes in more than 1 million visitors annually. We highly recommend the classic pineapple whip, too: a frozen, magically creamy dessert made entirely from, you guessed it – pineapple.

Once you've had your fill of ocean-gazing, pineapples and waterfalls, it's time to drive back through the centre of Oahu back down towards Waikiki, where Waikale Outlets await. With stores including A|X Armani Exchange, Adidas, Banana Republic, Calvin Klein, Coach, Kate Spade New York, Michael Kors, Polo Ralph Lauren, Saks Fifth Avenue Off 5th, Tommy Bahama, Tommy Hilfiger, and more offering huge discounts off the US price – let alone the jacked-up Australian prices you're likely to pay back home – this is the place to go for classic American basics, luggage and of course, the perennial tourists' staple, running shoes.

After your shopping extravaganza, dial it down by stopping off at the Pearl Harbor Visitor Center, home to the USS Arizona Memorial, built over the hull of the battleship that sank during the Japanese attack on December 7, 1941. Here, you can also walk on the USS Missouri, the same deck the Japanese surrendered on that brought to an end World War II.

Once back in Waikiki, celebrate your day out with a cocktail at Duke's, located right by the beach at the Outrigger, or at the Beach Bar at the Moana Surfrider, both overlooking the decadent sandy strip and the unmistakable Diamond Head in the distance. A climb up to the crater is another popular activity in Oahu, but that will have to wait for another day. •

Photography by Hawaii Tourism Authority & Helen Hayes



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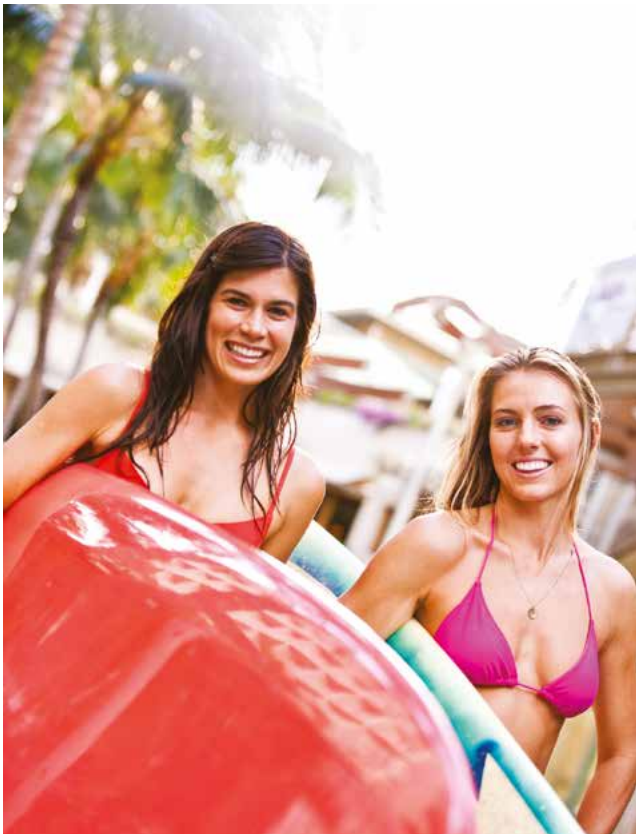
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SEEKING SUNTANS

Left from top: Everyone surfs in Hawaii; A sign in Waikiki; Find Brutus the turtle at Laniakea beach near Haleiwa

travel facts

GETTING THERE

Hawaiian Airlines, Jetstar and Qantas fly to Honolulu from Australia. All three operate flights from Sydney, while Hawaiian also offers services from Brisbane and Jetstar also flies direct from Melbourne and Brisbane. Qantas offers a full service ticket on the route, now served by Airbus A330 aircraft featuring SkyBeds, while Hawaiian and Jetstar have some pay-as-you-go offerings.

- Hawaiian Airlines: hawaiianairlines.com.au
- Jetstar: jetstar.com
- Qantas: qantas.com

WHERE TO STAY

- Aqua Ilikai Hotel and Suites: aquaresorts.com
- Aston Hotels & Resorts: astonhotels.com
- DoubleTree by Hilton: doubletreealana.com
- Hilton Hawaiian Village: hiltonhawaiianvillage.com
- Hyatt Waikiki Beach Resort and Spa: hyattregencywaikiki.com
- Moana Surfrider: moana-surfrider.com
- Outrigger Waikiki on the Beach: outrigger.com
- Trump Hotel Waikiki Beach Walk: trumpwaikikihotel.com

GETTING AROUND

The best way to explore Honolulu and the island of Oahu is by renting a car and all major outfits have vehicles on offer. In recent trips, V&T has found Alamo to be the best value in terms of pricing and quality of vehicles, while Avis, Budget, Dollar, Hertz, National and Thrifty are also worth getting quotes from.

Roberts offer a great range of tours, including the Grand Circle tour around the island.

- Alamo: alamo.com
- Roberts: robertshawaii.com

THINGS TO DO

- Bailey's Antiques and Aloha Shirts: alohashirts.com
- Haunama Bay: hanauma-bay-hawaii.com
- Polynesian Cultural Center: polynesia.com
- Pearl Harbor Visitor Center: pearlharborhistoricsites.org
- Shrimp Shack: shrimpshackoahu.com
- Giovanni's: giovannisshrimptruck.com
- Turtle Bay Resort: turtlebayresort.com
- North Shore Shark Adventures: sharktours-hawaii.com
- Dole Pineapple Plantation: dole-plantation.com
- Waikale Premium Outlets: premiumoutlets.com

WHEN TO GO

Hawaii offers fantastic weather year-round, however, it does get warmer during the summer months of June, July and August. Ideal times to visit are April and September.

MORE INFORMATION

Hawaii Tourism Authority: gohawaii.com/au



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ART WORKS in valparaiso

BY CHRIS WALKER

Wandering along the steep labyrinth of cobblestone streets while getting lost in vibrant street murals, it was hard to believe Valparaiso was declared a natural disaster zone a month before.

In April last year fire swept through one of the Chilean port city's picturesque 45 hills, destroying thousands of homes. Despite the damage to lives and infrastructure the iconic tourist town quickly reopened for business, with May a perfect time to visit before the cooler weather took hold.

Located 110km northwest of the country's

capital of Santiago, the city played an important geopolitical role in the second half of the 19th century. During its golden age Valparaiso came to be known as 'Little San Francisco' and the 'Jewel of the Pacific', until the opening of the Panama Canal in 1914 cut shipping traffic and dealt a significant economic blow to the city.





“Valparaiso, how absurd you are... you haven’t combed your hair, you’ve never had time to get dressed, life has always surprised you.”

Today the port remains operational, but tourism drives its economy, largely due to hundreds of world-class street murals. The vivid colours of Valparaiso assault the senses and turn every visitor into an award-winning photographer.

I felt particularly gifted behind the lens, snapping away happily and regularly forcing my wife to wait for me. Ever changing, the street murals belong in professional art exhibits, but can be enjoyed by all who take the time to meander through the twisted alleyways and up and down the hills.

The charm of the city has captured and enraptured many over the years. This includes famous Chilean poet, diplomat, politician, and Nobel Prize winner Pablo Neruda. The eccentric, or dare I say just plain weird poet, earned the honour for literature in 1971, ahead of his death a few years later. He owned a five-storey home perched atop his beloved Valparaiso with unparalleled views of the harbour.

In his iconic poem *Ode to Valparaiso*, Neruda described the city fondly.

“Valparaiso, how absurd you are... you haven’t combed your hair, you’ve never had time to get dressed, life has always surprised you.”

The poem goes on to explain how the long suffering city had battled through earthquakes and tsunamis to revive and repaint itself in colour each and every time. Neruda’s poetic words were once again tested before our arrival, and though the damage from the fire remained fresh, once again the city rallied.

In another poem he said that if one walked all of Valparaiso’s stairs, one would make a trip around the world. After a few days negotiating the city’s steep hills I certainly couldn’t refute Neruda’s words.

Almost as prominent as the incredible street art and seemingly endless stairs were the many street dogs who belong to no one and everyone. Hundreds of dogs of various breeds trot through the hills seeking human contact.

As an outsider your first encounter with a street dog will likely offer a mixture of guilt at not being able to rescue the animal, and perhaps even a little fear. But the friendly dogs are cared for by many and if they aren’t sound asleep they are out seeking a pat or trotting alongside their chosen human for the day.

That included a small but strongly built beagle my wife and I named The Boss. Befriending us on our first day the beagle with a slight limp escorted us down to Plaza Sotomayor, the starting point for a city walking tour.

COLOUR MY WORLD

Above: A larger example of Valparaiso’s beautiful street art

Opening page: Colourful art on a street corner in Valparaiso



EYES ON THE PRIZE

Clockwise from left: It looks more like a painting, but is actually the work of a talented street artist in Valparaiso; Very colourful street art in an alleyway leading down to the water in Valparaiso; Some of Valparaiso's street art is completed on large buildings. This effort was achieved through a number of artists abseiling down the buildings; Incredible street art from Valparaiso. Taken in Cerro Alegre, Valparaiso's most touristic hill and the heart of the UNESCO World heritage area



We felt a pang of guilt at not having any food to give our new friend and thought he must struggle living on the streets with a limp. By an hour later we were proved completely wrong.

The beagle was king. He escorted the entire walking tour past Valparaiso's standout sites, all the while entering the territory of scores of other dogs and demanding they back down to his aggressive barks. And they all did. He barked and chased cars, showing us how he sustained that limp, and constantly walked ahead clearing a path for his tour group. Quite simply he ran Valparaiso and we felt honoured to be taken under his paw on day one, despite our severe underestimation of his standing.

A local friend we made gave us some strange advice regarding the street dogs. She told us to always bring along a few dog treats on a night out. The tactic guarantees a few dogs trot closely behind as your personal escorts, not that Valparaiso felt overly dangerous.

Although a beautiful place Valparaiso remains somewhat neglected, with rubbish bins scarce and dog poo patrols

non-existent. Those distracted by the beautiful graffiti, the incredible views, or those just distracted are likely to fall victim to a crucial misstep and smelly result.

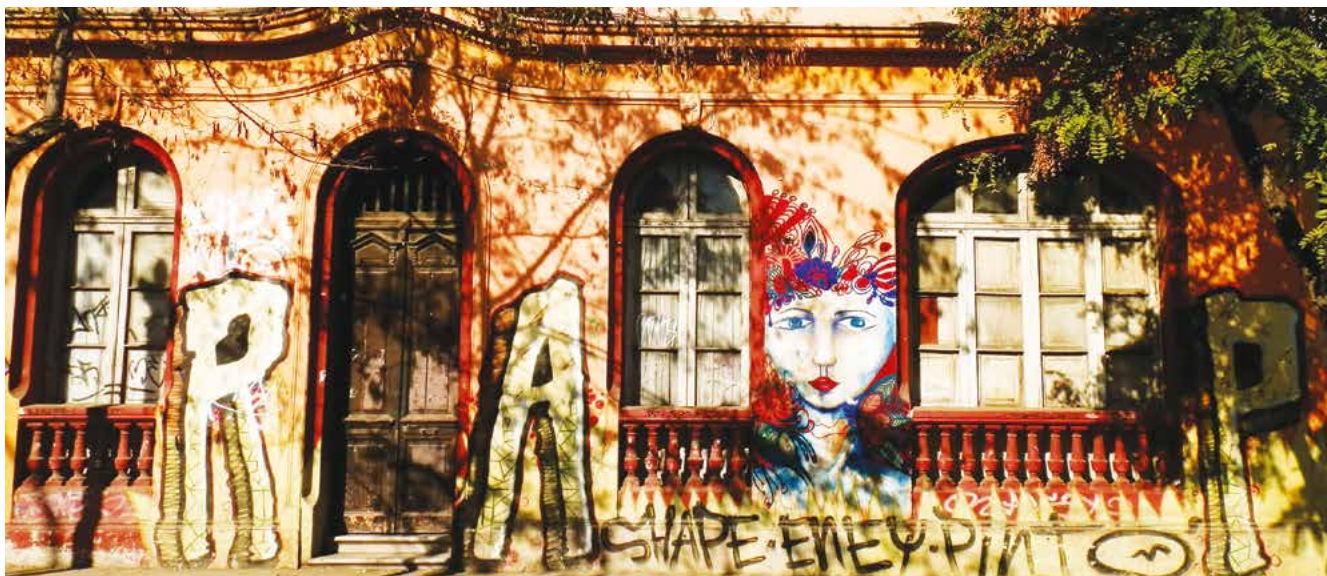
But that's just part of the fun and experience.

Along with Valparaiso's street art and dogs its architecture is something to behold. The majority of its homes are built into steep hills. Many appear to be one storey at the front, but at the back extend to three or even four storeys.

CLIMBING THE WALLS

Above: A UNESCO heritage listed building in Valparaiso has posed quite a problem for the local government after it was nearly lost in a fire, but now stands as a shell

Opposite page: An older building in Valparaiso turned into somewhat of an attraction by some different forms of graffiti



One of the city's other amazing architectural feats are the series of ageing ascensors or funiculars. Built at the turn of the 20th century, the incredible elevators climb almost vertical cliffs to cut down the time taken to ascend and descend the steep hills. Though quite scary they provide brilliant views of the pristine harbour and serve a very practical role, preventing the need for steep hikes for those living up in the hills.

Other standout examples of Valparaíso's historic achievements include: owning the world's oldest Spanish newspaper in continuous publication; the continent's first

volunteer fire department; along with Chile's first library.

In 2003 the historical quarter of Valparaíso was named a UNESCO World Heritage Site, with a national law declaring the city the Cultural Capital of Chile. Alongside plenty of hole-in-the-wall eateries to get your empanada fix, Valparaíso offers dozens of top quality restaurants.

For those inclined to enjoy an alcoholic drink, the first and only choice must be a pisco sour.

There are two main varieties of the delicious cocktail, which have similarities in taste to a margarita – one Chilean, the other

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DOGS' DAY OUT

Left: The boss of Valpo at the top of the stairs tells his tour group that it is safe to continue

Peruvian. Sample one from any of the more reputable looking restaurants or bars in Valparaiso and you won't be disappointed.

Though if you're silly enough to have a big night on cheap pisco be prepared for an almighty hangover. I endured the worst hangover of my life following a few bottles of pre-made pisco sour – in fact I thought my life was as good as over in our hostel room in Valparaiso. I felt like someone was drumming my head with brick drumsticks and didn't recover until long after the sun disappeared. But don't let that stop you enjoying

“Quite simply he ran Valparaiso and we felt honoured to be taken under his paw on day one, despite our severe underestimation of his standing.”

a restaurant or bar-made pisco sour – just try to do it in moderation and stick to the better quality options.

To compare Valparaiso to anywhere else in the world would do the unique city an injustice, but if forced it could be likened to San Francisco on drugs. It is part photographer, artist, architecture and dining paradise, part dog lovers dream, mixed with a certain gritty South American charm.

Be sure to bring along your camera, your appetite, and your walking shoes. •

Photography by Chris Walker

travel facts

GETTING THERE

LAN Airlines operates seven one-stop flights each week from Sydney, via Auckland, to Santiago, Chile, with onward connections to more than 115 destinations in South America. Ph: 1800-126-038; lan.com

Then it is a short 110km bus trip from Santiago to Valparaiso.

WHEN TO GO

From March to June – temperatures will go from hot in March to significantly cooler by June.

WHERE TO STAY

- On a backpacker budget a good option is Hostal Luna Sonrisa. The colourful and cosy hostel located in Cerro Alegre, Valparaiso's most emblematic hill and the heart of the UNESCO World heritage area. lunasonrisa.cl
- At the other end of the scale there is Sheraton Miramar Hotel, and plenty of other luxury options, but I'd recommend opting for a more authentic accommodation option up in one of Valparaiso's many hills.

WHERE TO EAT

- On a budget you can get a traditional feast of chorrillana at J. Cruz located on Condell 1466, Valparaiso. The distinctive restaurant is difficult to find in a tiny alleyway off Condell, but once seated the typical Chilean dish featuring a plate of fries topped with beef sliced into strips, eggs and fried onions will not disappoint.
- For those with more to spend you'll get a gourmet experience at Il Paparazzo located on Papudo 424, Cerro Concepcion.

WHAT TO DO

There are endless things to do, but the best activity is to simply walk the city. Let the people from Tours 4 Tips Valparaiso guide your stroll. The knowledgeable tour leaders take you through the maze that is Valparaiso to see the golden era of the city, climb the graffiti-lined stairwells and meet local residents. The tour leaves from Plaza Sotomayor, Valparaiso's main square every day at 10am and 3pm. tours4tips.com

FURTHER INFORMATION:

- Contours Travel: 1300-135-391; contourstravel.com.au
- Tourism Chile: tourismchile.com/guide/Valparaiso



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COMPILED BY MARK CHIPPERFIELD

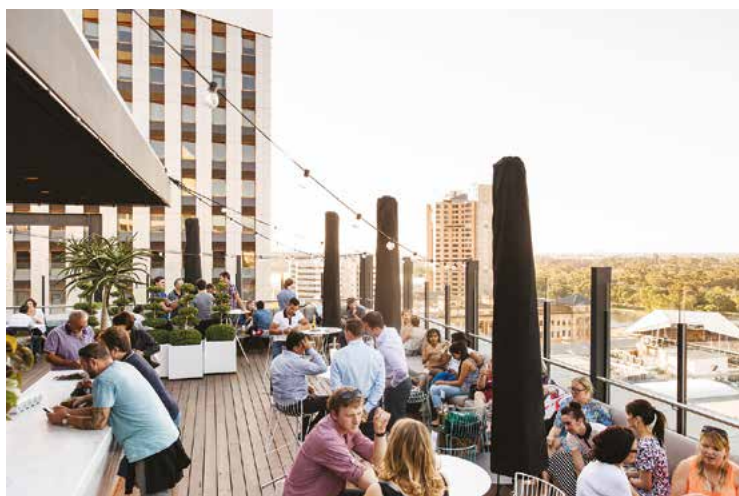
Hollywood Comes to Berlin

The glamorous 145-room Hotel Zoo has made a habit of turning heads since it re-opened in 2014. Located in Berlin's Kurfurstendamm the architectural masterpiece recalls the city's pre-war glamour and its special association with the movie industry. That theme continues in the newly-opened Restaurant Grace, which features white painted brick walls, champagne-hued wood panelling, floor-to-ceiling windows, huge gilt mirrors and chandeliers in the shape of antique birdcages. The sumptuous interiors are by American designer Dayna Lee and include leather banquette seating and velvet George Smith armchairs. The menu at Grace combines Asian, Italian and German culinary traditions and showcases local seasonal ingredients. Dishes include tomato Yum Yum soup, pork belly roasted in sweet hoisin sauce and tiger prawns topped with a pesto of Kaffir lime leaves and coconut cream. hotelzoo.de/food-drink/restaurant-grace



Adelaide's Rooftop Revolution

It takes something extra special to wipe Jamle Oliver off the front pages, but that is just what Adelaide's new \$4.5 million rooftop bar and restaurant has done. 2KW shares the same heritage building as Jamie's Italian on the corner of North Terrace and King William Street, except that 2KW is eight floors up with sweeping views of Government House, the Torrens and the Adelaide Hills. The sleek designer rooftop space consists of five entertainment areas, including an indoor/outdoor restaurant, a terrace bar and several private cabanas. Executive chef Nick Finn has created an equally glamorous menu – patrons can choose from hip bar food or more heavyweight restaurant dishes. 2KW has a cheeky range of cocktails and a great selection of boutique wines, beers and ciders. 2kwbar.com.au





The Riviera, English-style

“I mean, have you seen the people in Room Six? They’ve never even sat on chairs before.” Basil Fawlty, the fictional hotel owner played by John Cleese, would no doubt be apoplectic at the sight of Torbay’s newest culinary offering – Bistrot Pierre, a chic French restaurant, occupying a prime location on the Torquay seafront. This part of South Devon, long known as the English Riviera, is quickly embracing modern gastronomy based on fresh farm produce and the region’s excellent seafood. Bistrot Pierre is part of the new Abbey Sands development – and the 12th restaurant in the bistro chain. “Abbey Sands is a very striking addition to the Torquay seafront,” says company co-founder Robert Beacham. Bistrot Pierre offers relaxed dining at the bar, good value fixed price lunches, early bird dinner menus and special Soiree Gastronomique evenings throughout the year – very Basil.

lebistrotpierre.co.uk/locations/torquay

Balanced, Classic, Ultra-Modern

Sydney’s well-documented love affair with Japanese cuisine entered a new phase with the opening of Tokonoma Sydney at 44 Bridge Street, a stone’s throw from Circular Quay. The stylish new eatery is a spin-off of the popular Surry Hills dining room Toko, which first introduced Sydneysiders to the exciting flavours of modern Japanese cuisine. The elegant interiors, which include an intimate bar and New York-style open kitchen, were designed by Matt Darwon and Toko founder Matt Yazbek and feature murals by Ando Hiroshige. The menu showcases chef Hao San’s deft hand with traditional and delicate Japanese flavours and offers a range of sushi, tempura and robata (barbecued) dishes, plus several share plates. The sexy subterranean bunker has an extensive range of cocktails, wines, spirits, digestifs and sakes. Tokonoma Sydney is open for lunch, Tuesday to Friday and dinner, Tuesday to Saturday. tokonoma-sydney.com





Hentley Joins Elite League

The Barossa Valley's award-winning restaurant Hentley Farm has become the latest member of the elite Relais & Chateaux hospitality network. The genre-hopping vineyard dining room is only the second member chosen from South Australia – the other is Appellation restaurant, another Barossan culinary superstar. Established in 1954 Relais & Chateaux consists of 530 of the world's finest hotels and restaurants. The association's international president, Philippe Gombert, praised the youthful team at Hentley Farm for "creating a leading example of contemporary regional dining" in South Australia and said executive chef Lachlan Colwill's sophisticated menus "meld surprise with a delicious sense of place." The restaurant is open for lunch Thursday to Sunday and dinner on Friday and Saturday nights. Bookings essential. hentleyfarm.com.au

Nashville On The Yarra

Soul food has found a new berth in Melbourne. Just across the road from The Builders Arms on Gertrude Street, Fitzroy, is Belle's Hot Chicken – a finger lickin' diner with a simple menu, an astonishing wine list and retro fit-out complete with a neon sign above the bar. The chicken here is marinated in a secret chilli and spice mixture for two days. The result is like being tongue-kissed by an electric eel. The menu is tiny, with a choice of chicken, fish or mushrooms served at various stages of chilli intensity. A main course costs \$16, including a side dish such as black eye pea salad, old bay fries and coleslaw. Belle's only serves natural wines and a single dessert – soft serve ice cream. belleshotchicken.com





Gentlemen, To Your Stations

Imagine a restaurant where you could choose from the freshest sushi, authentic Tandoori chicken tikka, Asian duck pancakes with hoi sin sauce, freshly prepared squid ink linguine, a slice of prime lamb roast or an elegant salad of Belgium endive, Gorgonzola, radicchio and caramelized walnuts? These are just a fraction of the dishes on the daily lunch menu at the Melba Restaurant on Melbourne's Southbank. Anyone who thinks the hotel buffet is passé should step inside this sparkling dining room and take a quick tour of the immaculate food stations – don't miss the cheese table or sinful dessert selection. With lunchtime prices starting at \$58 per head this is also one of the best-priced (and flexible) gourmet experiences in Melbourne. melbarestaurant.com.au

The Gastronomic Express

Long-distance train travel within Australia is set to get a little tastier in 2015. Great Southern Rail, the company that operates both *The Ghan* and *Indian-Pacific* services, has begun rolling out a series of exciting new menus for its Platinum and Gold class passengers on both journeys. The new menus are designed to showcase fresh, seasonal produce sourced from the regions through which the two trains pass, such as the Swan Valley, Barossa and Adelaide Hills. There is also an emphasis on native bush foods such as samphire (sea asparagus) and eucalypt olida (strawberry gum). New dishes include tarragon chicken with braised white bean cassoulet and red wine jus, kangaroo steak with crocodile, potato puree and quandong jus and wattleseed and meringue rotolo served with macerated strawberries and riberry couli. greatsouthernrail.com.au





calling all CULTURE vultures

BY ANNE MAJUNDER

*Forget theme parks and skyscrapers that touch the stars,
Abu Dhabi is strengthening its focus on art and culture
in a bid to increase its global profile and tourism appeal.*





The countdown is on. By the end of the year, the world will welcome a brand new Louvre museum, the first offshoot of the cultural behemoth that stands proud on the right bank of the Seine in Paris.

But this bright-eyed youngster won't be located anywhere near its older sibling. Nor will it be found in the dusty domain of its European neighbours. Instead, eyes will turn further east towards the oil-rich capital of the United Arab Emirates, Abu Dhabi, where a shimmering skyline has rapidly sprung from the sand. For this fast developing metropolis is attempting to reposition itself as a global centre for arts and culture with the new Jean Nouvel-designed Louvre just one part of its ambitious plan.

While tourists may previously have been lured by the luxury offered by high-end hotels such as the so-called "seven star" Emirates Palace Hotel or the high octane thrills of Ferrari World on Yas Island, said to be the largest indoor theme park in the world, the opening of the Louvre represents a new direction for the destination.

Back in 2013, the emirate's tourism marketing organisation added the word "culture" to its title, renaming itself as the Abu Dhabi Tourism and Culture Authority (ADTCA) – a clear sign of a new strategy to attract visitors while differentiating itself from neighbouring destinations. The Louvre announcement was a major step in that direction.

"Ultimately, we hope to offer visitors a unique experience from a new perspective that underlines the universal spirit of the entire project," HE Sheikh Sultan bin Tahnoon Al Nahyan, ADTCA chairman, said of the project.

While the cultural push is largely focused on the Saadiyat Island development, just 25 minutes from the city centre, there are traces of it all over the emirate – from the main island's landmark Corniche to the heritage city of Al Ain.

SAADIYAT STIRRINGS

I slide my sunglasses down the slope of my sunscreen-greasy nose to shield my eyes from the glare of the sun bouncing off the raked sand of Saadiyat Island's Bake Beach Club, set on its public beach. My sun lounger is just metres from the surreal turquoise waters of the Arabian Gulf that tickle the 400-metre stretch of sand, with food and drink outlets and a well-tended changing room not much further in the opposite direction. Lifeguards decked out in bright primary hues stroll the sand, poised for action as bikinied holidaymakers skip clumsily through the waves. Later, sun-zapped and parched, I take in that same view as I sip a frosty imported beer at the Park Hyatt next door – one of six new hotel developments planned for the island.

It would be easy to think of it as a typical flop and drop island destination where languid lethargy prevails, but Saadiyat is actually a hive of activity. At various points on the island, cranes lurch awkwardly against the cloudless sky as hard-hatted construction workers build up its cultural district where functioning exhibition spaces Manarat Al Saadiyat and the UAE Pavilion will soon be joined by the Louvre in December, the Zayed National Museum in 2016 and the Frank Gehry-designed Guggenheim in 2017 along with a performing arts centre and maritime museum. The district already hosts the annual Abu Dhabi Art Fair which will take place for the seventh time this year.

But why have these icons of the art world picked Abu Dhabi for their next venture?

Thomas Krens, director of the Guggenheim Foundation, described Abu Dhabi as a fitting partner to both share and "expand" upon its point of view.

"The plans for Saadiyat Island and the cultural district, envisioned and developed by the Abu Dhabi Government, are,



LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

From left: Zayed National Museum will open in 2016; Palm trees divide the city's glittering skyscrapers and luxury hotels from the island's edge

Opposite page: Louvre Abu Dhabi – Jean-Nouvel Design

Opening spread: Al Ain is home to the historic Al Jahili Fort, constructed in 1891 to defend the city and protect palm groves. Pic courtesy Zuji

quite simply, extraordinary,” he said. “When this comprehensive and inclusive vision is realised, it will set a standard for global culture that will resonate for decades to come.”

Meanwhile, French Culture Minister Renaud Donnedieu de Vabres said the venture represents the first step in a long-term cooperation with the wealthy region.

“We’re not selling the French legacy and heritage,” he reassured critics of the arrangement. “We want this culture to radiate to parts of the world that value it. We’re proud that Abu Dhabi wants to bring the Louvre here.”

THE HEART OF THE CITY

Back on the main island, a sandy haze hangs heavy in the air as I take an afternoon stroll across the geometric paving stones of Abu Dhabi’s Corniche Road. Sweat beads spring up across my forehead as I tackle just a fraction of the famous road’s eight kilometre length that stretches along the main island’s western edge from the Hilton all the way down to Zayed port. To my left, the neatly manicured patches of lawn and palm trees that divide the city’s glittering skyscrapers and luxury hotels from the island’s edge are broken up with the occasional workout machine and to the right, the Arabian Gulf and the bustling Marina Mall.

I pass groups of young men discussing business in the shade of the palm trees, and am overtaken by the whirring blur of a cycle – one of the many cyclists to take advantage of the trail that runs alongside the pavement. Later on, as the intense temperatures calm with the onset of evening, the cyclists are joined by runners, ditching the gym to get their health fix in the scenic outdoors instead. But that’s all far too energetic for me, particularly in this heat. Instead, I make a beeline for the sand to cool down in the water.

This waterfront promenade has been here since the 1970s but, just like the city of Abu Dhabi itself, it is constantly evolving. Just over ten years ago, it was extended using land reclaimed from the sea. Now the latest phase of its



redevelopment has seen its status as a social hub enhanced further with the addition of new cafes, restaurants and even a new beach. The 1.5 kilometre stretch of imported sand at the western end of the Corniche opened to the general public in July 2013, with the public development plan also promising “cultural and environmental activities and promotions”.

In January this year, Mexican-Canadian artist Rafael Lozano-Hemmer created an art installation on the Corniche which shot a canopy of light beams into the sky using robotic searchlights controlled by the heart-rate of visitors holding sensors. Entitled ‘Pulse Corniche’, the interactive project was a collaboration with Guggenheim Abu Dhabi and Manarat al Saadiyat and was visible from across the city.

“Despite having never been to Abu Dhabi, I envision the Corniche as the perfect place to stage this project because of its size, infrastructure, and the reflection of light on the water,” the artist told *Time Out Abu Dhabi* at the time.

Installations such as this along with craft markets, watersport competitions and science fairs enhance the appeal of the already popular Corniche which attracts between 30,000 and 50,000 visitors each month.

AL AIN

The cultural push is not restricted to the city limits however. I make the 90-minute journey to the Garden City of Al Ain, the emirate’s eastern second city and discover that it is also playing an important role. From afar, the first thing you notice



about the emirate's second city is its splashes of green against the sun-baked landscape. Its oasis is one of the reasons that it is said to be one of the world's oldest permanently inhabited settlements and, as a result, it has a strong cultural heritage.

I wander from the cool stony shade of Al Jahili fort to the Al Ain National Museum to the Souq Al Qattara – a historic handicrafts market that has recently been redeveloped and is now home to an arts centre and gallery where visitors can try out a variety of workshops from pottery to calligraphy.

Al Ain was declared a UNESCO World Heritage site in 2011, and that award has helped to position Abu Dhabi as a cultural destination, with ADTCA confident it will help the emirate grow its profile worldwide. •

Photography by Anne Majunder and Visit Abu Dhabi

SAILING CULTURE

From top: Dhows on the Gulf off The Corniche. Pic courtesy Zujji; Abu Dhabi's cultural district will look like this by the end of 2017

travel facts

GETTING THERE

Abu Dhabi-based carrier Etihad Airways offers double daily services from Sydney and daily services from Melbourne, Brisbane and Perth. 1300-532-215; etihad.com

GETTING AROUND

The emirate's rapid expansion and population growth has prompted a reassessment of the public transport system with plans for an Abu Dhabi Metro in the making. In the meantime, buses and ferries are available, with taxis and hire cars also convenient options.

WHEN TO GO

The best time to visit is during the winter months from November to April when temperatures average 24 degrees Celsius in the day. Summer temperatures can climb as high as 49 degrees Celsius in July and August.

WHAT TO SEE:

- Saadiyat Cultural District is a work in progress, but there is already plenty to see here. Combine a visit with a trip to the beach and the nature reserve; saadiyatculturaldistrict.ae
- Take a walk along the Corniche at sunset to enjoy the view and the vibrant social scene
- Explore the heritage and culture of the emirate during a day trip to the Garden City of Al Ain; arabian-adventures.com

WHERE TO STAY

- For a comfortable stay in a peaceful setting not too far from the city's buzz try Anantara Eastern Mangroves Hotel & Spa; abu-dhabi.anantara.com
- Or for a Saadiyat Island address during your stay, check out the Park Hyatt Abu Dhabi; abudhabi.park.hyatt.com

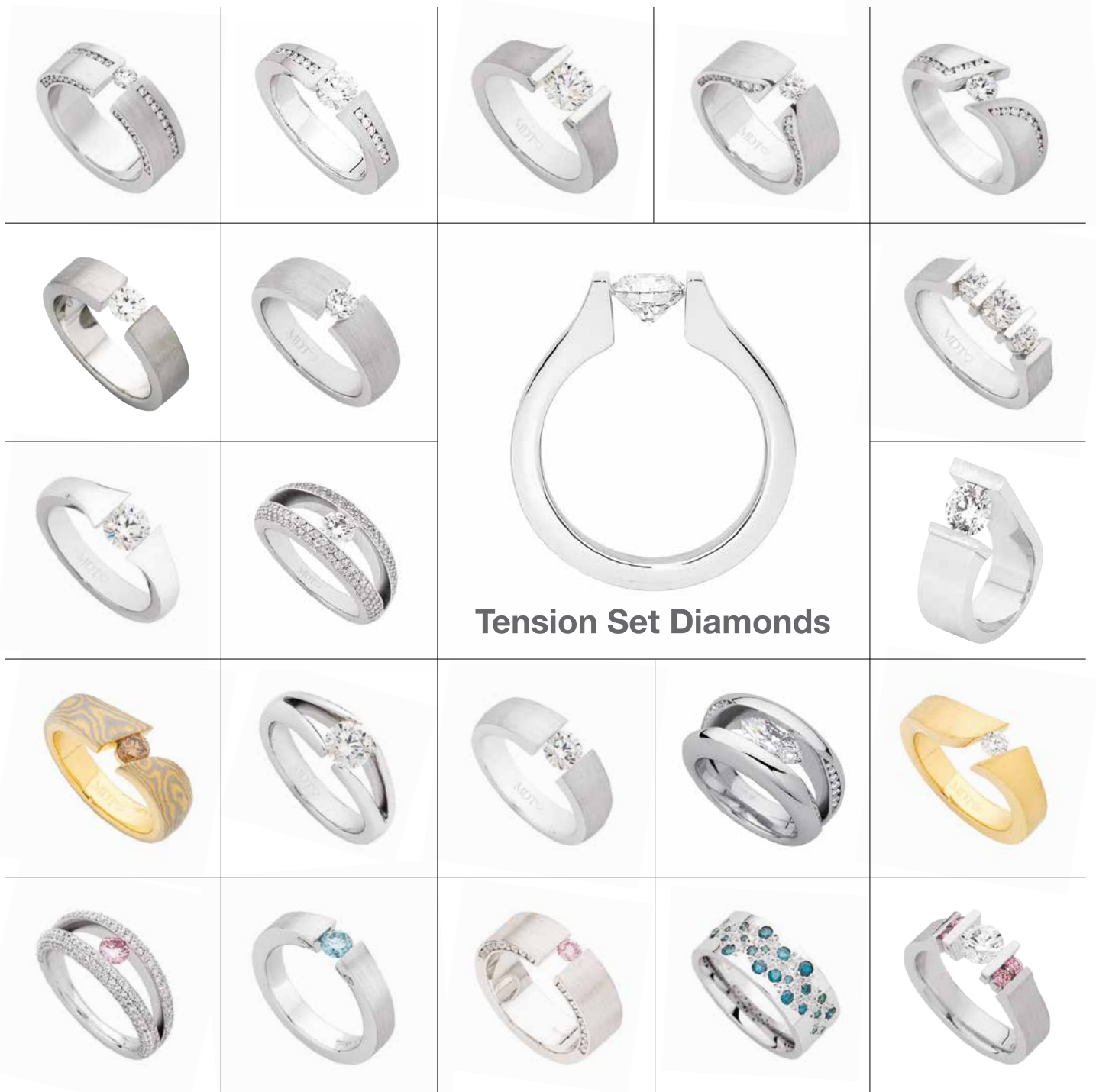
WHERE TO EAT

- Al Fanar, Canal Walk, Dubai Festival City Mall: +971-4/232-9966; alfanarrestaurant.com
- Atayeb, Viceroy Hotel, Yas Island: +971-2/656-0600; viceroyhotelsandresorts.com
- Mezlai, Emirates Palace, Corniche Road: +971-2/690-7999; kempinski.com
- Pachaylen, Anantara Eastern Mangroves Hotel & Spa: +971-2/646-1000; abu-dhabi.anantara.com
- Shish Shawerma: Khalidiya, behind Corniche Tower: +971-2/650-5576; shishshawerma.com

FURTHER INFORMATION

- Visit Abu Dhabi: visitabudhabi.ae
- The Louvre Abu Dhabi: louvreabudhabi.ae/en

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global spas

COMPILED BY LISA PERKOVIC

Revered in Saigon

There's plenty of glitz and glamour at the brand new Reverie Saigon, a luxury hotel in Ho Chi Minh's Times Square building. The 284 rooms are spread across the 27-39th floors of the building, with an extremely decadent décor. Expect chandeliers, extravagant bed heads, opulent wallpaper and velvet ottomans. Along with a helipad and two Rolls Royce Phantom Dragons. The 1200-square-metre spa and fitness centre is just as dramatic – including plenty of gold tiling when you walk in. The 10 treatment rooms are available for body treatments, reflexology, scrubs, massages and facials. thereveriesaiagon.com



New meets old in Tel Aviv

In a city with such history, The Norman, a new hotel in Tel Aviv is able to fit right in, through a combination of beautiful design and careful restoration. The hotel itself is spread out across two residences dating back to the 1920s, with just 50 rooms and suites, inside the UNESCO World Heritage White City. In keeping with the historical location, the style is Bauhaus but a very cool rooftop pool brings the buildings into this century. The Spa at The Norman is just as cool, with a range of “eclectic” treatments designed to pamper and look after your inner balance. The rooftop massages take place in a private cabana by the pool but if you'd like to indulge in wellness outdoors, ask to see the hotel's own yoga instructor. The staff yogi conducts sessions by the Tower Garden, a small grove of trees and grass. thenorman.com

Tranquil in Tokyo

In a city that's all about the bright lights, billboards and bigger is better messages, The Aman Tokyo's vibe is distinctly discreet and minimalist. Think bonsai pines, pale pine flooring and basalt-lined bath tubs. There are just 84 suites in this sky high hotel, which occupies the top six floors of the 40-storey Otemachi Tower. The more sedate elements of Japanese culture come to the fore in the 2,500 square-metre Aman Spa, which utilises natural products from Kampo, the traditional Japanese medicine system, along with Aman signature products. There are eight treatment rooms, where guests can indulge in customised programs or signature treatments. The spa is also home to a Fitness Centre, Yoga Studio, Steam Rooms, traditional male and female Japanese onsens and a much-talked-about 30-metre pool that sits level with the mountains on the horizon so you can swim and enjoy the scenery. amanresorts.com/amantokyo





Paradise on your doorstep

Noumea is usually the one and only port of call for a lot of New Caledonia's international visitors. Now there's a reason to venture further afield. The opening of the Sheraton Deva Resort & Spa, the first resort in the Bourail district, about two and a half hours drive from Noumea, marks the beginning of a new period of development in the region.

The property is designed as a hub for visitors to the developing mountain biking and hiking terrain. With a golf course and mountains on one side and the ocean on the other, as well as the largest resort pool in New Caledonia, the resort is already buzzing with activity.

The Deep NatureSpa by Algotherme has just opened and offers signature treatments alongside more traditional, tropical therapies, as a place to escape and unwind after a day spent adventuring or by the pool. The 700-square-metre wellness centre has five treatment rooms and offers body and beauty treatments using the paraben and phenoxyethanol free Algotherme range of marine cosmetics. There's also a Vichy shower room, hamman, fitness centre and plunge pool. starwoodhotels.com

Five star and fabulous at the Shangri-La

Five-star hotels in Sydney have a lot in common. Amazing harbour views, award-winning restaurants, well-stocked bars and of course, spas. So how do they set themselves apart? The Shangri La Sydney isn't resting on its laurels, with an upgrade of its Club Rooms and Horizon Lounge freshly completed and a brand new spa menu. CHI, The Spa at Shangri La, sits on the hotel's second floor and is perhaps the one spot where you won't find big windows looking out over the city. Instead, you walk into a cocoon of calm – the low light, sheer curtains and dark wooden panelling of the waiting area are just a taste of the spa's air of relaxation.

The spa has six private spa suites, including two couple suites, all of which are popular throughout the week and well into the evening, with the spa closing at 9pm every night.

The new CHI menu still makes use of the Sodashi chemical-free skincare range – part of the hotel's commitment to local ingredients and brands. Combining holistic Asian treatments with local ingredients, the menu includes CHI signature massages, spa journeys, body therapies, facials and a range of unique body polishes and exfoliations using local ingredients. The Bush Honey and Macadamia Body Wrap is a great experience for tourists and locals alike, with the more traditional aromatherapy massages and CHI balance therapies popular choices too. shangri-la.com





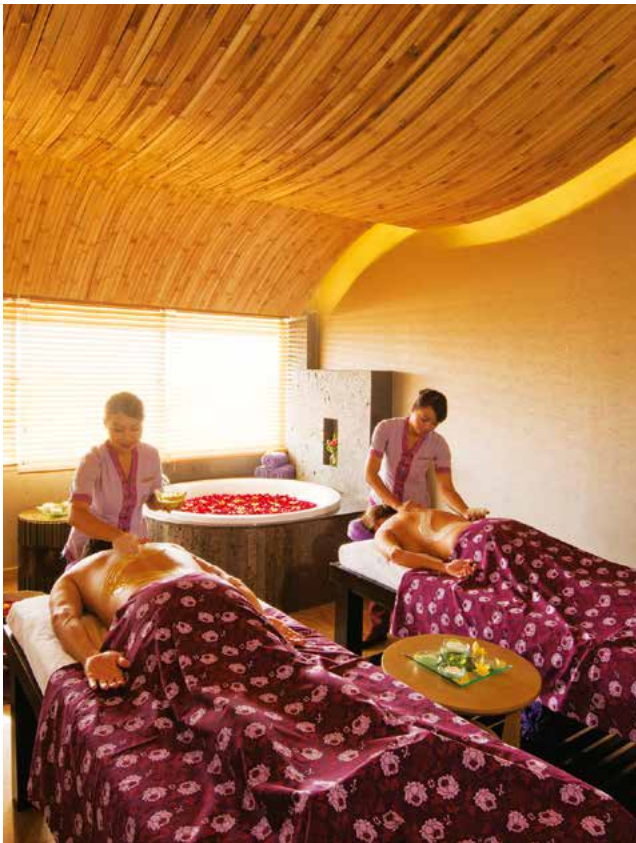
From Turkey with love

Beloved by celebrities and socialites, the famous Trump SoHo hotel in New York is home to an 11,000-square-foot spa that sprawls over two levels. The Trump brand is synonymous with decadence and that's no different here. The Spa is home to male and female hammans, offering traditional Turkish bath house scrubs, steam and bathing rituals. Clay massages, exfoliations and soap scrubs are just the beginning, with the heated marble slabs and domed mosaic ceilings bringing fans of the Turkish treatments from all over America to the hotel. Outside of the hamman, treatments make use of everything from gemstones to henna, with facials, massages, wraps, polishes and scrubs all on offer. Sunrise yoga takes place by the pool on weekends, and hair and makeup is available onsite at the Antonio Prieto salon. The Spa is also well known for its couple's treatments – packages that include milk baths, champagne and even chocolate covered strawberries. trumphotelcollection.com/soho

Back to nature in Canberra

A day spa generally smells pretty good – flowers, vanilla, spices – but the new Jindii EcoSpa has even more of a reason to smell amazing. Located inside Canberra's Australian National Botanic Gardens, the day spa is accessed by walking through the gardens, over bridges and through native plant gardens. The five treatment rooms are used for body wraps, massages, facials, exfoliations and hydrotherapy. With a focus on clean, green living, the spa uses organic Australian products – you'll find Camellia oil, Australian Desert Salts and Tasmanian Kelp featured in everything from half-hour hand treatments to three-hour spa journeys. Traditional Aboriginal healing techniques are incorporated into The Dreaming, Ocean Dreaming, Jindii and Billabong (designed for two) journeys. jindii.com.au



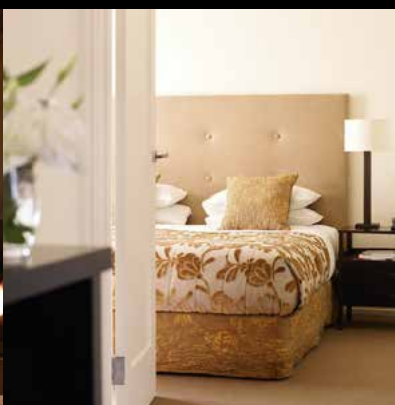


Bigger is better at RIMBA

Award-winning spas can't rest on their laurels and the AYANA resort and spa in Bali is a case in point. Already home to a 22,000-square-metre Thermes Marin wellness centre, the resort has added the RIMBA Rooftop Spa by Thermes Marins to its spa family. Located inside the AYANA'S 90 hectare gardens, this new spa brings six rooftop spa rooms to the table. While still offering AYANA'S signature treatments, the new space breaks away from the resort's traditional Balinese design, with a modern take focusing on natural elements. Think light colours and curved bamboo ceilings. The rooms make the most of the elevated location, with windows looking out over the gardens, bar and pools below. Book in for the Rock My Body treatment and you'll get the best of both worlds – a 75-minute aromatherapy Deep Relaxation Massage followed by a signature Spa on the Rocks cocktail at the resort's famous Rock Bar. rimbajimbaran.com

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TRIPLE TREAT in margaret river

BY UTE JUNKER

With world-class wine, fabulous food and gorgeous scenery, Margaret River makes for a great driving holiday.



WALK ON WATER

Right: The Cape to Cape track in WA's South West

Opening spread: View from the White Elephant Café

There's an art to the perfect driving holiday. Distances should be short. Scenery should be spectacular. There should be lots of opportunities to get out and stretch your legs and, of course, plenty of fine food and wine to enjoy.

Ladies and gentlemen, welcome to Margaret River. With its lovely beaches and soaring karri forests, its underground caves and thriving food scene, Margaret River has plenty to keep you occupied, before we even touch on the world-class wineries. Best of all, this surprisingly-compact area can be explored in just three days. Here's our guide to how to do it right.

DAY 1: EASY DOES IT

No need for an early start. Getting to Margaret River from Perth is easier than ever before, thanks to the new Forrest Highway. Take the Kwinana Freeway, which leads you direct to the Forrest Highway, and in just two and a half hours you will arrive in the seaside town of Busselton, where the Margaret River region officially starts.

Stretch your legs on Busselton's heritage-listed timber jetty: almost two kms long, it is the longest in the Southern Hemisphere. Too much of a walk? There is also a train that will take you all the way to the end. Alternatively, go for a stroll along the sheltered beach, or treat yourself to a dip, if the weather is warm enough.

The smart choice for lunch is Laundry 43, a hip diner where popular dishes include crispy whiting with a cucumber salad, or a carpaccio made with local beef and served with truffle mayonnaise.

After lunch, it is a quick 40-minute drive to Cape Naturaliste lighthouse, the starting point for one of Australia's great walks. The Cape to Cape Track stretches 135km along the coast, but even a short stroll along the clifftop will give you a sense of the spectacular views that can be enjoyed along the way.

By now, you are probably ready to taste some wine. Given Margaret River's global reputation, it's surprising to learn that the first vines were planted here less than 50 years ago. There are now over 100 different producers in the area, most famous for their chardonnay and cabernet sauvignon, but also producing plenty of other varietals, including semillon and sauvignon blanc.

Start your exploration with one of the smaller wineries, such as Windance, a family company run by Drew and Rosemary Brent-White. The range includes a sauvignon blanc semillon with tropical flavours, and a rich shiraz with berry flavours, vanilla, mocha and spice.

Dinner tonight is in the town of Margaret River. Must Wine Bar and Bistro, the little sister of a Perth institution, has communal tables, floor-to-ceiling wine racks and a dedication to doing as much as possible in-house, from dry ageing the beef to making pork confit. Anything from the grill is a good choice; alternatively, the angel hair pasta with crab, tomato and chilli is a longtime favourite.



DAY 2: CAVES AND CRAVINGS

This morning, it's time to head underground. Thanks to a subterranean ridge of limestone, Margaret River has some magnificent caves to explore. One of the most visited is the wheelchair-accessible Mammoth Cave, where you finish your visit on a winding trail lined with tall marri trees.

An alternative is the spectacular Lake Cave, where pretty limestone formations are reflected in an underground stream. You need to be steady on your feet for this one: you will need to walk down 300 stairs just to reach the cave.

From Lake Cave, head south and turn onto Boranup Drive, an 11km stretch of road that passes through a karri forest, where the trees soar up to 60 metres tall. The drive itself is impressive, but it is worth getting out of the car and walking amongst them to get the full impact of these giants. A number of trails can be accessed from the old picnic area, about halfway along the road.

At the end of the road, Boranup Drive meets up again with Caves Road. From here, it is an easy drive to Leeuwin Estate winery. Leeuwin Estate is known for its shiraz and chardonnay, particularly the Art Series, its distinctive labels designed by leading contemporary artists. Don't leave without visiting the in-house gallery, displaying works by some of Australia's best-known artists, including John Olsen, Sidney Nolan and Fred Williams.

If it is a nice day, head for the coast for lunch. The White Elephant Café has a gorgeous setting directly on the beach, and a tempting menu of treats such as slow braised lamb salad.



From here, it is a short drive to Cape Mentelle, one of the area's pioneer wineries. Its cabernet, shiraz, sauvignon blanc semillon and zinfandel are all highly regarded. Visitors can also opt for a one hour behind-the-scenes tour, to learn more about the winemaking progress. If you are visiting in summer, keep an eye out for the outdoor cinema program.

Dinner tonight is at Miki's Open Kitchen, known for its Japanese-influenced cuisine. The chef's menu is recommended: the dishes will probably include some sashimi and some of Miki's superb tempura, such as a panko-crumbed Esperance scallop.

DAY 3: GRAZING AND GALLERIES

Today it is time to explore Margaret River's burgeoning food scene. If it's a Saturday, start with a visit to the farmer's market at Margaret River, where you can buy local produce including nougat, berries, marmalade, olive oil, and wood-fired bread. Even if the market is not on, there is no need to go hungry.

Start with a coffee at Yahava Koffeeworks, where they roast a mean brew. Your next stop depends on your favourite temptation. Cheese fans will want to head for the Margaret

ROLL OUT THE BARREL

Clockwise from above: Leeuwin Estate Vineyard; Lake cave; Cape Mentelle Barrel room; Farmer's market

Valley Dairy Company, which offers free tastings of cheese and yoghurt. Specialities include silky camemberts and tangy cheddars, and they make a mean milkshake, too.

A different type of dairy treat is on offer at Millers Ice Cream, set in a 90-year-old cottage and offering tantalising flavours such as mascarpone and wild fig, ginger and coffee and strawberry and custard.

Other food-focused stores worth checking out include The Good Olive, which combines homewares and jewellery with a range of local goodies including jams, chutneys, coffee and olive oil.



Gourmets on the loose

Even the world's best chefs can't resist Margaret River. Each November, culinary heavy-hitters such as Heston Blumenthal, Rick Stein and Massimo Bottura fly in for the Margaret River Gourmet Escape, a three-day celebration of fine food and wine. Ticketholders can access the Festival Village, where a wide range of workshops, wine tastings, master classes talks and cooking demonstrations run all day. Choose your highlights before you go; with so much going on, it is easy to get distracted. Also worth checking out are the satellite events, which include foraging dinners, panel sessions and the annual Gourmet Beach BBQ.

This year's Margaret River Gourmet Escape takes place from 20 to 22 November.

If you have a sweet tooth, make a quick stop at the Margaret River Chocolate Company – and yes, those barrels of chocolate buttons are there for you to sample.

It's time to start heading for home, but that doesn't mean the fun is over. On the way, you will pass Cullen Wines, one of the area's most respected wineries. Cullen is known not just for its award-winning wine (the Diana Madeline Cabernet Merlot is outstanding) but for its commitment to biodynamic practices. The biodynamic approach extends to the restaurant, which sources 80 per cent of its fresh produce from the winery's own garden.

Cullen is an excellent choice for lunch; however, if you are still full from your morning grazing, keep heading north until you reach Knee Deep wineries, where another acclaimed restaurant awaits.

After lunch, drive on to Yallingup, where you can take another break to admire some art. Margaret River has a thriving art scene and is home to a number of galleries; Gunyulgup Galleries is the pick of the bunch. Located next to a scenic lake, the gallery showcases the best of WA artists' work across a range of mediums. It is a lovely last stop before the final stretch taking you back to Perth. •

Photography courtesy Ute Junker and Tourism Western Australia

SEA OF GREEN

Clockwise from above: Cullen winery in WA's Margaret River; White Elephant Café



travel facts

GETTING THERE

Qantas operates 51 services a week from Melbourne to Perth, 48 services from Sydney, and 28 services from Brisbane, on a combination of A330 and B737-800 aircraft. qantas.com

WHERE TO STAY

- The area's grandest lodging is the magnificent Cape Lodge, surrounded by vineyards. In addition to the tranquil setting, guests get first dibs at bookings in the acclaimed restaurant. capelodge.com.au
- Prefer to sleep by the sea? Pullman Bunker Bay Resort's bungalows are within easy walking distance of the beach. pullmanbunkerbayresort.com.au

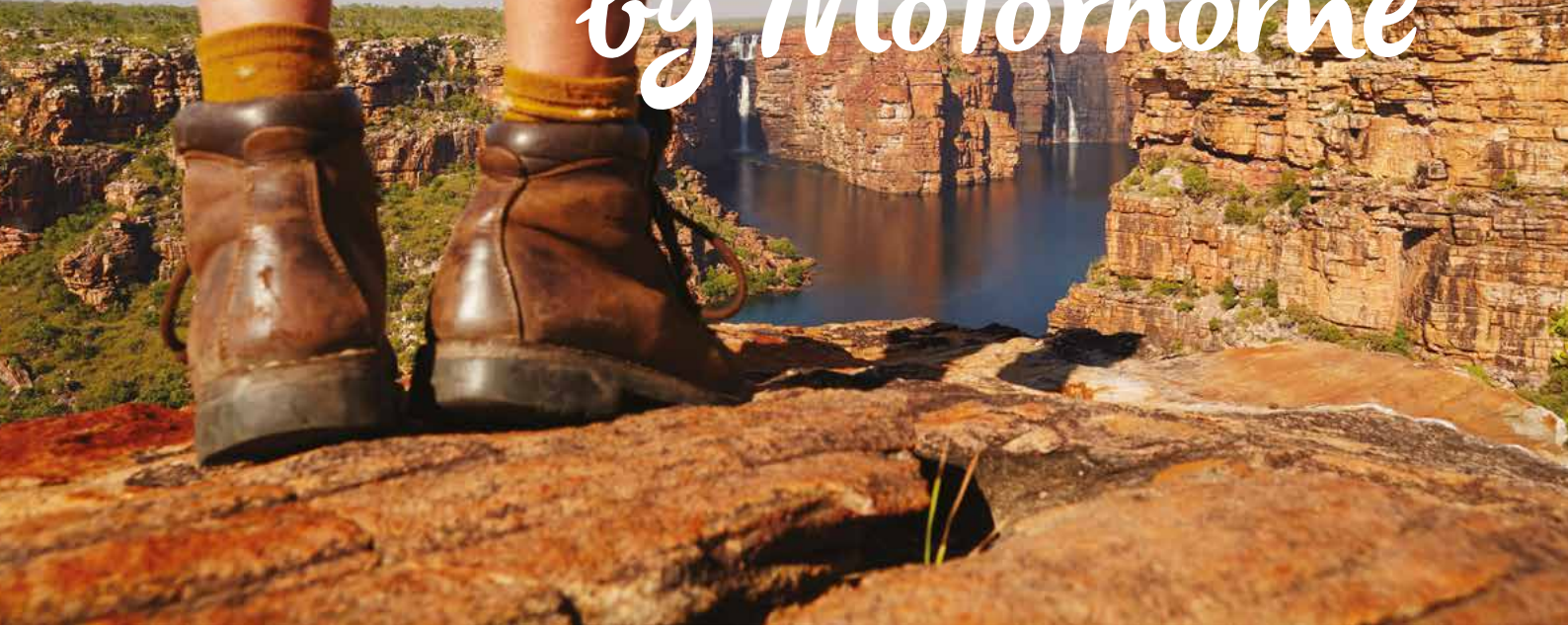
SELF DRIVE

Motorhome rentals are affordable and allow you to set the pace and sleep off the beaten track. driveaway.com.au

FURTHER INFORMATION

Tourism Western Australia: westernaustralia.com

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the finer things in Queenstown

BY HELEN HAYES

With mountain peaks jutting skywards, mirror-smooth lakes, wines that could be from the Gods themselves and food to suit, Queenstown is just about the perfect destination.



Queenstown is lucky. Very lucky. It started out as a town called 'Camp' – so named by William Rees, a man who must have been pinching himself when he arrived on the shores of Lake Wakitipu in February 1860. Imagine what it would have looked like then; the wild razor-backed Remarkable Range the backdrop to a lake so tranquil and clear, and on the eastern side – thick green forested slopes that give way to alpine splendours. Thankfully, the town became known as Queenstown, either because it is so beautiful it is fit for a queen, or after the Irish town of Queenstown – now known as Cobh – where the *Titanic* was built. Either way, this idyllic, postcard-pretty place deserves its regal status and certainly delivers a royal experience, whether you want to be active, do some wine tasting, go sightseeing and of course stay in five-star accommodation fit for a you-know-what.

ACTIVE

The landscape lends itself to outdoor adventures in spring and summer, and everything seems easier when you have such beautiful scenery to admire. For two-wheeled fun hire a bike and putter about the lakeside, or test your legs a little more on The Queenstown Trail which has 110 kilometres of walking and cycling trails. Then there's Rabbit Ridge Resort, a new year-round bike resort in Gibbston Valley, with 30 kilometres of single tracks over stunning high country terrain for learners to advanced riders. A little further afield, the Otago Central Rail Trail is spectacular, and while the 150-kilometre trail runs from Middlemarch to Clyde (40 kilometres from Queenstown), you don't have to do the whole thing. We tackle a 22-kilometre stretch between Oturehua and Lauder, and really want to do the whole trail as a result.

For a serious dose of Paradise with your exercise, visit Glenorchy, just 45 minutes from Queenstown at the head of Lake Wakatipu. Sign up for the Dart River Wilderness Jet, which includes a walk through untouched forest that looks like something out of *Lord of the Rings*. Or leap into the saddle with Dart Stables who operate a number of rides – some for beginners and some for advanced – with most going through filming locations for the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy as well as *The Hobbit*.



For a good walk, often ruined by a little white ball, Queenstown has six spectacular courses within 25 minutes of the town centre. Try your swing at Jack's Point, The Hills, Millbrook Resort, Arrowtown Golf Club, Queenstown Golf Club at Kelvin Heights, or the Frankton Driving Range and Golf Course.

If that's not enough, zip through the trees like Tarzan with ZipTrek, fling yourself off a bridge or a ledge on a bungee cord, or try parasailing from Skyline Gondola, where you can have an entrée of luge to settle the nerves.

TAKE IT EASY

For more relaxed pursuits, step aboard the historic and elegant *TS Earnslaw* for the tranquil 90-minute cruise across Lake Wakatipu or choose a cruise plus a tour to Walter Peak High Country Farm. Now one of the oldest tourist attractions in Central Otago and the only remaining passenger-carrying coal-fired steamship in the Southern Hemisphere, *Earnslaw* is as elegant as always, and has been enjoyed by Bill Clinton, the Queen and the Emperor of Japan.

For another slice of history, hire a car and visit Arrowtown, Cromwell and the town of Clyde. Picturesque Arrowtown is an old goldmining village with quaint tree-lined streets featuring old miners' cottages and a restored Chinese Village alongside intimate cafes, boutiques and galleries. In Cromwell, visit Old Cromwell Town, which pays homage to the old town that was



PARADISE FOUND

Clockwise from top: Wine tasting cave, Gibbston Valley Winery; Lakeside wharves; Horseriding in Glenorchy

Opening spread: Paragliding from Bob's Peak



Amisfield received the royal tick of approval last year when the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge dined at The Bistro



SOME DAYS ARE DIAMONDS

Opposite page from top: Spring view of the Remarkables; Blue cod ceviche, sea water cured paua, carrot, ginger kim chi at Amisfield winery; Cycling across Edgar Bridge

flooded when the Clyde Dam was constructed. Some forward thinking locals saved eight original properties and have restored or reconstructed many others. The buildings are now brimming with quirky shops and mementos. The town of Clyde, not far from Cromwell, hasn't changed much since it was a raucous, rich, gold mining town. Cruise on the Clutha River out of town and see just how hard the miners had it back in the day. The old Naylor's General Store, built of stone in 1869, along with its homestead, sheds, stables and barns, is now Olivers Central Otago, a beautiful boutique property with 11 rooms, all different and exquisitely furnished to reflect days gone by. The Restaurant, in the old general store building, opened its doors in March 2015, along with the Victoria Store Brewery, a bakery, deli and café.

To really enjoy doing nothing, book in for an onsen experience at Queenstown's Onsen Hot Pools. Situated on the cliffs overlooking the Shotover River canyon, the hot pools are perfect to ease tired muscles and to feast your eyes, as you can convert your pool from indoor to outdoor at the touch of a button. The view to the mountains is glorious.

FINE WINES

Central Otago is home to 200 vineyards and top growing conditions mean the region has more than its fair share of award-winning wines. Amisfield is well worth a visit, overlooking Lake Hayes and in the shadows of the Pisa Mountain range. This former merino station now boasts a state-of-the-art winery and produces mostly Pinot Noir as well as Sauvignon Blanc, Pinot Gris and Riesling.

The Cellar Door is in a beautiful stone building where you can enjoy wine tasting, and have a spectacular lunch in The Bistro. Amisfield received the royal tick of approval last year when the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge dined at The Bistro and enjoyed a glass or two of Amisfield Pinot Noir 2011.

Mt Difficulty is another winery with incredible views, situated on Felton Road, which has commanding views across the Cromwell basin and Lake Dunstan. The architecturally-pleasing building is a great place to wile away a few hours, tucking into lunch on the outdoor terrace and savouring one of their wines; the Sauvignon Blanc is exquisite.

Gibbston Valley is home to the Wine Cave, New Zealand's largest wine cave and certainly one of the most beautiful. Join the daily tour to the Cave and do a tasting tour that includes a visit to Home Block, the region's oldest vineyard. Then there's the Gibbston Valley Restaurant, offering one of the finest Central Otago wine and food experiences imaginable, with Executive Chef Mark Sage and his wife and Sous Chef Sue Sage, creating a harmonious blend of wine, food and place.



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travel facts

GETTING THERE

Air New Zealand, Qantas, Jetstar and Virgin fly to Queenstown.

- Air New Zealand: airnewzealand.com.au
- Qantas: qantas.com.au
- Jetstar: jetstar.com.au
- Virgin Australia: virginaustralia.com.au

WHAT TO DO

- Dart River Wilderness Jet: dartriver.co.nz
- Dart Stables: dartstables.com
- Otago Central Rail Trail: otagocentral.co.nz
- Onsen Hot Pools: onsen.co.nz
- TS Earnslaw: realjourneys.co.nz
- Amisfield: amisfield.co.nz
- Gibbston Valley: gibbstonvalley.com
- Mt Difficulty: mtdifficulty.co.nz

WHERE TO STAY

- Matakauri Lodge: matakaurilodge.com
- The Rees: therees.co.nz
- Millbrook: millbrook.co.nz
- Olivers Central Otago: oliverscentralotago.co.nz
- Platinum Villas: platinumqueenstown.co.nz

FURTHER INFORMATION

Destination Queenstown: queenstownnz.com.au

BUBBLE BATH

Opposite page from top: Lake Wakatipu; Onsen Hot Pools; Mt Difficulty

STAY IN STYLE

Queenstown has an embarrassment of riches when it comes to luxury accommodation, with some of the world's best lodges, boutique properties, resorts and hotels to choose from. Matakauri Lodge sits high and very pretty overlooking Lake Wakatipu and the Remarkable ranges, and while it's just seven minutes out of town, it's a world away. Accommodation is in 12 resplendent guest rooms and suites, with the ultimate being the Owner's Cottage, which has four suites, a private Jacuzzi, kitchen, lounge and courtyard. The property also has a magnificent spa.

You don't have to be a golfer to enjoy a stay at Millbrook Resort, which has one of the most scenic rural outlooks around. The Resort has 160 rooms, a 27-hole championship golf course, and an award-winning day spa. It is an oasis in green and the perfect place to get away from it all, without being too far from the delights of Queenstown.

Closer to the bright lights, The Rees Hotel & Apartments is perched on the lakeshore between the airport and the town

centre, with its beautifully-designed apartments a pleasure to stay in. The large balconies are perfect for a sunset drink, or for a bit of plane-spotting, as airlines swoop in over the lake. The view is arguably even better from the Bordeaux Wine Lounge, with its comfortable lounge, fireplace and soaring glass window opening up the Tolkienesque landscape in jaw-dropping fashion.

It seems fitting to raise a glass to the man the Rees is named after, the founder of this town and who still has descendants in the area. He saw the future when he came ashore all those years ago.

But thank goodness the name Camp didn't stick. •

Photography by Destination Queenstown, Helen Hayes and various establishments

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Rocky Mountain Oysters, Sheridan, Wyoming

Rocky Mountain oysters are not at all what you think they are, but if they were called bull's testicles, no one would ever order them. Truth is, these prairie molluscs are not nearly as unappetising as they sound; usually deep-fried or sauteed in an espagnole sauce, beef barnacles – or dusted nuts, if you prefer – are a popular appetiser in the Western United States and parts of Western Canada. Order a steaming plate of cowboy caviar at the Open Range restaurant in the historic Sheridan Inn, where Buffalo Bill Cody once auditioned cowboys for his Wild West Show, right out on the front lawn. Now that's ballsy.



Pomme Frites, Brussels, Belgium

Some historians contend that pomme frites, or French fries, have been dunked in bubbling oil in Belgium since the mid-1600s; others suggest that the process was started by the French in 1735. Today, *pomme frites* are most often associated with American fast food, though the best of the best are still served in the Belgian city of Brussels – there are more than 5,000 frites vendors in the country, and on average Belgians consume three-times as much fried potato as Americans. The house of Antoine is much beloved, and serves *pomme frites* with a variety of accompaniments – though traditionally they are eaten with a simple mayonnaise.

Bacon and Cabbage, Cashel, Ireland

Bacon and cabbage is a quintessentially Irish dish, as big a part of the culinary culture of the Emerald Isle as Guinness or blood pudding. A simple dish in both preparation and execution, this meal is made with boiled cabbage and thick cuts of bacon, and often accompanied by boiled or mashed potatoes. A thick buttermilk sauce, infused with parsley, is often used to top the dish. O'Neill's Restaurant in Cashel is particularly well known for their savoury spin.





Conch Ceviche, Belize City, Belize

When you first arrive in Belize City, chances are good that you'll zip through town en route to a hotel, private island transfer, or the harbour. You'll watch the vibrant, charming city come to life around you; I imagine you'll deign to sample local foods from the dozens of pop-ups, food trucks, and cafés you roll past. For a fresh taste of Belize, pop in to the Admiral's Restaurant, adjacent to the small Maya Island Air landing strip. The Admiral dishes what is quite possibly the best conch ceviche in the Caribbean.

Balut, Siem Reap, Cambodia

Most famous in the Philippines, this notorious dish – the bane of world-class chefs and backpacker gourmands alike – is also a popular street food snack in Cambodia. Made by boiling a developing duck embryo, *balut* is often served with a dash of salt, a bit of lime juice, and chilli sauce, and then washed down with a pint of beer. You'll find *balut* vendors scattered throughout Siem Reap and other Cambodian towns; the eggs are often covered with sand to keep them warm.



Larb, Luang Prabang, Laos

Laos has a long, rich culinary tradition which extends far beyond the borders of the small South East Asian country; there are more ethnic Lao people living in Thailand and China than in Laos itself, while dozens of dishes more commonly thought to be Thai or Chinese are actually of Lao origin. The most popular Lao dish is larb, a fresh, pungent minced meat salad that can include a variety of proteins – beef, duck, chicken, pork, fish – which are flavoured with roasted garlic, fish sauce, lime juice and Lao spices. A little vegetarian restaurant in Luang Prabang called Tamarind serves a vegan larb that is among the best you'll ever try.



Deep Dish Pizza, Chicago, USA

Deep dish pizza is baked into the fabric of Chicago's very identity. Baked in a deep pie or cake pan, Chicago-style is often two or three times as thick as regular pizza, and stacked high with mountains of cheese and chunky tomato sauce – the ingredients are added “upside down,” so that the cheese doesn't burn on top. This style began appearing in the city in the early 1940s, and has been a staple since. Pizza outposts like Lou Malnati's Pizzeria and Giordano's are nationally renowned for their classic approaches to deep-dish.

Camel Ice Cream, Dubai, UAE

Camel milk ice cream has been popular in the United Arab Emirates for ages, but it has only become commercially available throughout Dubai in the last few years. Proponents of camel milk products point to the lower fat content, abundance of unsaturated fatty acids, and Vitamin C levels; ice cream aficionados note the light, airy quality of the product, and the slight salty flavour as compared to cow's milk ice cream. You'll find camel milk products in malls, cafes and restaurants across the city, but for a unique bite try the ice cream pop-up next to the metro station at the Dubai Spice Souk.



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Hot Properties — FIJI

BY ALENEY DE WINTER

From luxury private islands and intimate boutique hotels, to family resorts and surf stays, Vacations has rounded up some of Fiji's hottest properties for a taste of tropical bliss.

SUBLIME SANCTUARY

Fiji's most unique luxury escape exclusively for couples, Likuliku is the only resort in Fiji with over water bures, each suspended over the lagoon's stunning reef edge. A magical sanctuary located in the glorious Mamanuca Island group, the resort appears as an ancient village, built in traditional style with an exotic mix of natural materials and modern comforts. Guests can laze in the horizon-edge pool, soak in one of the mini-Jacuzzis, indulge at the Tatadra spa, dine on the exquisite cuisine in Fijiana restaurant, enjoy myriad land and sea pursuits, or simply enjoy watching the sun set from the bar in the middle of the lagoon.

ULTIMATE LUXURY

Laucala Island is a place so special that it makes the usual superlatives seem somewhat lacking. A forward-thinking property that is as much about environmental and cultural sensitivity as it is about extreme luxury, Laucala is idyllically set amidst coconut plantations, sandy beaches and lush mountains overlooking turquoise bays. The 25 villas are the ultimate in luxury and glamour while maintaining a traditional



Fijian feel and each offers a seamless transition from indoor to outdoor living. If visitors can tear themselves away from the stunning villas, they can also enjoy the resort's incredible spa, horse stable, water sports, an 18-hole golf course, snorkelling and diving amongst colourful marine life on the coral reef, plus the culinary delights of five restaurants.

THE BUTLER DID IT

Set on the beach overlooking the Pacific Ocean and surrounded by lush tropical gardens Nanuku Fiji is the quintessential South Pacific paradise. Whether you're seeking a honeymoon destination, a family break or an adventure-packed holiday, this resort delivers. A choice of restaurants and bars, stunning infinity swimming pool, luxurious day spa and a salon complement the plush modern guest rooms which come with a butler to help out with requests. Those could be anything from organising activities including diving, snorkelling, surfing, zip lining, white water rafting and a trek in the forest with a local Fijian 'Warrior' to a food safari or an intimate dinner for two.

MALOLO MAGIC

For an escape away from the fast pace of today's world, Malolo is a beautiful, rustic resort that is all about relaxation. Owned by a Fijian family, and with a staff who are descendants of villagers who have lived there for centuries, Malolo delivers true Fijian hospitality. The Resort has 46 bures in four different categories, suitable for everyone from couples to families. Feel yourself slow down as you wean off the mod cons, listening to the sounds of the sea and the sea breeze rustling the palm trees instead of the beep and trill of a phone.

A serene and sophisticated tropical retreat, The Wakaya Club & Spa is surrounded by a protected coral reef, azure lagoons, majestic cliffs and pristine white sand beaches. The small but exceptionally luxurious eco-friendly resort offers palatial



accommodation tucked into tropical gardens, fine international cuisine and some of the best scuba diving and snorkelling in Fiji. Private, remote and exclusive, everything from the chilled French champagne upon arrival, the spectacular food, golf, and most water sports including diving is inclusive with only air transfers, dive certification and treatments at the spa extra.

SURF'S UP

Fiji's premium surf resort, Namotu Island Resort, is the island closest to seven of Fiji's most amazing surf breaks, including Cloudbreak. Beyond the breaks, Namotu is a first-class destination for a variety of water sports, and visitors can spend their day in, over and under the water with fishing, snorkelling, diving and stand up paddle surfing. Air-conditioned private bures for two to six people and a six-person villa offer stunning views and provide easy access to the resort's facilities including the renowned Namotu Bar and beachfront Waqa Bar where drinks are served with a warm Fijian smile.

BOUTIQUE RETREAT

Tokoriki Island Resort is a luxury boutique retreat where the relaxed and friendly resort atmosphere and contemporary Fijian style merge to create the perfect private accommodation. Located in the lovely Mamanuca Islands and easily accessed from Nadi by helicopter, seaplane, catamaran or speed boat, Tokoriki is the perfect Fiji destination for a child-free island escape. Dine on South Pacific and Asian influenced menus and fine wines at the resort's award winning

HAPPILY SECLUDED

Opposite page from top: Nanuku; Laucala offers dramatic extremes in landscape: volcanic mountains covered in tropical rainforest and postcard-perfect beaches, untouched mangroves and coral reefs brimming with marine life

Opening spread: Masima Island and Bar at dusk, Likuliku

restaurants, enjoy the tropical sunsets in your private pool, or laze on your daybed with a cocktail, explore the island on a guided nature walk, dive and snorkel along the stunning reefs, visit the local village, or unwind at the spa.

HOLE IN ONE

Luxurious accommodation and a picture-perfect beachfront location on Fiji's Coral Coast await visitors to the InterContinental Fiji Golf Resort and Spa. The sprawling resort's exceptional amenities include an 18-hole championship golf course with greens overlooking the ocean, three swimming pools, kids club, and a variety of exciting culinary experiences, from opulent fine dining to laidback beachside alternatives. If it is pampering and rejuvenation you seek, the secluded Spa InterContinental offers signature treatments with a Fijian twist. There's also a palm-fringed white sand beach ideal for swimming and snorkelling and relaxing massages in the beachside cabanas.



At Royal Davui Island Resort Fiji, the shell symbolises our invitation for you to come to our island paradise. Just a few guests can be accommodated at Royal Davui, so be prepared for an exclusive and exceptional experience from the moment of your arrival. Here the world-renowned warmth and hospitality of the Fijian people awaits you. Our premier Fiji resort is an adults only escape, offering an ideal tropical island escape, vacation, honeymoon or wedding.

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ROYAL DAVUI
ISLAND - FIJI

PRIVATE PLAYGROUND

Royal Davui Island Resort is an exclusive adults-only sanctuary located in Fiji's spectacular Beqa Lagoon, off the Southern coast of Fiji. With only 16 villas, in-room dining, private plunge pools, and the tranquil Davui day spa, this resort promises a level of luxury and privacy not found in larger resorts. A pristine playground for water lovers, visitors can catamaran, paddle board or sea kayak to the island's fringing coral reef, and divers will find an underwater paradise just 30-minutes away by boat. Food lovers too will love Royal Davui's gourmet offerings from a romantic champagne breakfast on a deserted sand bar or a long lunch under an ancient banyan tree, to laid-back picnics on the beach.

ADULTS-ONLY

Set among Fiji's northern islands, Qamea's breathtaking combination of lush tropical jungle and white sand beaches make an ideal setting for those seeking a unique and authentic break without sacrificing the finer things. This intimate adults-only resort welcomes only a limited number of guests at a time to ensure complete privacy and serenity. The reef located just off the resort has been named as one of the best resort snorkel reefs in the world and dive trips are operated to incredible diving sites just ten minutes from the island. Those who prefer their water sports above the waves might prefer Qamea's great surf spots.



DENARAU DELIGHT

Denarau Island's idyllic five-star Fiji Beach Resort & Spa is the ultimate in relaxed luxury. Minutes from Nadi airport, you can step straight off the plane into a world of relaxation. Accommodation options range from luxury studios to spacious five-bedroom luxury villas with Pacific Ocean views. Laze by one of the resort's beautiful pools, watch magical sunsets from beachfront bars, enjoy a choice of fine and casual dining, or make yourself at home with a BBQ on your private terrace. Get active surfing, diving and fishing, or work on your handicap at Denarau's internationally-renowned championship golf course. If you'd rather rejuvenate and restore, head to the luxurious spa or request a treatment poolside.

ISLAND SECLUSION

Located on the northern-most tip of the exquisite Yasawa Island group, Yasawa Island Resort and Spa is an exclusive luxury resort on one of the most remote and unspoiled islands of Fiji. At Yasawa you'll find just 18 spacious split-level bungalows metres from a white sand beach and crystal clear waters. Set the scene for romance with a visit to the beachfront Baravi Spa or a private candlelit dinner for two on the beach. The secluded resort also offers access to private beaches, diving, snorkelling, windsurfing and nature walks, or to connect with the island's ancient culture in nearby local villages, where some of your best memories will be made.

FAMILY MATTERS

With superb beach frontage and a tranquil tropical garden setting, Radisson Blu Resort Fiji offers the perfect escape for every member of the family. Only 20 minutes from Nadi Airport, the luxurious Denarau resort boasts four lagoon swimming pools (including a family lagoon, shaded children's pool, and private adults-only relaxation zone) plus a white water tunnel slide that will appeal to young and old. Wile away your days with banana boat rides, kayaking, paddle boarding, jet skiing and parasailing or visit to the indulgent day spa which also offers spa treatments for kids. One and two-bedroom suites with kitchen and laundry facilities make family holidays a breeze, as does the kids' club for children aged four to 12.

DIVE IN

At the luxurious, eco-sensitive Jean-Michel Cousteau Resort Fiji discerning travellers can enjoy a stay on a private island renowned the world over for its dedication to conserving the environment in style. Surrounded by a marine sanctuary abundant with exotic marine life, the opportunity to take part in water-based activities with the full-time marine biologist employed by the resort is one of its biggest drawcards. The resort boasts several pools, including one dedicated to families, day spa, and nannies for children under five, plus sumptuous sustainable dining. In fact, there's so much to do that the luxury of the resort's five-star accommodation and idyllic location are almost a bonus.

COCKTAIL, ANYONE?

From top: Malolo adults pool bar; Tokoriki sunset pool villa

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WATER DIVINERS

Clockwise from top: Royal Davui; Radisson Blu

TASTY ESCAPE

Covered in lush tropical rainforest and fringed by white sand beaches, colourful coral reefs and waters so blue they look painted, Castaway Island is the Fiji you dream of. Located in Fiji's Mamanuca Island group and easily accessible from Nadi International Airport, the island resort is a pristine paradise offering comfortable individual thatched bure Fiji accommodation. Take a dip in the deep blue or try scuba diving, snorkelling, water skiing or parasailing. Or perhaps a dip in the swimming pool and the Fijian massage service is more your holiday style. Castaway is renowned for its exceptional service and award-winning resort dining at its four restaurants, so foodies will find themselves right at home here.

TURTLE TIME

A luxury private island with only 28 villas and two private residences, Vomo offers a unique and personal 5-star Fijian experience. The Beachfront and Hillside villas have just been beautifully refurbished with a signature bathroom, new custom-made furnishings and luxuriously-appointed bedrooms. Home to pristine sandy beaches, startlingly blue waters and accommodation that is stylish and sleek in design, the luxurious resort welcomes all guests including families, with children effortlessly integrated into the picture-perfect setting. The resort offers guests 5-star cuisine – with a new kitchen just opened as well as a renovation of The Rocks Bar – the superb Senikai Spa, and a wide range of activities including golf, paddle boarding and extraordinary diving and snorkelling. But perhaps Vomo Island's most captivating feature is the Hawksbill Turtle Protection Programme that protects the hundreds of turtles hatched on the island until they are old enough to be released into the ocean. •

Photos by various properties



travel facts

GETTING THERE

Jetstar operates flights three times a week from the Gold Coast and Sydney from four times weekly. jetstar.com

Fiji Airways operate daily flights from most Australian capital cities to Nadi. fijairways.com.au

WHERE TO STAY

- Castaway Island Fiji: castawayfiji.com
- Royal Davui Fiji Resort: royaldavui.com
- Likuliku Lagoon Resort: likulikulagoon.com
- Intercontinental Golf Resort and Spa: fiji.intercontinental.com
- Vomo: vomofiji.com
- Nanuku Fiji: nanukufiji.com
- Radisson Blu Resort Fiji: radissonblu.com/resort-fiji
- Hilton Fiji Resort & Spa: hiltonfijibeachresort.com
- Jean Michel Cousteau Resort: fijiresort.com
- Laucala Island: laucala.com
- Namotu Island Resort: namotuislandfiji.com
- Tokoriki Island Resort: tokoriki.com
- Malolo Island: maloloisland.com
- Qamea: qamea.com
- The Wakaya Club & Spa: wakaya.com
- Yasawa Resort: yasawa.com

FURTHER INFORMATION

Fiji Tourism: Fijime.com



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BOOM and bust on TANNA

BY BEN GROUNDWATER

When you're on a volcano, looking up is just as important as looking down.

There's a hissing noise, a scream from the earth as hot air and steam is ejected from deep within the mountain. It's a fierce rush, but even that doesn't prepare you for the sonic boom that follows a few seconds later, a deep thunderclap that wobbles the eardrums and heralds the torrent of molten rock that's about to be thrown high into the air.

The crowd of people gathered on the lip of the volcano gasps and takes an involuntary step backwards as one of nature's finest shows continues, the lumps of red rock coming to rest nearby.

"Don't turn away and run," advises one of the local guides. "Always be looking up. Then you can see if you have to dodge a rock." As advice goes, it's not the most reassuring.





“From the lip of the volcano you can peer deep into the bowels of the earth, watching a show that becomes progressively more impressive as the sun goes down”



STAND AND DELIVER

Clockwise from top: Local kids have a laugh as Mt Yasur blows off steam in the distance; It is quite a hike to the top, but well worth it; Local handicrafts on sale at the village

Opening spread: Local villagers tall and proud on the dusty slopes of Mt Yasur

We're already aware of how finely poised this encounter is, of how easily the earth could turn from spectacular to deadly. The last thing we need is to be watching for falling missiles of molten rock.

But this is Tanna Island, Vanuatu, where things are not polished or packaged neatly for the tourist masses – this place is rough, and it's real. The people are real, the volcano is real, and the danger is real. Don't turn and run. Keep looking up.

The volcano I'm currently standing on the lip of is Mount Yasur, the world's oldest continuously erupting volcano, and the most accessible to visit. There's no day-long hike to get to the top; no ropes or crampons required. You simply get out of a car and walk up a concrete path for about 10 minutes and there you are, on the lip of a live volcano, watching and listening as molten rock flies and the mountain booms.

In fact the most difficult part of visiting Mount Yasur is the drive to the volcano itself. Tanna Island has no roads; well, nothing you'd recognise as a road. The island, a 40-minute flight from Vanuatu's capital, Port Vila, is criss-crossed with a couple of rough dirt tracks with potholes that sometimes appear to be the size of volcano craters. Any drive on Tanna is an exercise in patience as your car bumps and crunches its way over the torturous terrain.

Those roads, however, are part of what makes a trip to Tanna such an experience. "You're going to Tanna?" a local in Port Vila asked me a few days before my visit. "That's good. You'll see Vanuatu the way it really is."

Gone are the questionable luxuries of such things as sealed roads and electricity. At White Grass airport we're collected by the team from Friendly Bungalows, our bags thrown in the

back of a ute (and joined there by most of the hotel's staff), and we begin our journey into the unknown.

The smooth dirt road near the airport quickly disintegrates as we get past the only settlement on Tanna you could refer to as a "town". Journeying up into the central highlands of this jungle-covered island, we travel through small villages where kids come out to wave at the car and parents watch on with guarded interest.

There are some strange things that happen on Tanna Island. This is the home of the "cargo cults", the villages whose inhabitants worship a white man called John Frum who may or may not have really existed – depending upon who you ask. He's a mystical figure in a serviceman's coat who promised to return one day with supplies, or "cargo". That was 80 years ago. The locals still patiently wait.

There's a village here whose inhabitants worship Prince Philip as a god. (Tony Abbott, surprisingly, doesn't live there.) There are communities who worship sacred stones as religious icons. There are those who perform religious ceremonies in the guise of musical performances, where villagers, their brows glistening with pious fervour, play for 12 hours or more.

There are thermal springs that bubble up from under the seafloor. There are black sand beaches, rich with volcanic minerals, just a bend in the coastline away from the more traditional white. It's strange. And it's amazing.

Our accommodation on this trip is at Friendly Bungalows, a beachfront establishment on the eastern side of the island, a half-hour drive from the summit of Mt Yasur. The rooms here are rustic, having been built by the local villagers, some of whom belong to the John Frum cult. Each hut contains a few



The Havannah

VANUATU

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FI FI FO FRUM

Clockwise from left: Dancers strut their stuff at John Frum village; Some children have a shy peek at us at the village; Let the show begin



beds, mosquito nets, and a bathroom with a coral floor.

There's also no electricity. A generator is turned on from 5pm to 11pm, which means the bulk of the night is spent under the mozzie net in pitch darkness, accompanied only by the sound of waves crashing on the beach a few metres away.

There's no option for self-driving on Tanna, which is why the Friendly Bungalows team organises all of our activities. There's a visit to the nearby John Frum village, where members of the community sit in a circle and play songs while the others dance in the clearing that surrounds them. It's surreal and odd, much like the entire Tanna experience.

Another day we drive an hour and a half over the roughest terrain imaginable to visit Port Resolution, a bay so named by Captain James Cook, who was lured in for a look after seeing the red glow of Mount Yasur by night. Now a quiet inlet popular with the yachting community, it's also home to thermal springs right on the black-sand beachfront, and warm,

“There are black sand beaches, rich with volcanic minerals, just a bend in the coastline away from the more traditional white”



coloured clays formed by the volcanic forces. You can snorkel here, enjoying the reef. Or just lie back and wriggle toes in the sand.

And then there's the highlight of any stay on Tanna: a trip to the top of Mount Yasur. The evening we climb it's warm and clear, the clouds of steam and smoke that pour from the crater making slow progress up into the sky.

From the lip of the volcano you can peer deep into the bowels of the earth, watching a show that becomes progressively more impressive as the sun goes down and the glow of molten rock can be better appreciated. There are those hisses of steam, those sonic booms of volcanic eruptions, and the spectacular showers of glowing red rock that follow.

Don't turn and run, you remind yourself. Keep looking up. •

Photography by Ben Groundwater and Vanuatu Tourism

travel facts

GETTING THERE

Air Vanuatu flies six days a week from Sydney to Port Vila, three times a week from Brisbane, and operates a weekly direct service from Melbourne at peak periods of the year. Multiple connections to Tanna Island are available.

- Air Vanuatu: 1300-780-737; airvanuatu.com

GETTING AROUND

There's no option to self-drive on Tanna – and really, given the state of the roads, you wouldn't want to. All transfers and activities can be organised via Friendly Bungalows, from airport pick-up to day trips and visits to Mount Yasur.

WHEN TO GO

Peak season in Vanuatu is from April to September, when the humidity is at its lowest and temperatures are pleasant. It's possible to visit year-round – however, in summer you should be prepared to sweat.

WHERE TO STAY

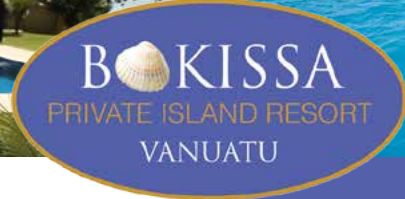
- Friendly Bungalows has a number of things going for it, not least its proximity to Mount Yasur, just a half-hour drive away. It also has a beachfront location, comfortable rooms, and good food at the restaurant. friendlybungalows.com.vu
- Efate Island: Stay a few days on the main island of Efate before venturing to Tanna, with The Havannah a beautiful boutique retreat. thehavannah.com
- Santo Island: To add some spectacular diving to your Vanuatu experience visit Santo, and treat yourself by staying at Bokissa Private Island Resort. bokissa.com

FURTHER INFORMATION

Vanuatu Tourism: discovervanuatu.com.au

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swinging SABAH

BY DANIEL RESNIK

For a vacation to please those who golf and have partners who don't, Sabah is the perfect choice.

The Sabah Masters isn't spoken in the same breath as The British Open or the US Masters but it is, none the less, a prestigious event that is played by Asia's up and coming golfers all wanting to shine on the world stage.

For the past few years the final tournament of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) tour has been held in Kota Kinabalu, the capital of Malaysia's Sabah province on the island of Borneo. This

year the four-day tournament offered prize money totalling US\$100,000 and duly attracted the best of the young golfing talent in the region.

When not watching the professionals or working on your handicap at one of the province's 18 golf courses there are plenty of other things to do, including island hopping, mountain trekking and visiting World War II memorials. At the top of my list is a visit to an orangutan rehabilitation centre.



CITY LIMITS

First impressions of Kota Kinabalu (population 600,000) are unexpected. In WWII Allied forces levelled the city to liberate North Borneo from Japanese occupation, leaving it with little in the way of architectural history apart from the Sabah Tourism Office and the 15.7 metre Atkinson Clock Tower, built in 1905, and still standing proudly today. Also unexpected is the laid-back nature of the city. Unlike many frantic, frenetic Asian cities it feels positively laconic – even the traffic.

In town, our guide takes us to his local café for a cup of 'kopi 'o' (strong black coffee and sugar). The coffee is good but I'd come back just for the name of the establishment: The Fook Yuen.

After our caffeine blast we hit the markets, along with half the town. Like most Asian markets this is the bustling epicentre of the city – relaxed, colourful, fruit filled, smoky (due to all the chicken wings cooking) and full of smiling faces and teeth, well, some teeth. The seafood section alone is the loudest and maddest I've ever encountered.

The markets are on the harbour front, which is also the hub of Kota Kinabalu's restaurants, bars and live music venues. It's definitely a great place to hang out in the early afternoons and late into the evenings.

ended up with a respectable score of 68 (for the first nine holes and I'm pleading the 5th amendment on the 18-hole score).

The Sutera Harbour Golf and Country Club is a golfing paradise and along with its championship course the club has a two-tiered driving range, practice putting and chipping areas and is the only course in East Malaysia with a 20-hole night golf facility.

FUN, GAMES AND ORANGUTANS

Next day we are taken on an island tour to Pulau Sapi Island in Sabah, which is one of the five islands that make up the Tunku Abdul Rahman Marine Park – just a 15-minute boat ride from the city of Kota Kinabalu. It's picturesque with a white sandy beach and aquamarine coloured water. The weather is perfect and after a few swims and a delicious buffet lunch we're back in town.

Our next port of call is Shangri-La's beautiful Rasa Ria Resort & Spa, set on 162 hectares, right next to one of Sabah's best beaches and just a 40-minute drive from the city. It includes a world-class golf course, part of the Dalit Bay Golf & Country Club.

The rooms are opulent, the restaurant's food exquisite, there are two pools, a spa and as a bonus, the massive private Pantai Dalit beach will exhaust all your water sport fantasies.

The Rasa Ria also has a nature reserve with both a petting zoo and, more importantly, a facility where young, abandoned

*“Unlike many frantic, frenetic Asian cities it feels positively laconic
- even the traffic”*

PAR FOR THE COURSE

One of the main reasons for me being here is the golf and the state of Sabah has eight premium golf courses and 10 smaller courses accommodating all levels of enthusiasts. We're here to see the Sabah Masters Championship 2014/15 final, which is being played on the Graham Marsh-designed 27-hole championship golf course at the Sutera Harbour Golf and Country Club (part of and opposite The Pacific Sutera Hotel where we are staying).

The hotel is set on 156 hectares overlooking the South China Sea, golf course and marina. The Sabah Masters Championship is a stepping-stone for Asia's brightest golfing stars, such as Mardan Mamat from Singapore who we watched take out the championship on an exhilarating final day. All four players in Mamat's group were in contention to win at the beginning of the final round.

The day before the master's event I played in the pro-am on the same course and was fortunate to be paired with Malaysia's 25th best professional player, Nicholas Pua. I can only hope my incredibly bad round (which included not hitting any straight drives off the tee and slowing down play while trying to retrieve lost balls, six of which are still out there) didn't effect Pua's chances of winning.

I can't blame the golf course for my disastrous round as the course is in superb condition. I did hit a few classic golf shots and

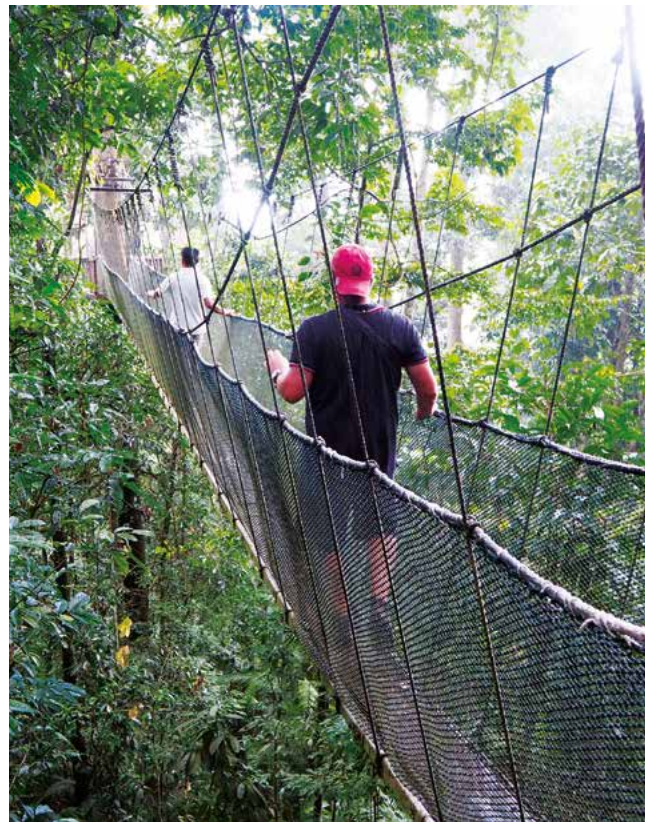
orangutans are rehabilitated so they can eventually be put back out in the wild.

At Rasa Ria we play a round of golf and you'd be hard pressed to find a prettier championship golf course or location. Water hazards are quite prominent and Mount Kinabalu can be seen in the distance when clouds allow. Large monitor lizards appear occasionally to check out our golfing prowess and can't get away quick enough as their lives are in danger from my wayward golf swing.

After golf we visit the orangutan facility which is currently looking after two young orangutans (four have just been moved to another facility to continue their rehabilitation) and we are lucky enough to have a private viewing with these beautiful, unique and very funny animals.

The orangutans arrive at Rasa Ria due to many reasons. Some are babies who have lost their mothers to poachers, some have been rescued by wildlife authorities from people keeping them as pets and some have been abandoned by their mothers at logging farms.

Feeding times are 10am and 2pm, which is when the public is allowed in to watch them. And watch them we do – absolutely mesmerised as two five-year-old-males wrestle, roll, run, jump, swing and, believe it or not, blow raspberries. Definitely one of my most memorable and favourite animal experiences ever.



SWINGING IN THE BREEZE

Clockwise from above: Pro's warming up for the Sabah Masters; The fish market; A city mosque; Rasa Ria Orangutan Rehabilitation Centre; The canopy walk is not for those who suffer vertigo; Harbour front bars and restaurants

Opening spread: Mt Kinabalu Golf Club



INTO THE CLOUDS

Our final golfing day is at the Mount Kinabalu Golf club, 1500 metres above sea level and a hilly two-hour drive from Kota Kinabalu. The course is as scenic as any golf course I've seen and sits in the shadow of Mount Kinabalu, Malaysia's second highest peak at 4095 metres.

We only play nine holes as the course is having restoration work done. Being in the mountains, hazards on the course include drifting clouds, which momentarily make visibility poor. On the first four holes you hit downhill, which means I make a few unintentional long shots in the right direction – down. But what goes down must come up and the remaining five holes are uphill and for me the par fives are five shots too long. My playing group loves it and thrives on the challenge.

Golf isn't the only attraction at Mount Kinabalu; you can also hike the mountain, a two-day endeavour so popular you have to book months in advance. Other mountain options available include a jungle rainforest canopy walk, which is not for everyone and requires both a degree of fitness and a lack of vertigo.

After the canopy walk we head back to town and on the way stop at the Kundasang War Memorial to pay our respects to the Australian and British prisoners of war (POW) who died in Sandakan and during the infamous death marches to Ranau during World War II. The memorial also remembers the people of North Borneo who risked their lives to help the POW.

I didn't know much about Sabah before arriving but after just seven days I've fallen in love with this island, the warmth of its people, its golf courses, its beautiful wilderness and, more than anything else, those raspberry-blowing orangutans. •

Photography by Daniel Resnik

MISTY MORN

Above: Mount Kinabalu hidden by clouds

travel facts

GETTING THERE

Malaysia Airlines has daily flights from Melbourne, Sydney and Perth to Kota Kinabalu via Kuala Lumpur, six flights a week from Brisbane and Adelaide and four flights a week from Darwin, with two flights a week direct from Perth to Kota Kinabalu. malaysiaairlines.com

GETTING AROUND

WOW Travel & Leisure: wowtravelsabah.com

WHERE TO STAY

- Sutera Harbour Resort is only a 10-minute drive from the airport and has spectacular views of the South China Sea, the resort's 27-hole championship golf course and the 104-berth marina. With a multitude of dining options, recreational activities and renowned Mandara Spa this is a fantastic resort. suteraharbour.com
- The Rasa Ria Shangri-la Resort is 40 minutes drive from Kota Kinabalu and a 1000 miles from care. Set on 162 tropical hectares the resort backs onto one of Sabah's best beaches, Pantai Dalit. With a championship golf course, spa, exquisite food options, lavish accommodation, a petting zoo and orangutan rehabilitation centre, this is definitely one of the best resorts I've stayed in. shangri-la.com

FURTHER INFORMATION

- ASEAN PGA Tour: aseanpgatour.com
- Sabah Tourism: sabahtourism.com

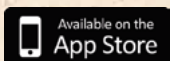
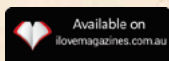
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Pasar Malam, Kota Kinabalu, Malaysia

Insomniacs, rejoice! Kota Kinabalu, the largest city in Sabah, Malaysian Borneo, is a night hawk's dream come true. The city positively bustles when the sun goes down; from 5pm-10pm, vendors open for business all across the city, much to the delight of big eaters, big shoppers, and everyone with a sleep disorder. The main night market, located adjacent to the Le Meridien Hotel, is a fine place to shop for crystal jewellery and pearls – especially if you missed out on a good deal at the Handicraft Market during the day. Textiles are also common, while sister markets, loosely connected by a series of overhanging tarps, lead to the night food market.



Sukawati Art Market, Bali, Indonesia

Who doesn't love Balinese arts and crafts? Walk into any upmarket home outfitter in the western world, and you're likely to come upon hundreds of unique items curated from the artisan shops and markets of Bali. But why pay inflated prices when you can shop at the source, and experience the atmospheric streets of Sukawati? The Sukawati Art Market is a haven for lovers of handicrafts, original artwork, Indonesian kitsch and more.



Gateway Market, Umhlanga, South Africa

The arts and crafts markets in this little Durban seaside village are fantastic; browse for Zulu crafts, one-of-a-kind textiles, prints, carvings and more. Shopping in South Africa is particularly good value at the moment, so don't be surprised if you find yourself rubbing shoulders with gallery curators from the world over while browsing for that next home décor centrepiece.



Panama Hat Market, Cuenca, Ecuador

Contrary to popular belief, the Panama hat – that most noble of summertime accessories, is not actually from Panama; the hats originated in Ecuador in the 17th century. Two major centres of production remain; the city of Cuenca produces excellent *toquilla* straw hats, while the town of Montecristi is world renowned for producing the Montecristi superfino. These ultra-lux hats may have as many as 2,500 weaves per square inch, and can cost in excess of \$5,000 per hat. Cuenca’s old town is home to dozens of quality hat shops, including the Barranco hat factory, which includes a museum dedicated to the history and production of the Panama hat.

Gold Souk, Dubai, UAE

Dubai’s perpetually glittering Gold Souk has been one of this Emirate’s major attractions for decades – you’ll find dozens and dozens of shops selling gold, silver, platinum, diamonds and more, and encounter plenty of touts hawking “genuine fake” Rolex watches, iPhones, textiles, laptops and more. The government exercises strict controls over the quality of gold and other precious metals, so you can rest assured that what you’re buying is the real deal – though the same cannot be said for watches you’re likely to be talked into purchasing down a back alley. The Gold Souk is a fantastic place to watch Dubai whiz by; pack your camera for a wander through the back alleys, where you’ll encounter friendly folk eager to pose with you for a photo or two.





Farmers' Market, Punta Cana, Dominican Republic

The Puntacana Farmers' Market at the Puntacana Village is open for business each Saturday from 9am to noon, and features local producers and artisans selling goods ranging from fresh fruits and veggies to award-winning local honey to organic juices, jellies and oils. You can also pick up fun souvenirs from the sea, including stuffed lion fish. The aim of the market, which receives financial and social support from the Puntacana Resort & Club, is to empower entrepreneurs to work in their own community on projects that help sustain local arts and culture.



Sadar Market, Jodhpur, India

If you live for hustle and bustle and love your markets heaving with human energy, then Jodhpur's Sadar Market is for you. Focused around the old city's iconic clock tower, known as the Ghanta Ghar, the market spills into streets, back alleys, and almost every ferret warren in the city; it's not unusual to brush past cattle while shopping for Rajasthani textiles, bump into a chi-walla while picking out the perfect pinch of tea, and there's even a chance an elephant wanders by while you browse for pachyderm avatars carved from precious stones. Sadar offers a wild, once-in-a-lifetime market experience.

Dallas Farmers' Market, Dallas, USA

The Dallas Farmers' Market is a vibrant, green place – not the dusty country bowl you may have in your mind. The flower market is one of the state's most stunning, while the covered market itself is home to artisans who sell fresh fruits, vegetables, organic honey and more. There's also a fitness centre on site, which is unique for a market of this type – the Dallas Farmers' Market probably isn't top of mind when it comes to exercise, but some people find time to work out between bites of brisket, spicy pickles, sausages, candy and all the other treats. Classes take place Saturday morning in Shed 2. Shed a few pounds before you work your way down to the legendary Pecan Lodge for the most delicious barbecue in all of Texas.



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go wild in IRELAND

BY GARY WALSH

The Wild Atlantic Way – all 2,500 kilometres of it – gives yet another reason to visit Ireland.

The island of Ireland, bless its little emerald green heart, is smaller in area than Tasmania, yet it boasts a coastal touring route that is longer than the drive from Sydney to Cairns. The 2500km Wild Atlantic Way, like Ireland itself, is a little bit of magic. Running from Donegal in the northwest to Cork in the south, it doesn't just stick to the highways; rather, it dips into side roads and tiny laneways to reveal sights that once were discovered only by the most assiduous of travellers.

The Wild Atlantic Way concept was developed in part to help boost tourism in the northwest, which is the least visited region of Ireland by international travellers. Traditionally its tourism industry has been based on domestic visitation, much of it from Northern Ireland, so now this wild and windswept corner is playing catch up.

Slieve League is one of 15 Signature Discovery Points on the Wild Atlantic Way, which mark the best of the best sights along its path. Here, on the edge of Europe, sea cliffs tumble up to 600m straight into the Atlantic. These are not as famous as the Cliffs of Moher to the south, which is among Ireland's most visited places and boasts a fancy interpretive centre full of high-tech gadgets and exhibits, signs in a hundred languages and a car park crammed with touring coaches.

At Slieve League (Sliabh Liag in Irish) you drive in on a narrow road that swoops and soars with the landscape past tarns and bogs and grassy hills, and you might have to stop to open a gate or pull to the side to let a car pass in the opposite direction or to avoid a posse of sheep who otherwise are dotted in a picturesque manner about the countryside.

At its end you stand braced against the ferocious winds that sweep in from Newfoundland or pick your way along steep paths through the folds of the hills, the foaming sea smashing into the cliffs far beneath you. It is an elemental place that sits perfectly in wild Donegal.

Inland you drive on roads that cut through mountain passes into deep valleys, past whitewashed cottages (and as many ruins), great mounds of cut peat, across tiny bridges and into ancient villages like Glencolmcille, where the Oideas Gael cultural centre's residential courses teach Irish language alongside such pursuits as set dancing and flute and whistle playing – and, one suspects, how to drink Guinness in the local pubs.

Donegal and Mayo, to the south, are the heart of the Gaeltacht. When spoken, with a sort of catch in the throat, the word sounds a little like “gael talked”, which is essentially what it means. This is the Irish-speaking part of the country, where Gaelic is the main tongue and English disappears from road signs, leading to the occasional puzzlement of foreign drivers wondering, for example, whether Cathair na Mart means Westport.

In the Gaeltacht, music and pubs go together perfectly in places such as the Reel Inn, opposite Donegal Castle in the

heart of Donegal Town. Traditional music sessions have a kind of stateliness interspersed with abandon. The musicians sit around a table, drinking pints and chatting quietly, perhaps for five or 10 minutes, before a fiddler, an accordionist, a flute or whistle player begins a tune that all eventually join in playing. Then it is on for all money.

Often a singer will be featured. At the Reel Inn on this night it was a girl with a massive beehive hairdo, a sort of healthy Amy Winehouse, and she had a group of female relations of a certain age sitting in the corner who looked like extras from *Mrs Brown's Boys*, all overflowing bosoms and tight short skirts, and who nodded among themselves after each tune, “Didn't she do well?”

Further south, in Westport, a gracious town of splendid Georgian architecture on the banks of the Carrowbeg, is Matt Molloy's pub, owned by the flute player from the legendary Chieftains. There is music every night, and if Molloy is about he usually joins in. It's a tiny place, and the trad sessions are held in a compact room off the main bar, packed to the gills with patrons.

Westport is the gateway to Connemara, the region that best encapsulates the sometimes-savage beauty of Ireland's west coast and the Wild Atlantic Way. The town rises steeply from

“At its end you stand braced against the ferocious winds that sweep in from Newfoundland or pick your way along steep paths through the folds of the hills, the foaming sea smashing into the cliffs far beneath you”



the Carrowbeg, its well-tended buildings painted in primary colours. There are fine pubs and restaurants, and it is a pleasant place in which to wander, with the Great Western Greenway walking and cycling path, which runs for 42km to Achill Island, offering a serious chance to stretch your legs.

Also beckoning is Croagh Patrick, Ireland's holiest mountain, which rises behind Westport. The mountain – just 764m high – is believed to have been a pagan pilgrimage site as early as 3000BC. Ireland's patron saint, St Patrick, is said to have fasted on its summit for 40 days in the fifth century, and it is now a place of pilgrimage for Catholics, especially on Reek Sunday, the last Sunday in July.

Connemara, which begins just southwest of Westport (and is marked, in typical Irish fashion, by a pub that announces itself as 'The First Pub in Connemara'), is a region of remarkable contrasts. One minute you are driving in bright sunlight through a lush valley fed by roaring streams, the next you are cresting a bald, wind-scarred hill and gazing on a bleakly beautiful land of limestone shards and drystone walls that somehow pass for agricultural land.

The small town of Leenane, dramatically sited on Killary Harbour (Ireland's only fjord, and another of the Wild Atlantic Way's Signature Discovery Points), is where Connemara's scenic options truly open up. You might arrive, if you're lucky, when the sheep market is on, and shepherds come down from the hills to barter over their flocks. There seemed, in truth, to be more yarning than negotiating, with everyone up for a chat, but the streets were lined with trailers crammed with long-haired sheep and vendors selling everything from shears to wellington boots.

Any route from Leenane is marked on every map as a scenic drive, and you really can't go wrong. You might head through Joyce's Country – named not, as you might expect, for James Joyce, but because generations of Joyces have farmed here – to Maam Cross, or west past the Twelve Pins mountain range to Clifden, one of the region's most prosperous towns and its biggest.

It is close to where aviators Alcock and Brown ended the first non-stop trans-Atlantic flight in 1919, landing somewhat unceremoniously in a bog they thought was a green field.



CLIFFS OF MORE

Clockwise from left: Ardara, Donegal; Walkers on Sliabh Liag; Mullaghmore Beach, Donegal

Opposite page: Beehive huts on Skellig Michael

Opening page: Sheep near Slieve League



Here, too, was where the communications pioneer Marconi built his trans-Atlantic wireless station in 1907, connecting Europe with North America.

The road south from Clifden offers Connemara at its most visceral. Tiny allotments enclosed by stone walls sit next to abandoned tumbledown cottages. Donkeys stand hunched against the vicious gales that roar in from the Atlantic. Great

“In the Gaeltacht, music and pubs go together perfectly in places such as the Reel Inn, opposite Donegal Castle in the heart of Donegal Town”

swathes of broken limestone interspersed with stunted bushes rise to rocky crests scarred and shaped by wind and rain. When the rain comes – and it comes often – the landscape shines silver.

Through it all, the Wild Atlantic Way rolls on, bound for the Dingle Peninsula, the Ring of Kerry, the Beara Peninsula and the coast of Cork. The route’s neat blue-and-white signs lead the way, and you should follow. •

Photography by Gary Walsh and Tourism Ireland

UNDER THE ARCHES

From top: Westport County Mayo; The Conor Pass



travel facts

GETTING THERE

Royal Brunei flies daily from Melbourne to Bandar Seri Begawan, with onward connections to Dubai and London Heathrow. Aer Lingus flies from the UK to Dublin, Shannon, Cork, Kerry and Knock.

- Royal Brunei: flyroyalbrunei.com

WHEN TO GO

Weather is best in summer, and the days are long, but there is much to be said for off-season travel, when you may find yourself virtually alone in some of Europe’s most blessed places.

WHERE TO STAY

- Solis Lough Eske Castle, Co. Donegal: solishotels.com/lougheskecastle
- Mill Times Hotel, Westport, Co. Mayo: milltimeshotel.ie

WHERE TO EAT

- Sage Restaurant, Westport, Co. Mayo: sagewestport.ie

FURTHER INFORMATION

- Tourism Ireland: ireland.com
- CIE Tours: cietours.com
- Shamrock Travel: shamrocktravel.com.au



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COOL YULE

shopping

BY ROSHAN SUKHLA

Experience a taste of Germany and a sleigh full of Christmas spirit as you tour some of the best Christmas markets in the land in a luxury private coach.

As I wander around the WeihnachtsZauber, one of Berlin's biggest Christmas markets, I stop and smile. I'm in a shopper's heaven – to be more precise I'm in a Christmas-themed shopper's heaven. Everywhere I look there is stall after stall of handmade ornaments, tiny trinkets, sugary treats and festive treasures.

I stare in wonder at the goods on offer, from all varieties of nougat at one stand to tiny wooden Christmas trees at the next. The white tent stalls are all trimmed with greenery, silver baubles and twinkling lights, topped off with a bright yellow star on each roof.

There are around 50 Christmas markets in Berlin alone, varying in size and atmosphere, but the WeihnachtsZauber is definitely the one to put at the top of your list. It can be

found in the historic Gendarmenmarkt square. The markets lie in the shadows of three beautifully-restored buildings – the Konzerthaus, the Deutscher Dom (German Cathedral) and the Französischer Dom (French Cathedral). This mix of history and festive cheer is one of the reasons I am here in Germany's capital.

A traditional European Christmas has always had such a romantic appeal for me – warming up by the fire, carolers singing in the cold and snow falling lightly to the ground. Having grown up in Australia means that a hot Christmas on a sizzling summer's day is all I've ever known, but for a while now – just like the song says - I've been dreaming of a white Christmas, so I have joined an Insight Vacations German Christmas Markets tour to not only





“Dating back to 1434 the Dresden Striezelmarkt is a Christmas wonderland, which celebrated its 580th market in 2014”





TO MARKET TO MARKET

Left: Weihnachts Zauber in Berlin

Opposite page, clockwise from top: Christkindlesmarkt in Nuremberg; The Striezelmarkt in Dresden is the oldest Christmas market in Germany; Porcelain demonstration at the Museum of Meissen Art; Gingerbread in Leipzig

Opening page: Wooden reindeer, Rothenburg ob der Tauber

indulge my love of shopping but to get a feel for how the Europeans celebrate Christmas time in this idyllic winter clime.

From Berlin, we board our luxury heated coach and make the journey to Leipzig. There's ample legroom to stretch out as our tour director Kari-Anne fills us in on the long and interesting history of Germany.

When we arrive in Leipzig, we head to the beautiful Thomaskirche (St. Thomas Church). It is here where famed composer Johann Sebastian Bach was Cantor, as well as principal music director of all the churches in Leipzig, a position he held for 27 years until his death. The church features a new 'Bach organ' and ornate stain glass windows.

The Leipziger Weihnachtsmarkt (Christmas market) is a large marketplace over several city streets containing oodles of goodies from wreaths of fresh greenery, candles and baubles; to gingerbread hearts of all sizes and designs featuring messages like 'I heart Leipzig'. There are stalls with intricate wooden tree decorations and chocolate-coated apples. I find myself purchasing a candle shaped like a pine tree with a frosted snow top. With an old-fashioned carousel, a tableau of Brothers Grimm fairy tales, a separate medieval market, street performers, musicians and a giant Ferris wheel, these markets have a fun festival atmosphere.

The historical city of Dresden is our next stop. Situated on the River Elbe the city radiates grandeur through its Baroque and Renaissance architecture. Our guided walking tour takes us past the Procession of the Princes mural, which features over 24,000 porcelain tiles; the Semper Opera; and the Frauenkirche with its famous bell-shaped dome dating back to 1726.

Dresden is home to the oldest Christmas market in Germany. Dating back to 1434 the Dresden Striezelmarkt is a Christmas wonderland, which celebrated its 580th market in 2014. The name 'Striezelmarkt' even refers to the famous Dresden Christollen cake (striezel being old German for stollen). It is here we get to meet with a stall holder and try

christollen for ourselves. Stollen is a speciality of Dresden and there are many different types. The traditional Christollen tastes like a cross between bread and cake with raisins, almonds, meal and butter. The same traditional recipe has been used since the 1450s.

The market is noted for its 14-metre high wooden candle pyramid, featuring six levels and 42 carved figurines. The wood used for the pyramid, and for many of the smaller wooden figurines and toys sold at the market are made in the nearby Ore Mountains. At the Striezelmarkt you'll find the Moravian star for sale, a traditional Christmas decoration featuring 26 points. Also keep an eye out for the Pflaumentoffel figures. These small stick figures, made from prunes, resemble the young chimney sweeps of days gone by and are said to be a lucky charm.

By night the Striezelmarkt exudes a different sort of magic entirely. It's crowded with families and locals gathering after work buying Christmas gifts and sipping glühwein (mulled wine) to stay warm. With the candle pyramid and large Christmas tree all lit up, it's really a sight to behold. A true winter wonderland if you will, all that's missing is the snow. Head to the entrance and climb up the giant Schwibbogen (arch) candle holder gateway, which offers great views back over the entire market.

The optional excursion to the village of Meissen, where porcelain has been produced since 1710, is well worth the trip. We stop in at the Museum of Meissen Art for a demonstration of this decades-old tradition. The process from start to finish is complex and intricate, and you could even purchase a piece for yourself from their store.

Meissen has a charming village atmosphere with quaint cobblestoned streets. The town square has a small Christmas market, and a unique full-sized advent calendar on the side of a building. Locals gather each evening as the 24 windows are opened, one on each day of the advent, to reveal a picture underneath.

There are a number of other optional excursions that can be added to the tour to enhance your experience. You can visit the Dachau concentration camp memorial just outside of Munich, which is a very moving experience; or take a highlights tour of former East Berlin, including Checkpoint Charlie and remnants of the Berlin Wall.

Back in the comfort of our coach, we head down the autobahn to Nuremberg, and one of the most famous Christmas markets in all of Germany. Behind the historic walls of the town centre you'll find the Christkindlesmarkt, with its renowned red and white striped stalls. In the shadows of the Frauenkirche (Church of our Lady), the market is bustling with locals and tourists on the Saturday that I visit with the smell of chestnuts roasting wafting above our heads. There are Christmas

BASKET CASE

Clockwise from right: Glühwein stall in Munich; Basket making at the medieval markets in Leipzig



decorations galore, including many wooden toys and carved wooden ornaments. As I walk through the crowded marketplace I try some delicious tiny Nuremberg sausages and munch on the town's famed *lebkuchen* (gingerbread).

If you haven't got your Yuletide fix by now, you will definitely get it at Rothenburg ob der Tauber. Inside this walled medieval city is a year-round Christmas village, featuring a German Christmas museum and Käthe Wohlfahrt's incredible Christmas store featuring handcrafted German treasures. The Christmas markets here may be full of tourists, but the views of the green countryside and the chance to taste a *schneeball* (snowball), a deep fried dough creation, makes the trip to Rothenburg ob der Tauber well worth it.

As the tour draws to an end I've come to appreciate the little things that have made this trip very enjoyable. The seat rotation policy on the coach means you aren't stuck in one seat for the whole trip and you come to know different people each day. Most tipping is already included in your tour price, and the porter will pick up your bag from right outside your luxury hotel room on travelling days.

Munich is our last stop and it's here I farewell my newfound friends with a traditional Bavarian celebration dinner. The next day, after my tour mates have all left, I am walking alone through the English Garden, Munich's answer to Central Park. The quiet serenity of the park lets me reflect on my German journey, and I may not have had my dream white Christmas this year, but that just means I'll have to come back and do it all again next year. •

Photography by Roshan Sukhla and German National Tourist Board

travel facts

GETTING THERE

Cathay Pacific offers over 70 nonstop flights a week from Australia to Hong Kong - it operates four flights daily between Sydney and Hong Kong, three flights per day from Melbourne, daily flights from Brisbane, four flights a week from Cairns and Adelaide, and ten flights from Perth. From its Hong Kong hub, the airline also provides convenient one-stop connections to more than 190 destinations around the world, including daily flights to Frankfurt and eight other destinations in Europe. Including codeshare services, Cathay Pacific passengers can travel to over 30 European destinations. Cathay Pacific offers Business, Premium Economy and Economy on all flights aboard Airbus A330s, and on Boeing 777s which operates on selected Sydney flights. cathaypacific.com.au

TOUR INFORMATION

Insight Vacations' eight-day German Christmas Markets escorted journey travels from Berlin to Munich, visiting Leipzig, Dresden, Nuremberg and Rothenburg, with a highlight stay at the five-star Swissotel Berlin.

Signature Experiences include meeting a market stall holder to taste the local Stollen in Dresden and visiting the 500-year-old Reiterlesmarkt in Rothenburg. Guests will be accompanied by an experienced Tour Director, enjoy many included meals and authentic dining experiences. They will travel by luxury air-conditioned coach with Business Class legroom and discover cities with guided tours from local experts. Departures available in November and December 2015. Insight Vacations: 1300-301-672; insightvacations.com

FURTHER INFORMATION

German National Tourist Board: germany.travel

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COMPILED BY HELEN HAYES



Saffire helping save Tassie Devils

Saffire has launched a new program that offers guests the chance to have an encounter with the endangered Tasmanian Devil, and by doing so, participate in the quest to save it.

The Saffire Tasmanian Devil Experience has been created in conjunction with the University of Tasmania's Menzies Institute for Medical Research and the Save the Tasmanian Devil Program (STDP), and will support critical research to save the iconic Tasmanian Devil from extinction due to Devil Facial Tumour Disease (DFTD).

Led by expert guides, guests will visit Saffire's one-hectare open-range Tasmanian Devil enclosure – that reflects their natural habitat – and observe them as they feed and play while hearing all about the world's largest carnivorous marsupial.

Additionally, guests will have the chance to contribute to Saffire's management and observation of the Devil population by participating in a visual health inspection of the animals. They will learn how to recognise individual Devils as well as how to use direct observation and remote camera imagery to identify and check each animal.

The experience is designed to educate participants on the vital work of the STDP and the critical research of the Menzies Institute and Professor Greg Woods. Saffire is a key partner in Dr. Woods' quest to find a vaccine for DFTD, and guests will discover how to be a part of the ongoing work to secure the survival of this iconic species. saffire-freycinet.com.au

Fund a child

Thousands of Australians already sponsor a child in poverty-stricken areas around the world through ChildFund Australia, making a big difference to that child, and their family. ChildFund also organises fundraising tours and adventures. For the adventurous, tackle the Kilimanjaro Challenge, which gives donors the chance to climb Mt Kilimanjaro while raising funds to help provide water to remote communities in Ethiopia. The less adventurous might be interested in the Laos Discovery Tour, which includes visiting ChildFund-supported communities in Laos and seeing the work they do first hand. It only takes \$45 a month to help change a life by providing food, clean water, sanitation, education and healthcare, and you develop a relationship with your sponsored child through letters, photos, birthday and Christmas gifts.

childfund.org.au





School for Life

In a remarkable effort, two Australian university students have made a real difference in the lives of many in Uganda. In 2008, Annabel Chauncy and David Everett – both 21 – travelled extensively in Kenya and Uganda, and were moved to make their own contribution to help. They raised over half a million dollars to establish the School for Life Foundation, assemble a board of directors and set up a relationship with Rotary. Annabel and David have gone from strength to strength, opening the Katuusoo Nursery and Primary School in 2011, with 80 children. Another 40 students were taken on in 2012. The final stage will see more classrooms added, as well as a library and kitchen – catering to 320 students. They also provide regular health care, established a farm, have purchased land on which to build another primary school and a secondary school, employ 60 people, and run training programs to help locals get jobs. Classic Safari Company can organise safaris to Uganda with the opportunity to visit the school, and have also provided a safari as a prize for the Annual School For Life Black Tie Fundraising Ball to held in Sydney on 9 May. schoolforlife.org.au

Global Vision empowering women

Women interested in volunteering overseas during their holidays will be keen on the new Women's Empowerment Program, launched by leading volunteer organisation GVI (Global Vision International). Volunteers can work on projects in countries including Fiji, South Africa, India and Nepal which have been developed to help empower women in areas including education, their personal rights and health and business opportunities. Not only will volunteers be working for a highly worthy cause, the program will give participants an authentic insight into the local culture, the customs of their temporary homes and the geographic beauty of the location of the project. Programs run from two to 12 weeks. gviaustralia.com.au/womens-empowerment



Leave your heart in Uganda



Emma Blackman is a young New Zealander who has made a difference to many lives in Africa, and continues to do so. She tells V&T her story.

“I always felt incredibly lucky to have been born into a loving family that could afford to put food on the table and who encouraged me to follow my dreams and passions. I felt compelled to give back to the world that had always treated me kindly and decided to volunteer in Africa.

After extensive research, I opted to volunteer for six months for Kids Worldwide, which gives all money raised direct to the school or orphanage program you are volunteering for. I chose the St Paul KAASO Primary School, because it wasn't just a school, it was a multi-faceted project that reached out into the local community and it seemed there would be plenty to keep me busy for the six-month volunteering stint.

The school was established in 1999 by two Ugandan teachers, Dominic and Rose Mukwaya, who wanted to do something to help kids left as orphans due to HIV/AIDS. They started with 12 young orphans who lived in Dominic and Rose's home along with their own family and classes were taught under a single thatched roof hut. By the end of that first year, there were 49 children and the school roll continued to expand. Today over 600 children receive an education every year thanks to Dominic and Rose's incredible determination and dedication.

Around a third of the school's children are orphans who are unable to pay school fees but KAASO also takes children with parents who can afford to pay fees, enabling the school to function without any external or government funding. Not only do Dominic and Rose run KAASO, they have also established an

Empowerment Group offering a micro-loans program for members of the impoverished local community, mainly consisting of sustenance farmers. The Empowerment Group teaches literacy, agriculture, financial management and helps support everyone from elderly widows to young entrepreneurs in achieving their goals.

My first six months volunteering at KAASO in 2009 were really a time of learning. I taught English and Music, gave art and PE lessons, helped teachers with marking and spent hours playing the guitar with an ever-expanding choir under the mango tree. My friends and I launched a major fundraiser to construct Kiwi House, a 100-bed dormitory to help accommodate the growing student population. I wanted to see how I could be more useful. At the time I didn't know that my one-off journey would become a life-long love affair with a place that is now very much a part of my life. I didn't know that I would return every year and that the KAASO family would come to feel like my own. Over the past six years, I have helped to establish a library and computer lab at the school, fundraised for the construction of a second dormitory, Mark House, which is now home to 80 boys, funded a poultry project to generate income for KAASO, fundraised and established the Kiwi Sponsorships – thanks to a boy named Henry.

Henry was a 12-year-old boy in his final year of primary school. Henry was orphaned as a baby and his mother struggled to support him (in Uganda, an orphan is classified as anyone who has lost their father – the breadwinner of the family). He was phenomenally intelligent, hugely helpful with a cheeky grin and I quickly fell in love with him. He asked for my support to continue his education beyond primary school and, together with my parents, I agreed to sponsor him for his six years of secondary schooling.

There were others like Henry too, so I started trying to find sponsors for the other kids who were most needy. We now have sponsors for 30 kids. My first wave of students will be graduating at the end of this year and I am incredibly proud of each and every one. They were given the chance of an education and I know that they deeply appreciate the support and will go on to do amazing things.”

Emma is now Volunteer Coordinator for KAASO and is always seeking motivated, enthusiastic volunteers to help the kids. She concludes “It is the most rewarding thing you could ever do and being at KAASO really makes you appreciate the simple things in life.”

Follow Emma's work during her annual trips to Uganda on her blog; leftmyheartinuganda.com; Kaaso-uganda.org

Outrigger Fiji's new community tourism project on track

Outrigger on the Lagoon, Fiji launched its first public community tourism project in October 2014, underlining the company's global commitment to provide a deeply engaging hotel experience for its guests. The initiative involves the building of a large Bure or traditional meeting hall at Conua School in the Sigatoka Valley, an example of Outrigger Resorts' dedicated commitment to the local culture and communities.

When completed by the end of this year, the building will be the centrepiece of the village and have the capacity to accommodate over 100 people for both school and village meetings and community events. The project is estimated to cost approximately FJD\$100,000, and is being driven by the Chairman of the Coral Coast Hotels Association and Outrigger Resorts Area General Manager, Mr Peter Hopgood.

Mr Hopgood said "This community tourism project will enable guests to volunteer their time over one or two days during their holiday to assist the resort's engineering team with all aspects of the construction phase from basic labour work to more skilled trades.

"They will also have time to interact with the local school children, share a bowl of kava with the local villagers and complete the day with a visit to one of Fiji's most prestigious cultural sites, Tavuni Hill Fort," he said. outriggerfiji.com



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OLD MACAU

on the menu

BY EWEN BELL

Traditional tastes in the streets and villages of Macau.



Steam rises off the soup stove and merges with the humid air of Macau. Wantons bubble over in the liquid, freshly wrapped by hand just minutes ago. The grandma sits at a table carefully folding the sheets around a mix of prawns and pork. They're so light that I could eat a village worth.

Everybody in the laneway calls grandma by her Chinese title, *Waipo*. It's a family-owned business, with a shop on either side of the alley still known by its Portuguese name of *Travessa do Faisao*. Kaya toast and milky tea are served on one side of the lane, noodles and wanton soup on the other. The pre working day crowd crush into the tiny tables, politely and without concern for being seated shoulder to shoulder over breakfast.

Macau's laneways are often narrow and winding as they follow the contours and history of the land. When the Portuguese started building their grand facades in the 16th century they didn't possess the earth moving equipment of today. Instead they laid out villages on the edges of hills, and for centuries after kept building upwards against the slopes.

These old streets bare the character of Chinese families and the landscape that lies beneath. Laundry hangs on the balconies of apartments above and small Taoist spirit houses are still preserved along sections of footpath. Residents bring incense and flowers to adorn the statues of sages, then throw their scraps of rice nearby for the street cats to feed on.

As you walk through the narrow lanes on peninsula Macau it is often tiles under foot instead of concrete, an ornate nod to Chinese resourcefulness having figured out centuries ago that fired pottery can be both decorative and hard wearing.

Secret walled gardens are hidden amongst the colonial architecture of old Macau, such as the Jardim de Lou Lim IEOC. Over one hundred years ago a wealthy merchant copied the Suzhou recipe of gardens built around water to form this modest-sized gem, now providing an oasis for locals to practise Tai Chi and poetry. Turtles and carp are cared for in the pond by families who bring them bread.

A local bus passes by this garden on its way from the tourist mecca of Senado Square to the produce mecca of Red Market. The seafood section of the market literally jumps with freshness, the thrashing of live eels splattering water onto passing shoppers. Philipino maids come to Red Market to prepare for the evening meal dressed in sequins and high heels, some handling the slippery floors with class and some not.

Outside on the street this market bares a potently South-East Asian flavour. Durian stalls in peak season over-power the smell of steamed buns and dried fish. Roast duck and char su pork are always hot tickets, the sound of cleavers pounding the boards is never far away. A little kitchen under a tin roof bakes almond cookies and sells them by the jar full, an excellent snack before tackling the extensive laneway stalls that adjoin the iconic red building.

These streets of Macau are not so much a gourmet experience but a banquet of indulgence. The produce markets offer an abundance of temptations that are hot and ready to devour. Bamboo steamers are the definition of anticipation, because you know there's something delicious and savoury hidden away but you won't know what until you ask. Sometimes it's pork buns, maybe chicken dumplings or a Macau twist on prawns wrapped in rice paper.

The key ingredient to the best street eats is freshness. The ducks are roasted in front of your eyes, the noodle soup is boiled on the spot and no dim sum spends more than half an hour in a steamer before it's sold and a new batch racked in its place. Freshness is also the key ingredient to that most recognised of Portuguese culinary influences in Macau, the egg custard tart.

The little fishing village of Coloane sits at the southern tip of Macau and is the original home of Lord Stow's Bakery. Trays of tarts are popped out of the oven, allowed to cool for a few minutes and then served to customers waiting in line. A modest cafe at the rear of the bakery makes room to sit and enjoy them hot out of the oven with a milky iced tea. The egg



METICULOUS MORSELS

Clockwise from right: Weathered pink paint marks the iconic streets around Red Market; Grandma still makes the wantons by hand at Café Kong Chi Kei; Pastry chefs steal the show at Festiva

Opposite page: Longans and Litchi in abundance at the Red Market

Opening spread: Bamboo cages fresh off the steamer and onto the table at Long Wa Tea House



“Secret walled gardens are hidden amongst the colonial architecture of old Macau”

tarts in Macau are noted for being less sweet than the Portuguese original and small enough that you don't have to stop at just one.

Where Coloane is sleepy and peaceful, Taipa Village is vibrant and cheeky. It's a popular destination for Chinese travellers to seek out matcha flavoured desserts and shop for trendy panda-cartoon souvenirs. Taipa is a melting pot of Macau culture with an eye on the past as it embraces the future. Hidden down a laneway beyond the juice stalls and tea salons is one of the most genuine Portuguese restaurants in Macau, Antonio.

The owner and head chef is Antonio Coelho, a charming man of garrulous proportions. He's prone to bursting into song and has a way of getting everyone else in the room to embrace the moment. In the middle of preparing flaming crepes suzette at our table he whips out a long sword and demonstrates his preferred technique for popping the cork off a bottle of Espumante. Antonio is doing his best to keep the flavour of Portugal alive in Macau.

Peering down onto the village of Taipa are the glass towers of Galaxy Macau, just one of several integrated resorts that have risen from the reclaimed land that was once ocean. Coloane and Taipa were once distinct islands but the sandy bay between the



two has been filled in with land to form the Cotai Strip.

Stepping inside the Galaxy Macau is to step away from both China and Portugal and arrive somewhere completely different. The central lobby is a cavern of marble and lights, with an illuminated water fountain that performs every half hour. Resorts in Macau like to make an impression when welcoming new guests.

At the centre of the resort is a wave pool with its own

beach, providing a place for families to swim in safety and a spectacular view for the hotel rooms that surround it. Access to casinos and fine dining is possible without leaving the resort, and in 2015 the Michelin 3-Star-awarded Umberto Bombana will be adding his name to the dining options at Galaxy Macau.

The Banyan Tree Macau is just one of the hotels in the resort and delivers one of the most impressive experiences in town. Guest can choose from poolside bungalows across from the wave pool, or luxury suites that blend the elegance of Chinese influence with the contemporary flare of modern Macau. Anyone who appreciates the Banyan Tree brand will not be disappointed here.

For my final meal in Macau I head back to the Red Market on the advice of a local. Next door to the faded red block is a modest stairway that leads to the Long Wa Tea House. Upstairs is a large room with tables along the open windows. The breeze is sufficiently cooling and a pot of hot tea lands on the table within seconds of being seated.

“Bamboo steamers are the definition of anticipation, because you know there’s something delicious and savoury hidden away”

A small counter in the middle of the restaurant is stacked with a selection of dim sum. I grab a few bamboo steamers to take back to my table, under the watchful gaze of Chairman Mao.

Every wall of Long Wa is covered in hand-painted art, but the central pillar is reserved for his resolute presence. Macau was never subjected to direct rule under Mao, but his influence was profound and his image appears regularly in shops and homes. Bus drivers always carry a gold framed picture of The Chairman, given pride of place at the front of the cabin. His image alone is believed to scare away the evil spirits.

Mao marks both the beginning of the Chinese reclaiming their city from the Portuguese, and the beginning of Macau’s extensive reclamation of land from the sea. They have mastered the art of respecting their traditions while building a better future. In the coming years many new resorts will be opening with the aim of attracting Michelin stars and higher rollers, but don’t forget the tasty treasures that continue to delight along the streets of the old city. •

Photography by Ewen Bell

STREET TREAT

Below: Hidden treasures inside the bamboo steamers on the streets of Macau



travel facts

GETTING THERE

Cathay Pacific offers regular direct flights from Australia to Hong Kong. Qantas has direct flights from several cities in Australia to Hong Kong.

- Cathay Pacific: 131-747; cathaypacific.com.au
- Qantas: 131-313; qantas.com
- From Hong Kong, Macau is a one-hour ferry ride with TurboJET. turbojetseexpress.com.hk/en

WHEN TO GO

The hot, humid summers (late May to mid-September) are best avoided. September to December is probably best for bearable warmth, although the winter months (December to February) are milder and make exploring much more pleasant.

WHERE TO STAY

- Banyan Tree Macau: banyantree.com
- Galaxy Macau: galaxymacau.com/en

FURTHER INFORMATION

Macau Government Tourist Office: +61-2/9264-1488; macautourism.gov.mo

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TUB Crawling

BY ROB GRANT

Nearly 1300 years ago, the Japanese discovered Kinosaki Onsen's magical, restorative waters. Now visitors are invited to shed their clothes and take a dip.

The idea of wearing just a bathrobe while on holiday certainly promises a relaxing time. But it's a little odd. Especially when this minimalist outfit is worn for strolls along the main street, meals in busy restaurants and even drinks in local watering holes. Yet in Kinosaki Onsen, two-and-a-half hours from Kyoto on the north-west coast of Japan's Honshu island, this practice is almost mandatory.

Bathing is a serious matter in Kinosaki Onsen, the 'onsen' part of its name meaning hot spring or bathhouse. In glitzier onsen towns, each venue tries to hold onto visitors and their cash. Here a more communal mindset welcomes visitors as a collective,

rather than competing for their attention. Although there are private bathhouses, it's the seven public ones which draw the crowds. Since you are encouraged to visit them all, it makes sense to keep only your robe on. And everybody does, as they have for centuries.

WATER UNDER THE BRIDGE

Ancient mythology tells of an injured stork bathing its wounds in marshy ground that later became Kinosaki Onsen. In 717AD a priest founded the settlement when, after 1000 days of praying, he discovered water springing from the ground. It's been all about the effervescent, healing local waters ever since.

The low-rise town rambles along the



ROVING ROBES

Opening page: A Yukata is traditionally worn to communal onsens/
Shutterstock

Clockwise from right: Old-timers show how to effortlessly stroll in a yukata; Willow trees reflect in the twilight water of the Otanigawa river; Wooden sandals in the lobby of Mikiya; one size fits all; Keep the flames away from your yukata when dining at Naru

Otanigawa River, which flows down from nearby mountains to the coast just 20 minutes away. Little stone bridges crisscross the water's flow and, with cherry and willow tree-lined walkways and buildings running along both banks, it forms the living artery of the streetscape. The river's soothing, low-pitched bubbling sound – reminiscent of a day spa water feature – is a constant soundtrack.

Strolling is the official form of transport and spring water footbaths are strategically placed by the roadside to give your feet renewed vigour. Dotted along the streets are drinking fountains serving the town's prized nectar. Be warned: it's warm and salty. Cafés sell raw eggs to boil in nearby wells of piping-hot spring water.

HOT TICKET

From daybreak when the first public onsen opens, until nearly midnight when the last one closes, bathers fill the streets as they hop between the bathhouses. Dressed in colourful, tightly-wrapped yukatas, sturdy kimono-style robes, they create a comical sight. Added to the amusement, everyone wears ungainly wooden sandals – imagine a breadboard with straps – which clickety-clack along the paved streets.

On my first night, even though my lodgings provided a tasteful outfit, I resisted the dress code in public. But I threw away my inhibitions on day two, embraced the freedom and never looked back. I felt silly thereafter not wearing my grey patterned robe and clunky clogs.

Once inside an onsen, a precise etiquette is followed. Men and women bathe apart. Valuables are stored in lockers. Robes stay in the changing rooms. So, when entering the bathing area, you are naked – no exceptions. Lowering my exposed body into a scalding bath, full of unclothed Japanese men, was a challenge. But just as the body adapts to the heat, you soon forget the nudity and relax. After the fourth bath of the day, it's second nature.

Every hot spring is subtly different, promises different forms of luck and all can be visited by buying one multi-entry ticket. At the far end of town, Mandala-yu offers mountain views and grants one wish. Ichi-no-yu has an outdoor bath enclosed in a rock cave and brings good fortune. Smaller Yanagi-yu is just one deep wooden bath and helps with fertility. It was my favourite as an adjacent kiosk serves ice-cold draught Kirin beer in one-litre mugs for post-bath refreshment.

SURF, TURF AND MIRTH

With proximity to verdant farmlands and vibrant fishing communities, Kinosaki Onsen is gourmet heaven, especially since the best diners are all on one street. Its most famous dish, freshly landed in the winter months at nearby Tsuiyama Port, is Matsuba crab. A festival takes place in November in

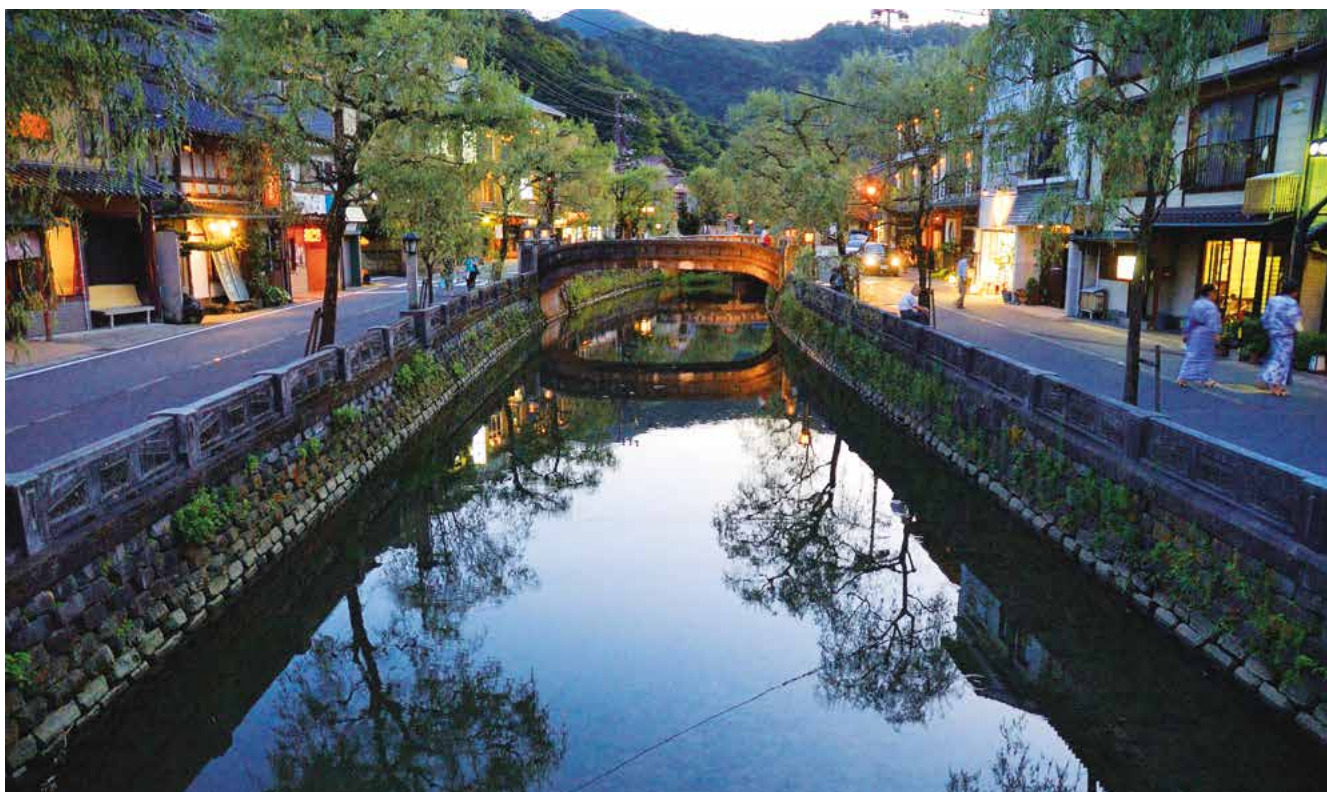


*“At the far end of town,
Mandala-yu offers mountain
views and grants one wish”*



honour of this eight-legged delicacy. Visit then and every corner of the town has a crab stall. Or dine at Inaba Sengyo restaurant where two plastic crabs, as big as cars, hang outside and make it hard to miss.

Although not a regional speciality, the fresh seafood at Orizuru sushi bar is the best I've tasted. It's a tiny strip of a



room and a family affair. Father and son – master and apprentice – man the kitchen, while the ladies work the floor. Language barriers present no problems. Simply point to the seafood which takes your fancy and it is masterfully prepared under your nose.

Owing its heritage to the land, rather than the ocean, soba noodles are a local favourite all year around. Masuya café is renowned for its homemade buckwheat noodles, served with toppings of wasabi, leek, raw egg and grated yam. Slurping, like a toddler eating tinned spaghetti, is all part of the fun.

Nearby cattle farms produce Tajima-grade beef, the most

revered in Japan. Unlike in Australia, where leanness reigns supreme, the best quality cuts have the highest levels of marbled fat. Since fat melts at a low temperature, it literally melts in the mouth. A fun way to sample Tajima is at Naru grill where you cook it yourself on a table-top barbecue. As the fat drips onto the red-hot coals, it's a smoky spectacle.

Wash it all down with local Gubigabu craft beer or Kasumi Tsuru sake at the welcoming Pub Hananoya. Owner Yoshiko Funatani is an obsessive Anglophile, so it's a curious blend of Union Jack flags, Beatles' memorabilia and Japanese knick-knacks. Western tourists are still rare commodities, so expect plenty of questions and lots of giggles.

SLEEP LIKE A LOG

True to its old-fashioned nature, accommodation is mainly in ryokans, traditional Japanese guest houses. Historically, these were simple roadside inns, with communal facilities where travellers shared tales with the host. This spirit of hospitality is still alive and, despite resisting the big chain hotels, the level of luxury has markedly risen.

Mikiya ryokan is centrally placed on the hot spring parade and guests have stayed here for three centuries. One of Japan's most celebrated authors, Naoya Shiga, recuperated here after a train crash injury and returned countless times. In 1917 he wrote the classic *At Kinomaki* which catapulted the town to new heights.

The main building, made of wood and paper, is a modest 87 years old, as fire destroyed the original. More contemporary wings were added during a recent refurbishment. From the main lobby and lounge area, styled like a Scandinavian architect's office, the intricately-designed garden provides a soothing backdrop.

On arrival, guests are given two *yukatas*: one for parading the town and a lighter version to wear privately. Bedrooms are

laid with woven tatami mats made from rice straw and you pick the room size based on the number of mats. Throughout the day, comfy futon beds are spirited away to make space to lounge in. Each evening the beds magically reappear, laid out for a tranquil night's sleep.

Breakfast, served in private booths with discreet, sliding paper doors, is a highlight at Mikiya. It's hard to believe how many different dishes appear. I counted 17. Fish, eggs, tofu, beans, soup, rice, salads and picked vegetables are all thoughtfully presented to form a balanced, healthy start to the morning quite unlike bacon and eggs. And you'll need it. Bathing all day is harder work than it sounds. •

Photography by Sandra Witzel, Rob Grant and the Japan National Tourism Organization

ON THE LINE

Below: After a dip in Yanagiyu Bath, where to next?; The Otanigawa river is the life and soul of this tranquil town



travel facts

GETTING THERE

Kinosaki Onsen is easily accessed by train from Osaka or Kyoto (direct, about 2.5 hours). Alternatively, you can fly from various airports in Japan to Toyooka and transfer by bus (30-minutes).

Qantas and Japan Airlines fly direct to Tokyo from Sydney; Jetstar fly there from Melbourne, Cairns and the Gold Coast. From central Tokyo, the 'shinkansen' (bullet train) leaves every 5-10 minutes and takes around 2.5 hours to either Osaka or Kyoto.

- Qantas: 131 313; qantas.com
- Japan Airlines: jal.co.jp/en
- Jetstar: jetstar.com

BANKING

Few Japanese ATMs accept overseas cards; 7-Eleven and Japan Post are notable exceptions (only the latter exists in Kinosaki Onsen, at 532 Yushima Kinosaki-cho).

WHEN TO GO

Every time of year offers different reasons to visit: spring is cherry blossom season; summer brings festivals, dance shows and firework displays; autumn turns the trees a stunning rusty colour; winter is crab season with the added charm of snow-covered scenery (warm yukatas and woollen socks are provided).

WHERE TO STAY

- Mikiya Ryokan, 487 Yushima Kinosaki-cho: kinosaki-mikiya.jp/en

WHERE TO EAT & DRINK

- Inaba Sengyo, 224 Yushima Kinosaki-cho
- Masuya, 654 Yushima Kinosaki-cho
- Naru, 667 Yushima Kinosaki-cho
- Orizuru, 396 Yushima Kinosaki-cho
- Pub Hananoya, 528 Yushima Kinosaki-cho

FURTHER INFORMATION

- visitkinosaki.com
- kinosaki-spa.gr.jp



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[^]Dreamliner flights from Melbourne (Tullamarine) to Tokyo (Narita) commence 10 July 2015, subject to government and regulatory approval.



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Victorinox SwissCard

Small, sharp and seriously lightweight, the Victorinox SwissCard should be on every traveller's packing list. Designed to fit in your wallet along with your credit cards, the SwissCard is 82mm long and 54.5mm wide. It contains scissors, a nail file, screwdriver, toothpick and tweezers, even a ballpoint pen with integrated ruler and letter opener. Everything you need for an African safari or another business meeting – just don't try fighting off lions. You might want to upgrade to the full-size Swiss Army Knife for that! Available in red and blue. victorinox.com



Instinct Gold Edition

From celebrity soccer player to big brand name, David Beckham can do no wrong. Ten years after launching his first Instinct fragrance, the Brit brings us a special limited edition to celebrate a decade on the shelves. The Gold Edition is a dynamic mix of lemon and bergamot oil, cardamon, rosemary and juniper berries – bottled into the signature hip flask. **1800-812-663.**



Kambrook Swift Steam Garment Steamer

Forget dealing with hotel room ironing boards, this portable steamer will have your clothes wrinkle-free in minutes. The device operates like an iron – fill it with water, plug it into the wall and simply move the fabric brush along the surface of your clothing. The continuous steam removes wrinkles quickly and without the fuss of figuring out how to use a foreign iron and ironing board. The 1000-watt device is small enough to fit in a suitcase – you probably wouldn't take it on a weekend away, but on a long-haul trip where in-room irons aren't always available, it's a great addition to your luggage. kambrook.com.au



Nikon D5500 DSLR

The days of big, bulky DSLRs are drawing to an end – Nikon's new camera is testament to that fact. The small, slim line DSLR is designed to stay under the radar without sacrificing on image quality. The 24.2MP DX-format sensor will certainly give you plenty of grunt, along with an ISO range of 100-125,600 and a 39-point Auto Focus system, especially when it comes to taking action shots. Built-in Wi-Fi capabilities facilitate instant photo sharing and full HD video is great for not-to-be-missed moments. nikon.com.au

Leatherman Tread

Mountain climbers, hikers, businessmen, surfers, backpackers, builders, plumbers – there's something about a cool tool that men just want. The new Leatherman Tread is a wearable multi-tool – Allen wrenches, cutting hooks, screwdriver, bottle opener, even an oxygen tank wrench are among the 25 tools cleverly incorporated into this nifty gadget. The adjustable, stainless steel device is even water resistant up to 200 metres. Keep an eye out for the Tread QM1, which will launch in September and features a removable timepiece, converting the tool into a watch too. leatherman.com



Lonely Planet Accessory Range

Look out world, Lonely Planet is at it again. Their guides have changed the trips of backpackers, flashpackers and every day travellers around the world – now they're changing the way you pack too. The Lonely Planet Accessory Range has everything from ponchos to travel locks to keep you safe and sane on the road. The brightly coloured packing cubes are great for anyone who likes to stay organised, while the foldable duffel bag is a good option for shoppers. There's digital world clocks, luggage scales (great for travel on budget airlines with strict weight restrictions), adapters, even dry pouches for your phone or travel documents. travelgoods.com



FitBit Charge

Every traveller has those days when they feel like they've walked the entire length of Manhattan Island and back. If you've ever wondered just how far you've walked in the name of sightseeing, shopping or exploring, you need to get a FitBit Charge now. The newest device from the FitBit family tracks just about everything – steps (like most pedometers), calories, kilometres, floors (as in the amount of floors of a building you've climbed), the time, your sleep, even your phone calls. The slim line adjustable wrist band is comfortable enough to wear to bed, so when you wake up simply sync your FitBit to your phone (via Bluetooth) to see how long you've slept and how many times you woke. Keep the Bluetooth on and the FitBit will vibrate and light up with the caller ID of incoming calls. It will also vibrate with silent alarms set on your phone. Keep an eye out for models this year with heart rate monitoring. fitbit.com/au

The Grand Tourista Scarf by Jason Wu

To stay in style will have new meaning this year – luxury hotel brand St Regis has collaborated with designer Jason Wu. The 100 per cent silk scarf is inspired by the new St Regis Istanbul. Its delicate tessellated patterns evoke the ceramic tiles in the city and the bright colours of the famous bazaars. The scarf is available in blue, beige and grey. The latter is Wu's signature colour – the designer has been an official St Regis Connoisseur since 2010. stregisboutique.com



Canon Connect Station CS100

Keeping track of all your photos when you're travelling is no easy task. If you've ever packed your laptop and a portable hard drive simply to back up files, this is the new device for you. The Canon Connect Station C100 has up to 1TB of storage – if you have an NFC enabled Canon camera, just touch the device to the camera and voila, wireless image transfer. Upload CF and SD memory card data through a USB port. You can also print wirelessly, share your images between stations, connect the station with your TV or view the images on your Smartphone. canon.com.au

Triangl Swimwear

These days you don't need a supermodel ambassador to be the face, and body, of your swimsuit line. You need hundreds of models and celebrities. Aussies Craig Ellis and Erin Deering set up Triangl Swimwear from Hong Kong a few years ago – a very humble start up that has now sold hundreds of thousands of neoprene bikinis. Models and celebrities (think Kendall Jenner and Beyoncé) have posted pictures of themselves posing in the bikinis on Instagram and the trend has snowballed from there. It helps that the geometric designs made from neoprene (wetsuit) material are bright, colourful and eye-catching. A must have in your next tropical holiday suitcase. australia.triangl.com



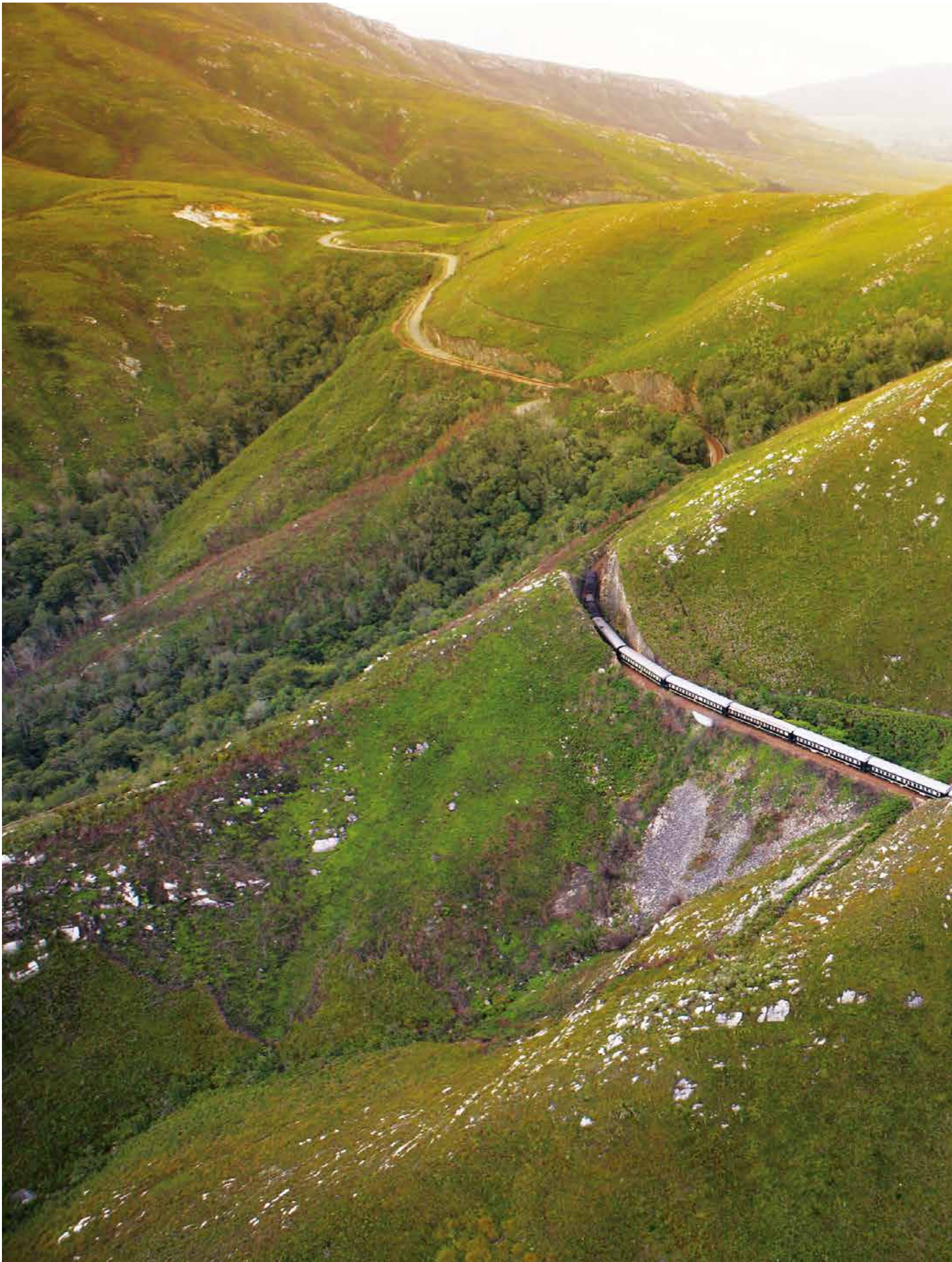
Atlas Paper Jewellery

These handmade pieces are a great gift for anyone interested in travel. Melbourne-based artist Catrine Berlatier creates one-of-a-kind necklaces from atlas paper. Each work is painstakingly created through delicately folded and woven paper. This takes origami to a whole new level. Berlatier's aim is to transform the ordinary object (whether it's atlas paper, packaging, envelopes or string) into an object of desire. She has certainly done that; the bold, beautiful necklaces are available at contemporary art galleries such as e.g.etal on Flinders Lane in Melbourne. egetal.com.au

Seiko Astron GPS Solar

If all a watch does these days is tell the time, it had better be pretty good at it. With the Apple iWatch hitting shelves this year, timekeepers have to keep up with technology. Seiko's new range of Astron connects into GPS satellites once a day, pinpointing your exact location and local time. Accuracy fluctuates +/- 15 seconds a month – no excuses for running late. It is powered by light so forget batteries or charging cables, has 40 different time zones and chronographs up to six hours in 1/5 second increments. seiko.com.au





An aerial photograph of a train winding through a lush green valley in the Great Karoo region of South Africa. The train is a long, white, multi-carriage train with a black roof, curving through the valley. The surrounding landscape is a mix of green grass and rocky outcrops. The sky is a pale, hazy blue.

ROVING on ROVOS

BY RICHARD HOLMES

*Step on board the most luxurious train in Africa for
a cross-country odyssey through South Africa's
Great Karoo.*

The shaking bed stirred me from my sleep as the wood-panelled compartment pitched and rolled as if on a stormy sea. In the well-stocked mini-bar crystal champagne glasses tinkled like a boozy wind chime. Earthquake, I wondered?

Until the screech of wheel on track reminds me I'm in a train carriage built half a century ago, barrelling through the semi-desert that dominates the heartland of South Africa. I drop the blinds and watch the electricity poles tick off the long kilometres to Cape Town. It's my last night on Rovos Rail, and I'm happy to trade a little sleep for the starlit silence of the Great Karoo.

It's a rare visitor to South Africa that doesn't combine the wild beauty of the bushveld with the coastal charms of Cape Town. You can swop seeing the Big Five in the bush for fine dining in the winelands with just a two-hour flight. Except there's a far better way to do it, which is how I find myself strolling along the platform at Rovos Rail's Capital Park Station in Pretoria on a warm spring afternoon.

Since 1989 Rovos Rail has grown from the quirky hobby of owner Rohan Vos to one of the icons of luxury travel in Africa. The first departure had just four paying passengers on board, while today Rovos runs dozens of immaculately restored carriages, often saved from abandoned sidings and refitted in the vintage-luxury style that has become the hallmark of this family-owned business.

Rohan is normally on the platform to see passengers off, but today it's daughter Brenda that introduces the train staff and waves us on our way. Train stewards, at our beck and call for the duration of the journey, show us to our carriage and explain the inner workings of the compact double or twin compartments. All have en-suite facilities with showers, while the top-drawer Royal Suites boast freestanding Victorian baths.

With its smoking lounge and brass name-plates, monogrammed writing paper and floral bedspreads, Rovos Rail is a flashback to the early decades of the 20th-century: to when travel was glamorous, not a grind. From the bow-tied barman to the discreet dinner gong, Edwardian charm all but seeps out of the woodwork. *Downton Abbey* on wheels? It's not far off.

On board, there's a careful balance of olde-world charm and modernity: air-conditioners come standard, yet televisions are forbidden. Wi-Fi? Forget it, and guests are asked to keep their mobile phones out of public areas. There are few complaints, and most passengers are only too happy to wave goodbye to their Blackberry or iPhone for a few days.

As our train jolts into motion, heads hang out the windows – goggles are thoughtfully provided – as 'King Zog' puffs and rumbles to life. Vos keeps a number of vintage steam locomotives in working order, with each named for a member of the family. King Zog is his dog.

However, with coal and water in short supply on the 1600-kilometre run down to Cape Town we quickly switch to an electric locomotive and point our nose south. I unpack, hang up my jacket for dinner, and head to the bar and lounge carriage at the back of the train. It becomes a home-from-home for much of the journey, with the dual benefits of an open-air deck and a well-stocked bar. Barman Joe Mathala is doing a brisk business in stiff G&Ts as we leave Pretoria in the afternoon haze.



“From the bow-tied barman to the discreet dinner gong, Edwardian charm all but seeps out of the woodwork”



BEING GREEN

Clockwise from above: Smiling staff wait to load supplies; Fine wine is par for the course; The train splits the vines through the Hex Valley

Opening spread: Rovos Rail over the Montagu Pass



Pretoria to Cape Town is the flagship route for Rovos Rail, but there are also regular departures to Durban, via the scenic Drakensberg Mountains and historic battlefields of KwaZulu-Natal. The three-night run north to Victoria Falls is justifiably popular, as are seasonal itineraries to Namibia. Travellers with particularly deep pockets can consider the two-week odyssey to Dar es Salaam in Tanzania.

Our first hours out of Pretoria aren't particularly attractive, traversing commuter lines as the train skirts the southern rump of Johannesburg. While the city is enjoying a long-awaited gentrification, from the train it's an uninspiring vista of industrial parks and urban townships.

The following morning all is forgiven, as the wide-open landscapes of the Highveld give way to russet grasslands and endless fields. Across the Vaal River century-old bridges mark historic battles, while the waters of Kamfers Dam outside Kimberley are tinged a lustrous pink by thousands of endangered Lesser Flamingos.

Kimberley is the first of two off-train excursions on the journey south, a chance to stretch your legs and soak up a little local history. The Big Hole may not sound like much of an attraction, but what was once an unremarkable flat-topped mountain is today one of the world's largest hand-dug

excavations: a 214-metre-deep crater that yielded nearly three tonnes of diamonds between 1871 and 1914. The wealth extracted here made some of South Africa's first fortunes.

Today a modern visitor centre overlooks the old mine workings, and entertaining local guides bring the diamond-rush days to life. After a wander through the new Diamond Museum, done up as an old-style mining village, it is back to the train for lunch on the rails as we head into the Great Karoo.

Meals on Rovos are a highlight of the journey, segmenting the days with fine South African cuisine served in the vintage dining cars. From a minuscule moving kitchen the brigade of chefs conjure up an impressive array of locally-inspired dishes. Expect the likes of seared rock lobster, pan-fried Karoo lamb, springbok loin and traditional South African *bobotie*. The wine-list is equally impressive, showcasing iconic producers of the Cape winelands as well as boutique estates pioneering new vineyard plantings. Fares are all-inclusive, so there's little reason not to indulge.

The afternoon disappears in a blur of expansive Karoo scenery, before guests wander back to their compartments to prepare for dinner. While the dress code and ambience on the train is smart-casual during the daytime, evenings are formal

RETIRING GRACEFULLY

Right: The accommodation on board is elegant and surprisingly spacious

and dressing for dinner is expected. Jacket-and-tie is a minimum requirement for gentlemen and while there's no need to pack your tuxedo, you won't look out of place if you do.

After a night of lightning storms and rattling carriages the morning sees the Cape mountains poking through the morning haze, a dusting of snow on the high peaks of the Matroosberg. The day's excursion is the quaint Victorian village of Matjiesfontein, where a handful of quirky country museums keep passengers entertained for an hour or two.



“Across the Vaal River century-old bridges mark historic battles, while the waters of Kamfers Dam outside Kimberley are tinged a lustrous pink by thousands of endangered Lesser Flamingos”

Then it's back on board for the final, and most scenic, leg of the trip: past the craggy Hex River Mountains and into the fertile Breede River valley and the Cape winelands where vineyards carpet the landscape in neat rows. Vines give way to emerald wheat fields as the train rounds the Tulbagh Mountains and runs for Cape Town.

Just as the earliest sailors would have seen, Table Mountain looms on the horizon with welcoming arms of sandstone. Cape Town Station and the end of the journey awaits, yet I find myself wishing I could turn the train around and do it all again. As if on cue, Joe appears. There's just enough time for one last G&T... •

Photography by Rovos Rail

travel facts

GETTING THERE

- Qantas flies daily from Sydney to Johannesburg's OR Tambo International Airport. From the airport it's a 30-minute drive to Rovos Rail's Capital park Station in Pretoria. Qantas: 131-313; qantas.com.au
- Oneworld partner airline BA/Comair offers connections to Cape Town, Durban and Victoria Falls for other Rovos departures. British Airways: +27-11/ 921-0222; ba.com
- South African Airways offers daily direct flights between Perth and Johannesburg. South African Airways: 1300-435-972; flysaa.com

WHERE TO STAY

- Extend your stay in Cape Town with a few nights at Rovos Rail's stately St. James Guesthouses. The guesthouse offers easy access to local beaches and restaurants, and is a 25-minute drive from the city centre. +27-21/788-4543; stjamesguesthouses.com
- Closer to the city, Taj Cape Town occupies a prime position in the heart of the central business district; close to galleries, shops and restaurants. The 10 Heritage Suites are the best in the house. +27-21/819-2000; tajcapetown.co.za

WHEN TO GO

There's no bad time to make the journey from Pretoria to Cape Town, which has a Mediterranean climate similar to Melbourne: expect warm to hot summers and wet, cold winters. Go in summer if you want to spend some time on the beaches, winter for whale watching near Hermanus (two hours' drive from Cape Town), and spring for the annual flower displays up the West Coast. The trip from Pretoria to Victoria Falls is best from February to April, when the Zambezi is in full flood.

FURTHER INFORMATION

- Rovos Rail: +27-12/315-8242; rovos.com
- African Ubuntu Safaris: +61-2/9877-6789; africanubuntusafaris.com.au
- South African Tourism: 1800-238-643; southafrica.net
- Cape Town Tourism: +27-86/132-2223; capetown.travel

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One of a kind in Japan

Luxury travel company Abercrombie & Kent, with 25 years in expedition cruising, has announced an exciting new cruise around Japan, chartering the beautiful all-balcony ship *Le Soleal*. This adventure will allow guests to discover Japan, visiting unique ports and away-from-it-all wilderness areas with highlights being Kyoto, Osaka, Hiroshima and Miyajima, medieval Hagi, Gyeongju in South Korea, the arts centre of Kanazawa and the rice paddies of Sado Island. Guests on board will also enjoy a variety of shore excursions, visiting tea houses, galleries, museums, an onsen, gardens, villages and going hiking, and can learn about Japan in fascinating onboard lectures. The tour departs on 13 May, 2016, with only 199 guests able to enjoy this fascinating itinerary. abercrombiekent.com.au



Seabourn's new Penthouse Spa Suites

Seabourn's elegant Penthouse Spa Suites on board *Seabourn Odyssey* were unveiled for its Australian summer cruise season and added more than a touch of ultra-luxury to an already stunning ship. The four new Spa Suites offer 50 square metres of inside space and large private verandahs, with a living and dining area, separate bedroom, walk-in robe, bathroom with a tub, a spa shower, two flat screen TVs and floor-to-ceiling windows onto the verandah. The suites are accessed by a spiral staircase off the Spa lobby, and guests can enjoy the services of a spa concierge during the voyage. The Penthouse Spa Suites are also offered on *Seabourn Quest* and will be added to *Seabourn Sojourn* when she's next in drydock. Seabourn will add two more ships to its fleet, with the *Seabourn Encore* to launch in late 2016 and *Seabourn Ovation* in early 2018 with both ships set to carry 604 guests. seabourn.com



Vintage Hurtigruten in Norway

Hurtigruten's grand old lady, *MS Lofoten*, which celebrated her 50th anniversary in 2014, will be celebrated on her voyages from April 2015. The ship's classic characteristics will be accentuated throughout her journeys, offering guests nostalgic experiences such as fishing directly from the ship, then enjoying your catch at dinner time.

This small, agile veteran of the seas can navigate waters others can't, bringing her guests closer to the action and to the magnificent scenery on her coastal voyage between Bergen and Kirkenes.

And it is the scenery that is the star of this part of the world, with *Lofoten* and her sister ships on the 'Classic Round Voyage' visiting Nordfjord, the Art Nouveau town of Ålesund, either Geirangerfjord or Hjørundfjord (depending on season), the Viking-founded city of Trondheim, the Arctic Circle, Ørnes, the Lofoten Islands, Tromsø, the North Cape and the heartland of the Sami people. The range of excursions is almost as impressive as the scenery. Go in winter and you might even see the Northern Lights. discovertheworldcruising.com.au





A new Princess in the Emerald City

Princess Cruises will introduce a new ship to its Australian fleet, with the *Emerald Princess* to have her first season of cruising in Australia in late 2016. The 3082-guest ship will be based in Sydney – the Emerald City – from November 2016 to April 2017, giving the cruise line a capacity of 11,800 berths on five ships across Australasia. Launched in 2007, *Emerald Princess* will be one of the youngest ships to be deployed in Australia and New Zealand and has a raft of features including 13 dining options, eight showrooms and lounges, two nightclubs and four swimming pools as well as signature Princess offerings such as a child-free Sanctuary, the poolside Movies Under the Stars and the luxurious Lotus Spa.

Emerald Princess will undertake a number of cruises from Sydney, with itineraries to New Zealand, Australia and the South Pacific. princess.com.au



Avalon's Suite on the Mekong

Avalon Waterways has unveiled its first Suite Ship in Asia, the brand new *Avalon Siem Reap* which is now sailing the mighty Mekong River through Cambodia and Vietnam. Catering to only 36 guests, the 60 metre ship is based on Avalon's revolutionary Suite Ship concept pioneered on the rivers of Europe, but is smaller and designed especially for Asian cruising.

Built by local craftsmen, *Avalon Siem Reap* has been designed to reflect the character, symbolism and traditions of the regions through which it sails, while offering the modern features guests expect and enjoy. Its 18 air-conditioned Avalon Suites are beautifully fitted in contemporary Asian style and each features Avalon's signature open-air balcony with floor-to-ceiling, wall-to-wall panoramic windows that have retractable screen systems and doors that slide open to make the most of the passing scenery. *Avalon Siem Reap* is the only ship in the industry able to cruise all the way between Ho Chi Minh City and Siem Reap, avoiding hours of travel by road. The vessel will be joined later this year by a second new Asian ship, *Avalon Myanmar*, which will operate Avalon's first cruises on the Irrawaddy River. avalonwaterways.com.au



Star ship Emerald

Following the incredible success of Evergreen Tours' Star Ships, launched on the rivers of Europe last year, the company has announced plans to build a fifth ship, the *Emerald Belle*. The ship will be built in the same configuration as her four sister ships, with features including a 24-square-metre heated swimming pool with a retractable glass roof that transforms into a cinema in the evening, two restaurants, and stylish cabins including the Emerald Panorama Balcony Suite. Evergreen created a new kind of indoor balcony, complete with a decked area and an ingenious open-air system. With the touch of a button, the upper half of the cabin's floor-to-ceiling window drops down to let in fresh air and provide full panoramic views of the landscape. The ships carry 182 guests in 72 suites and 20 staterooms. The ship will also have a hairdresser, massage therapy room and a fitness area.

The cruises range from eight to 15 days, and take you to many fantastic villages, towns and cities lining Europe's Danube and Rhine rivers. evergreentours.com.au

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A grand tour with MSC

MSC Cruises has launched an exciting new cruise product called the MSC Grand Tour, a package combining either two, three or four itineraries into one epic voyage aboard up to four different MSC cruise ships in the Mediterranean or Northern Europe.

MSC Cruises will arrange free transfers between ships as well as deliver all luggage between ships for a seamless, stress-free changeover. Passengers booked on a Grand Tour including more than one ship will enjoy priority check-in from the second cruise onwards. Every MSC Grand Tour package also includes discounted onboard laundry services and free shore excursions in selected ports, enabling passengers to discover the cultural and historical diversity of the Mediterranean or Northern Europe.

Cruisers can choose between MSC Grand Mediterranean Tours or MSC Grand Northern Europe Tours for an unforgettable journey. msccruises.com.au



Star of the Seven Seas

Regent Seven Seas Cruises carried out a multi-million-dollar refurbishment and upgrade to the *Seven Seas Mariner* in 2014, and showed her off to Australia during the summer. The all-suite, all-balcony ship retained its warmth and charm but has added elegance and luxury across the ship. The ship's Grand, Master, Mariner, Seven Seas, Horizons and Penthouse Suites received all-new furniture, upholstery, lighting and wall coverings. The ship's two-deck high, state-of-the-art show theatre was renovated with a new LED wall to enhance the on-stage productions, along with new carpeting, upholstery, wall coverings and furnishings, with the Stars Lounge, Horizon Lounge and Observation Lounge also receiving new looks.

The Canyon Ranch Spa and Fitness Centre also enjoyed a makeover, as well as the exterior decks and all fresco lounges.

Regent Seven Seas Cruises has three all-suite vessels; *Seven Seas Mariner*, *Seven Seas Voyager* and *Seven Seas Navigator*, with the *Seven Seas Explorer* currently under construction and due to be cruising in mid-2016. rsc.com

All aboard the MS *Koningsdam*

In 2016, Holland America Line's newest ship, *MS Koningsdam*, will make her debut, with the ship representing a new Pinnacle Class of ship for the Line. The vessel will debut several innovative concepts and new public spaces and venues, while still featuring popular amenities guests associate with Holland America Line.

Koningsdam's inaugural voyage will be a seven-day roundtrip from Civitavecchia departing 20 February, 2016 visiting Dubrovnik, Croatia, Kérkira (Corfu) and Katakolon (Olympia), Greece, and Naples, Italy. hollandamerica.com



in brief

Carnival Australia has launched the first shore excursion at Vanuatu's Mystery Island, with passengers now able to try four experiences during a visit to the Island. Tackle stand up paddleboarding, a glass bottom boat tour, guided snorkel safari and a glass bottom kayak excursion in the beautiful turquoise waters. carnival.com.au

Crystal Cruises has a new owner, with Genting Hong Kong purchasing the award-winning cruise line for US\$550million. The new owners have already announced that they will add a third vessel to the fleet, joining *Crystal Symphony* and *Crystal Serenity*. crystalcruises.com

Scenic Tours has unveiled its latest luxury SpaceShip *Scenic Azure*, which will launch on Portugal's picturesque Douro River in April 2016, travelling over 11 days from Porto to Vega de Terron. Scenic is the first operator to own and operate a purpose-built river cruise ship in the region. scenictours.com.au

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Silver Discoverer

By Roderick Eime

Silversea's 2008 entry into the hallowed realm of expedition cruising had industry observers looking closely at the boutique luxury brand's ambitious move with the launch of *Prince Albert II* (now *Silver Explorer*). Silversea has since added *Silver Galapagos* and now, *Silver Discoverer* to form a trio of highly capable, well-appointed vessels that have the globe covered.

Starting life in 1989 and previously operating as the much-loved *Clipper Odyssey*, an extensive refit and makeover transformed this already ideal vessel into one befitting the Silversea brand.

Relaunched as *Silver Discoverer* early last year, the 103 metre vessel accommodates a maximum of 128 guests, served by 87 officers, staff and crew.

Silversea's all-inclusive policy and superior onboard experience puts new sparkle into the category of 'champagne adventure' with butlers and sommeliers as part of the expedition experience. Shipboard accommodations are in line with demand in modern expedition cruising. Suites range in size from 17 to 40 square metres with champagne on request, refrigerator stocked with guests' choice of beverage, European bath amenities, premium Pratesi bed linen with down duvet covers, iPod docking station, plush bathrobe and slippers, umbrella, hairdryer, (reasonably priced) WiFi, flat-screen television with on-demand movies, music and satellite news. Suite service includes daily evening turndown and dark chocolates.

Surprisingly, these niceties come at very little extra compared to existing expedition products. silversea.com/expeditions



Aqua Mekong

By Sue Wallace

The sleek new boutique cruiser, *Aqua Mekong* leaves a stylish wake in the waters between Vietnam and Cambodia. Stretch out on a comfy day bed, throw back the curtains and get set for a spectacular show of life on the mighty Mekong while cocooned in the 62-metre cruiser that has all the style of a five-star hotel.

Dining is an adventure with award-winning Executive Chef David Thompson, of Bangkok's Nahm fame, designing exotic menus. Days are filled visiting colourful markets with neat piles of fresh fruit, wandering through small villages and visits to silk weavers, silversmiths, bamboo mat makers and temples.

It accommodates 40 passengers in 20 suites, some with balconies, has 40 crew and there's a great sense of space from the chic lounge to the observation deck with plunge pool.

It's a dream come true for Francesco Galli Zugaro, CEO of Aqua Expeditions, who has carved his name in the world of luxury and adventure with *Aqua Amazon* and *Aria Amazon* that cruise the South American waterways. aquaexpeditions.com



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REEF magic

BY RODERICK EIME

Millennium Atoll is one of the last of the truly pristine reefs in the world, as guests on board a Lindblad Expeditions – National Geographic voyage into this remote South Pacific region discovered.

We had seen the pictures and videos, but nothing prepared us for what we were about to experience. We checked our vests and regulators, repositioned our masks, took a couple of deep breaths and launched ourselves backwards into the blue. As we turned and looked down, preparing to descend into the turquoise depths, we could see them milling below us, their sleek streamlined bodies gliding effortlessly through the water.

As I pressed the release button, a stream of violent bubbles signalled my intention. I was deliberately dropping down 20 metres below the gentle waves into a swarm of sharks. More than I could count, perhaps 30, perhaps more, were waiting for us as we invaded their realm from above.

Here on Millennium Atoll, hundreds of miles from anywhere, we are at what National Geographic researchers believe is one of the last of the truly pristine reefs anywhere on the planet. In 2009, a team of researchers led by Dr. Eric Sala, a National Geographic Explorer-in-Residence, spent more than 1000 hours below the water surveying the region, including Millennium Atoll (formerly Caroline Island) here in Kiribati to assess its viability as a 'Pristine Seas' location. Sala launched the Pristine Seas project to find, survey, and help protect the last wild places in the ocean.

"It is essential that we let the world know that these places exist, that they are threatened, and that they deserve to be protected," says Sala, "We have the rare opportunity, right now, to protect many of the most pristine seas around the world."

As the reef gets closer, so do the sharks, totally unafraid of our presence, they investigate us. Most common among the swarm are the svelte black-tipped reef sharks, adorned with a tricolour dorsal fin. White-tipped reef sharks can also be seen around the pack, but it's the grey reef sharks that have caught our attention.

Bold, confident and larger than any of the other reef sharks, the greys are one of the most heavily fished species with many local populations all but eliminated due to unrestricted harvesting. They are ever-present, never leaving us alone.

"If an alien had just one day on Earth and wanted to see a coral reef, I would show him Millennium Atoll" said National Geographic Explorer-in-Residence Dr. Eric Sala.

"One of the most unusual features of Millennium Atoll and its reefs is what is called an 'inverted trophic pyramid'," says Dave Cochrane, a Lindblad Expeditions – National Geographic naturalist and expedition guide who has been vital to our understanding of the dynamics of the reef. "This means that the biomass of predator species exceeds that of the prey. It might sound like an imbalance, but it's actually a very good sign of robust health."

Travelling aboard the compact but lavish, 4000 ton *National Geographic Orion*, I am just one of more than 100 passengers on a journey of exploration and discovery from Fiji to Tahiti. Not only are we delving beneath the waves, in awe of the thriving reefs of the remote South Pacific, we go ashore to meet tribal chiefs at communities like Taveuni in Fiji and Apia in Samoa. We learn about anthropology and ecology, zoology and mythology from naturalist lecturers like 35-year Lindblad veteran Tom Ritchie who loves to tease us with tales of the great South Pacific migrations and cultures.

While many readers will be familiar with the much-lauded *Orion* which operated here in Australia under the stewardship of Sarina Bratton's locally-based operation, there are changes



SEA SHELLS

From top: White terns flutter on Millennium Atoll (JackSwenson/Expedition Gallery.com); A local warrior greets guests at Manihiki Island in the Cook Islands (Roderick Eime/Travography.com)

Opening spread: The lagoon in the pristine Millennium Atoll is a perfect habitat for young blacktip reef sharks (Eric Sala/National Geographic)

aboard the 2003-built expedition vessel. Lectures have been moved to a modified lounge, rearranged with multiple flat screens and guaranteed seating for every passenger, with the library moved to the observation lounge in the former bar. The beauty salon is gone and the top deck theatre is closed pending renovations or conversion. The excellent dining and state room comforts however remain.

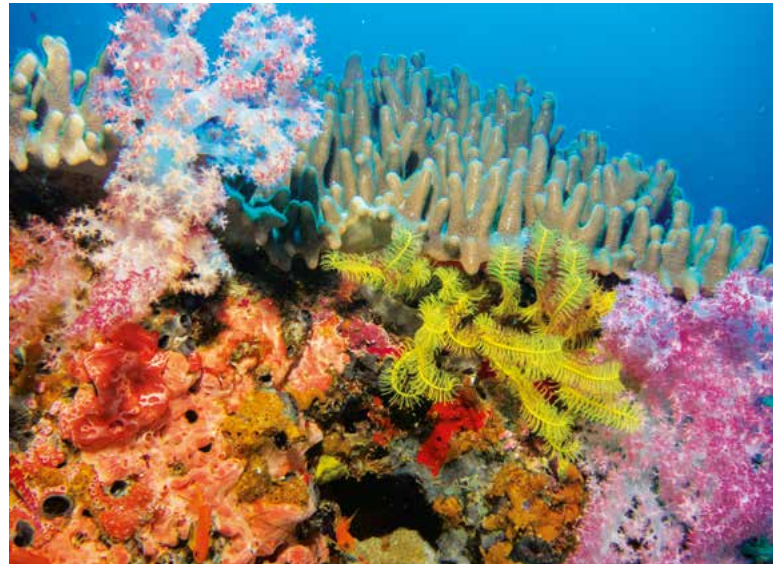
Despite the curriculum, this is still a vacation. While ashore, we stroll among wild palms and tropical vegetation, many of us toting serious optical equipment like 300mm telephoto lenses and Swarovski binoculars. Angelic terns flutter above our heads as if to mock us, while marauding frigate birds swoop and wheel looking for any morsel they can find.

But the takeaway from this immersive, transformational holiday is that our seas and oceans are not in great shape. Man plunders the seas feeding our voracious appetite for fish and



WHAT LIES BENEATH

Clockwise from left: Naturalist guide Richard White shows off a massive coconut crab on uninhabited Flint Island (Mark M. Gottlieb); Beautiful coral (Mark M. Gottlieb); Glorious colours of a giant clam (Mark M. Gottlieb)



“If an alien had just one day on Earth and wanted to see a coral reef, I would show him Millennium Atoll.” – National Geographic Explorer-in-Residence Dr. Enric Sala



THE BIG BLUE

Opposite page from top: Guests on deck (Mark M. Gottlieb); Lindblad divemaster, Justin Hofman - silhouetted against a shoal of fish inside Swallow Cave, Tonga; A map shows part of our journey; A grey reef shark (Mark M. Gottlieb)

marine products without fully understanding the ramifications of our actions. It's not just whales and dolphins that need our protection. It's every living thing in the ocean that needs each other to survive in healthy harmony. Add global warming and other environmental factors like ocean acidity, garbage, pollution and toxic waste, and it's clear we are putting intolerable stress on our oceans.

This Lindblad Expeditions – National Geographic voyage is not some rarefied event. Beginning with the stalwart travel brand's founding patriarch, Lars-Eric Lindblad, the company has been through several incarnations over more than half a century. But the consistent theme has always been to deliver exceptional, environmentally and culturally courageous itineraries to travellers who want more than typical brochure rack offerings.

“But the takeaway from this immersive, transformational holiday is that our seas and oceans are not in great shape”

And I use the word ‘courageous’ deliberately. During the Cold War period, Lindblad defied trade and cultural embargoes to take American guests to such foreign lands as China, Vietnam and Cambodia, a move that incurred the supreme displeasure of the US State Department.

Commenting on his rebellious nature to the *New York Times* after being levied with \$75,000 fines in 1989 for trading with the USA's enemies, Lindblad snr said, “I would do it again. Travel in my opinion is not ordinary trade. Travel is a way of communication. To embargo travel is like burning books or imprisoning journalists.”

While on holiday in his native city of Stockholm in 1994, Lars-Eric Lindblad died suddenly from a massive heart attack.

Now in the hands of the founder's son, Sven-Olaf Lindblad and his son Jeremy, the company has never been stronger and has always been perfectly positioned to deliver benchmark expeditions to a growing section of the population who crave educational and ‘transformational’ travel experiences. Lindblad snr. was the first to offer private charters to Antarctica and built the first of the modern wave of expedition vessels, the *MS Lindblad Explorer*, in 1969.

Now with either outright ownership or regular charter of a fleet of ten vessels strategically positioned around the world, thousands upon thousands of guests are enriched and informed about the state of the planet's ecosystems, through both first hand exposure and lectures from experts with decades of experience.

For example, aboard the *National Geographic Orion* on our three-week ‘Reefs, Lagoons and Volcanic Isles’ itinerary from Fiji to Tahiti, is Flip Nicklin and his wife Linda. Flip has been photographing whales and marine ecosystems for National Geographic for 30 years. It's rare that regular travellers or even expedition cruisers meet these revered photojournalists, much less join them for dinner conversation.

It's a policy of Lindblad to include the very best of guest presenters to supplement the roll call of illustrious expedition staff. Famous Australian filmmaker and explorer, Ben Cropp is scheduled to join the *Orion* for Lindblad's Global Perspectives Speakers Program in October for the ‘Palau to Solomon Islands: Along the Pacific Equator’ expedition. This program has featured former presidents, Nobel and Pulitzer Prize winners, astronauts and other intelligent celebrities from all over the world.

Lindblad ships are also equipped to deliver enrichment experiences that the rest of the industry clamour to emulate. While the Remote Operating Vehicle (ROV) was not functioning on our journey, more's the pity, I am advised it is now fully operational and has been wowing guests with undersea images from the Antarctic. Likewise our ocean-going kayaks were not deployed, but elsewhere they feature as an activity when the above water attractions predominate.

From the Antarctic to the Arctic and the entire circumference of the Equator, Lindblad Expeditions are positioned to explore every inch of the planet in a way that gives incomparable insight and understanding of both the environment and the cultures encountered. Heck, why Lindblad haven't been awarded a Nobel Prize beats me. •

*In an announcement that stunned the travel industry, Lindblad Expeditions have announced that *NG Orion* will reposition to Europe for the southern winter from 2016. This decision means the 2015 itineraries will be the last Pacific Ocean itineraries aboard *NG Orion* for the foreseeable future.

Photography by Roderick Eime, Mark M. Gottlieb, Eric Sala and Jack Swensen



travel facts

Lindblad Expeditions – National Geographic returns to the Southern Line Islands in November 2015 as part of their extensive exploration of the South Pacific aboard the luxury expedition vessel, *National Geographic Orion*.

au.expeditions.com

Millennium Island (formerly Caroline island):
kiribatitourism.gov.ki



COMPILED BY HELEN HAYES



Qantas First in LA

Qantas opened its brand new Qantas First Lounge at LAX in December, offering a new standard of luxury for first class passengers. The new lounge is based on the flagship multi-award-winning Qantas First Lounges in Sydney and Melbourne, providing seating for more than 200 customers and different zones in which to dine, relax, work and socialise.

It is the first overseas Qantas First lounge to be designed by renowned Australian industrial designer, Marc Newson. The lounge is more than triple the size of the previous space, with the design and service the equivalent of the world's best five-star hotels.

Features of the lounge include Californian Knoll furniture, Tuscan Carrara marbled floors, a massive bar and Tai Ping wool carpets from Hong Kong. The star of the lounge is a 74-seat restaurant and bar where customers can dine from a Neil Perry Rockpool-designed à la carte menu while enjoying a view of the open-style kitchen.

The new Qantas First Lounge also offers faster Wi-Fi, wireless printing, cable television, two private work suites and seven shower suites featuring Aurora Spa ASPAR products.

Qantas will open the new wing of its Los Angeles Business Lounge in early May, adding space for an extra 200 passengers along with a dedicated dining area with upgraded meals, a family room and more shower suites. qantas.com.au

Take a bite of Korean Air

One of the service attributes that sets Korean Air apart is its in-flight cuisine. Delectable and healthy meals are served on Wedgwood China with elegant place settings synonymous with the quiet beauty of Korea. Korean Air has repeatedly been awarded the prestigious Mercury Award for its in-flight meals, including its signature dish, Bibimbap. Meals are specially selected by a team of culinary experts to reflect the tastes of travellers from many regions of the world. Korean Air was one of the first airlines to introduce organic breads and salads, and its beef and chicken dishes in First Class on routes out of Seoul are sourced from its own ranch on Jeju Island. Mineral water on all flights is bottled at Korean Air's own spring on the slopes of Jeju's Mt. Halla. The First Class dining experience also includes Sevruga caviar and the finest Laurent Perrier Champagne, which is also served in Prestige Class.

Korean Air Flies from Sydney to Seoul daily and from Brisbane to Seoul six times a week. koreanair.com





More than a feeling with Cathay

Cathay Pacific is making inroads in the US, with a sixth gateway online from May when the airline begins offering four non-stop flights a week from Hong Kong to Boston, Massachusetts. The Boston service will be operated by Boeing 777-300ER aircraft in a four-class configuration featuring Cathay Pacific's newly refreshed First Class, award-winning Business Class, new Premium Economy and long-haul Economy Class seats. The airline currently serves Chicago, Los Angeles, New York (JFK), Newark, San Francisco, Toronto and Vancouver. Cathay also launched flights to Zurich in March, also on the Boeing 777-300ER aircraft. cathaypacific.com



Air China eyes Melbourne

Air China is launching a new service to Australia on 1 June, 2015, with the airline operating four weekly Beijing to Melbourne flights. The flights, operated on Airbus A330-200 aircraft, will offer 28 lie-flat business class and 199 economy seats.

The service will operate four times per week with evening departures on Monday, Wednesday, Friday and Sunday. It will increase to a daily service from 25 October, 2015.

The decision to introduce a direct Melbourne to Beijing service reflects an increase in demand from both the business and leisure markets and the signing of the Free Trade Agreement in November last year. Air China is the only carrier flying from Australia to provide this direct service.

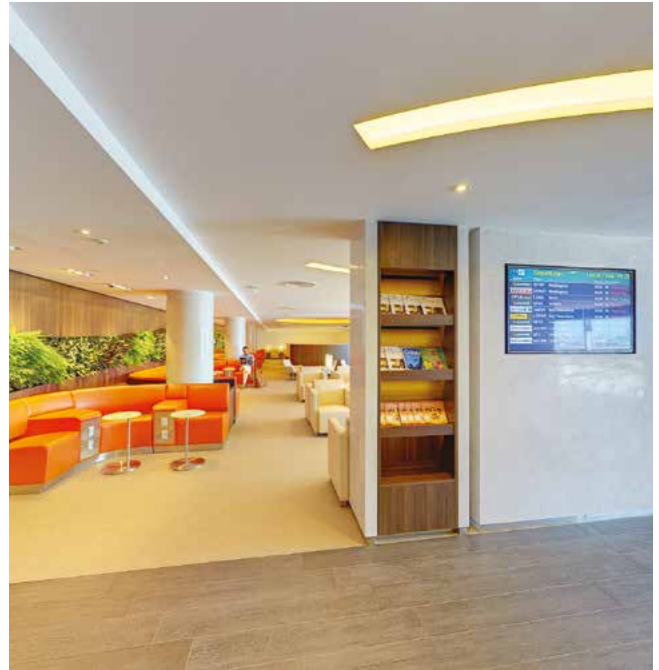
Over the course of 2015, Air China will increase its capacity from Melbourne by 60 per cent, the largest increase in a single year since Air China first entered the Australian market 30 years ago. airchina.com.au

SkyTeam's new lounge

SkyTeam, the global airline alliance, opened its first exclusive lounge at Sydney Airport earlier in the year. The alliance presence has been growing in the Australian market and now offers over 80 weekly departures from Sydney International Airport operated by China Airlines, China Eastern, China Southern, Delta Air Lines, Garuda Indonesia, Korean Air and Vietnam Airlines.

The Sydney lounge is the third in SkyTeam's global network and is a spacious environment to relax pre-flight with sweeping airport views and the iconic 'green botanical Wall' adding a breath of fresh air.

The lounge can seat 140 guests, with electrical outlets available by each seat, offers complimentary refreshments, a champagne and wine bar, a wellness centre, TV room, and a business area fully equipped with printing facilities. The lounge is available to Elite Plus, First and Business Class passengers flying on any of the seven SkyTeam airlines serving the airport. skyteam.com



Singapore Airlines' Next Generation

Customers flying on select Singapore Airlines flights from Sydney and Melbourne are now able to enjoy the Airline's newest cabin products thanks to the deployment of new Boeing 777-300ER aircraft. Sydney flyers have been experiencing the product since November while Melbourne travellers came on board at the end of March 2015.

The next-generation 777-300ER integrates the latest technology with cutting-edge design to offer customers across every cabin class more space, comfort and privacy as well as a state of the art KrisWorld in-flight entertainment system.

The new product includes one of the most spacious First Class products in the sky, one of the widest Business Class seats available, innovative seats in Economy with more legroom and a new in-flight entertainment system. singaporeairlines.com

in brief

United Airlines has increased the frequency of its non-stop Melbourne–Los Angeles service from six-times-weekly to daily, following its inaugural launch on 28 Oct., 2014. United operates the Boeing 787-9 Dreamliner aircraft on this route. United currently remains the only carrier to fly non-stop from Australia to San Francisco. united.com

Qantas will begin direct flights from Brisbane to Tokyo's Narita Airport from August this year. This new direct service will operate four times a week and complement a new direct daily Sydney–Haneda service. Qantas will also fly to Narita on three alternate days from another Australian port, which will be finalised shortly, meaning the airline will offer double daily services to Japan. qantas.com.au

LAN and TAM, members of LATAM Airlines Group, picked up three awards at the prestigious Cellar In the Sky Awards in London recently, recognising the best airline wine lists in the world. LAN and TAM Airlines were awarded silver medals in the 'Best Business Class Fortified or Dessert Wine' category and a bronze medal in the 'Best First Class White Wine' category. lan.com



Etihad introduces Flying Reimagined

Etihad Airways has launched its new global brand campaign with the worldwide premiere of a new television commercial (TVC) in Abu Dhabi, attended by Hollywood icon Nicole Kidman, the media and hundreds of special guests. Nicole Kidman is both star and narrator of the captivating feature, which will be shown globally on television and social media in both 60- and 30-second formats, with still versions of the campaign appearing in print, digital and on outdoor channels. The TVC was shot onboard Etihad Airways' new flagship Airbus A380 and in a number of locations around the world, including various landmarks in Abu Dhabi. The ad also features a digitally created scene of Kidman in the interior of the soon-to-be-opened Louvre Abu Dhabi. The opening scene shows Kidman flicking through the pages of an inspirational novel at the Strahov library, with subsequent sequences showing the actress enjoying the revolutionary cabins and service offerings onboard Etihad Airways' new A380. etihad.com

 tried & tested

Japan Airlines JL772

ROUTE: SYDNEY – TOKYO NARITA, JAPAN

AIRCRAFT: BOEING 777-200

CLASS SEAT: ECONOMY, 45A

DEPARTURE TIME: 9.15 AM

ARRIVAL TIME: 17.05 PM

CONFIGURATION: 244 SEATS: 8 FIRST CLASS, 49 BUSINESS CLASS, 40 PREMIUM ECONOMY, 147 ECONOMY

Off on a family trip to the famous Niseko snow, the excitement was palpable as we were warmly welcomed onto the plane. With two lanky young men amongst us the amount of leg room was surprisingly good, the seats comfortable and we breathed a big sigh of relief to see that there were in-seat TV screens. How did we ever survive long flights without them? The seats also had a USB port and an AC power point – necessities for the techno-savvy traveller.

We were all absorbed into our movie, book, sleep or game in no time, only waking or pausing long enough to enjoy lunch. We all opted for the stir-fried shredded beef and white rice with salad, fruit and a tasty lemon cake for dessert, accompanied by a nice white (me) and a sake (him). The meal before arrival was penne with pork bolognese, with bush tucker salad, fruit and chocolate cake.



The flight attendants, like the check-in staff, were so friendly and warm, with nothing a problem. Another bottle of water? Certainly. Another snack for the starving teenager? Absolutely.

While the economy cabin was fine, the business class seats looked pretty special as we walked past them to board. Called JAL Sky Suites, they are little cocoons of calm, with unrestricted access – no climbing past or over anyone – and of course, a lie-flat bed to ensure sleep is no problem. The spaces also boast an ottoman, privacy partition, a large swivel table and a large TV monitor.

The verdict? Everything was seamless but the highlight was the incredibly friendly and warm service from all and sundry. au.jal.com

By Helen Hayes

global apps



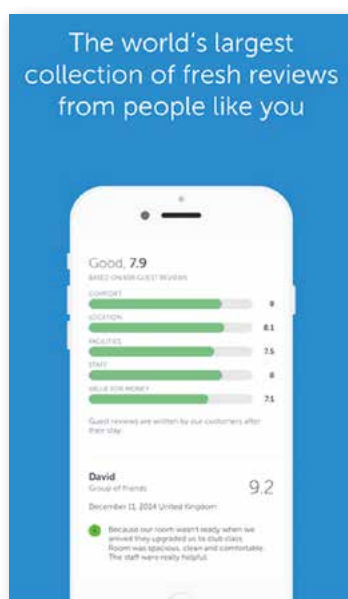
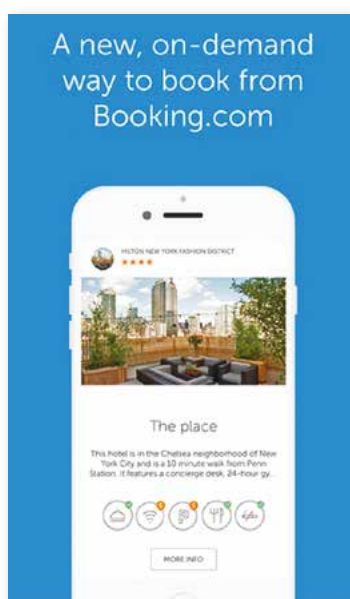
COMPILED BY HUGH MCCRYSTAL

Booking Now

Free



Just landed and you still don't have a bed to sleep in tonight? Fire up this sleek, modern-looking app and find yourself somewhere to stay at rock-bottom prices. Swipe left or right, Tinder-style, to express interest in the day's offerings and nab yourself an accommodation bargain.



Snapchat



Free

Hear us out – we know this one's been around for a while. But the buzziest young people's social-networking site has launched Snapchat Discover, an edited newsfeed of the most relevant stories from around the world. They're still growing their media partnerships but this is one to keep an eye on.

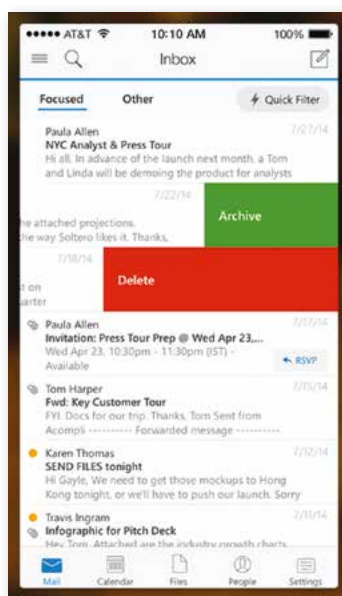
Microsoft Outlook



iOS

Free

Yep, it's Outlook, just like your work email – finally! Launched in late January this year, we already consider it essential. Just as fast as the default Apple email app, it has far more functions, including the capacity to learn which messages are likely to be urgent. Oh, and it also lets you attach Dropbox and OneDrive files.





Instant Heart Rate

Free



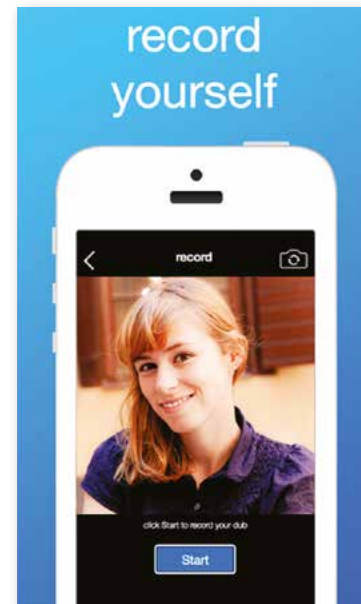
Whether you're a health nut or an athlete – or just want to know your resting pulse rate – this popular app is a remarkably accurate way to measure your heart beat simply by pressing a finger against the camera of your phone.

Dubsmash



Free

Choose from an array of famous movie and TV quotes, then record a video of yourself lip-synching the words and send them out to your friends via Facebook, Twitter or text message. It's a fun diversion and when the novelty wears off, at least you didn't invest any money in it.

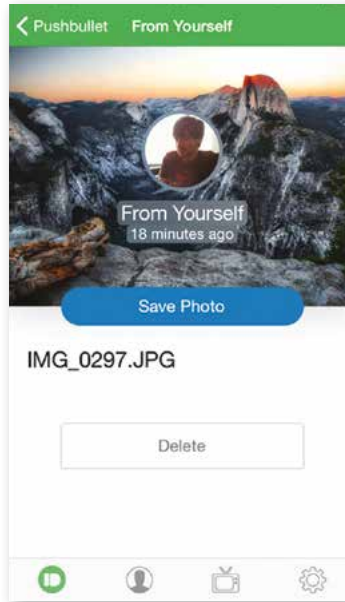
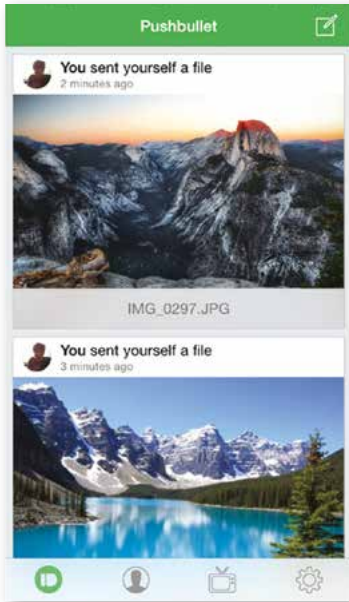


VRSE



Free

Google's ultra low-tech, cardboard virtual-reality goggles come into their own with this app, available on iOS and Android. Showcasing an ever-expanding library of extraordinarily beautiful, moving VR shorts films, it'll quite likely blow your mind. The audio-visual future is here and it's in your phone.



Pushbullet

Free



This remarkably useful app lets you send links, files and notifications to yourself, and retrieve them from any of your compatible devices. We find ourselves turning to it again and again – and it’s very possible you won’t know how you managed without it.



Trivia Crack



Free

Remember “Draw Something”? Well, here’s the next friend-against-friend gaming app sweeping the globe. Put your trivia knowledge about science, entertainment, art, geography, sport and history to the test. Just be careful with this one, it’s pretty habit-forming.

Lingua.ly



Free

If you’re heading to a country and don’t speak the local language, or want to brush up on your creaky old high-school knowledge, this app is a godsend. Read articles in one of 10 available languages, then test your comprehension or learn the words you weren’t sure of via a series of flashcards.



Currency Today Widget



Free

If you find yourself switching between different currencies frequently, this app may become your best friend. It installs a widget that enables you to swipe straight down to your iPhone's notification screen – suddenly it's possible to check exchange rates without even having to unlock your screen. Genius.



KiwiRail Scenic Journeys

See the best of New Zealand by train



Our three iconic train journeys take you through breathtaking landscapes that can only be seen by rail. Roll past majestic volcanoes, encounter the rugged Pacific coastline, traverse the pristine Southern Alps, and do it all from the air-conditioned comfort of our world class carriages.

A licensed café allows you to completely relax on board, and panoramic sky-view windows and the open air viewing platforms ensure there is nothing between you and the very best of New Zealand.

Book now at kiwirailscenic.co.nz

hotel update



COMPILED BY HELEN HAYES



Kata Rocks

Phuket has a new star. Kata Rocks is a luxury boutique resort and residence, which has won 20 international property awards, including “Best Apartment in the World”. There are 34 Sky Villas ranging in size from one to four bedrooms. Each has its own private infinity-pool, an expansive dining and living area, a fully-fitted European kitchen, and superbly appointed bedrooms and bathrooms. The latest interactive iPad technology allows guests to control the world of their Sky Villa at the touch or swipe of a button. The resort sits on a promontory between Kata Beach and Kata Noi Beach. katarocks.com

Reverie in Saigon

Ho Chi Minh City has a new hotel opening its doors in May. The 286-room Reverie Saigon commands the upper and lower floors of a contemporary, 39-storey tower in Ho Chi Minh City and has already made a name for itself with bold style, opulent features and absolute grandeur. From its rooms and suites to its restaurants and bars, as well as its lavish public spaces, all feature indelible expressions of original craftsmanship and artistry. As visually arresting as the hotel is within, so too are the expansive views from each and every room and suite. You’ve never seen Saigon quite like this. Definitely one to put on your list for 2015. thereveriesaigon.com



Tasmanian estate

Quamby Estate is one of Tasmania’s most prestigious properties, and with a history dating back to 1828, it’s also culturally significant. The property, in the Meander Valley just 25 minutes from Launceston Airport with a complimentary transfer, is formerly the ancestral home of Tasmania’s first-born Premier, Sir Richard Dry. It’s a unique 10-bedroom country manor, with charming Anglo-Indian architecture and period antiques combined with modern luxuries to create an idyllic haven.

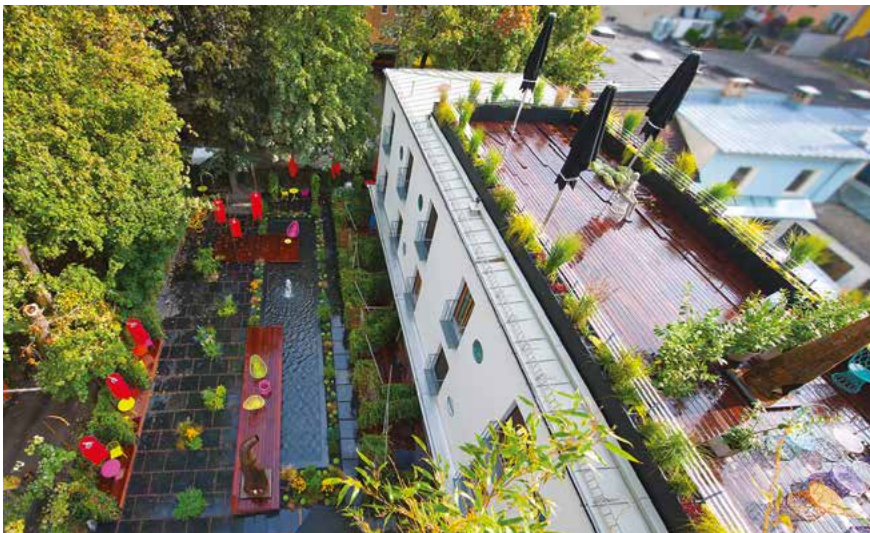
The property has been lovingly restored after a change of ownership, and now features extensive entertaining areas, a restaurant or private dining room, sitting rooms and a library. There is a tennis court, hiking and bike trails, lakes and streams to fish in and a golf course nearby – where Sir Richard Branson holds the number 1 membership. It’s a wonderful place for a weekend away, a stopover on a self-drive holiday or a golfing sojourn. quambyestate.com.au



The Principal Madrid the new hot spot

Design Hotels has a new property in Spain – The Principal Madrid, which is located on Madrid’s Gran Via. The palatial building dates back to 1917, and has 76 rooms and suites in a glam modern Spanish luxe style. Guests are received at the heart of the hotel, the sixth floor Ático (Spanish for penthouse). Here, the stately polish of a grand residence meets the casual-cool of a private club. The informal reception area welcomes guests, while the Ático restaurant, bar and open fireplace set the social scene. The light-flooded sixth floor affords views of the ornate rooftops over the city, which can be enjoyed any time of year from La Pergola – the rooftop terrace and bar. Ático restaurant is by acclaimed chef Ramon Freixa – sure to delight visiting gourmands. designhotels.com

Be an individual in Innsbruck



Innsbruck’s newest hotel, NALA Individuelhotel, combines individuality, charm and quality. There are 20 rooms – most individually designed to ensure there is a room type to suit just about everyone. Choose a Business, Zen or Small Beauty room for example. The Gold room features lashings of glamour, the Cinema room is perfect for lovers of film and the Orient Room is reminiscent of *1001 Arabian Nights*.

There are also spacious family rooms as well as self-contained apartments, while the Beretta Restaurant offers breakfast, great coffee, a stylish bar and delicious Italian specialties. The ultimate space for drinks is the rooftop terrace, giving excellent views to the Bergisel Ski Jump and the mountains beyond.

nala-hotel.at



Cool in Costa Rica

Nayara Hotel Spa & Gardens has been turning heads in the hotel world, with its spectacular location near Arenal Volcano National Park. This five-star property truly reflects its environment and respects the ecological balance of this beautiful part of the world.

The casitas, suites and villas all have large screened windows that open up to bring nature inside. Light flows through the interiors, from the bedroom to the private gardens with rain showers, to the private terraces with secluded Jacuzzis. The facilities are state-of-the-art, the restaurants offer international and local cuisine, there is a pool bar, wine and tapas bar and The Spa is out of this world. It is perched on a cliff overlooking the verdant rainforest – a place where harmony can be easily restored to body and soul. Add the many activities available in the National Park, and you have one unforgettable holiday. arenalnayara.com

in brief

Southern Ocean Lodge and Longitude 131° have been named founding members of the National Geographic Society's latest foray in world-class travel experiences, National Geographic Unique Lodges of the World. The new initiative is a collection of 24 boutique hotels in extraordinary locations around the world, each with a demonstrated commitment to sustainability, authenticity and excellence.

nationalgeographiclodges.com

Auckland is going to have a Park Hyatt Hotel, with the Park Hyatt Auckland expected to open in 2017. It will be the first Park Hyatt branded hotel to open in the harbour city and also marks Hyatt's return to New Zealand. The property will have 190 guestrooms, three restaurants and bars, a spa, 25-metre pool and a fitness centre, on Auckland harbour. parkhyatt.com

The Sebel has added two properties to its Australian network, including the just-opened Sebel South Brisbane, and the upcoming \$35million waterfront project, the Sebel Yarrowonga.

The Sebel South Brisbane opened in February 2015, offering 63 apartment-style rooms. The Sebel Yarrowonga will be built on The Point overlooking Lake Mulwala, in regional Victoria. thesebel.com



Small luxury in Lijiang

Lijiang is one of China's hidden gems, combined with beautiful natural attractions such as Lugu Lake, Tiger Leaping Gorge and Jade Dragon Snow Mountain and the ancient UNESCO town, Dayan Town. Lijiang's Patio, a new property in the centre of Lijiang, has 22 private residences, the Qin Cambodian Spa, the Wyatt Wine Cellar and the only Cigar Bar in town. Upon arrival, all guests take part in the hotel's traditional tea ceremony before being shown to their private villa.

Lijiang's Patio is a new member of Small Luxury Hotels of the World. slh.com/hotels/lijiangs-patio

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Hotel Montreal, Christchurch

By Helen Hayes

One of the newest properties in Christchurch, the Hotel Montreal is a boutique property overlooking Cranmer Square and opposite the verdant Hagley Park, a short walk from the vibrant restaurants and bars of Victoria Street.

The property is beautifully decorated with a polo theme – think beautiful paintings of horses and polo-themed pieces – and is quite high tech. The 25 rooms are enormous – we are in a Deluxe Room and can't believe the amount of space. The furnishings are divine, giving a lush, European feel but with the comforts of home. There are also two-bedroom suites, a family suite and a lavish penthouse.

Downstairs the Polo Lounge is perfect for breakfast, drinks during the day or indulge in Argentinian shared plates for dinner. In summer, you can enjoy a drink outside on the terrace – perhaps after a game of croquet on the lawn or during the outdoor cinema.

The family-owned property is easy to find, well located, and the staff are friendly and knowledgeable about what to see and do in Christchurch. A great place to stay on your next visit to this resurging New Zealand city. hotelmontreal.co.nz

Saffire-Freycinet, Tasmania



By Helen Hayes

Expectations were very high and growing by the kilometre on the pretty drive down from Hobart, but from the moment we walked up the 'dock' into the architecturally striking main building, it exceeded each and every expectation we had.

The design of the property is such that it makes the location the star of the show, but also manages to shine in each and every aspect. The Hazards, the craggy peaks that jut up from the exquisite Freycinet National Park, across the beautiful blue waters of Great Oyster Bay, are front and centre when in the restaurant, the lounge or in your suite. Simply spectacular.

The suites are impeccably presented – spacious, stylish and incredibly relaxing – and lovely to come back to after experiencing some of the complimentary tours and activities Saffire offers. We choose to visit the Freycinet Marine Oyster Farm, learning about oysters and then trying some, complemented by champagne, on a white-linen covered table in the water. We do the guided Wineglass Bay Lookout Walk, marvelling at the spectacular horseshoe-shaped bay and learning about its history, and also sign on for a cooking class.

The culinary offerings at Saffire are a highlight – whether it's a casual lunch in the lounge or a more formal dinner in the restaurant. Absolutely first class. A spa treatment is also part of the package and not to be missed. saffire-freycinet.com.au

The New Inchcolm Hotel and Suites, Brisbane



By Anthony Gallagher

This heritage-listed property, which dates back to the 1880s, has added a new flavour to Brisbane's accommodation scene with its impeccable style. The property, located in Wickham Terrace, has 50 rooms and suites, some in the heritage section of the hotel. The property underwent a major refurbishment and expansion in 2014, and while it retains some of the glamorous styling from the early days, it is now a modern world with hidden gems, signature pieces, layered patterns, textures and every comfort.

With three interior design themes, all the rooms are bespoke. Some room features include free-standing baths, four-poster and king-size beds, and sofa beds. Options include hotel rooms, superior suites, one- and two-bedroom suites, the Inchcolm Loft, Thomson Suite and MacArthur Suite. Aptly named after General Douglas MacArthur, whose physician was based in the Inchcolm while MacArthur was stationed in Brisbane in World War II. The Thomson Suite is named in honour of Dr John Thomson, who built his private residence on this site in 1880.

Dr Thomson also lends his name to the delightful Thomson's Reserve Restaurant, located on the ground floor and open for breakfast, lunch and dinner seven days, with a share-style menu as well as à la carte. The chefs use local, organic produce in a seasonal menu, complemented by a good selection of local and international wines.

For a more casual evening, choose The Socialite's Bar, which offers a selection of share plates filled with canapés, a favourite in the hotel's heyday but served with a modern twist. The Bar is inspired by the 'Roaring Twenties', a time for jazz music, motion pictures and exciting new fashions. It's a great place for a pre-dinner drink but don't be surprised if you end up staying much, much later. inchcolm.com.au

Hyatt Regency Waikiki Beach Resort & Spa

By Anrea Washmore

Explore the excitement of Oahu in one of Hawaii's most fashionable zip codes. Just steps from the renowned warm waters and spectacular views of Waikiki, Hyatt Regency Waikiki Beach Resort and Spa features an award-winning spa, retail shopping, cultural activities and cuisine from celebrated chefs.

The guestrooms are some of the largest on the island and are the perfect retreat to watch the sunset from a private lanai. Newly remodelled, the rooms highlight the light and fresh colours of the Hawaiian sea and sky, with a strong emphasis on the breathtaking views of the ocean or Waikiki. With an option of two queen or one king Hyatt Grand Beds, the furniture is characterised by clean and modern lines, with subtle nods to Hawaiian culture.

Other features include a 55" state-of-the-art flat screen television, upgraded hi-speed Internet access, plenty of storage and outlet pods to cater for all the electrical devices the guests of today require.

The upgraded bathrooms feel like a spa environment, and guests love the Toto Washlets. Close to Honolulu attractions such as the USS Arizona Memorial at Pearl Harbor, Iolani Palace and Diamond Head Crater, the hotel is the ideal solution for those who want it all. hyattregencywaikiki.com





Pier One Sydney Harbour, Autograph Collection

By Helen Hayes

When it comes to location, Pier One Sydney Harbour has one of the best in Sydney; virtually in the shadows of the Sydney Harbour Bridge and right by, or even over, the harbour. Built in the historic Pier One Wharf, the stunning property – given a major refurbishment in 2014 – has kept a lot of the original timber and ironwork that were in abundance on the wharf; the timber giving the property a very warm, homely ambience.

We stay in an absolutely spectacular Harbour View Balcony Suite, on the north western corner of the hotel. We have a massive balcony that juts out over the pier, which has a day bed, designer deck chairs, armchair, a large dining table and views to Luna Park and the Bridge. Inside, we have a lounge room, a separate bedroom and huge bathroom with a free-standing bath – that can be either open plan or closed off.

We stroll down to the lobby and admire the Gantry Bar, before deciding whether to have a drink in the comfy chairs, at the bar or on the pier out in the afternoon sun. The pier won, and we enjoy a few wines before moving into the restaurant for dinner. The focus is on produce sourced from top suppliers from around Sydney and New South Wales and the end result is a menu heavy in delicious offerings.

Afterwards, it was back onto our own balcony, watching the ferries chug past on the harbour, listening to trains rattle over the bridge, as the last of the sun disappears over the horizon. A perfect end to a perfect day.
pieronesydneyharbour.com.au

Mayfair Hotel, Adelaide

By Mark Chipperfield

Small but beautifully formed is the easiest way to sum up the Mayfair Hotel, Adelaide's ritzy new boutique hotel on King William Street. A meticulous \$55 million renovation has transformed the old Colonial Mutual Life Building into a contemporary mid-size property, complete with a quirky rooftop bar, destination restaurant, pavement café, small gym and several conference rooms. Apart from rescuing one of Adelaide's architectural gems from obscurity, the Adabco Group has added a modern cube extension. The hotel, which opened in late January 2015, will appeal equally to the leisure market and the business traveller. The 170 rooms and suites are stylishly furnished and come with free WiFi, large flat screen TVs and custom-made beds. There are several nice touches in the rooms, such as a pillow menu, a well-stocked mini bar and Nespresso machine.

While the hotel interiors by Bates Smith are glamorous but restrained, the owners have let their hair down a little in the basement. The Mayflower Restaurant and Bar serves classical French cuisine under the direction of executive chef Bethany Finn (ex-Hilton Adelaide); the space includes a magnificent walk-in wine cellar. Apart from adding a touch of pizzazz to the Adelaide CBD, the rooftop Hennessy Lounge is destined to become a magnet for the city's movers and shakers. The Mayfair is also setting new standards for service – the courtesy and professionalism is evident the moment you walk into the marble clad foyer.
mayfairhotel.com.au





The Hydro Majestic, Blue Mountains

By Mike Smith

For almost six years, the doors, gates and very much everything else had been bolted shut at what was one of the most historic and famous holiday resorts in the NSW Blue Mountains. Much conjecture had been made on what future lay ahead for the grand Hydro Majestic Hotel. Now that the retreat has re-opened, the answer is as clear as the brisk mountain air on a sunny winter's morning.

With a fresh coat of paint and in the new ownership of the Escarpment Group which also has Lillianfels, Echoes and Parklands under its umbrella, this heritage-listed hotel is back in business – in far better shape than ever before.

The Hydro Majestic's mix of Art Deco and Edwardian style architecture – and the ornate late Victorian Italianate wedding cake-like roof – is matched by the same views of Megalong Valley which impressed such notable guests as Dame Nellie Melba, *Sherlock Holmes* author Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, Prime Minister Sir Edmund Barton and, in more recent times, actor Russell Crowe.

Step inside, and you will be impressed by a contemporary décor which hasn't detracted from the hotel's historic roots. Centrepiece – the Casino (meeting hall, not for gaming) – is a grand entry point for the Wintergarden fine dining restaurant, a magnet for the view of the valley as much as for the cuisine and day-time High Tea experience. The hotel's famous Cats Alley, linking the suites to the Casino, has been brightened up with new furnishings and oil paintings from Mark Foy's personal collection. And the Majestic Ballroom hosts regular weekend concerts, attracting such artists as James Morrison and Christine Anu.

The hotel's new addition – the Pavilion – is a cafe, which also has shelves filled with local produce, intermixed with historic memorabilia such as old cash registers, advertising signs and even the familiar green uniforms worn by past staff.

Across the car park is the old Boiler House, once responsible for providing power for much of Medlow Bath. Today, it's a two-storey casual restaurant, the menu Italian.

Guests are catered for in rooms of the Belgravia Wing, the site of the original Belgravia Hotel. The attractively furnished and decorated rooms may be compact, but the large windows are rewarding for the view of the valley at first light – worth framing for the home. hydromajestic.com.au

The Shangri-La Hotel, Kuala Lumpur

By Daniel Resnik

The luxurious Shangri-La Hotel is located just a 45-minute drive from the international airport and is an oasis amidst Malaysia's bustling capital city of Kuala Lumpur. This place oozes class and opulence.

Nestled amongst sumptuous gardens and outdoor areas the hotel is only minutes away from major shopping and business precincts and a five-minute walk to the second tallest building in the world – the Petronas Twin Towers. The hotel has a great variety of accommodation comprising 662 luxurious guestrooms, including 101 stylish suites. For the more astute traveller there is the Horizon Club that provides the highest level of personal attention. Consisting of four floors of executive accommodation (that also has an exclusive private lounge), the privileges of the club are many such as a Shangri-La representative that meets you at the airport to facilitate your arrival and a private check-in/out of your room. There is the option of a late checkout on the day of departure and you have a dedicated Club Concierge to take care of all your needs.

The hotel has everything you expect from a five-star hotel including a wide variety of international cuisine available from five restaurants. A fully-equipped fitness centre, aerobics, dance studio, Jacuzzi and steam room are available to keep you fit. And the pool area, surrounded by skyscrapers, is a haven in this busy city and the perfect area to unwind and relax. shangri-la.com



Coppersmith Hotel, Melbourne

By Mark Chipperfield

Another boutique hotel in Melbourne? For a city which seems to have an abundance of great hotels, great cafés and even greater restaurants, opening a new property (especially one with such a strong food focus) in South Melbourne might seem reckless. The people behind the new Coppersmith Hotel on Clarendon Street have proved the sceptics wrong. Not only are the 15 guest rooms delightful, individualistic and well-priced, the downstairs bistro has helped put South Melbourne back on the culinary map. Chef Daniel Southern has created a dynamic menu which is modern without being fussy. Diners can sit in the sleek dining room or order from a range of delicious bar snacks. Coppersmith occupies a corner site once occupied by the Cricket Club Hotel and the marble-topped bar pays homage to the era with a stunning range of craft beers and exotic varietals. For travellers such as myself who are just looking for a perfectly-cooked steak and a well-poured IPA (India Pale Ale) then the Coppersmith is perfect. Because this was a total rebuild not a renovation (only the façade is original) the rooms are well planned, quiet and bristling with the latest technology. The designer cupboards contain mini-bars, tea and coffee making gear, ironing boards and robes. Rooms offer workspaces, fine woollen rugs and small Ottomans. Other attractions at the Coppersmith include the rooftop garden and freshly made breakfast selection. The service couldn't be friendlier and for solo travellers having the downstairs bar and bistro is a real boon. Don't worry about being out on a limb in South Melbourne – getting into the city couldn't be easier with a tram stop just outside. The hotel is also within easy reach of St Kilda and Albert Park, site of the Australian F1 Grand Prix. coppersmithhotel.com.au



Mandarin Oriental New York

By Helen Hayes

Located on Columbus Circle, on a corner overlooking Central Park, the Mandarin Oriental New York offers movie star views. We are in a Premier Central Park View Room, which is located on the higher floors and has exquisite views over the park and that sparkling city skyline. It's almost a pinch-me moment.

The room is beautifully furnished, feeling luxurious without being over the top. The bed is one of the most comfortable I've slept in – must be the goose down bedding and luxurious linens by Fili D'Oro.

The restaurants at the Hotel are exceptional. We enjoy breakfast and a casual lunch at the lobby, and for a special night out, treat ourselves to dinner to Asiate – often in the lists of the top ten restaurants in the Big Apple. The interior is stunning, from the far walls clad in wine bottles, to the tree branch sculpture clinging to the ceiling. It is elegance personified, the service friendly and warm and our meals – the cuisine is Modern American – are mouth-wateringly good.

After dinner, not wanting the night to end, we sidle into the MO Bar for a nightcap, eyes not leaving the glowing cityscape outside.

The location is brilliant – across the road from the Museum of Art and Design, over the road from Central Park, around the corner from the Lincoln Center and walking distance from Broadway. There is even a private door for hotel guests into the Time Warner Center, with its many shops.

And after a busy day out and about, book in for a massage at the Spa. Or go straight to the MO Bar and raise your glass to this remarkable city. mandarinoriental.com/newyork

Hotel Kurrajong, Canberra

By Roderick Eime

Many who attended the lavish re-opening ceremony of Canberra's historic Kurrajong Hotel were more than aware of the irony of having a sitting Liberal Prime Minister perform the ceremony at the site of many significant Labor moments.

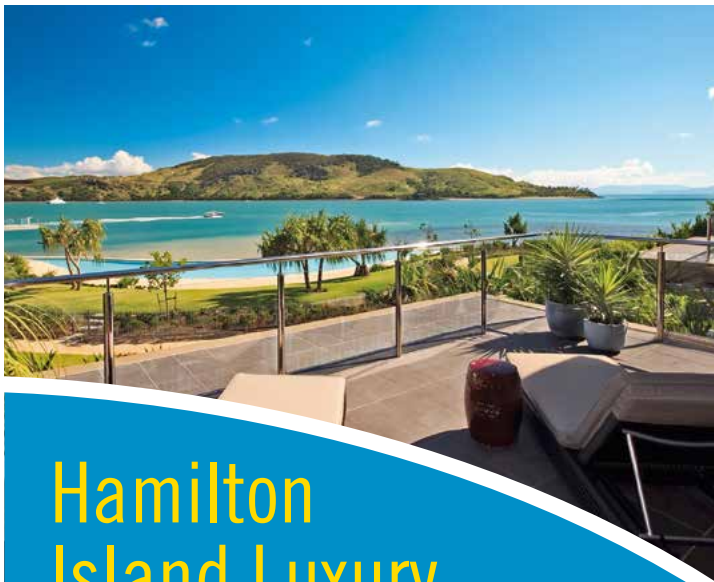
During its various lives, the hotel has operated as a boarding house and more recently, a hotel school. In a joint venture between TFE Hotels and the NRMA, the stylish pavilion-style hotel has been fully restored with a distinct art deco theme.

The hotel was first opened in 1926, when there wasn't much else in the fledgling capital. It became the official residence of PM Ben Chifley during his time in Canberra between 1940-1951. In fact, the revered 16th PM passed away in his room after declining an invitation to a nearby ball. Now after an extensive renovation over several months, the heritage-listed Kurrajong Hotel is welcoming guests again.

Ideal for weddings, conferences and meetings, there are 147 tastefully appointed rooms, 26 in the Heritage Wing, including larger executive suites, balcony rooms and terrace suites.

Dining is in Chifley's Bar and Grill where hatted chef Michael Chatto serves dishes of hand selected meats and fresh local produce with a wine list that runs to more than 100 local and international labels. Be sure to sample one of the quirky breakfast dishes such as the 'Windy Pig' or the signature 'Chifley' with free range eggs, bacon and pork sausage on sourdough bread. Enough to thwart any double dissolution. hotelkurrajong.com.au





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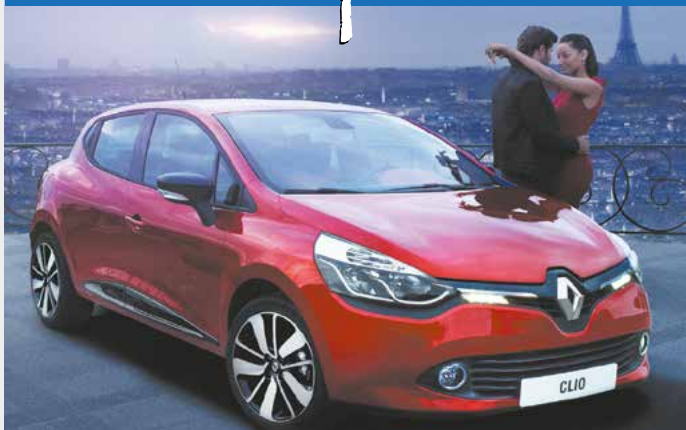


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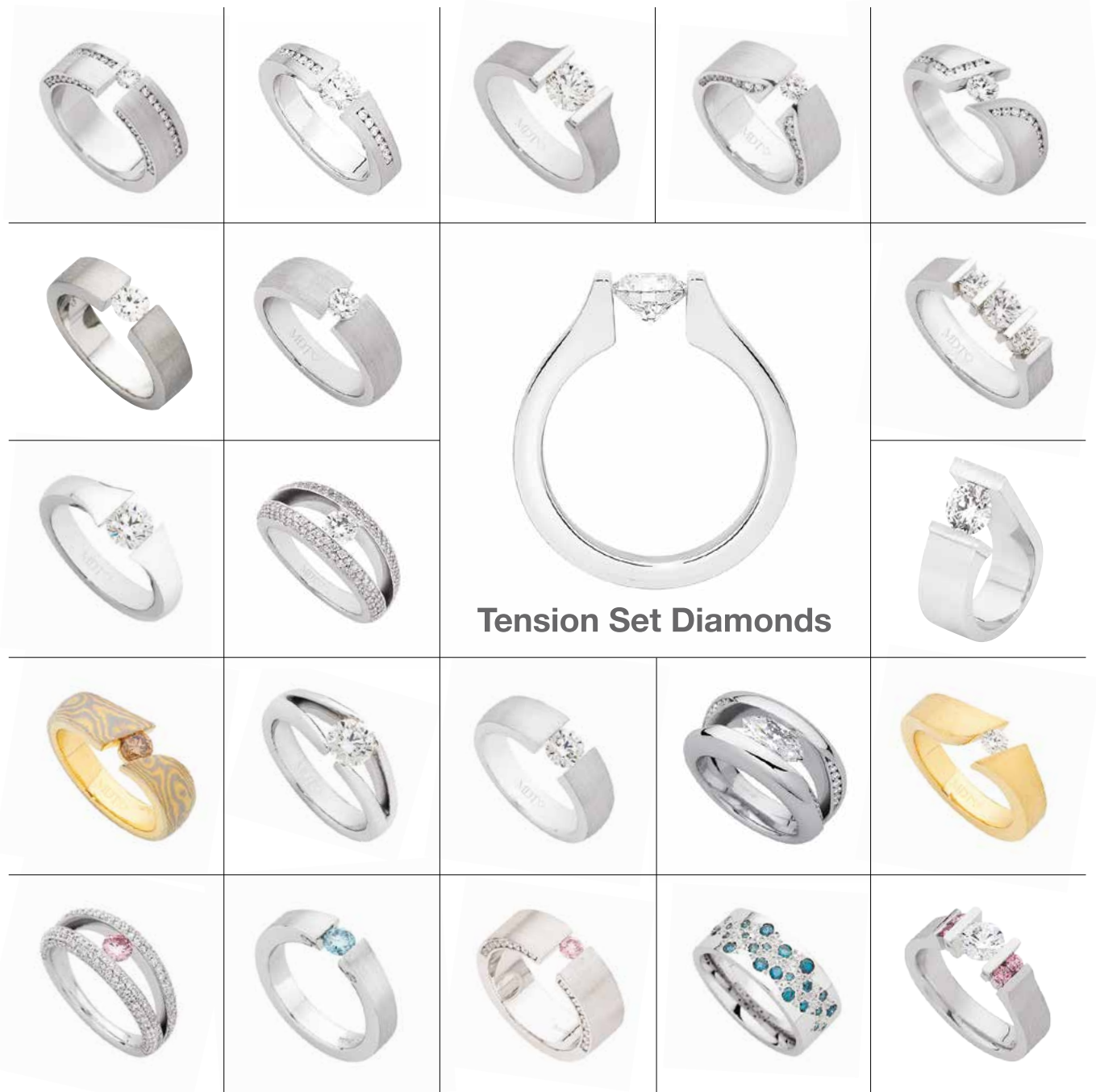
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