

Australia's favourite travel news magazine

# Travel*talk*

WWW.TRAVELTALKMAG.COM.AU SPECIAL EDITION - DECEMBER 2020

## COMPETITION

Win yourself the trip of a lifetime

## DOMESTIC TRAVEL

Inside Australia's own Jurassic Park

## SPECIAL REPORT

How will travel look in the future?

*Plus:* What the new \$128m support package means for Aussie agents

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COVER IMAGE:  
*Dark Mofo and City of Hobart Winter Feast. Picture courtesy Inspiring Journeys/Tourism Tasmania*

# THAT WAS THE YEAR THAT WASN'T

IF WE might plagiarize HMQE2 for a moment (and with apologies to all the Latin scholars out there), this has been the most *horribilis* of *annuses*.

Who would have thought back at the start of the year that the world would be plunged into such unexpected turmoil? I doubt that many of us will shed a tear for the passing of 2020, but simply hope for a better 2021.

Here at *Traveltalk* we have continued to publish a monthly online magazine and have kept Australia's travel community informed and updated through our digital channels.

We believe wholeheartedly in the travel industry and felt it was important to maintain some semblance of normality in an abnormal time.

We're extremely grateful for the many e-mails from agents, wholesalers, DMC's and PR's thanking us for our efforts, given that many others have been more severely affected.

Sometimes it's been difficult to remain positive and see an end in sight. It's often seemed like one step forward and 17 back in the fight against COVID-19 and the Armageddon it has tried to bring to the travel industry.

Fortunately, there are positive signs that we may at last be emerging from this nightmare.

Promising COVID vaccines are being announced on an almost daily basis around the world and once tested and

approved this can only help kick-start international travel.

At home, the long-awaited opening of the Queensland border has been universally welcomed and now even our cousins in the west are following suit. As Abraham Lincoln famously said: "A house divided against itself, cannot stand."

Of course, the big question is will the recovery be quick enough and large enough to keep travel agents in their jobs?

Domestic travel can only keep the coffers ticking over: we need international travel to start pouring money back into barren bank accounts.

The announcement of a \$128 million support package for agents should hopefully alleviate any immediate monetary stress and give cause for optimism that the industry will survive this crisis.

Darren Rudd, CEO of AFTA, points out that travel agents are still working on behalf of their customers to repatriate \$4bn from overseas airlines, hotels and tour operators. And they are doing this while having little or no income themselves.

"This holiday season, it's time to reap the benefits and rewards of supporting your local travel agent," he says.

After such a miserable year, that's one Christmas message that we'd all like to endorse.

*Merry Christmas from all of us at Traveltalk. Have a happy and peaceful holiday season and we'll see you all again in 2021.*



Seven Seas Mariner



Laurin Taggart

# BOOKINGS SPARK HOPE FOR THE FUTURE

COVID HAS left many travel agents walking a tightrope but for one consultant a recent booking has given her optimism for the future.

Laurin Taggart recently booked a record-breaking, round the world cruise holiday for 2023. The 143-night circumnavigation itinerary with *Regent Seven Seas* is set to be one of the largest individual cruise bookings TravelManagers has ever taken.

"Having bookings starting to come in for 2022 and beyond has given me hope in what quite frankly has been a time of despair," said Laurin, who is

based in Forster in New South Wales.

"We now have an opportunity to redesign the industry with a greater emphasis on sustainability – not just in terms of how we travel but also how we work."

It will be a case of third time lucky for Laurin's client: her first attempt at a circumnavigation was cut short by a medical emergency, her second by COVID.

The voyage will see her cross three oceans and visit six continents, calling at 72 ports in 42 countries and sailing a total of more than 38,000 nautical miles.

"I really enjoy the process of selling cruise holidays – working with each client to plan their itinerary, shore excursions and onboard experiences," added Laurin.

"Travel plays such an integral part in our lives today and the memories made while travelling last a lifetime and are literally priceless."

Laurin's efforts have not gone unnoticed with her happy client, who is quick to point out that having a good travel agent is key to a successful and enjoyable cruise holiday.

"Laurin always seems to know exactly what is right for me and ensures that my travel plans are absolutely seamless, easy and enjoyable," the client said.

"She looks after every little detail, and her help when COVID-19 put an end to my cruise this year was amazing."

✦ IN MORE encouraging news for agents, Tanya Tyler has become the first consultant to book a client on one of Crooked Compass' newly minted 'Lunch Club' fly-and-dine day trips.

Her client will now fly in their 'own' private aircraft to Port Macquarie for an indulgent lunch at beachfront restaurant, The Stunned Mullet.

"I think it's such a fabulous idea that you can simply hop on a plane and go somewhere special for the day, so I put it out to my clients on social media and within days I had my first booking," said Tanya, who is based in Riverview in NSW.

Lisa Pagotto, Founder and Managing Director of Crooked Compass, said the response to the initial release of three Lunch Club experiences had been very positive, and with Tyler's \$9,000 sale hopefully just the beginning.

Their sales support for travel agents includes regular webinars, providing pre-recorded training sessions and offering content such as social media tiles and image galleries.

■ [travelmanagers.com.au](http://travelmanagers.com.au);  
[crooked-compass.com](http://crooked-compass.com)



Tanya Tyler



# Family travel goes by the book

A WORLDWIDE pandemic didn't stop travel agent Rebecca Mason from finding something constructive to occupy her time.

The mum-of-six who runs Mr Chocolate's Travel decided to write a family travel book during her time in lockdown in Melbourne.

She drew on more than 20 years' experience booking holidays for her family of eight and other big Australian families. The result is *Holiday Dreaming: The Expert's Guide to Large Family Travel*.

It's described as must-read for big families who want practical advice about how, when and where to travel, as well as a few laughs as Rebecca shares all the spills and thrills of travelling with six kids.

Among the tips and tricks in the book are detailed packing lists, the best budget travel meals, choosing a suitable holiday location, when and how to nab a deal, how to navigate airports and survive road trips, and which museums, parks and zoos are worth the queues.

"Just as Lonely Planet became a travel bible for backpackers, *Holiday Dreaming* is the must-have book for Aussie families who want to make their dream holiday a reality," said Rebecca, a well-respected family travel expert and



Author Rebecca Mason

one of Disney's top sellers in Australia.

"After taking my six kids on dozens of trips over the past 20 years, I've learned a lot of 'dos' and 'don'ts' and I wanted to share all my hacks and systems with other big Aussie families so that they can experience the magic of a family holiday and make the same 'forever memories' that we have.

"Holidays shouldn't be an infrequent luxury, they are part of the very fabric that knits families together and keeps them connected.

"As a mum-of-six, I know that undertaking anything with a big family isn't easy but that doesn't mean we should miss out, especially

on family holidays. Holidays have always been my favourite time with the kids and that's why I worked so hard and did so much research to find every possible shortcut and save every possible penny to make sure we could go anywhere we wanted, including the ultimate family holiday – Disneyland, five times and counting."

*Holiday Dreaming* is available to order online at:

■ [travel.mrchocolate.com.au/book](http://travel.mrchocolate.com.au/book)

## IN BRIEF///

CHRISTMAS CAME a little early for Liz Boyden from MTA Travel Redbank Plains in Queensland after she won a trip to Fiji.

Liz picked up the prize in an online competition organised by Treasures of the South Pacific. More than 2,000 presentations from agents were downloaded and viewed before the winner was selected.

The prize includes two return tickets with Fiji Airways and seven nights' accommodation at Treasure Island Resort & Spa.

■ [tosp.com.au](http://tosp.com.au)



Darren Rudd, centre

# HISTORIC SUPPORT PACKAGE FOR AUSSIE AGENTS

THE FEDERAL government has recognised the plight of Australia's travel agents by announcing a financial support package of a \$128 million in cash grants.

Under the scheme, eligible parties will receive a one-off cash grant. Grants will be scaled, starting with a minimum payment of \$1,500 for a business with a turnover of \$50,000 up to a maximum payment of \$100,000 for a business

with a turnover of \$20 million.

"This is a historic day for Australia's travel industry," said Darren Rudd, CEO of the Australian Federation of Travel Agents (AFTA).

"We are thrilled to see that the government recognises the need for sector specific support and we welcome the announcement of tailored support for Australia's 4,000 travel agents, tour operators,

“To say this support package is a financial lifeline is a significant understatement. We simply couldn't ask for a better outcome from government.”

wholesalers and the 40,000 people we employ and the many, many consumers our members support.”

AFTA is working with government to make available the web-based vehicle that eligible parties will use to access the grants to try and ensure intended recipients get paid this month.

"Travel agents have been among the hardest hit given their reliance on international travel. All have experienced revenue drops of close to 100 per cent with no substantive income on the horizon until international travel returns.

"To say this support package is a financial lifeline is a significant understatement. We simply couldn't ask for a better outcome from government."

## Top trip offered for training purposes

YOU CAN win the trip of a lifetime by completing a new online training program by the Monaco Government Tourist Bureau.

The initiative gives Australian travel agents the chance to become certified 'Monaco Tourism Experts' and be in the running to win prizes.

The program is designed to help agents gain comprehensive destination knowledge and find out why Monaco can be the perfect extension to their clients' next European itinerary once international travel resumes.

Comprising a series of six concise and engaging learning modules, the program will be rolled out in two phases, with the first phase of three modules launched last month and

the second phase scheduled to be launched in March 2021.

Throughout the course, agents will be invited to discover Monaco's history and culture, unique selling points, as well as the latest news and developments from the Principality's attractions, unique hotel offerings, exclusive experiences and virtual selling tools.

The grand prize for those who complete the course will win a trip to Monaco for two, including return business class tickets to Nice International Airport, return helicopter transfers to Monaco, a four-night stay in a Monte-Carlo Société des Bains de Mer luxury property and complimentary visitors passes to some of the Principality's most spectacular museums, gardens and attractions.



Bottles of a recently launched exclusive gin by La Distillerie de Monaco are also up for grabs for 12 winners (two per module), acknowledging best quiz performance for each module.

■ [monacotourismexpert.com/registration](http://monacotourismexpert.com/registration); [visitmonaco.com](http://visitmonaco.com)

# Truly madly deeply Malaysia

Here, TUAN RAZALI TUAN OMAR, the new director of Tourism Malaysia Sydney, talks about the country's newest destination, what makes it 'Truly Asia' and the best travel experience he's had in his homeland.

**Q: Where is the last place you travelled?**

**A:** The last place that I have travelled to with my family was Penang. I love Penang as it caters to my whole family.

The children were able to indulge in exciting activities like the longest tube waterslide in the world and the Monkey Business and Slingshot experiences at the ESCAPE theme park, while my wife and I explored the heritage and popular street food of Penang.

**Q: What do you bring to this role at Tourism Malaysia?**

**A:** I'm confident that my experience of more than 25 years in many senior roles within Tourism Malaysia can only add value to the rich experience that my team have in Sydney.

I believe this role also allows me to work closely with the travel trade and media towards promoting Malaysia as a premier holiday destination to Australians.

**Q: Tell us something travellers might not know about Malaysia?**

**A:** Malaysia is 'Truly Asia'; it is a bustling melting pot of races where Malays, Chinese, Indians and many other ethnic groups live together in peace and harmony.



*Petronas Twin Towers, Kuala Lumpur. Photo courtesy Tourism Malaysia*



*Tuan Razali Tuan Omar, Director of Tourism Malaysia, Sydney*

This multi-culturism has made Malaysia a foodie's paradise and home to many colourful festivals.

Here, you can experience the buzz of towering skyscrapers looking down upon wooden houses built on stilts, while five-star hotels sit just metres away from ancient reefs, trek up rugged mountains while rainforest-clad slopes sweep down to floodplains teeming with forest life, or escape to the cool highland hideaways or stroll along warm sandy beaches.

**Q: What's coming up in Malaysia that's got you excited?**

**A:** One of the newest tourist

attractions in Malaysia is Desaru Coast; it houses one of the world's biggest waterparks, championship golf courses, globally renowned hotels and resorts, and a retail and lifestyle village.

Selangor has several attractive new tourism offerings including Sky Mirror, a secret 'island' right in the middle of the sea that has become known as the "Salar de Uyuni" of Malaysia.

**Q: What's one travel experience you've had in Malaysia that stands out?**

**A:** Diving in Sipadan Island was the best travel experience I've had in Malaysia. It felt to me like I was diving in a big aquarium with abundant marine life and non-stop action.

Sipadan is considered one of the top diving destinations in the world and its water is reported to have more than 3,000 fish species and hundreds of species of corals.

**Q: What's your top travel tip?**

**A:** My top travel tip is to always experience different stages of dreaming, planning and experiencing the journey. #Dream Now, Travel Later.

■ [malaysia.travel](http://malaysia.travel)



(Left to right): Gai Tyrrell, Globus family of brands; Alison Roberts-Brown, Monaco Tourism; Barbara Whitten, Anywhere Travel; Neil Ager, Etihad Airways. Photo courtesy Alex Pics Photography

## Barbara bags big prize during French lesson

ONE OF the most glamorous prizes ever offered at an industry event was given away at a French-themed evening in Sydney recently.

Traveltalk was among the many

guests at the special screening of the French comedy *Le Chef* at United Cinemas at Opera Quays.

The event was organised by Avalon Waterways, part of Globus family of

brands, and Atout France, France's tourism development agency.

The COVID-safe event aimed to keep the crowd inspired by France and generate interest in the destination for when the time is right to travel again.

Hosted in partnership with Etihad Airways, Monaco Tourism and Northern France Tourism, the event updated agents on new product and tourism developments in France and thanked agents and the industry for their continued support and collaboration through a particularly tough year.

A range of prizes were drawn, with the grand prize of an incredible trip to France, including an Avalon Waterways cruise for two, two economy class return tickets with Etihad, two nights at the Fairmont Monte Carlo and a return helicopter transfer. The prize went to Barbara Whitten from Anywhere Travel.

Emily Kadinski from itravel took out the runner-up prize of two nights' accommodation at one of Monte Carlo's SBM properties, a bottle of gin and a return helicopter transfer.

Other prizes included a pair of Louboutin flip flops and Mumm Jeroboam and all attendees went home with an exclusive Lancôme gift bag and fresh baguette courtesy of Atout France. ■ [globusfamily.com.au](http://globusfamily.com.au); [au.france.fr/en](http://au.france.fr/en)

## Company catch up is a virtual success

ALMOST 2,000 business owners and colleagues from multiple countries have tuned in to Travel Counsellor's first virtual annual conference.

The UK-based event featured special guests and insights into how the company is supporting its business owners to look forward to a bright future.

A key theme across the one-day virtual event was to recognise how individual Travel Counsellors have come together to show care and support to their customers over recent months.

Creating positive experiences and nurturing trusted customer relationships was cited as the key to future business growth for the company's business owners.

The vital topic of looking after



mental wellbeing was also featured throughout the agenda, as lockdown restrictions continue across the globe.

"It's been awe-inspiring to see the company community band together, not only proving that together there is a bright future ahead of us, but recognising the very real requirement for experienced travel professionals

to be on-hand with expert advice as customers continue to navigate changing advice and seek safe ways to travel," said Kaylene Shuttlewood, Regional Managing Director.

"We will come out of this period ready to support people to travel the globe once more."

■ [travelcounsellors.com.au](http://travelcounsellors.com.au)





## AGENTS LOVE TAKING A HIKE

SWITZERLAND TOURISM have been keeping agents active and inspired via a series of scenic hiking trails around Greater Sydney recently.

During the leisurely walks, agents took the chance to catch up with colleagues but also expressed their thanks for the ongoing support provided by the Switzerland Tourism team.

This included assistance with enquiries and the series of live upskilling webinars, where product, experiential and contact updates were provided by the key partners Zurich, Basel, Lucerne, Jungfrau Railways and Interlaken, the Schilthorn, Zermatt and the Swiss Travel System.

The six nature trails that agents chose from were America Bay, the Hermitage Foreshore, Harold Reed Foreshore, Wentworth Falls, Bundeeda-Jibbon and Towlers Bay.

Participating agents came from Savenio, MTA, TravelManagers, World Orbit Travel, World Star Travel, Above And Beyond Experiences, Travel Crafters, Mary Rossi, Snowcapped, Travel Choice, Spencer Travel, Egencia, Utracks and Flight Centre.

■ [myswitzerland.com](http://myswitzerland.com)



Picture courtesy  
Oklahoma Tourism &  
Recreation

## Find your route to a Xmas gift

OKLAHOMA TOURISM and Recreation are giving away gift vouchers to travel agents in a 'Watch and Win' incentive.

Valued between \$20 and \$100, the vouchers will be offered as a prize to those who watch the brand's 30-minute training webinar and complete a short survey. The promotion runs until December 15.

"We wanted to show our support of the local Australian travel industry, particularly our front line agents and trade partners, who have shown such resilience during the most challenging year in our industries history," said Todd Stallbaumer, Oklahoma Tourism's Travel Development Manager.

"We hope the webinar and the incentive give agents the opportunity to upskill themselves and to learn more about the wide array of exciting and diverse experiences on offer across Oklahoma in preparation for the increased demand we anticipate from the Australian market in 2021 and beyond."

The webinar highlights some of the key experiences on offer across Route 66, along with other popular itineraries including the new 'Cowboys, Indians and All That Jazz' itinerary set to launch with ATI and available via a number of Australian suppliers from next year.

"From experiencing rich Native American legacy at one of the cultural centres or museums scattered across the state's 39 Native American Tribal

communities, to getting away from the crowds and exploring the over 30 diverse state parks and nature reserves, this new itinerary is designed to appeal to those travellers who may have visited the U.S. before and are looking to explore beyond the often crowded, gateway cities."

Agents who want to explore further have additional resources at their disposal including the new Oklahoma Discovery Badge, just launched as part of the ongoing Brand USA Discovery Badge program.

Consultants who complete the program are encouraged to share the Oklahoma Discovery Badge logo, found on the site, on their own websites to show their certification as an Oklahoma expert.

■ [linkdtourism.com/traveloklahoma](http://linkdtourism.com/traveloklahoma)

### IN BRIEF///

NEW CALEDONIA Tourism and Aircalin are hosting agents to an exclusive private screening of French romantic comedy *La Belle Epoque* on December 10.

The film will be shown at Palace Cinemas in Sydney in conjunction with the Alliance Francais French Film Festival. Tickets are still available for those wishing to attend.



# Feel the passion again

BUNNIK TOURS have just launched a new campaign designed to reignite our passion for travel.

Entitled 'The Places We'll Go', the initiative reminds Aussie travellers of the places, sights and people that are waiting around the world.

As an extra incentive, clients can book 12 of Bunnik's small group tours for travel in 2022 at 2020 prices. The offer expires on January 29, 2021.

"We know we can't travel internationally just yet, but, when we can safely, we can't wait to reconnect with the world's people, places and cultures," said Dennis Bunnik, Joint CEO.

"Following on from our successful 'Still Dreaming, Still Bunnik Tours' campaign, this campaign is about getting our travellers excited about

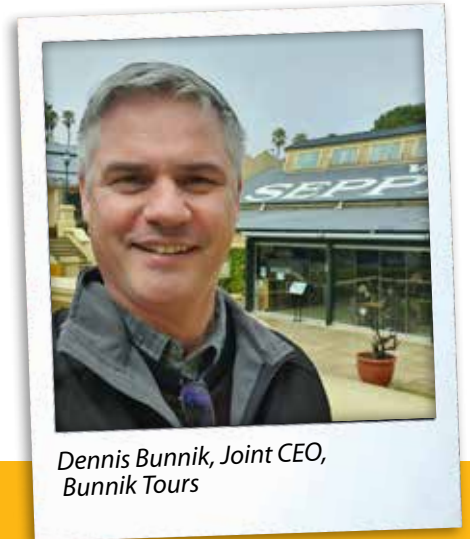
the places we'll go, the sights we'll see, and the people we'll meet again."

Special experiences are injected into each itinerary giving travellers a unique insight into their destination; clients can learn how authentic port is made in Porto, experience sunrise in the Sahara Desert, or try their hand at perfecting the ancient art of Japanese black ink calligraphy.

All tours include no more than 20 travellers and include all sightseeing, accommodation and many meals.

"As Australia's small group touring specialists, we're excited at the prospect of getting back out there and showcasing our incredible world in the comfortable and safe environment of small groups."

■ [bunniktours.com.au/2022-at2020-prices](http://bunniktours.com.au/2022-at2020-prices)



Dennis Bunnik, Joint CEO, Bunnik Tours

Among Bunnik's 12 small group tours in Europe, Asia, South America and Africa are:

- \* Spain, Portugal & Morocco, 27 days from \$11,795 per person
- \* Japan Discovery, 16 days from \$10,895 per person
- \* Turkey in Depth, 20 days from \$7,395 per person
- \* Peru Explorer, 20 days from \$10,795 per person
- \* Namibia, Botswana & Victoria Falls, 24 days from \$15,995 per person

# CATCH THIS NEW PROGRAM



ORMINA TOURS has released its 2021/22 program which includes new group tours and private packaged itineraries.

With only 10 to a group, Ormina expects their tours to sell out quickly once borders safely reopen.

To help guests feel confident when booking in such uncertain times, they have launched with a limited time free cancellation offer.

Deposits are fully refundable, up until December 31, 2021, on any new 2022 small group tour booking.

"Everyone is eager to start travelling again and with that pent-up demand and limited capacity, we expect travellers will find it harder to secure exactly what they want," said Anna Jones, CMO.

"While 2022 may seem far off, we are already receiving enquiries and want to give clients a risk-free opportunity to lock in their spot so they don't miss out."

■ [orminatours.com](http://orminatours.com)



Croatia



# Golfers on course for green heaven



Left: Barnbougle  
Right: The Tasman

SOME OF Australia's world-ranked golf courses are featured on a new cruise-and-play itinerary in 2022.

In association with Events Travel, Voyages.Golf has chartered *Coral Geographer* for a one-way cruise from Melbourne to Hobart, departing February 8, 2022.

Top courses include Cape Wickham and Ocean Dunes on King Island, Barnbougle Dunes and Barnbougle Lost Farm near Bridport, the Tasmania Golf Club and Royal Hobart.

An optional two-night, pre-cruise experience playing the famed West Course at Royal Melbourne is also available, with accommodation at Sofitel on Collins.

The cruise ends with three nights in Hobart at The Tasman, a Luxury Collection hotel opening in April 2021, creating an 11-night trip or a 13-night trip with further extensions possible.

"We have a pedigree in luxury cruise and rail charters dedicated to golf and around major sports events in New Zealand, the Caribbean, South Africa,

Vietnam, France and Croatia," said Glenn Hedley, Director of Events Travel and Voyages.Golf.

"This very unusual year has seen a considerable increase in people playing golf due to its health benefits, with exercise, clean air and wide-open spaces."

The all-inclusive cruise features complimentary Wi-Fi, all transportation, six rounds of world-class golf and an interesting escorted itinerary for non-golfers.

■ [voyages.golf](http://voyages.golf)

## AUSSIES TO GET A VERY WARM WELCOME BACK

COLLETTE IS welcoming Australians back to the world of travel by offering 10 per cent off 2021-22 tours worldwide.

The sale runs until December 31 and includes memorable experiences on every continent.

Travellers can book the 'Cultural Treasures of Japan' tour from \$6,434 per person, saving them \$715 on this popular trip.

The itinerary includes 12 night's accommodation across five locations, a ride on the famous Shinkansen bullet train and 19 meals, including a sake tasting and a traditional kaiseki dinner with Geisha show in Kyoto.

Old favourites including 'Southern Italy and Sicily' (now \$3,194), 'Shades of Ireland' (now \$2,474) and 'Northern Lights of Finland' (now \$4,891) are also available at a discounted price.

The sale is available on all travel dates between January 1, 2021, and June 30, 2022. Guests booking within this period are entitled to change their travel dates up to 60 days prior to departure.

All bookings are fully refundable for 30 days, with the option of purchasing a cancellation waiver for \$95 per person to allow for free cancellation or changes up to 24 hours before a trip. This eases the financial stress and uncertainty of post-pandemic travel.

Guests can book with confidence knowing they are backed by Colette's 'Travelling Well Experience' guidelines. These feature a number of advanced protocols to ensure that the health, wellbeing and enjoyment of travellers are paramount.

■ [gocollette.com.au/WzWIDE21](http://gocollette.com.au/WzWIDE21)

Below: Asakusa, Japan.  
Bottom: A husky safari





Dark Mofo in Hobart

# Journey to the dark side

INSPIRING JOURNEYS have announced a new trip to celebrate the much-anticipated opening of Tasmania's borders.

The 'Dark Mofo Long Weekend in Hobart' invites guests to discover the city's 'darker side' at Australia's number one winter festival, a unique celebration of the arts with hidden galleries in sandstone, light shows and a winter feast.

Spanning a four-day immersive experience in June 2021, the tour has been created by David Walsh, founder of the Museum of Old and New Art (MONA), and its creative cluster DarkLab.

Travellers will find offbeat theatre productions alongside retrospectives of classic films and late openings of MONA. Take a wander through central Hobart and get lost through the many installations along the way.

Meet the locals at historic Salamanca market, discover more than 300 artworks at MONA, experience fresh paddock-to-plate dining at the Agrarian Kitchen Eatery and sample wines at Moorilla Winery's Cellar Door.

■ [inspiringjourneys.com/journeys](https://inspiringjourneys.com/journeys)

**Inspiring Journeys also offers three Tasmania trips, scheduled over January and February:**

- \* 'Tasmania's Footsteps & Trails' (seven days) – Discover Bruny Island, the Bay of Fires and Wineglass Bay as you embark on a journey through time, ancient landscapes and untamed coastline
- \* 'Tastes of Tasmania' (seven days) – Delight in paddock-to-plate dining experiences and meet the producers of some of Australia's best food and wine. Delve into the untouched landscapes of Maria Island and the Bay of Fires
- \* 'Tasmania's Food, Whisky & Wine' (six days) – Indulge in private tastings and dining experiences over stories from the passionate makers and producers. Discover the best of Hobart, Bruny Island and Freycinet National Park.

## Combo helps you take it slow

CRUISE TRAVELLER has released new 'slow travel' rail and sail packages combining a journey across Australia.

'Rail and Sail ex Sydney' is a 16-night package beginning January 19, 2022, with an overnight journey aboard the legendary Indian Pacific train to Adelaide along with an excursion in Broken Hill.

Two nights in an Adelaide hotel follow before guests board the tall ship, *Golden Horizon*, for a 13-night voyage to Perth, followed by a flight back to Sydney.

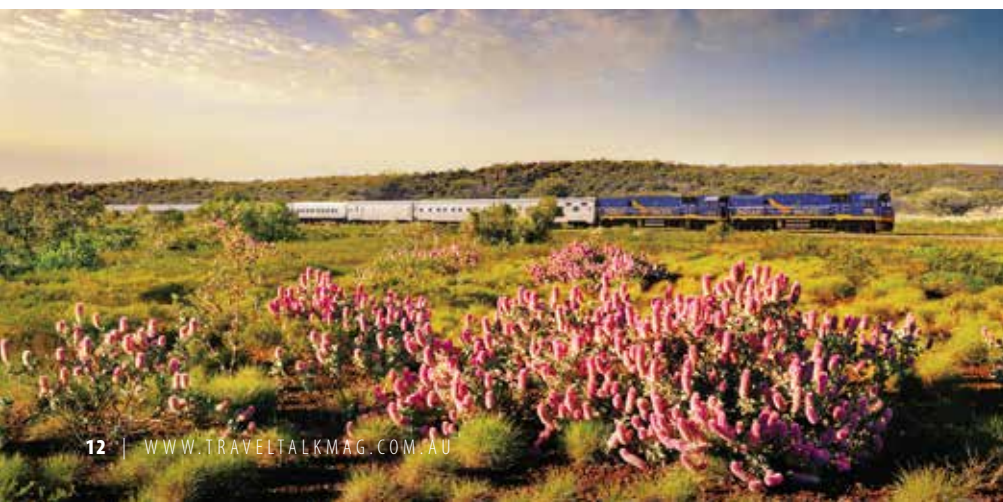
The package is available from \$9,375 per person twin share, including beer and wine with lunch and dinner aboard the ship.

In addition, 'Rail and Sail ex Adelaide' is a 17-night package beginning January 22, 2022, with a 13-night voyage aboard *Golden Horizon* to Perth.

This is followed by two nights in the WA capital and a two-night trip back to Adelaide aboard the Indian Pacific including off-train experiences on the world-famous Nullarbor Plain.

This package is available from \$9,165 per person twin share, including beer and wine with lunch and dinner aboard the ship.

■ [cruisetraveller.com.au/railandsail](https://cruisetraveller.com.au/railandsail)



# Win A TASTE OF AUSTRALIA

A NEW book from Lonely Planet celebrates the ingenuity and passion of Australia's best food and wine regions.

Out now, *Gourmet Trails Australia & New Zealand* serves up 40 culinary weekends available for gourmands across both countries.

The Bellarine Peninsula in Victoria, Bruny Island in Tasmania, the Fleurieu Peninsula in South Australia and Tweed Valley in New South Wales are heralded as among the best gourmet regions in Australia.

"This book showcases why Australia is considered such a heavyweight on the global gourmet scene," said Lonely Planet.

"With an abundance of hip restaurants, food markets, craft-beer breweries, micro-distilleries, vineyards, coffee roasters, cheese makers and culinary specialists, you don't have to go any further than our own backyard to experience world-class produce."

Contributing author Chris Zeiher joked that this may have been the best job he'd ever done for the publisher.

"We collectively ate and drank our way around Australia to come up with these amazing weekend itineraries in some of our countries prettiest spots," he said.

"Part of the joy of *Gourmet Trails Australia and New Zealand* is that we're able to introduce you to the minds behind these businesses, but also create these easy-to-follow itineraries to enable travellers to discover these places themselves and indulge in the same delicious experiences we had.

"This is a celebration of Australia's culinary ingenuity and, with domestic border restrictions starting to relax, now is the perfect time for travellers to experience it.

"Whether it's savouring fresh seafood while taking in the Instagramable views of the South Australian coastline, to carb-loading at a brilliant bakehouse on the Gold Coast to being introduced to the intensity of a Tasmanian whisky there's something for all tastes in this tome."



*Jack Rabbit, Bellarine Peninsula*

## The Australian regions covered in *Gourmet Trails Australia and New Zealand* are:

- \* NEW SOUTH WALES – Byron Bay, Kangaroo Valley, Tweed Valley, Shoalhaven and Sydney
- \* QUEENSLAND – Granite Belt, Atherton Tablelands, The Gold Coast and Brisbane
- \* SOUTH AUSTRALIA – The Fleurieu Peninsula, Adelaide & the Adelaide Hills, Clare Valley
- \* TASMANIA – Bruny Island, The Cradle Coast, Tamar Valley, Derwent Valley and Huon Valley
- \* VICTORIA – The Great Ocean Road, the Grampians, King Valley, the Goldfields, Bellarine Peninsula, Yarra Valley, Mornington Peninsula, and Melbourne
- \* WESTERN AUSTRALIA – Margaret River, Swan Valley
- \* ACT – Canberra
- \* NORTHERN TERRITORY – Darwin

## How to enter

We have FIVE copies of *Gourmet Trails Australia and New Zealand* (RRP: \$39.99) to give away. Simply head to our website

([www.traveltalkmag.com.au](http://www.traveltalkmag.com.au)) and tell us about the best meal you've ever had in Australia. The five most creative answers will each win a copy.





Margaret River, Western Australia

# WIN YOUR OWN SUMMER HOLIDAY

AIRBNB IS giving away seven, month-long holidays to a deserving Aussie in each state across the country.

The giveaway is part of the company's 'Once Upon A Summer' campaign, which aims to inspire Aussies to get out and explore their own backyards through a series of state-based itineraries.

To enter, head to the competition website (listed below) and share in 50 words or less what memories you hope to create this summer. Winners will receive \$15,000 of Airbnb coupons and entries close on December 11.

The promotion comes as Airbnb unveils research designed to uncover the changing attitudes, behaviour and travel plans of Australians.

The findings have been published in support of Tourism Australia's 'Holiday Here This Year' campaign.

Focusing on what makes up the perfect Aussie summer, the research reveals that we are seeking a season of simplicity after an arduous year.

"We're definitely seeing a retro revival of sorts," said Susan Wheeldon, Airbnb's Country Manager for Australia and New Zealand.

"This summer Aussies want all the simple staples that make an Aussie summer so quintessential; from a great backyard pool to a big barbeque.

"After such a stressful year, there's also a strong push towards homes that are designed for relaxing and unwinding, with everything from panoramic views to outdoor baths.

"What's also heartening to see is that Aussies are making a conscious decision to spend their precious tourist dollars in communities that need it most.

"Last year, Australian guests on Airbnb contributed almost \$6 billion to the economy, so the money they spend not just on accommodation but at local shops, pubs and cafes can be a real lifeline to communities doing it tough."

The research was carried out between October 29 and November 2, surveying 1,725 Australians aged 18 years and older.

"Whether it's rediscovering a favourite childhood destination or venturing further afield to somewhere new, or even taking a city break

staycation, we hope that Australians will take this opportunity to have a holiday here this year and in doing so provide much needed support to our industry," said Phillipa Harrison, Managing Director, Tourism Australia.

■ [airbnb.com.au/d/aussiesummer](https://airbnb.com.au/d/aussiesummer)

## Key national stats from the research include:

- \* More than a quarter (27 per cent) of Australians will head to a familiar summer destination
- \* Some 36 per cent of Aussies plan to holiday in a location that is driving distance from home
- \* Almost a third of Aussies plan to visit a bushfire affected region
- \* The smell of a sausage sizzle, sunscreen and sea salt are the top three things that remind Aussies of summer
- \* Airbnb data shows that pet-friendly listings are the most searched for amenity by Australians, followed by a pool, fully-equipped kitchen, wireless internet and spa.



## CAMPAIGN HOPES TO MAKE A CONNECTION

AN ADVERTISING campaign has just been launched designed to encourage consumers to reconnect with travel agents.

Entitled 'Travel Is Calling', the initiative is from APT Travel Group brands, APT and Travelmarvel. It has been specifically tailored to meet the needs and sensitivities of the current era.

"We are starting to see the green shoots and we know people are keen to travel," said Vanesa Russack, GM Marketing and Digital at the APT Travel Group.

The campaign is focused on the reality of future travel and will be launched on domestic, trans-Tasman and international journeys. Campaign assets are available for agents to use on ATG Connect.

Both APT and Travelmarvel have extensive touring options in Australia and New Zealand, including coach tours, 4WD adventure touring, walking holidays, short breaks and small ship cruising.

The company hopes the campaign will support its valued travel partners by encouraging travellers who are ready to book to get in contact with their agent and make it happen.

"We are delighted to launch this campaign and to share the message that travel is close and let our travel partners and guests know that we are ready and willing to facilitate that future travel right now," added Ms Russack.

■ [atgconnect.com.au](http://atgconnect.com.au); [apttouring.com.au](http://apttouring.com.au)



## Give your local hero a reward

TRAFALGAR IS asking Australians to nominate their 'Local Hero' and give them the opportunity to win one of two holidays valued at up to \$9,000 each.

The initiative shines a spotlight on individuals around the country that have gone above and beyond for others through this exceptionally difficult year.

Each prize includes a \$5,000 Trafalgar voucher, together with two economy class return airfares to Europe with Singapore Airlines. All nominees and nominators will receive a Trafalgar tour discount valid through until the end of 2022.

"We are so grateful to the selfless individuals in our communities that have helped Australians get through this year and look forward to being able to recognise and reward these 'Local Heroes' for their efforts with this campaign," said Katrina Barry, Managing Director of Trafalgar.

Nominations close on December 11 and the winner will be announced on December 15.

■ [trafalgar.com](http://trafalgar.com)

## IN BRIEF///

A NEW platform has been developed bringing together a collection of leading independent travel representation agencies.

REPSUNITE brings together sales and marketing representation around the globe with industry leaders operating out of the world's most important source markets.

The new collective aims to deliver clients within the luxury travel and tourism sector proven sales and marketing activities, aligned with their strategy for building brand identity and driving new business from key international markets.

■ [repsunite.com](http://repsunite.com)



# AUSSIES HELP PREDICT THE FUTURE OF TRAVEL

Booking.com has just released research findings from more than 20,000 travellers across 28 countries, including Australia, revealing that travel will be forever re-shaped. Here are their five predictions for the future of travel.

SMARTER, KINDER, safer. These are the key words likely to shape the future of travel in a post-COVID world.

Innovation within the travel industry will accelerate faster than ever while travellers will look for a heightened level of travel safety and more sustainable travel offerings, as well as evolve their preferences.

## 1. BYE BYE 9 TO 5

Working remotely has irreversibly entered the mainstream during the pandemic with the knock-on effect that people will look to take longer trips in the future that more effectively combine work and pleasure.

Over a third (34 per cent) of Australian travellers have already considered booking somewhere to stay in order to work from a different destination, while two in five (43 per cent) would be willing to quarantine if they could work remotely.

Accommodations will prioritise showcasing home office facilities in

an attempt to attract this new wave of digital nomads.

Likewise, the world of corporate travel will see increasing demand for privacy, cleanliness and longer stays among those traveling for business, requiring alternative accommodations to up their 'work-friendly' game.

While companies will undoubtedly reassess approach to business travel in the future, workers will continue to maximise the trips they do take, with half of Australian travellers (50 per cent) saying they would take the opportunity to extend business trips to enjoy leisure time at the destination.

## 2. IMPACT AWAKENING

With 41 per cent of Australian travellers wanting to travel more sustainably in the future, expect to see a more eco-conscious mindset, as COVID-19 has increased consumer's awareness about responsible choices.

Two-thirds (62 per cent) expect the travel industry to offer more

sustainable options and guests will consequently visit alternative destinations in a bid to avoid peak season (52 per cent) and overcrowding (50 per cent).

Additionally, COVID-19 has inspired more than half (52 per cent) of travellers to consider reducing waste and/or recycling their plastic.

Travellers believe that the industry must adapt to this sustainable mindset by offering more attractive off-season travel packages (47 per cent) and proposing alternative destinations to prevent overcrowding (32 per cent).

More than two-thirds (68 per cent) of Aussies indicate that they want their travel choices to also support the destination's recovery efforts and more than half (54 per cent) want to see how their money is going back into the local community.

## 3. SPON-TECH-NAITY

Tech innovation will adapt to a new type of traveller and play a crucial role in rebuilding confidence.

Six in 10 Australians agree that technology will be important in controlling health risks when traveling and three in five (61 per cent) say that



accommodations will need to use the latest technologies to make guests feel safe.

Almost half (46 per cent) will want tech options to make last-minute restaurant reservations and about the same amount (48 per cent) will want more self-service machines instead of ticket desks.

Future innovations will bring even more change, with enhanced online experiences influencing travel behaviour and planning.

#### 4. VITAL VALUE

The financial legacy of COVID-19 will inevitably see people demand more 'bang for their buck' in the future.

The survey reveals 63 per cent will be more price-conscious when it comes to searching and planning a trip in the future and 53 per cent are more likely to hunt down promotions and savings, behaviours that will probably last for many years.

But the value consumers expect will go beyond price tags. Three-quarters (74 per cent) stated they want travel booking platforms to increase their transparency about cancellation policies, refund processes and trip insurance options.

Furthermore, 51 per cent consider refundable accommodation a must-have for their next trip, while 38 per cent want the flexibility to change dates without being charged.

Travellers are still keen to support the industry in its recovery (71 per cent) and want their future bookings to help rebuild communities around Australia and the world (68 per cent).

#### 5. SAFETY CLEANS UP

Almost three in four Aussies (74 per cent) will take more precautions due to COVID-19 and will look to the travel industry to help them gear up for this new normal.

Some 65 per cent of those surveyed will avoid certain destinations (rising to 67 per cent of baby boomers) and 72 per cent expect tourist attractions to adapt to allow for social distancing.

At the same time, 65 per cent will only book a particular accommodation if it's clear what health and hygiene policies it has in place.

Short-term there will also be a change in transport preference and provisions, with under half (41 per cent) opting to avoid public transport. This



“With 41 per cent of Australian travellers wanting to travel more sustainably in the future, expect to see a more eco-conscious mindset, as COVID-19 has increased consumer’s awareness about responsible choices.”

will cause a longer-term shift in how people will travel to and around their holiday destinations, with more people choosing to rent or drive their own car.

Just as we have become accustomed to travelling without liquids in our carry-on luggage and removing shoes to go through airport security, 62 per cent will accept journeying to destinations that have health spot checks on arrival and 42 per cent will accept wearing a mask in public.

Quarantine measures will remain less popular with far fewer (27 per cent) travellers willing to accept

these in order to visit a particular destination.

“For Australia, like many countries in the Pacific, the impact the pandemic has had on travel has been keenly felt,” said Luke Wilson, Area Manager for Australia at Booking.com

“While the future of international travel remains uncertain, the ability to explore our own backyard continues to bring moments of joy and inspiration, whether through dreaming and planning, or cherishing the trips we have been able to take.”

■ [booking.com/articles/category/future-of-travel](https://www.booking.com/articles/category/future-of-travel)



# Travel toolbox could be a game changer

TRAVEL AGENTS are being offered a world-first sophisticated and seamless global online, mobile and full-service travel booking toolbox.

Launching in 2021, Aeronology Mobile can be used globally and travel advisors can operate anywhere they have access to the internet.

"It's going to change the travel advisor industry," said Russell Carstensen, CEO of Aeronology, an Australian travel technology company.

"An advisor can now keep all commission in what is an affordable, user-pay one-stop shop application which allows you to earn more and save time."

Aeronology Mobile is the perfect tool for independent travel advisors, or agents who are members of consortiums (corporate and leisure), their consultants, or individuals who want to operate as sole traders.

It caters for IATA and non-IATA agents, creating the 'lowest cost of sale in the market' by not having the overheads or headaches of ongoing costs such as rent, licence fees, mid-office and inflexible communication charges.

The application set up is free and Aeronology Mobile provides the 'nose to tail' service which travel businesses will require moving forward in a COVID-normal travel environment.

"The travel agent/advisor owns all their data and we provide a traveller profile database, all the shopping, plus



*Russell Carstensen,  
CEO of Aeronology*

booking and transaction services for any travel product on a web-based booking platform," added Mr Carstensen.

"This includes a mid-office service which will load to all the major accounting systems, including MYOB, Xero and QuickBooks."

"The travel agent will never pay another monthly mid-office licence fee again. In the current travel environment, travel experts need to be flexible, adaptable and mobile as well as have the ability to operate off their tablets, laptops or even their mobile phones."

Mr Carstensen says the technology involved is the result of 20 years of understanding the needs and requirements to be a profitable and effective travel advisor.

"This application isn't an overnight

discovery; it has been years in the making and is one that offers hope for this moment of need in a world of uncertainty. We have built a travel technology service which doesn't require licences, set up fees or base costs.

"You pay as you use. It's simple. We can even provide the travel advisor with their preferred GDS service of Sabre, Travelport or TravelSky, or use your own GDS contract. You on-charge and collect your fees at the Point of Sale."

■ For more information, e-mail: [mobile@aeronology.travel](mailto:mobile@aeronology.travel)

## Key points of Aeronology Mobile

- \* Revolutionary travel application offers full commission for travel agents
- \* No contracts, start-up costs or subscription fees; a seamless user-pay system
- \* "Travel Advisor Hub" with multiple GDS, Mid Office, Travel Supplier and NDC integration. It is so simple to use, no special training is needed
- \* Set up your office anywhere, work off a phone, tablet or laptop.



# Driving on the road to recovery

A NEW study provides an insight into the road to recovery for the global travel industry, revealing the latest traveller trends and top recovering destinations.

The report, *2020 - A Year in Travel: Charting the Travel Industry's Path to Recovery*, was a joint venture by Tripadvisor and Phocuswright.

"The good news is that consumers' desire to travel remains incredibly resilient, and that pent-up demand bodes well for the travel industry in the long run, especially considering the advances announced last week in the development of a vaccine," said Steve Kaufer, Chief Executive Officer, Tripadvisor.

#### Key findings from the report include:

- ✱ After positive signs of recovery in domestic leisure travel in spring, demand for accommodation is now falling back in a number of markets as infection rates rise.

Europe experienced the strongest leisure travel recovery during their summer months, with the number of travellers researching domestic hotel stays reaching 2019 levels of demand

for a sustained period in late July and August.

However, the recent re-introduction of lockdown restrictions in countries like France, Germany and the UK has seen demand for rooms drop.

Signs of recovery in Asia-Pacific were less obvious across the region as a whole between June and October, though some markets – such as Singapore – saw a surge in demand for domestic stays.

- ✱ Travellers are reassessing the type of trips they want to take. Two-thirds of consumers surveyed (65 per cent) say the ability to avoid crowded places when travelling is now a more important factor in their choice of destination than it was pre-pandemic.

More than half (52 per cent) say they are more likely to take an outdoor/nature trip than they were before the pandemic.

Between May and September, outdoor activities, nature and parks accounted for 34 per cent of all attraction page views on Tripadvisor, up from 25 per cent in 2019.

- ✱ Looking at year-on-year data

over the October period, ski and seaside resorts, as well as other rural destinations, dominated the list of fastest recovering destinations in Europe for domestic accommodation searches on Tripadvisor, with Zermatt in Switzerland and Adler in Russia topping the list based on year-on-year demand.

- ✱ Despite continuing consumer uncertainty, the desire to travel remains very strong. Nearly two-thirds (65%) of respondents are still thinking about where they want to travel next.

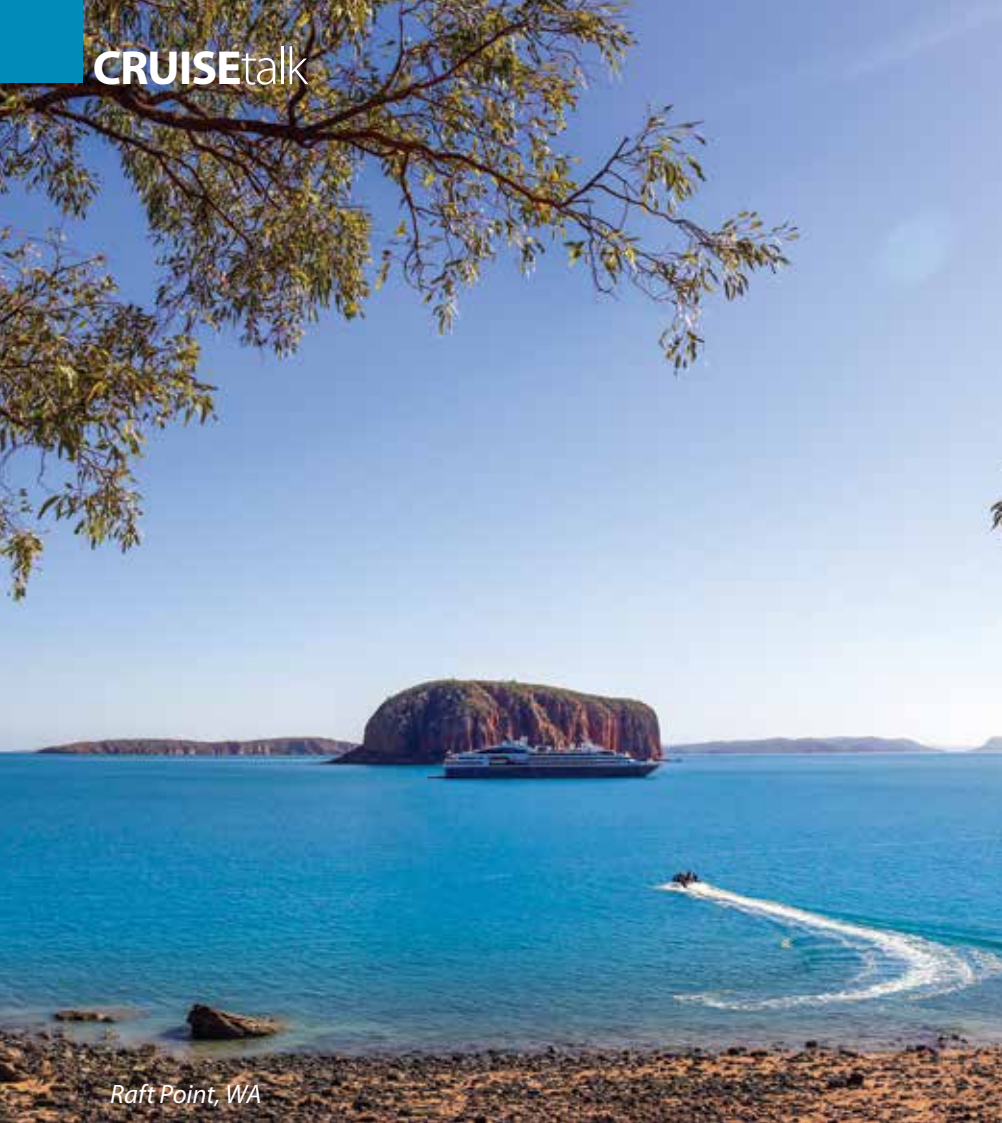
"The industry has shown incredible adaptability and resilience in what has been a long and difficult year for travel," said Charuta Fadnis, Senior Vice-President of Research and Product Strategy, Phocuswright.

"Our research consistently shows that travel remains a key part of consumers' lifestyles and travellers are keen to indulge their wanderlust again.

"Vaccines and therapeutics will boost the nascent recovery and the industry can look forward to brighter days ahead."

■ [tripadvisor.com/](https://www.tripadvisor.com/)

*Covid19WhitepaperNovember2020*



Raft Point, WA

# Special offer for grabbin' a cabin

YOU'LL HAVE to be quick but Abercrombie & Kent has announced a limited offer on its 2021 Kimberley cruise adventure.

The 12-night journey from Broome to Darwin departs on May 6, 2021, and will showcase the unique Kimberley coastline.

Guests will explore the Lacapede Islands, enjoy a jet boat tour to the Horizontal Falls, experience low tide at Montgomery Reef, discover the mysterious Bradshaw paintings at Jar Island, visit the Prince Regent Nature Reserve and take a helicopter ride to Mitchell Falls.

An in-depth look at the rock art of Bigge Island is part of the adventure plus saltwater crocodiles and crabs on the Hunter River, the King George River and Falls, the Ord River and Lake Argyle and a flight over the Bungle Bungles.

A&K has exclusively chartered luxury mega-yacht *Le Laperouse* for the journey. This boutique ship boasts elegantly designed cabins and spacious suites with large windows and lounge areas with outdoor access.

Onboard facilities include an underwater lounge, swimming pool, salon, spa hammam and fitness centre.

'Kimberley Cruise: Australia's Last Frontier' is priced from \$17,800 per person double occupancy. A&K is offering special prices across all cabin categories, available only until December 11. A \$1,000 per person deposit is required to secure a cabin.

■ [abercrombiekent.com.au](http://abercrombiekent.com.au)



## INCLUSIONS ARE NO ILLUSIONS

WITH THE upcoming launch of its new 2022/2023 itineraries, Silversea Cruises is set to become more all-inclusive than ever.

For the first time in the company's history, travellers will enjoy at least one complimentary shore excursion, from a range of experiences in every port of call, included with all voyages in the new itinerary collection - across the line's entire fleet of 10 ships.

Enhancing Silversea's all-inclusive offering further still, all cruise fares will include roundtrip air and transfers.

Setting sail between March 2022 and May 2023, Silversea's new collection of voyages represents the cruise line's largest-ever itinerary release, with almost 12 per cent more itineraries compared to the previous launch.

The new collection includes 315 voyages across all seven continents, calling in 669 destinations in 114 countries, with 61 maiden calls.

"We are enhancing our already comprehensive all-inclusive offering for the convenience of our guests, while leveraging on our destination leadership to take travellers deeper into over 900 of the world's most amazing destinations on included shore excursions," said Roberto Martinoli, Silversea's President and CEO.

"With the inclusion of roundtrip air and transfers, we are further enriching our all-inclusive offering, which is among the most broad-ranging in the ultra-luxury cruise sector."

Silversea's new itineraries will go on general sale on December 10.

■ [silversea.com](http://silversea.com)



Norwegian Escape  
in Santorini

## Green light for Black Friday sale

NORWEGIAN CRUISE Line (NCL) is running a 'Black Friday Sale' with extensive offers for consumers and launching a new rewards program for travel partners.

Running until December 10, the promotion offers guests a free beverage package, free shore excursion credit, free specialty dining package, free Wi-Fi package and access to NCL's '3rd and 4th guest sail at a reduced rate', providing \$US2,900 (approx. \$AU3,900) in overall value.

"Our Black Friday Sale is a compelling offer that will assist our valued travel partners in Australia to secure new client bookings," said Damian Borg, Norwegian Cruise Line Director of Sales, Australia and New Zealand.

"Providing exceptional value, the Black Friday Sale is

available fleetwide across hundreds of destinations around the world, making it a perfect incentive for bookings no matter where your clients wish to sail."

The company will also be re-launching its trade portal, Norwegian Central, in the coming weeks.

Norwegian Central is a one-stop-shop for travel partners in Australia and will comprise four main sections: Learn, Promote, Book and Connect.

As part of the re-launch, NCL is offering an exclusive new rewards program for travel agents that will only be available to Norwegian Central users with an individual log-in.

■ [ncl.com](http://ncl.com)

## GET INTO THE SPIRIT

CREATIVE CRUISING is launching an exclusive new membership program in early 2021 to support its retail travel agency partners across Australia.

The Cruise Spirit membership program will deliver a range of unique benefits and enhanced rewards tailored to its members.

These will include curated cruise packages with handpicked inclusions, dedicated sales and marketing support and priority communication channels.

Members will have access to market-leading cruise technology platforms and all travel agency partners will receive their own branded online cruise-booking website.

"We are developing Cruise Spirit in collaboration with our travel agency partners to deliver benefits relevant to their business models," said Caroline Hitchen, General Manager for Creative Cruising

"Our team of cruise specialists will work closely with select cruise suppliers to negotiate and deliver the very best deals for members.

"We are excited to welcome new members into Cruise Spirit and look forward to a restart and growth of cruise travel in 2021."

■ Agencies interested in membership should contact Lara Anderson at [lara.anderson@creativecruising.com.au](mailto:lara.anderson@creativecruising.com.au)



Caroline Hitchen, General Manager  
for Creative Cruising



# Feel like a local celebrity

CELEBRITY CRUISES have released plans for local 2021-2022 summer sailings, including curated itineraries highlighting the best of Australia, New Zealand and the South Pacific.

Making her debut in local waters for the very first time, *Celebrity Eclipse* sets sail from October 18, 2021, through April 17, 2022.

The 19 voyages she will undertake during this period feature custom itinerary programming which were identified through market research and valuable travel partner feedback.

'Sun and Beach Escapes', 'Food and Wine Classics' and 'Five-Star Getaways' are designed to accentuate guests' sailing experience based on their holiday preference.

The highlight experience on a 'Sun and Beach Escapes' voyage is the chance to sleep under the stars on a private pontoon floating above the Great Barrier Reef, including exclusive first light access to the reef. Guests can do this on an 11-night 'Great Barrier Reef Cruise', departing on February 8, 2022.

"Bringing the unique desires of the Australian guest to the forefront of our programming has allowed us to deliver on what our local market desires from a holiday experience and in turn, support our regional tourism market," said Tim Jones, Vice President and Managing Director of Celebrity Cruises APAC.

Elsewhere the cruise line has updated its 2021-2022 program for the Caribbean, Europe and South America.

The debut offerings are highlighted by an expanded Caribbean presence with new seven-night and overnight itineraries, new Spain and Portugal itineraries in Europe and a new homeport and new shorter itineraries in South America.

■ [celebritycruises.com/au](http://celebritycruises.com/au)



## Yule love this Christmas experience

SOAK UP the splendour of the Murray River on a seven-night Christmas voyage with Captain Cook Cruises.

Departing December 23 onboard paddlewheeler *PS Murray Princess*, the cruise goes from Renmark to Mannum, exploring Australian history along 420kms of the river.

Seasonally-themed activities will include festivities and carols, a traditional South Australian Christmas Day lunch and a Christmas beach party on the banks of the river.

Guests will also visit the historic towns of Berri, Waikerie Loxton and Morgan, following in the footsteps of the great 19th century pioneers.

Learn about Aboriginal history at the Ngaut Ngaut Aboriginal Reserve, see the sandstone cliffs at Big Bend, while at Sunnydale experience the Australian Woolshed Shearing Show, followed by a visit to the native wildlife shelter.

Food and wine lovers will enjoy cellar door tastings and a tour of the gardens and orchards at Caudo Vineyard. Onboard sample the local produce and wines from the Murray and Riverland regions at a food and wine tasting in the Sturt Dining Room.

Early booking saver fares start from \$2,499 per person twin share for the seven-night cruise which runs from December 23 to December 30.

■ [murrayprincess.com.au](http://murrayprincess.com.au)

## Learn more in a monthly masterclass

AZAMARA IS launching a new monthly masterclass series of on-demand videos to further the company's mission to support the travel advisor community.

The videos will be hosted on Azamara Connect – the brand's online portal for travel consultants – providing destination education and sales boosting modules that will coach advisors on how to optimise their business.

"We value our resilient trade partners and will continue to support their business during these challenging times," said Nils Lindstad, Associate Vice President of Sales and Trade Support, Azamara.

The educational series is the latest in Azamara's efforts to support its trade partners, as the company has executed more than 125 virtual events since April with both trade partners and consumers.

The virtual events have received more than 5,000 attendees, with this number continuing to climb.

The field sales team also runs fun happy hours with travel advisors such as 'Gin & Topics' and 'Mitch & Martinis', with special guest speakers including Azamara's Captains and Cruise Directors.

■ [azamara.com](http://azamara.com)



## Amazon trip now gets even Nera

AQUA EXPEDITIONS has announced the resumption of its Amazon operations and the launch of *Aqua Nera*.

Peruvian borders are now open and international flights have been in operation since November.

Aqua is now preparing for the first departure of *Aria Amazon* scheduled for December 18 and just in time for the holiday season.

*Aqua Nera* (pictured above), the company's newest expedition vessel, will launch its much-anticipated inaugural voyage on April 3, 2021. The 20-suite ship is currently sailing the full length of the Amazon to her home port of Iquitos, Peru, after an epic 19,866kms journey across the world.

The ship's expert naturalist guides will conduct small group excursions rewarding guests with up-close wildlife encounters. The expedition also features cuisine by Pedro Miguel Schiaffino, one of Peru's finest chefs, celebrated for creating refined cuisine from native Amazonian produce.

"*Aqua Nera* is positioned to be an innovative addition on the Amazon river, inspired by the Peruvian black water lagoons, combining refined elegance with contemporary design," said Francesco Galli Zugaro, CEO and Founder, Aqua Expeditions.

■ [aquaexpeditions.com](http://aquaexpeditions.com)

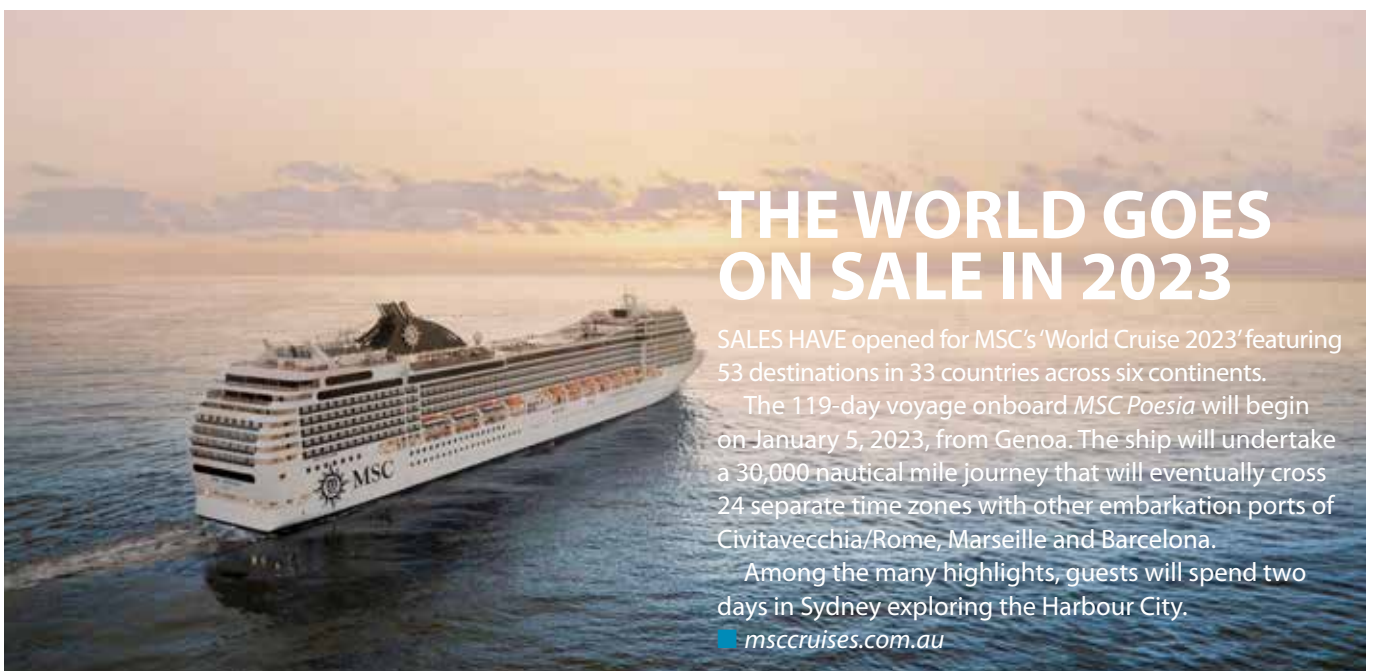
## THE WORLD GOES ON SALE IN 2023

SALES HAVE opened for MSC's 'World Cruise 2023' featuring 53 destinations in 33 countries across six continents.

The 119-day voyage onboard *MSC Poesia* will begin on January 5, 2023, from Genoa. The ship will undertake a 30,000 nautical mile journey that will eventually cross 24 separate time zones with other embarkation ports of Civitavecchia/Rome, Marseille and Barcelona.

Among the many highlights, guests will spend two days in Sydney exploring the Harbour City.

■ [msccruises.com.au](http://msccruises.com.au)



*Le Commandant-Charcot.  
Picture courtesy Stirling  
Design International/  
PONANT*

## It's a polar solar treat

CRUISERS CAN experience a total Antarctic solar eclipse onboard PONANT's new polar expedition ship *Le Commandant-Charcot*.

In addition to viewing the total eclipse of the sun from the pack ice, this 15-night expedition voyage, departing Ushuaia, Argentina on November 30, 2021, will explore the challenging eastern part of the Weddell Sea.

Mostly frozen by a thick and compressed ice floe, the region remains rarely accessible, perfect for the Polar Class 2 rated *Le Commandant-Charcot*.

Guests will also discover the imposing Larsen ice shelves with immense tabletop icebergs, among the largest ever seen.

In addition to regular outings and shore visits in Zodiacs with the expert polar expedition team and naturalist guides, there will be plenty of opportunity to take advantage of inclusive innovative

activities including hovercraft, hot air ballooning and electric powered snowmobiles, when appropriate, to provide additional exploration and perspectives of the surroundings.

"For many, an expedition to Antarctica is one of those 'once-in-a-lifetime' experiences, often expressed as life-changing," said Deb Corbett, PONANT General Manager Sales & Marketing Asia Pacific.

"I really love the concept of not just following in the footsteps of the great explorers but exploring further in this wonderland, only made possible by the extraordinary capabilities of our new ship."

The 15-night 'Total Eclipse in the Weddell Sea' voyage is priced from \$25,340 twin share. The price includes return charter flight Santiago to Ushuaia, all meals and open bar, lectures, Zodiac outings and shore excursions.

■ [au.ponant.com](http://au.ponant.com)

## Take a trip close to home

REGENT SEVEN Seas Cruises will offer 14 all-inclusive itineraries in local waters between October 2021 and April 2022.

The collection of 'Close to Home' sailings in Australia and New Zealand will be onboard *Seven Seas Explorer* as part of her inaugural Asia-Pacific season.

"*Seven Seas Explorer* delivers a level of luxury never seen before in this region and we can't wait to share it with discerning local travellers," said Lisa Pile, Vice President Sales, Australia & New Zealand, Regent Seven Seas Cruises.

For those looking to celebrate Christmas and New Year in style, the 16-night 'Holiday Down Under' voyage will showcase some of Australia and New Zealand's best ports of call.

Departing Sydney on December 20, 2021, itinerary highlights range from the popular city beaches to artisan workshops in Burnie, Tasmania, to New Zealand's Bay of Islands and the volcanic hills of Akaroa.

Guests can choose from an extensive suite of free unlimited shore excursions, such as an epicurean adventure sampling Burnie's gourmet cheeses, chocolates and local wines, or a horse riding expedition along the beaches of New Zealand's Waipu coast.

■ [RSSC.com](http://RSSC.com)



*The spa infinity pool  
onboard Seven Seas  
Explorer*





## FLYING KANGAROO TURNS 100

THE GLOBAL pandemic spoiled the party somewhat but Qantas still managed to celebrate its 100th birthday in some style.

It was on November 16, 1920, that two veterans of the Australian Flying Corps, Hudson Fysh and Paul McGinness, together with local grazier Fergus McMaster, founded what would later become the national carrier.

Qantas is now the oldest continuously-operating airline in the world and the only one that (normally)

flies to every single inhabited continent on earth. The airline marked its anniversary with a low-level flyover of Sydney Harbour. The flight path passed near Rose Bay where Empire Flying Boats took off for Singapore between 1938 and 1942.

“Around the world, Qantas is probably best known for its safety record, endurance flying and long list of aviation firsts,” said Alan Joyce, Qantas Group CEO.

“But for Australians there’s nothing quite like seeing the Flying Kangaroo

at the airport, waiting to take you home. We hope to be doing a lot more of that in the months and years ahead.”

Meanwhile Qantas and Accor have announced a partnership that will see mutual members of their loyalty programs be rewarded at every stage of their travel journey.

Scheduled to launch mid-2021, it will be the first partnership of its kind between an airline and hospitality group in the Asia Pacific region.

■ [qantas.com/au](https://qantas.com/au)

## HOW VIRGIN IS RE-EMERGING

VIRGIN AUSTRALIA has come out of voluntary administration with plans to focus on the mid-market for flyers.

The airline says it will dump free onboard meals, but keep three domestic seating choices.

“Australia already has a low-cost-carrier and a traditional full-service airline, and we won’t be either,” said Jayne Hrdlicka, Virgin Australia Group CEO.

“Virgin Australia will be a mid-market carrier.”

Hrdlika said the airline has “removed an enormous amount of complexity” from its business model, improving its cost base. Ergo the carrier could now focus on giving customers what they value “without the big price tag.”

Virgin Australia Group plans to retain roughly one third of the domestic market (as was pre-COVID) with a commitment to regional Australia, including the

restructuring of Virgin Australia Regional Airlines.

Customers will still have a choice of three seating options, but will have to pay for food as the airline switches to a buy onboard menu. In-flight Wi-Fi and entertainment are currently under review.

The Virgin airport experience will see new state-of-the-art self-service and assisted check-in facilities open across major airports by December 2021, currently featuring in Melbourne and Perth.

“Virgin Australia is an airline built on a 20-year history of exceptional customer service and delivering a great experience for millions of Australians,” said Hrdlicka.

“Today, we exit voluntary administration with a renewed sense of who we are and who we are here to serve.”

■ [virginaustralia.com/au](https://virginaustralia.com/au)



## NEW BRAND IN OUR LAND

TFE HOTELS are increasing their footprint in Australia with four new hotel openings within 12 months, including a new brand for the country.

This month, doors will open on the 99-room Adina Apartment Hotel West Melbourne in the city's up-and-coming trendy 'West End' precinct.

This will be followed by the introduction of the new brand into Australia with the debut of the 241-room Quincy Hotel Melbourne in early 2021.

These new properties follow the opening of the 206-room Vibe Hotel Melbourne (pictured below) and the 220-room Adina Apartment Hotel Melbourne Southbank.

"Melbourne is one of the world's great cities and we're excited about its future," said Antony Ritch, Chief Executive Officer, TFE Hotels.

Opening on December 4, Adina West Melbourne is part of a \$350 million luxury mixed-use precinct in Melbourne's blossoming inner-city fringe.

The property features 2,000sqm of Zen gardens, an on-site supermarket, gym, coffee roastery, 10 eclectic eateries and a private outdoor retreat complete with a 25m lap pool, plunge pool and spa pool.

Quincy Melbourne will open on Flinders Lane with three signature food experiences, a rooftop pool with views of the Melbourne CBD and exclusive club levels and lounge access.

■ [tfehotels.com](http://tfehotels.com)



# ANOTHER FIRST FOR AUSTRALIA

AUSTRALIA'S FIRST Mondrian hotel and branded residences will be built on the Gold Coast in Queensland.

A dual tower property, Mondrian Gold Coast will occupy a beachfront site on the corner of First Avenue and The Esplanade Burleigh Heads in one of the area's most desirable neighbourhoods.

With 80 metres of ocean frontage, guests and residents will have direct access to the signature white sands



and world-famous surf of Burleigh Heads Beach.

The property will feature two distinct towers to separate the private residences, comprised of 89 luxury apartments, from the hotel, which will encompass 208 guestrooms.

The buildings will be united by a three-level podium that acts as the building's common space and hub of activity, including a state-of-the-art fitness centre, spa, restaurants and swimming pools.

"With five open properties, nine in development, and six more to be announced, Mondrian has established itself as one of the strongest brands in the sbe lifestyle portfolio, showing staying power for the long-term," said Chadi Farhat, Chief Operating Officer, sbe.

"The Gold Coast has grown into one of Australia's leading travel destinations and the opening of Mondrian Gold Coast is the next step in our strategic global expansion for the Mondrian brand, selecting communities at the heart of the most exciting cultural destinations in the world."

Construction will commence in June next year with the hotel hopefully ready to open in mid-2023.

■ [mondrianresidencesgc.com](http://mondrianresidencesgc.com)

# Playlist offers the drive to arrive

THE SEBEL Yarrowonga has opened its doors, inviting guests to hit the road with a drive-themed playlist from across the decades.

From classics like *Drive* by The Cars and *Drive my Car* by The Beatles, the playlist also includes a nod to those ready to escape from lockdown with songs like *Freedom!* by George Michael and *I Want to Break Free* by Queen.

Some Australian favourites have also been included that celebrate our wide open spaces such as *Great Southern Land* by Icehouse and *Sounds of Then* by GANGajang.

"Everyone is looking for a well-earned change of scenery and some wide open space after a challenging year and we are looking forward to welcoming guests from across Victoria and interstate when borders open," said Rebecca Russell, General Manager, The Sebel Yarrowonga.

The four-and-a-half star property offers hotel and apartment accommodation and is a three-hour drive from Melbourne in the Murray River region. It features 63 studio rooms and spacious one-, two- and three-bedroom

apartments overlooking Lake Mulwala.

The lake is a popular destination for water skiing in summer and the surrounding region offers natural produce and a variety of wineries in nearby Rutherglen. The drive from Melbourne also encompasses the silo art on the North East Art Trail.

The Sebel Yarrowonga has initially opened two of its three food and beverage venues – Stock & Barrel bar and casual dining and Sunset Pool Bar – with Elizabeth's fine dining restaurant and function space set to open this month.

The SOL Health & Wellness Day Spa is expected to open early January, offering signature treatments and products for those seeking a pampering getaway.

Accommodation rates start from \$199 per night in a studio garden view room, 'Stay & Play' packages are also available from \$399 per night for two people staying in a studio lake view room including breakfast and 18 holes of golf at the adjacent Black Bull golf course.

■ [all.accor.com](http://all.accor.com)

*Pullman Sails in the Desert, NT*



## Grab a real deal for summer

THERE'S STILL time to take advantage of Accor's 'Take Two' deals encouraging travellers to rediscover the beauty of Australia.

From luxury to economy, the company has more than 340 hotels, resorts and apartments to choose from across the country.

These include international brands such as Sofitel, MGallery, Art Series, Pullman, Swissôtel, Grand Mercure, Peppers, The Sebel, Mantra, Novotel, Mercure, Tribe, BreakFree, ibis, ibis Styles and ibis Budget.

The deals start from as low as \$99 per night at ibis Melbourne over the summer holiday period and are valid for new bookings until January 31, 2021.

■ [all.accor.com](http://all.accor.com)



# THE TRUTH ABOUT YOUTH

While the global pandemic has affected almost every age range, our young people have been particularly impacted by lockdowns and social distancing.

In this exclusive article for *Traveltalk*, CHARLES KNOWLTON, Global General Manager at Topdeck Travel, looks at what the future will hold for the next generation.

TRAVEL IS a very crucial part of life for young adults, providing an escape from the busy every day, as well being a great remedy for stress, anxiety and depression.

Looking ahead to future travel experiences and adventures will help boost the wellbeing of today's young people during an anxiety-ridden lockdown period.

A recent Topdeck Travel survey revealed that 35 per cent of young adults (18-25 years) felt that going on holiday and enjoying the perks of travel was an important part of switching off from the events of the last few months.

What's key is that as an industry we help to build confidence and trust among young travellers, reassuring



*Charles Knowlton, Global General Manager at Topdeck Travel*

them that they can still make plans for the year ahead with the flexibility to change or cancel should they have to.

## THE IMPORTANCE OF WORRY-FREE ADVENTURE

While making future travel plans will help young adults get a much-needed release from the stresses caused by the coronavirus pandemic, ensuring peace of mind when it comes to booking will be high on the priority list for those looking to plan their next travel adventure.

In fact, our recent customer research highlighted a strong desire to travel, yet a lack in customer confidence when it comes to booking.

Providing flexibility is the most sought-after factor when it comes to ensuring young travellers feel at ease to make future travel plans.

By allowing them to make changes to their bookings, such as being able to cancel or move travel dates if necessary, travellers will feel they are covered against any unforeseen circumstances caused by the pandemic and will be more likely to book trips in 2021 and beyond.

Another important factor for post-

pandemic travel among young adults will be for travel providers to specify clear health and safety measures to help reduce the risk of infection.

Youngsters will be choosing to travel on trips, as well as staying at hotels, based on how confident they are that they will be clean and hygienic.

## LOOKING TO EXPLORE THE GREAT OUTDOORS

In our recent study, one in four 18-25-year-olds stated that experiencing nature as much as possible was going to be important to them when travelling again.

With travel being limited for so much of 2020, it makes sense that young travellers will want to get out and explore the world again.

Due to lockdown restrictions, a new sense of appreciation for nature and its effect on our mental health has been discovered by many.

We expect that choices in travel destinations will correspond with this desire, with young travellers choosing to visit destinations and places that offer natural surroundings.

## CHOOSING ENRICHING EXPERIENCES

The pent-up demand to travel caused by a lack of it due to lockdown will have encouraged a greater need among many young people to experience different cultures.

Our recent research also proved this to be the case, with 28 per cent of Gen Z admitting that they seek meaningful and authentic travel experiences, and 23 per cent hoping to experience a different culture to what they've been used to over the last few months.

The pandemic seems to have shifted the importance placed on



mindlessly following others and doing things just because they look good on social media.

Now more than ever, young individuals are working out who they are in this current landscape, what their identity is in the 'new normal'.

Travel allows the young to build a new chapter, one filled with refreshing discoveries, a chance to strip back the norm to identify their real selves and what it means to truly feel something real.

Following months in lockdown, they will desire escape from the mundane day to day of home. It will be likely that young travellers will want to meet new people, gain new perspectives, and create meaningful memories.

We know that our audience wants deep culture and the ability to see and

feel a different side to a destination, not just to have the standard 'copy and paste' experience.

Given the huge impact that lockdown and social restrictions have and will have, we are confident that young adults will turn to travel for a much-needed release and that there will be demand for youth travel in 2021 and beyond.

While travel may not be possible at present, Topdeck will be here for travellers when the time comes to travel again. Offering a wide range of life changing tours in 2021 and beyond, our commitment to offering unforgettable travel is still the same and we cannot wait to get back to helping our customers experience refreshing, authentic and life-changing discoveries.

■ [topdeck.travel](https://www.topdeck.travel)

**SUPPORT YOUR LOCAL TRAVEL AGENT**  
*They know their stuff!*



# Inside Australia's Jurassic Park



*Traveltalk's* JON UNDERWOOD gets a special preview of a new Australian attraction that's been 240 million years in the making.

EINSTEIN ONCE wrote that insanity was doing the same thing over and over and expecting a different result.

Someone really should have told the people behind all those *Jurassic Park* movies, which never ended well for the human population. "An accident waiting to happen" is how Jeff Goldblum's character describes it in one of the films.

Fortunately, there's a way we can interact with these giants from another time that doesn't involve loss of limbs, or for Sam Neill to come to the rescue.

Following a successful season in 2018, Dinosaur Valley is returning to Scenic World in the Blue Mountains outside Sydney. I was invited to a special preview of the attraction, which will be open until January 31.

"It's been a very tough year for

Scenic World and for tourism in the Blue Mountains so we're very excited to see Dinosaur Valley up and running," said Amanda Byrne, Scenic World's Chief Experience Officer.

"We've had to make some changes due to COVID restrictions but we'd like to think that the changes we've made have actually improved the experience."

Our descent into the Jurassic rainforest begins via the Scenic Cableway, the steepest aerial cable car in the Southern Hemisphere. A scary beginning, but fortunately there were no screams to alert the giants lurking below...

One of the reasons the attraction was such a hit back in 2018 was the location, which replicates the flora that would have existed when dinosaurs roamed the world.

New for 2020 are the Dino-Rangers, who now guide the tour from beginning to end, offering extra information about the life-sized creatures dotted around the rainforest.

A walk through Fossil Valley reveals the footprints of a young Stegosaurus, who was clearly running from something. As we turn the corner, Velociraptor remains and a T-Rex skull are revealed. No wonder he was running!

But the highlight of the tour is the life-sized animatronic dinosaurs that appear on both sides of the boardwalk that snakes its way through the foliage (in a smart move, they've kept the omnivores and carnivores on separate sides of the path, just to avoid temptation...)

You'll see favourites like the Triceratops, a fully-grown Stegosaurus and the Maiasaura, which apparently



had the speed of Usain Bolt. But there are also the dinosaurs that once called Australia home.

Creatures like the Minmi, a weird-looking herbivore that lived in Queensland, and the Australovenator, our version of the Velociraptor, and known as the cheetah of the dinosaur world, capable of 30 kilometres an hour.

A walk through the egg hatchery brings the tour to a close, with our trip out of the valley courtesy of the world's steepest railway. We go up in reverse, a fitting end to an

entertaining journey back in time.

While dinosaurs may be extinct, the exhibits in Dinosaur Valley clearly have a vital role still to play in providing a much-needed tourism boost to the region.

"We hope people will be more comfortable to venture out and do experiences like this, particularly with the level of COVID-safety we have here," adds Amanda.

"What makes it so unique – and I know lots of people have seen dinosaur exhibits before – is we

have this beautiful, pristine Jurassic rainforest and seeing these dinosaurs in their natural habitat is quite spectacular.

"We are really hoping that Dinosaur Valley reignites people's interest and love for the Blue Mountains and gives them a reason to come back. Tourism is the major industry up here and a lot of livelihoods rely on it."

*Tickets are priced from \$49.90 for adults and \$27.90 for children under 14 years.*

■ [dinosaurvalley.com.au](http://dinosaurvalley.com.au);  
[scenicworld.com.au](http://scenicworld.com.au)

## WHERE TO STAY

BEING SUCH a relatively 'young' country, we can sometimes forget that Australia often punches well above its weight on the world stage.

Who would have thought, for example, that we have a hotel that once rivalled the famous Raffles in Singapore for elegance, charm and sophistication?

Originally opened in 1883, The Carrington Hotel in Katoomba drips history from every pore, a building quite unlike any I've stayed at in Australia.

Close my eyes and I can imagine Victorian ladies and gentlemen strutting around in their finery, eating cucumber sandwiches and listening to a tinkling piano while enjoying afternoon tea.

Sadly, a tourism slump saw the

hotel closed and derelict, before eight years of restoration led to a reopening in 1998. Renovation works and upgrades continue to restore the 'Grand Old Lady of the Mountains' back to her best.

A walk around the property is like stepping back in time, with art deco pieces, stained glass windows and creaking floorboards at every turn. There's a library, a lounge and a ballroom, which hosted the Dalai Lama during his visit in 2015.

Highlight of my two-night stay was a delicious meal in the Grand Dining Room, the centrepiece of the hotel. The room is close to the 1886 original and such a welcome change to the sterile, stainless steel eateries of modern times.

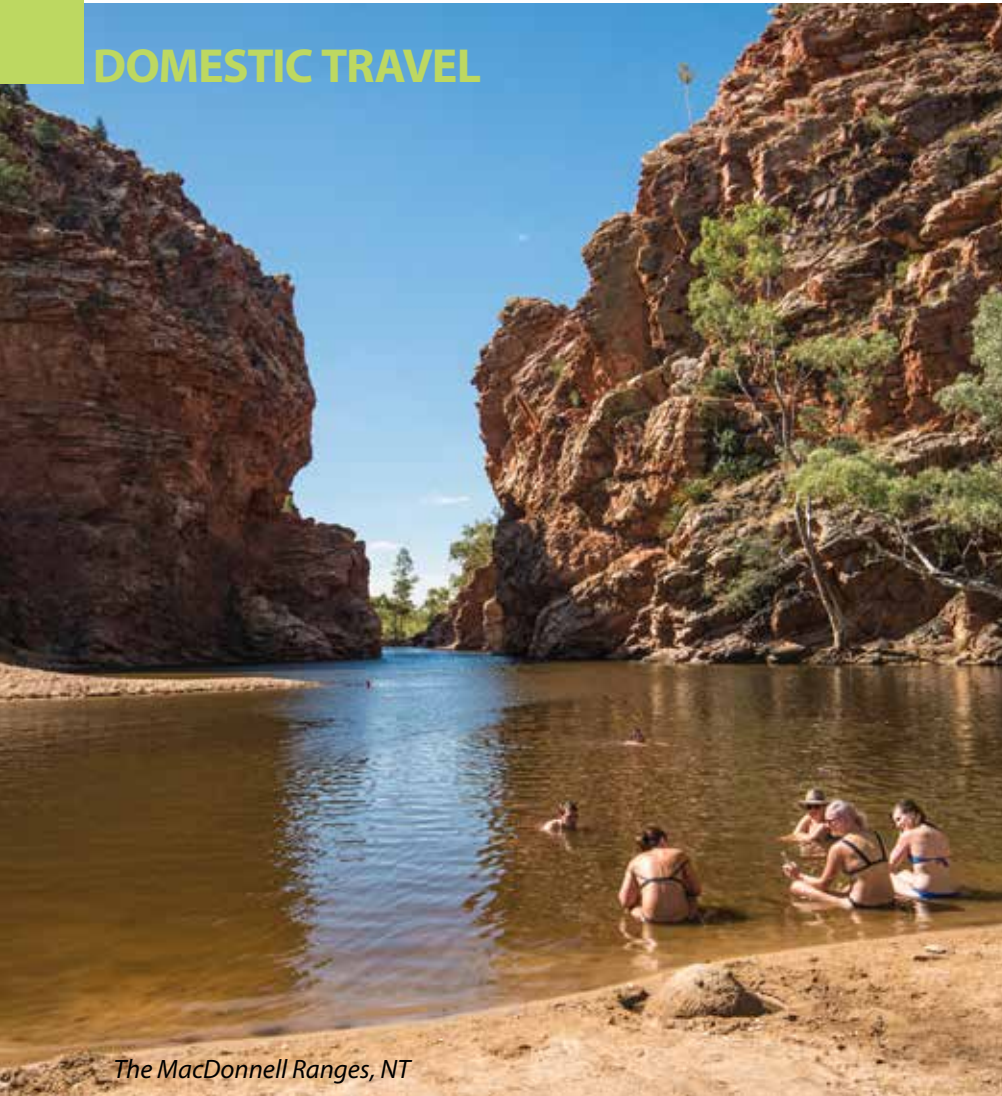
As with any property of such age, some concessions have to be made and I did miss the modern comfort

of air conditioning in my room, particularly as I picked one of the hottest days of the year to stay.

But sitting on the front veranda, ice-cold cocktail in hand while watching the world go by, made me nostalgic for days when life was a lot simpler and slower. Let's hope this Grand Old Lady will be around for another 100 years.

■ [thecarrington.com.au](http://thecarrington.com.au)





*The MacDonnell Ranges, NT*

# TIME TO COME TOGETHER FOR AN ADVENTURE

INTREPID TRAVEL has grown its Aussie portfolio with more adventures aimed at supporting local communities and offering meaningful First Nations experiences.

The 14 new itineraries across every state and territory (except ACT) bolster the company's existing Local Travel range, launched earlier this year. Intrepid now offers a total of 22 local trips in Australia.

As part of the new tours, travellers can expect more active and wellness itineraries, as well as trips that highlight local food and produce.

After a year when many extended families have been separated by state border closures, or forced to spend extended time in lockdown, there are

also new adventures that will bring families closer and out of the house.

"Our new local trips allow travellers to confidently get out and back on the road, and discover Australia's diverse cultures, histories, landscapes, food, wine and more," said Sarah Clark, Intrepid Travel's APAC Managing Director.

"After a year when many people have felt isolated, these adventures allow travellers to come together, reconnect, get active, try something new and support local communities.

"I'm proud that many of our 14 new trips include a First Nations experience and we will continue to build on this in the future."

■ [intrepidtravel.com/au/new-local-tours](https://intrepidtravel.com/au/new-local-tours)

**Sample highlights from the newly launched tours include:**

**\* Five-day 'Warrumbungles Dark Sky Adventure' – from \$2,220**

Venture past the Blue Mountains to the forested and artisanal heart of New South Wales. This trip includes produce tastings, wilderness walks, visits to The Dish observatory and the Three Sisters lookout, and local insight into First Nations cultures in the area.

**\* Six-day 'Margaret River & Albany Adventure' – from \$2,945**

Taste wines, cheese and chocolate in the epicurean Margaret River region, spend a night surrounded by some of Australia's animal treasures at Donnelly River Village and get to know the southern coast with wildlife and wilderness experiences in and around Albany.

**\* Five-day 'Queensland Hinterland Adventure' – from \$2,305**

Make your way to the hinterland of southern Queensland where ancient World Heritage rainforest, tens of thousands of years of Indigenous stories and culture, and small community hospitality make for an Australian getaway full of food, beaches, walks, culture and nature experiences.

**\* Five-day 'Australia: Daintree Family Holiday' – from \$2,285**

This family-focused trip takes you into the heart of the land the Kuku Yalanji people have called home for 50,000 years, into the complex ecosystem of the forest and deserted white-sand beaches.

Learn about hunting native plants from a First Nations guide, encounter crocodiles and colourful birds on a cruise through mangrove thickets and walk under heavy green canopy in Mossman Gorge.

**\* Five-day 'Victoria's Great South West Walk' – from \$1,995**

Discover the dramatic scenery of Victoria's South West, from rocky sea cliffs to remote bushland. With sandy white beaches and an abundance of wildlife, travellers will discover why it is one of the state's most underrated regions.





# Campaign urges Vics to keep it local

A NEW tourism marketing campaign has been launched encouraging Victorians to take a break in their home state to support the local tourism industry.

The multi-million dollar campaign will promote both Melbourne and regional Victoria. Launched by Visit Victoria, it will be rolled out across television, print, radio, digital and social media channels, supported

by public relations and industry partnerships.

Aimed first and foremost at Victorians, the campaign will also target visitors from bordering regions of New South Wales and South Australia once practical.

The initiative showcases the creativity, culture and beauty of Victoria through its people and encourages locals to take a 'new view' of the state.

Each element of the campaign connects to the notion of 'Staying close' – (travelling within Victoria) and the opportunities to 'go further' (discovering the unexplored, inspiring ourselves and experiencing a truly unique adventure).

The campaign also showcases Victorian makers and creators in some of the regions hit hardest by the summer bushfires and global pandemic, including Gippsland and the High Country.

"Our campaign tells the stories of the products and experiences that exist within our borders and we trust it will inspire Victorians to make some new discoveries," said Brendan McClements, CEO Visit Victoria.

■ [visitvictoria.com](http://visitvictoria.com)



## IT'S THE REAL DEAL

VISIT SUNSHINE Coast (VSC) has unveiled 'For real' as the destination's new brand, following the launch of a successful campaign by the same name.

The VSC team shared the news with more than 240 members at the Annual General Meeting and end of year networking celebration at the new Night Quarter venue on the Sunshine Coast.

"The new branding segues from our previous 'naturally refreshing' tagline, which has served us well for the past 10 years but our research showed was no longer setting us apart in the marketplace," said Craig Davidson, VSC Interim CEO.

"Instead, we recognised the increasing importance of authenticity and nature in people's travel choices, and the new 'For real' brand resonated strongly with travellers.

"For real will be instrumental in driving VSC's marketing activities into the next decade as we position the Sunshine Coast as one of Australia's most desired, premium destinations for families, couples, groups and business events."

■ [visitsunshinecoastforreal.com](http://visitsunshinecoastforreal.com)

## IN BRIEF///

*National Geographic Travel* has nominated Lord Howe Island among its picks for the top 25 travel destinations for 2021 in its 'Best of the World' list.

Inclusion in the prestigious list is a boost for the tiny World Heritage-listed island, which only reopened in October following a seven month closure due to the global pandemic.

Lord Howe shares the honour with some of the world's most remote and remarkable destinations, from Cerrado in Brazil and Yellowknife in Canada to Hortobágy in Hungary and Alonissos in Greece.



## GET READY TO RETREAT AGAIN

LIZARD ISLAND will reopen for guests on December 14 following a nine-month closure due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Situated on the World Heritage-listed Great Barrier Reef, the property is regarded as one of Australia's most idyllic tropical luxury island retreats.

With just 40 beach house-style suites catering to a small number of guests and more than 20 private beaches ready to be explored, an escape to Lizard Island promises plenty of space.

A raft of private and guided experiences can be enjoyed

with friends and family, on an exclusive basis if requested, including a private luxury boat charter for fishing, snorkelling and diving excursions on the reef.

"With plenty of fresh air, no crowds and fabulous dining, plus an exciting array of marine and land adventures from a cruise in a motorised dinghy to claim a private beach or a snorkel straight from the beach to explore the underwater Giant Clam Gardens, we think there's no better place for Australians to reclaim their love of travel," said Greg Magi, Executive Director of Parks & Resorts for Delaware North.

■ [lizardisland.com.au](http://lizardisland.com.au)



## WARM WELCOME FOR NEW MARKETPLACE

THE FIRST not-for-profit online marketplace for Australia's First Peoples tourism experiences and products has just been launched.

Welcome to Country (WtC) was unveiled on December 2 and the official launch ceremony will be followed by 17 online cultural, art and travel events that will run until December 8.

The primary objective of WtC is to empower Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Tourism operators and communities by creating sustainable economic and wellbeing outcomes through tourism and products.

"All Australians should be proud to live in a country with a culture which

is in the truest sense of the word, unique," said John Morse AM, former Australian Tourism CEO and Welcome to Country board member.

"At Welcome to Country, we want to encourage and assist local and international travellers, when they return to our shores, to explore aspects of Australia they may not have experienced before, to give them a true historic and authentic cultural connection.

"They can do that through Welcome to Country's easy-to-use, single booking platform."

There are nearly 90 bookable experiences already on the WtC

platform supplied by indigenous tourism operators, including indigenous art, cultural performances and talks, food gathering, dining and wining experiences, quad bikes and scuba diving.

"A First Nations' travel experience is much more than capturing a picture of ancient landscapes across our vast continent," said Rhoda Roberts AO, WtC board member and Aboriginal arts leader.

"There is also the depth of listening, witnessing the diversity of cultures, the mystery of rituals, foods, language song and story."

■ [welcometocountry.com](http://welcometocountry.com)



## AIR TODAY, SAFARI TOMORROW

PRIVATE AIR safaris seem to be the new black in Australian travel and Abercrombie & Kent are the latest company to offer this luxury experience.

Utilising a chartered Citation X, the world's fastest midsize jet, A&K have a selection of eight-day itineraries across the country.

"Aimed at exclusive groups of friends and family, these eight-day air safaris are for no more than eight guests each departure with journeys crossing state borders to combine the country's most scenic and cultural attractions," said Sujata Raman, Regional Managing Director Australia/Asia Pacific, A&K.

"Our journey designers will tailor each one, working with the travelling party to secure dates that suit. And should the exact route not meet the guest's needs then they will collaborate to design a bespoke journey that does."

Starting in Melbourne, the 'South Australia and Outback Queensland' itinerary includes the country's opal capital, Coober Pedy, where an underground mining exploration awaits. The trip ends in Hamilton Island at luxury resort qualia in the heart of the Whitsundays.

Other air safaris include 'Queensland and Western Australia' and 'Western Australia, South Australia and King Island'. There's also a golf-specific trip to Barnbougle in Tasmania.

Estimated pricing for each tour is \$25-34,000 per person twin share (based on eight guests travelling).

■ [abercrombiekent.com.au](http://abercrombiekent.com.au)



*The Marree Man in SA*

## HOME ON THE RANGE

FOLLOWING LAST month's announcement of its newest travel style, Private Jet Air Tours, APT has released full details of its range of 2021 Aussie itineraries.

Privately chartered aircraft have been selected for customised air touring, ensuring optimal passenger comfort while meeting local airport requirements.

On the nine-day 'Queensland Outback & Tropics by Private Jet' journey guests will visit the Qantas Founders Museum in Longreach, walk to 'The Tip', the northernmost point of mainland Australia at Cape York, and relax at Hamilton Island.

There are seven dates available from May to September 2021, starting at \$8,995 per person twin share with the option to start and end in either Sydney or Brisbane.

Guests can journey through the centre of Australia from Melbourne to Darwin on the seven-day 'Southern Ocean to Top End by Private Jet' trip.

Travellers will taste their way through Kangaroo Island's gourmet delights, explore Wilpena Pound on foot and see the Field of Light at Uluru. There are two departures in June and July 2021 with a starting price from \$6,695 per person twin share.

Guests can also see more of Australia by combining this journey with the 'West Coast and Kimberley Horizons by Private Jet' itinerary. APT also offers a 'Wonders of Tasmania by Private Jet' itinerary.

■ [aptouring.com.au](http://aptouring.com.au)



# The delightful dozen

The Maldives has just received the ‘World’s Leading Destination’ award at the World Travel Awards 2020. With its international borders now open, what better time to look at 12 must-do experiences in this Indian Ocean paradise.

## 1. FLY ABOVE THE ISLANDS

Witness the beauty of the island nation from above via a seaplane ride. The Maldives has the world’s largest seaplane fleet, which takes you from Velana International Airport in Malé to your island holiday destination.

Get a bird’s-eye view of lagoons, islands and sandbanks scattered across the deep blue ocean. This could be one of the most incredible plane rides you will ever experience.

## 2. ENJOY A FLOATING BREAKFAST

Maldivian resorts love an innovative dining concept. Imagine yourself in the private pool of your overwater villa with a large floating tray filled with delicious breakfast foods, coupled with views of the Indian Ocean in the background.

There are a number of luxury resorts that offer this spread, including the Ayada Maldives and the Sun Siyam Iru Veli Maldives.

## 3. LIVE LIKE A LOCAL

Aside from luxury resorts and overwater bungalows, the Maldives has one of the most unique and authentic cultures in the world.

Venture to one of the many local islands and get to know the friendly residents. Join their laid-back lifestyle and play football with the children, enjoy a home-cooked meal or simply just sit on the beach and watch the sun set.

Secret Paradise offers a range of guided tours that are educational, sustainable and unforgettable.

## 4. STAY IN AN OVER-WATER BUNGALOW

Perched over crystal clear blue waters with boardwalks and thatched roofs, over-water bungalows are the ultimate source of luxury and privacy.

With the one-island, one-resort concept in mind, visitors are guaranteed a romantic holiday in complete seclusion.

Some of the most lavish over-water bungalows include Soneva Jani’s Water Retreat, which comes equipped with a retractable roof, private pool, open-air bathroom and a water slide.

The Muraka at the Conrad Maldives boasts an infinity pool, a private butler, private jets skies and three bedrooms – one of which is submerged five metres below sea level for the ultimate underwater sleeping experience.

## 5. SWIM WITH THE FISHES

The Maldives is one of the best countries in the world for swimming, snorkelling and diving. You can snorkel at a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve with manta rays, nurse sharks, turtles and even whale sharks.

Bar Atoll and Ari Atoll are the best locations for this memorable experience, where you will find a wide range of marine life.

## 6. DINE UNDERWATER

Exceptional dining experiences await under the sea amid vivid views of coral gardens, blue water and marine life.

The Maldives has several underwater dining options, including 5.8 Undersea Restaurant – the world’s largest all-glass underwater restaurant – and Subsix, submerged off a private island 500 metres from Niyama’s main island.

## 7. BOOK A TREEHOUSE ADVENTURE

Looking for a unique adventure or an escape among the trees? Book yourself a resort with a luxury treehouse villa.

Amilla Maldives offers a treetop pool villa which boasts two bedrooms, an outdoor rain shower, private freshwater pool and wine cellar – all sitting 12 metres above the ground among the palm trees.

## 8. STAY IN A BEACH BUBBLE TENT

A luxury 'glamping' concept, beach bubble tents provide a whole new meaning to sleeping under the stars.

The stylish Finolhu on Baa Atoll was the first resort in the Maldives to offer this type of experience, which includes a private butler and chef, four-poster bed, luxurious bathroom and an exclusive beach barbeque and breakfast.

The best part about the Beach Bubble experience is that the tent is nestled in a secluded spot along a 1.5km sandbank, ensuring the ultimate socially-distanced holiday.

## 9. SUNSET FISHING EXCURSION

With more than 2,000 species of fish, the Maldives is one of the world's top destinations for sustainable angling excursions.

One stand-out experience to try is sunset fishing, which is not only a fun activity for anglers, but also for those wanting to watch the skies turn into shades of pink and orange.

Como Cocoa Island offers guests the chance to catch their own fish at sunset, which can be taken back to the resort and cooked by its chefs for the freshest of seafood dinners.

## 10. REPLENISH AND CONSERVE CORAL

Help the Maldives save and preserve its underwater beauty by planting coral during your next stay. Many resorts have programs available for guests to help rejuvenate and restore reefs affected by coral bleaching.

For instance, Anantara Veli Maldives Resort gives guests the opportunity to join their reef regeneration project by adopting coral and planting it on the reef with instruction from its resident marine biologist.

## 11. EXPERIENCE ILLUMINATED WATERS

Have you ever walked along the seashore at night and seen it completely lit up like stars in the sky? Caused by bioluminescent planktons,



*The Finolhu bubble tent*

this phenomenon is only found in a few places in the world.

The best time to witness a glowing beach in the Maldives is mid-summer through to winter, with Vaadhoo Island on Raa Atoll being one of the best places to see it. Other resorts include the Farrufushi Maldives and You & Me by Cocoon.

## 12. WATCH MOVIES UNDER THE STARS

Cinefushi at Constance Moofushi gives travellers the chance to watch a film under the stars on the beach. Choose your film from a selection of more than 100 to watch on a private screen.

Lie back on loungers and enjoy a unique luxury cinema experience complete with popcorn, ice cream, canapés and sparkling wine.

■ [visitmaldives.com/en](http://visitmaldives.com/en)

*Subsix at Niyama*





# HOW SMART ARE YOU?

Our popular *Traveltease* quiz runs every week on our website, but we thought we'd give everyone a chance to see how much they know about travel. Can you get the correct answers without Google?

1. Mount Hutt is a ski field in which country?

- a. Canada
- b. New Zealand
- c. Australia
- d. Japan

2. In which Italian city would you find the Ponte Vecchio?

- a. Venice
- b. Milan
- c. Florence
- d. Rome

3. In which country did Viking start its first river cruise?

- a. Russia
- b. France
- c. Portugal
- d. Germany

4. In which country will you find Chichen Itza?

- a. Mexico
- b. Bolivia
- c. Chile
- d. Argentina

5. What is the largest planet in our solar system?

- a. Earth
- b. Mars
- c. Venus
- d. Jupiter

6. What is the capital of Jamaica?

- a. Nassau
- b. Port-au-Prince
- c. Kingston
- d. Havana

7. What is the second largest city on the South Island of New Zealand?

- a. Christchurch
- b. Invercargill
- c. Dunedin
- d. Queenstown

8. The Cubs and the White Sox are baseball teams in which American city?

- a. New York
- b. Washington
- c. Chicago
- d. Los Angeles



8

5





9

9. If you have a wallet full of dram, what country are you in?

- a. Belarus
- b. Armenia
- c. Georgia
- d. Somalia

10. Which region of Romania is associated with Count Dracula?

- a. Wallachia
- b. Dobruja
- c. Moldovia
- d. Transylvania

11. What is the capital of Macedonia?

- a. Skopje
- b. Ohrid
- c. Bitola
- d. Prilep

12. What is the highest waterfall in the world?

- a. Angel Falls, Venezuela
- b. Tugela Falls, South Africa
- c. Yumbilla, Peru
- d. Olo'upena, Hawaii



12



13

13. Where is this famous archaeological site?

- a. Chichen Itza
- b. Petra
- c. Moche
- d. Teotihuacan

14. What is the name of the prison situated on an island in San Francisco?

- a. Alcatraz
- b. Sing Sing
- c. Leavenworth
- d. Polunsky

15. Famous English writer Beatrix Potter was associated with which region of the UK?

- a. The Peak District
- b. The Yorkshire Moors
- c. The Lake District
- d. The Cotswolds

For more quiz action, head to our website [www.traveltalkmag.com.au](http://www.traveltalkmag.com.au) or look out for *Traveltease* every Thursday.

ANSWERS: 1b, 2c, 3a, 4a, 5d, 6c, 7c, 8c, 9b, 10d, 11a, 12a, 13b, 14a, 15c.



*Tian Tan Buddha, Hong Kong*