

Australia's favourite travel news magazine

Traveltalk

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DOMESTIC TRAVEL

Top spots around Australia

SKYTALK

How airlines will survive COVID-19

GOING SOLO

Travel tips for all the single ladies

Plus: How to invite an elephant to your next meeting!

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COVER IMAGE:
An emu laying eggs at night by Lachlan Dodds-Watson. Picture courtesy Parrtjima 2020

Money's too tight to mention

AS THIS issue goes 'live', the entire Australian travel industry is holding its collective breath.

The Federal Budget is imminent. And it's no over exaggeration to say that what it contains could decide the future of this industry as we know it.

The Australian Federation of Travel Agents has been steadfastly lobbying the government for a \$125 million 'Travel Agent Support Package' as well as a range of business relief measures.

Agents have also been active, writing to and meeting with their local MPs to push their case. All we can do now is wait, hope and keep as many parts of our anatomies crossed as is humanly possible.

But as Australia enters its first recession in almost 30 years, will the government be able to pull yet another financial rabbit out of their COVID-battered hat?

According to Treasurer Josh Frydenberg, this country is facing a deficit of more than \$281 billion, the highest since the Second World War. It could take years for the economy to recover from the financial meltdown caused by coronavirus.

JobKeeper has provided a lifeline to many but it only goes so far and can only last so long. (One travel agent I spoke to recently told me she was actually using most of her JK payments to reimburse clients).

Tax cuts, changes to super, a boost for pensioners and young people have all been flagged in the budget, but nothing has been said about the travel industry, which stands to lose a staggering \$55 billion this year.

Interestingly, a highly-respected journalist mused recently that the million-or-so people who work in our travel industry could justifiably feel 'betrayed' by the general public, who have seemingly abandoned them.

He argued that tradies, farmers and coal workers were considered more important and that travel agents should, in effect, 'get a real job'.

Hopefully this isn't the feeling in Canberra, who know all too well the power tourism has to boost the country's coffers when times are good. In 2019, tourism in Australia contributed \$60.8 billion to the economy, more than three per cent of the national GDP.

Of course, that figure included a sizeable chunk of revenue from overseas visitors and that particular ship won't be sailing for some time.

Sadly, domestic travel alone is unlikely to be enough to keep the industry afloat. Countries such as Thailand have already found this out and we need travel bubbles to New Zealand and, potentially, Singapore and the Pacific Islands to open up sooner rather than later.

But as State borders finally start to creak open and optimism slowly returns, so will the innate desire in every Australian to travel...somewhere!

It is now up to our elected representatives to make sure there's a travel industry left standing to service that need. Over to you, Canberra.

GOING BUSH WITH THE SWISS

SWITZERLAND TOURISM are organising a series of bushwalks for those in the travel trade.

Walks will take place every Thursday from October 1 through to November 5 in Greater Sydney. Locations visited include the nature track at Wentworth Falls in the Blue Mountains, the Harold Reid Foreshore track and Towlers Bay trail.

Co-sponsored by SWISS International Airlines and Victorinox, each participant will receive a personal backpack as well as a typical Swiss picnic.

With only 10 agents allowed per walk, it is 'first in, best dressed' for those wishing to attend.

Participants should bring sunscreen and sun protection, adequate hiking shoes and a personal water bottle. Hand sanitiser and face masks will be provided if desired.

■ For more information, head to: corner.stnet.ch/trade-au



Planting the seed of support

GREEN FINGERED agents have received a gift of plants in a joint gesture from Etihad Airways and the Department of Culture and Tourism Abu Dhabi.

More than 200 plants with the message "Even in the toughest times, we'll grow stronger together", were sent to 200 agents in Sydney and Brisbane. Agents in Melbourne will receive a similar gesture once restrictions are lifted.

"In these times, when everyone is feeling uncertain, we sought to reach out to our travel agents, to show we care and to say we stand with them," said Jennifer Gaskin, Country Manager for Abu Dhabi.

■ visitabudhabi.ae



AGENTS ARE being offered the chance to win one of 150 Amazon digital gift cards valued at \$50 each.

The promotion is being run by The Korea Tourism Organization (KTO), which has created a South Korea Travel Specialist ANZ online training program.

There are 10 learning units to complete, each containing images, videos and information on South Korea. Topics cover the country's response to COVID-19, special travel themes, travel essentials and then a final exam and survey.

The learning modules have to be completed by October 31. Full instructions on the program are detailed in the introduction video on the site.

The first 150 registrants of the South Korea Travel Specialist (ANZ) Facebook Group will receive a Korea travel kit and tumbler. The first 150 agents to complete the training will receive a \$50 Amazon digital gift card.

All agents who complete the training will receive a Certificate of Completion and will have exclusive access to future invitations for familiarisation trips to South Korea or local events.

■ For more information on how to participate contact melanie@visitkorea.org.au

Epic walk achieves its sole purpose

AFTER A mammoth 81 days on foot, James McAlloon has completed his 'Footsteps For Food' charity quest.

McAlloon, Chimu Adventures' QLD Relationship Manager, took his final steps to the base of Uluru on September 19, completing 3,460 kilometres from the Sunshine Coast to the iconic red rock.

The charity trek raised more than \$36,000 for communities in South America who are struggling through the loss of income from tourists due to COVID-19. This equates to food for more than 900 families.

"It wasn't always an easy trek and there were many challenges to overcome, including border closures which forced us to change the original destination," said James.

"Despite this we accomplished more than I ever could have hoped for, both personally and in the amount of funds we were able to raise.

"It just goes to show that if you



Heroic effort: James McAlloon nears the finish line of his charity walk

keep moving, accept the reality and innovate as you go, the end result could be better than you ever imagined. It was for me."

Chad Carey, Chimu's co-founder, flew to the Northern Territory to join James at the end of his journey.

"James really is a true adventurer and a modest one to boot. It means the world to me that we have people at Chimu like James, who are willing to risk life and limb to help others in need. I couldn't be more proud of him," said Chad.

"The mind boggles and how he had the motivation to do it day in and out for so many months. Through thunderstorms, searing heat, driving headwinds. Getting past wild animals and becoming nonchalant about road

trains zipping past him. Most mere mortals wouldn't have got far.

"It's so heart-warming to see what this means to people in South America and their admiration for what James has done just to help them.

"It's exactly the kind of glue that we need to keep our travel industry together at the moment, as we are separated by oceans and COVID-19 restrictions."

The team at Chimu will now work on getting the remaining funds to their partners in South America through their not-for-profit charity the MAD project. These funds will buy food and hygiene supplies for those most in need.

■ chimoadventures.com/en-au/footstepsforfood

UP FOR THE CUP

TRAVEL COUNSELLORS have just concluded a fun event designed to encourage community engagement and lift the spirits of COVID-affected consultants.

The first 'TC Community Cup' was a two-week initiative involving activities and challenges in groups, each run by a team leader.

Held virtually, teams selected two activities each week to complete together, such as sharing favourite cocktail recipes, hosting themed video calls, sharing hobbies and skills, and 'cook-alongs' with travel-inspired recipes.



Teams shared pre-recorded videos and photos of their activities on the weekly digital 'TCTV' programme, which saw participants across Australia enjoy an afternoon of shared laughter and enjoyment.

"Launching a fun challenge like the TC Community Cup gives our agents the opportunity to connect with their fellow Travel Counsellors and engage in activities for a well-needed laugh," said Kaylene Shuttlewood, Regional Managing Director.

■ travelcounsellors.com.au

The travel treats money just can buy

Here, luxury travel agents from around the world reveal some of the outrageous requests they've received from their super-rich clients.

FROM DINNER with a celebrity chef to penguins in your hotel room, it seems there are no limits for the wealthy when it comes to luxury travel requests.

Asia travel specialists Remote Lands helped a family buy all 12 first class seats on a Korean Air flight so they could essentially fly privately. The cost? Around \$27,000 per seat.

In Iceland, luxury adventure travel company Black Tomato helped organise a proposal involving a diamond ring inside an ice cave.

The same company also arranged for a Hollywood cinematographer to film a family on a six-week journey through Indonesia, on a trip worth more than \$900,000.

"The only reason any of these things are possible is that we've got a fantastic network of fixers around the world, who know us and the types of experiences we like to provide," Tom Marchant, Black Tomato co-founder, told *CNN*.

Luxury concierge service Element Lifestyle once surprised some clients with three penguins in their San Diego hotel suite.

"When we learned that [the girlfriend] loved penguins, it sparked an idea," Michael Albanese, Element Lifestyle founder, told *CNN*.

"Can we hire an animal wrangler? Can we get the hotel onboard? We started making calls and it came together pretty easily."

The same company also arranged for a family of six to view the normally bustling Sistine Chapel alone – at a cost of around \$100,000.

Element Lifestyle, whose customers spend around \$200,000-\$350,000 per two-week trip, have also created treasure hunts around Europe with a theme song written and performed by a famous recording artist.

Elsewhere, the travel firm arranged a private eight-course dinner with American celebrity chef Eric Ripert, who

took nine months to agree to the event.

"It wasn't even a milestone or a birthday or anything," Albanese said. "The client's wife just loves Eric Ripert, so this was a dream dinner.

"We also hired the sommelier from French Laundry to suggest wine pairings, and he found this port on a shipwreck that was older than Abraham Lincoln. It was easily a \$400,000 dinner."

But it's not always about utter luxury. Black Tomato once helped a Canadian philanthropist teach English at a school in a slum in India to give back, as well as experience a meaningful visit to Hiroshima, Japan.

In an age of social distancing, other uber-luxury trips have involved private glamping in Peru's Sacred Valley (complete with private train ride and fireworks display), a pop-up luxury camp in a part of southern New Zealand only accessible by helicopter and high-end yacht trips and private home and island rentals.

■ *What's the most bizarre or luxurious request you've had to accommodate for a client? E-mail us at editorial@traveltalkmag.com.au*

Le Commandant Charcot. Picture courtesy PONANT

Take a bite out of PONANT

FOLLOWING ON from its recently announced online portal for agents, PONANT have released a series of bite-sized 10-minute webinars.

The PONANT 10 has been specifically designed to provide comprehensive background on the company, including a focus on key destinations, fleet, expeditions and commitment to sustainability.

Topics include:

The PONANT Fleet – The modern fleet of 11 ships provides guests with immersive experiences accessing some of the most remote areas of the planet.

Life Onboard – Modern technologies, relaxed ambiance and PONANT's signature French inspired luxury and service.

The Kimberley – Highlights the power of the tides, exceptional wildlife, geology and indigenous culture.

The Sub Antarctic Islands – Some

of the most rarely visited islands on the planet teeming with wildlife.

Le Commandant Charcot – The new jewel in the fleet and the future of polar exploration including voyages in luxury to the North Pole.

Antarctica – Discover the lure of Antarctica and why PONANT carries more guests to the polar regions than anyone else.

Yacht cruising – Explore hidden harbours and tiny coves, seeing the heart of a destination from aboard a luxury yacht

NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC & PONANT EXPEDITIONS – A partnership built on common values: a spirit of adventure, commitment to environment and a thirst for exploring.

Sustainability – A passion and abiding commitment to responsible tourism including preserving the oceans, people and polar regions.

Small ship cruising – Enhance your expertise and discover the benefits to your business of the fastest genre in the cruise industry.

"The PONANT sales team have created this series of 10 short webinars to assist our partners obtain the latest information about PONANT via easy and convenient access on our Pro portal," said Deb Corbett, PONANT General Manager Sales & Marketing Asia Pacific.

"Available exclusively for the trade and our partners, these convenient easy grabs will help brush up on knowledge to provide confidence or reference when responding to clients' needs."

In other news, the company has received top billing by environmental association NABU for environmental climate and environmental measures in a comprehensive survey of cruise lines.

■ pro-au.ponant.com

HANDS ACROSS THE OCEANIA

OCEANIA CRUISES has launched a new online ecosystem delivering a one-stop shop for trade partners.

Oceania Trade Connect integrates the company's portfolio of trade support initiatives with all the tools, insights and information needed to learn about, promote and sell their cruises successfully – and be rewarded for it.

Eligible travel agents in Australia will receive \$20 in rewards points for signing up to the platform, as well as 10 CLIA accredited points for completing the course.

"The current climate has really demonstrated the value of true partnership," said Jason Worth, Vice President Australia and New Zealand for Oceania Cruises.

"We hope that Oceania Trade Connect provides our valued trade partners with as much support as possible during this time."

■ oceaniatradeconnect.com



From left: TravelManagers Heather Taylor, Leanne Pearman and Lyndy Burston are enjoying a new job opportunity

Tasting a fresh role

MANY TRAVEL professionals whose careers have been impacted by COVID-19 have been forced to apply their skills to new work opportunities in order to protect their livelihoods.

Sometimes these openings come from unexpected places, as was the case for a group of personal travel managers (PTMs) recently.

A partner supplier alerted the company's National Partnership Office (NPO) to a HR firm seeking home-based contact centre staff.

A quick heads-up to the local network, a flurry of applications, a round of interviews and seven PTMs from Victoria were being offered roles within the call centre team.

They were hired to provide support and advice to locally-based businesses on anything from COVID-related government grants to understanding the rules of running their businesses during the lockdown.

Heather Taylor, who is TravelManagers' representative for Mornington, said her experience with the company held her in good stead for the new challenge.

"My listening skills together with providing clear and concise communication that have been fine-tuned over my years as a PTM were important, as was my experience

in being disciplined in working autonomously to seek out the correct information and ensuring the caller had a clear understanding.

"This job opportunity was not something I expected from NPO, but am certainly grateful and do appreciate the commitment that results in this level of support at such a stressful and difficult time for everyone, including NPO."

“Being the tight-knit family that we are, it feels a bit like home.”

Lyndy Burston, who is TravelManagers' representative for Werribee, has just completed her first month in her new role and is enjoying the fresh challenge.

"I have very been grateful for the chance to help out my fellow Victorians during these uncertain times.

"The work has kept me occupied and gives me a sense of purpose – I actually feel like I am doing my bit for the community by helping these people."

The new work was not without its challenges. From day one, the pressure was on to respond to an

immense volume of calls – the call centre team of 420 temporary staff similarly impacted by COVID dealt with more than 18,000 calls in their first four days.

And the seven PTMs found themselves taking customer calls just 48 hours after finding out about the roles.

"We were definitely thrown in the deep end, but being able to

empathise and relate with businesses that are doing it tough, and being able to handle the pressure created by such an immense number of calls over the first couple of weeks, made a big difference," said Jodie Quigley, TravelManagers' representative for Sunbury.

As well as providing some welcome income, the PTMs also welcomed the chance to work with their colleagues.

"Being the tight-knit family that we are, it feels a bit like home," said Burston. "We have even formed a group chat so that we can assist each other – just like we do as PTMs!"

■ travelmanagers.com.au

Priceless in Seattle

A NEW dedicated training program and resource centre is offering Aussie travel agents the chance to win a \$100 Mastercard gift card.

Launched by the Port of Seattle, the initiative helps consultants brush up on their knowledge of the premier North America cruise port destination.

Running until the end of December, CLIA member agents who complete the program will be entered into a fortnightly draw to win a gift card. The first winner was Selena Luscombe from Helloworld Parkdale in Victoria and there are nine more chances to win.

"We're confident in the return of Australasian cruisers as the industry bounces back in 2021 and look forward to welcoming more clients on pre- and post-cruise itineraries," said Patti Denny, International Tourism Manager at the Port of Seattle.

■ clia.getlearnworlds.com

How to book yourself a prize

FIVE LUCKY agents have the chance to win a cruise in a new booking incentive and giveaway from Norwegian Cruise Line (NCL).

The promotion celebrates *Norwegian Spirit's* inaugural local season, which sees her heading Down Under for the first time in December 2021.

Every deposited booking made before November 4 on any Australia and New Zealand *Norwegian Spirit* sailing departing from Sydney or Auckland will receive a \$100 gift card.

In addition, the five agents who sell the most cruises will also win an oceanview stateroom for two so they can experience *Spirit* first-hand.

Meanwhile agents also have the opportunity to win prizes in a new health and wellbeing initiative from NCL.

Utilising a free mobile phone app, participants will embark on a walking adventure while journeying around an interactive map of the world, reaching virtual global landmarks and completing weekly challenges.

'NCL's Walk for Wellness' runs from October 6 to 31 and more than 500 registrations were received in the first week. Monthly challenges will offer prizes such as Fitbits and gift cards.

■ To register, head to: trade.ncl.com/1/162131/2020-09-15/fhstsw

MAGIC MOMENTS

THE VANUATU Tourism Office (VTO) has launched a webinar series to give agents a deeper insight into the islands.

Entitled 'Vanuatu Moments', the webinars will highlight the new and most well-loved local experiences, giving agents the tools to best sell the destination once international travel resumes.

Forthcoming webinars include: **October 13:** Espiritu Santo and the Champagne Coast: an in-depth guide to five experiences on Vanuatu's largest island, including visits to the famous blue holes and Champagne Beach.

October 20: Tanna and the Outer Islands: a recap of the key cultural and active experiences available on Tanna and the outer islands, including Pentecost, Ambrym, Malekula and the Banks.

The webinar will include information on how to coordinate a visit to a local village and a tour of the world's most accessible volcano, Mount Yasur, as well as top tips for getting to the outer islands and info on when to visit for events like the renowned 'Nagol' land diving on Pentecost. Each session will take place at 12pm (AEST).

■ vanuatuspecialists.com



NO MASKING THIS ABOUT FACE

TRAVEL CONSULTANT Fiona Oliver is drawing on some old skills to open up a potential new revenue stream.

Fiona, owner of Travel & Cruise Castlemaine in Victoria, previously owned a sports store and produced trophies and branded merchandise for local teams.

With her agency essentially in a COVID-induced holding pattern, the Travellers Choice member has started producing branded face masks for local businesses and travel companies.

"So far we've produced face masks that are branded with Travel & Cruise Castlemaine and Travellers Choice, and I'm now approaching local businesses to see if they are interested," she said.

"Even when international borders open up again, I think face masks are going to be an essential item for travellers.

"I've no doubt there will be plenty of other travel agents, tour operators and other suppliers who will also want to promote their companies with branded face masks, and we are happy to provide them."

Along with face masks, Fiona can produce branded luggage tags, key rings, wine carriers and stubby holders.

For more information, e-mail fiona@castlemainetravel.com.au

IN BRIEF///

THE DREAM Cruises Agent Portal has just been unveiled to help consultants sell, promote and learn about this growing brand.

It provides a gateway to brochures and deck plans, details of current promotions, training and webinars, plus reservations and sales support.

The marketing and resource library has images and video galleries, along with brand assets and additional marketing support.

■ dreamcruisesagents.com.au



Trunk call puts Thai elephants in the Zoom

A WELFARE charity has launched a service that stars elephants in Zoom video calls live from their natural habitat in the jungles of Northern Thailand.

The initiative is a partnership between The Human Elephant Learning Programs Foundation (H-ELP) and the Golden Triangle Asian Elephant Foundation (GTAEF)

During the Zoom video call, participants can virtually participate in unique and once-in-a-lifetime elephant experiences.

These include the 'Walking With Giants' signature activity that provides an optimum way of getting to know the elephants and develop a deeper emotional connection with them.

The almost total disappearance of tourism throughout Thailand due to COVID-19 continues to have a negative effect on the Kingdom's 3,800-odd captive elephants. The pandemic has reportedly forced at least 85 elephant camps in Northern Thailand to close.

As a result, GTAEF has expanded its work to meet the challenge, including lending a helping hand and

resources to Thailand's traditional elephant owning and wild elephant communities.

All funds raised through people or organisations booking elephants to partake in their video conferencing will be shared by H-ELP and GTAEF to care for Asian elephants.

Rates start from \$US75 (approx. \$AU100) to bring elephants in on a Zoom video call for 10 minutes. For \$US145 (approx. \$AU200), callers also get a two-minute introduction to their three ton video call companions and a three-minute question and answer session conducted by one of the elephant experts at GTAEF.

H-ELP is an Australian organisation that aims to improve the welfare of working elephants in Asia through the systematic application of humane, evidence-based training initiatives, education and engagement with local communities and relevant stakeholders.

Ms Marlee Horobin, Chairperson of H-ELP, said that Asian elephants are already endangered due to poaching and loss of habitat.

"The drying up of funds to support

domesticated elephants means there is a real risk many could starve, or their parts end up elsewhere in Asia for medicinal purposes.

"This is a chance for us to raise funds to prevent that and it also gives corporations and other organisations, including educational, the opportunity to incorporate corporate social responsibility into their Zoom calls as well."

Ms Horobin added that the idea by H-ELP to Zoom Asia's elephants into boardrooms and living rooms for a nominal donation could be a welcome respite for many.

"You can share the excitement of a couple of gentle giants joining your meeting knowing that, in so doing, you are helping those elephants and many like them get through this crisis for a better life."

The new initiative follows the success of the GTAEF's twice-daily livestreams of elephants enjoying their walks in the jungle and taking a mud bath in the Mekong River that garnered more than five million views.

■ h-elp.org; helpingelephants.org

Give your mate a break



who has gone to great lengths to create community, or an advocate for the travel industry throughout this difficult time.

The travel company will reward the four most deserving nominees with a future seven-night holiday for two at the all-inclusive Club Med resort in Asia of their choice.

Winners can choose from a stay at Club Med Bali, Indonesia, Club Med Bintan Island, Indonesia, Club Med Phuket, Thailand, Club Med Cherating Beach, Malaysia, Club Med Kani, Maldives or Club Med Kabira Beach, Japan.

Each deserving nominee will be announced at the end of each week via the Club Med for Travel Agents Facebook page.

Nominators need to complete the form with nominees' details along with a written story submission. There's also an additional option to submit a video or image to support their testimonial via Facebook messenger.

■ clubmedta.com.au/training-tools-benefits/nominate-a-mate

IN A move that's sure to prompt a huge industry response, Club Med is offering agents the chance to nominate someone in desperate need of a holiday.

The new initiative, entitled 'Nominate a Mate', runs until October 30 and encourages travel industry professionals to put forward a colleague or peer.

Nominees could be someone who has experienced extraordinary challenges and adversity, someone



Awaroa Inlet on the Abel Tasman Coast Track



The Nydia Track in Marlborough. Photos courtesy Great Walks of New Zealand

TAKE A WALK ON THE KIWI SIDE

WORLD EXPEDITIONS has launched a new brand comprising of 21 self-guided and guided walks on New Zealand's South Island.

Great Walks of New Zealand is the adventure travel company's third Kiwi entity, joining the long established cycling brands, Adventure South and Trail Journeys.

"With a focus on affordability and flexibility, there are options for couples, small groups of friends and families," said Sue Badyari, CEO of World Expeditions.

"As we return to overseas travel,

whenever that may be, I think New Zealand will be a highly sought-after destination."

Itineraries include multi-day treks or shorter local hikes, offering native forests, lakes, rivers, rugged mountain peaks, deep gorges and vast valleys. Most of the tracks are well formed, easy to follow and are accessible from major towns with excellent accommodation and transport.

Among the tours is five bucket-list walks, including the Abel Tasman Coast Track, the Queen Charlotte Track, the Kepler Track, the Heaphy Track and the

Tuatapere Hump Ridge Track.

The latter promises an epic adventure traversing some of New Zealand's wildest landscapes. The walk passes through Fiordland National Park, ancient regenerating forest, Maori land and deserted coastlines.

"We registered the Great Walks of New Zealand domain name more than five years ago and we've been actively researching and developing the new range for the last 18 months," added Ms Badyari.

■ greatwalksofnewzealand.co.nz; worldexpeditions.com



Interest rate is steady for Japan

WENDY WU Tours has released its 2021/2022 Japan brochure featuring two new tours and cultural experiences.

"Despite the current market conditions, we are seeing exceptional interest in Japan," said Andrew Mulholland, Managing Director, Wendy Wu Tours Australia.

Unique to the company, 'Japan by Rail' is a fully-inclusive tour starting in Fukuoka and takes customers across three islands (Kyushu, Honshu and Hokkaido) travelling by efficient Shinkansen (bullet train) over three weeks.

Authentic experiences along the way include including fan painting, whisky tasting, a cooking experience on Miyajima Island and zen meditation at Nara-juku.

The company has also unveiled its first tours to the Middle East in 2021/22. Seven fully-inclusive Classic Tours cover Egypt, Jordan, Oman and Israel in the *Central Asia & Middle East* brochure. WW also have new tours to Georgia and Uzbekistan.

■ wendywutours.com.au



Get on track for savings

TRAVELMARVEL IS offering a range of early bird specials on its Great Rail Journeys for 2021.

Discounts of up to \$3,000 per couple are available on the selection of 32 itineraries.

Any bookings that combine 'European Gems' cruise and rail combinations can receive free return economy flights, inclusive of air taxes.

For additional savings, Travelmarvel has an early payment discount of up to \$1,000 per couple when locking trips in 10 months prior to departure. All offers are limited and available until sold out.

Many of the world's most well known trains and railways are featured in the program, which offers a selection of holidays across Europe, Asia, the U.S., New Zealand and Australia.

Tours include the world's slowest express train, the Glacier Express in Switzerland (pictured right), to the high speed bullet trains in Japan. Guests can also ride the Darjeeling Himalayan Railway, India's Toy Train and the West Highland Line in Scotland, whose Jacobite steam train starred as the Hogwarts Express in the Harry Potter films.

"We always receive fantastic feedback for our Great Rail Journeys program, especially for the fact that our itineraries are fully chaperoned," said Paddy Scott, Travelmarvel's Brand Manager.

"We take care of everything, enabling guests to sit back, relax and watch the world roll by."

■ travelmarvel.com.au



Red Bluff in Western Australia

ENJOY AN AUSSIE BACKYARD BONUS

AAT KINGS and sister company Inspiring Journeys have launched their 2021 – 2022 brochures, including two new domestic itineraries for each brand.

Guests can take advantage of a 10 per cent early bird discount on selected trips and a \$99 per person deposit offer with bookings made by November 16. This deal is valid for travel departures from April 1, 2021, to October 31, 2021.

The new trips include:

The Wildflower Wanderer. This seven-day Best Buys Guided Holiday features the dramatic beauty of Western Australia's wildflowers in full bloom.

See the must-visit wildflower hotspots of Perth's Kings Park botanical garden, Kalbarri National Park's Murchison River and the coastal town of Geraldton.

The WA experience is topped off with a visit to the Pinnacles before discovering the natural wonder of Hutt Lagoon, the famous pink lake.

Northern Territory Explorer. This 11-day Best Buys trip showcases the natural wonders, immersive cultural experiences and friendly locals of the Northern Territory.

Deep gorges, waterfalls and wildlife await guests in the Top End, along with the outback's unforgettable outdoor experiences and Indigenous culture. Clients will visit Uluru, Kata Tjuta, Kakadu and Katherine.

Flavours of South Australia. This five-day culinary discovery with Inspiring Journeys will connect clients to the makers, growers and passionate owners of South Australia's food scene.

As part of Inspiring Journey's commitment to supporting bushfire recovery in affected communities, this journey now includes #EmptyEsy movement elements, where guests are invited to purchase locally made goods to take home and enjoy.

The itinerary also complements South Australia's biggest food and wine festival.

Dark Mofo Long Weekend. This four-day trip with Inspiring Journeys will showcase Australia's number one winter festival, Dark Mofo in Tasmania's capital.

Guests will enjoy a community celebration of cooking with fire at the Winter Feast and take a tour through the after dark attractions on offer in Australia's southernmost city.

■ trade.aatkings.com



Brisbane

What most solo women want

ACCORDING TO travel industry studies, solo travel by women has grown in popularity year after year.

Hostelworld, an online hostel-booking platform, found in a 2018 study that bookings by solo female travellers increased by 45 per cent from 2015 to 2017, compared with a 40 per cent increase for men.

Budget Direct Travel Insurance wanted to identify which destinations currently hold the most appeal for women travelling solo.

Following an analysis of a sample of relevant Instagram posts, they discovered where in the world single women love travelling to most.

Budget Direct found London to be the favourite destination globally for solo women travellers, followed by New York, Paris, Singapore and Rome.

Barcelona, Los Angeles, Dubai, Gianyar (Bali) and Bangkok rounded out the top 10 hottest spots.

After NYC, the most popular cities to visit in the U.S. were Los Angeles, San Francisco, Las Vegas and Chicago, while Edinburgh, Manchester, Oxford and Brighton followed London as the favourite destinations in the UK.

When it came to countries, the U.S. was the easy winner (with 135,185 hits), with Italy, UK, Spain and India also proving popular among solo women travellers.

■ budgetdirect.com.au/blog/the-most-popular-female-solo-travel-destinations.html



Perth



Adelaide

Australia's top female solo travel spots are:

1. Sydney
2. Melbourne
3. Brisbane
4. Byron Bay, NSW
5. Perth
6. Bondi, NSW
7. Cairns
8. Gold Coast
9. Port Campbell, Victoria
10. Adelaide



Bondi



Keeping it in the family

INTREPID TRAVEL has launched new retreats for parents and children in response to a boom in family holidays.

The company reports that a quarter of the top 25 itineraries booked by its customers globally over the past three months have been family-themed tours, an increase of 12 per cent from the same period last year.

Currently, the top family trips booked globally are all based in Africa and Asia, including the 'South Africa Family Safari with Teenagers' and a family tour of Vietnam.

Australian families are also interested in adventures in Tanzania, Peru, Borneo and Sri Lanka.

"After months spent indoors away from friends and classmates, we've seen families are eager to get out and explore the world once it is safe to do so, and have a desire to reconnect with both nature and like-minded people," said Dyan Mckie, Intrepid's Family Product Manager.

The four new family retreats, based in Morocco, Turkey and England, will have groups immerse themselves in one location in handpicked

accommodation with nearby experiences.

This new tour style celebrates 'slow travel' and allows adventurers to engage with the surrounding communities away from the crowds and in a more controlled setting.

Each itinerary has been designed to benefit local communities affected by the pandemic, while also providing enriching activities for children and parents who have spent the majority of 2020 indoors due to COVID-19.

In Turkey, families will visit a sea turtle rescue centre – supported in part by donations from Intrepid travellers – to learn about conservation efforts and rehabilitation.

In Morocco, they'll break bread with a local Imazighen family in their village, getting an insight into daily life in the High Atlas region.

Each tour will operate under Intrepid's new Safe Travels health protocols, developed in partnership with the WTTC.

■ intrepidtravel.com/au/theme/family



Ouirgane in Morocco

NEW TOURS///

* 'Turkey Family Retreat' Fethiye

(Five days, from \$1,070 per person)

This retreat celebrates nature, wildlife and local cuisine. Visit a turtle rehabilitation centre and enjoy a hike through the mountainous terrain between Kayakoy to Oludeniz Beach. Take a traditional meze cooking class with locally foraged produce.

* 'Morocco Family Retreat' Ouirgane

(Four days, from \$605 per person)

The comforts of Amazigh (Berber) hospitality await on this retreat to Ouirgane on the edges of Mt. Toubkal National Park. Hike the hills through small villages and farms, hang out with the locals and try making authentic dishes.

* 'England Family Retreat' Cornwall

(Four days, from \$980 per person)

Explore England's southwest coast, enjoy a private yoga and wellness session and visit a small, family-run bakery that makes Cornish pasties the traditional way.

* 'England Family Retreat' Peak District

(Three days, from \$670 per person)

Exploring Britain's first national park, travellers will walk to the scenic villages of Bamford and Bakewell, along the banks of the River Derwent, passing farms, woods and cottages while stopping along the way to grab tea in a shop that supports, and is run by, the local community.



Coalcliff, NSW

Cool tool boosts Aussie tourism

TOURISM AUSTRALIA has created a new tool designed to make planning travel around the country easier.

Called the 'Australian COVID Travel Portal', the new resource combines safety information, travel restrictions and guidelines for the whole nation.

Importantly, it will feature the latest status on all state and territory borders along with travel restrictions, information on transport, accommodation, activities and experiences, and health and safety tips.

Both travellers and tourism operators will be able to use the centralised portal, with the tool

likely to be extended to international visitors once borders reopen.

Phillipa Harrison, Managing Director of Tourism Australia, said the new tool would help boost domestic tourism by instilling confidence in prospective holidaymakers.

"One of the significant changes that we've seen in consumer behaviour as a result of the COVID-19 outbreak is, unsurprisingly, a heightened awareness around health concerns, hygiene and physical distancing.

"As Australians begin to travel again, it is crucial that travellers feel confident to holiday safely, and

that tourism businesses and their communities are ready to welcome them warmly but also safely.

"We want travellers to know it's safe to travel and show how the Australian tourism industry is putting in place the highest standards and stringent COVID safe measures to ensure their wellbeing and safety at every point in the customer journey.

"The portal will provide up to date, practical information relating to all aspects of travel in the one place to help people better navigate all of the different COVID-19 restrictions."

■ australia.com/en/facts-and-planning

Xmas presents a staycation opportunity

AUSTRALIANS ARE set to holiday at home this Christmas with almost 40 per cent hoping to explore their own backyard over the festive holiday period.

A new study by global agency network INNOCEAN reveals overwhelming support for local travel with just one in 10 people able to get out and discover their surroundings in the past few months.

Six in 10 Australians also said it was travel they missed the most, followed by their social life and freedom (50 per cent), since the onset of the global pandemic.

Travel was the number one opportunity people would seek once COVID-19 was controlled.

"We're gearing up for Australia's biggest ever staycation



season – and with so many regions still reeling from the effects of drought and bushfires, let alone COVID-19, it's great news for the many tourism, accommodation and hospitality providers who have been doing it tough," said Karl Bates, INNOCEAN Head of Strategy.

The study, entitled *2020 Life in the Times of Covid*, revealed that 70 per cent of respondents stated their lives had been majorly disrupted socially, 50 per cent were feeling the impact financially and 35 per cent suffering a psychological impact over the past six months.

The survey was conducted between June and August with a sample size of 2,000 people aged 30 to 60 years old.

■ INNOCEAN.com.au



Wishing for a new holiday

NEW REASERCH has revealed the extent to which COVID-19 has changed the wish list of Australians desperate to travel.

With overseas trips ruled out for the foreseeable future, interest in local holidays is skyrocketing as domestic travel becomes the only way to satisfy our wanderlust.

According to travel site Agoda, the Gold Coast has usurped Bali as the most searched destination online by Australians.

The research showed that following the Queensland destination, our overall wish list for this year are Sydney, Melbourne, Bali, Margaret River, Sunshine Coast, Perth, Cairns, Bangkok and Phuket.

Only three domestic destinations featured on last year's list, compared to seven in 2020.

"While Agoda's search data has seen a shift toward domestic destinations as regulations are being eased for domestic travel, people are still dreaming about international travel adventures," said Tim Hughes, Vice President of Corporate Development, Agoda.

"What Agoda's data is showing us is there is still a hunger to travel, people are enjoying exploring their own countries whether alone, with family, or with friends.

"But most importantly, they still have hope that travel corridors will open later this year to some key

markets where COVID has been more contained."

Couples, family, group and solo travel demographics mirrored the shift in the overall category, with searches for local holidays dominating international vacations for the remainder of the year.

Across all of its markets, Agoda found Taiwan to be the most sought-after destination from June to December 2020, with the island state beating Thailand, Japan, Vietnam and South Korea to the top spot.

The U.S., Australia, Hong Kong, Malaysia and Indonesia completed the top 10 most searched for destinations on Agoda for the year.

■ agoda.com

Bring on the bubble

TOURISM BODIES have welcomed Prime Minister Scott Morrison's renewal of plans for a travel bubble between Australia and New Zealand.

Coupled with an uptick in the international arrival caps, the move provides much needed relief for business owners and workers in tourism who are desperate for good news.

"The bubble would provide up to an additional \$3.6 billion economic benefit to Australia at a time when dollars are greatly needed and would mean thousands of Australian and New Zealand families would be able to reunite," said John Hart,

Chair of Australian Chamber Tourism.

The lifting of the caps will also have direct benefit to hotels in cities housing people in quarantine.

Sydney hotel occupancy is currently at 27 per cent on average, while Adelaide and Brisbane are 38 and 42 per cent respectively compared to figures around 80 per cent last year.

"These pitiful rates are completely unsustainable, as is the fact that only 3,500 international visitors arrived in June compared to almost 800,000 in June last year," added Mr Hart.

■ australianchamber.com.au



Campaign heads into new territory

AUSSIERS ARE being encouraged to enjoy a summer holiday in the Northern Territory in a new \$5 million campaign.

The 'Never Before NT Summer Sale' is the biggest incentivised summer tourism initiative ever staged by the NT Government.

Partnering with the majority of Australian travel retailers, including Helloworld, Flight Centre and Holidays of Australia, the campaign offers an additional discount of up to \$1,000 on a Northern Territory holiday, allowing travellers to save on flights, accommodation, tours, attractions and hire vehicles.

The savings are based on a set discount of \$200 for every \$1,000 spent on a Northern Territory booking.

With the tourism industry heavily impacted by the global coronavirus pandemic and border restrictions, the initiative aims to drive visitation and capitalise on the NT's wide-open spaces, nature, wildlife, popular locations and its status as a COVID-free destination.

"Last year Aussies spent more than \$64 billion on overseas holidays," said

Tony Quarmby, Tourism NT Executive General Manager of Marketing.

"With international travel off the cards until at least next year, we're encouraging our friends to the east, west and down south to come and have the adventure of a lifetime here.

"Visitors often tell us that they feel 'more Australian' when in the Territory and there's no better time to support Australia and Australian businesses."

Attractions and activities include watching the sunrise over Uluru, hot air ballooning over the Red Centre, cruising along the rivers of Kakadu, discovering the Asian-influenced food scene in Darwin and experiencing tropical summer's electric storms.

The campaign will run until March 31, 2021. All offers are valid for bookings and travel during those dates.

"Summer in the Northern Territory is the opportunity all Australians have been waiting for – spectacular attractions, wide open spaces and an opportunity to explore the region at a once-in-a-lifetime low price."

■ northernterritory.com/summer-sale

SHAPING THE FUTURE OF TOURISM

A NEW global initiative has been unveiled designed to positively shape the future of tourism through a purpose-led community platform.

Industry stalwart Julie King is the driving force behind Bonailie, born from the devastation of COVID-19.

"It is an industry that I love and have operated in globally for 34 years," said Julie, Founder and CEO.

"We knew that things could no longer continue as they had done – it was now time to reshape our vision of the future of the tourism industry, for the better and play a bigger role.

"Our research highlighted the need for global collaboration in shaping that future – together."

Bonailie will deliver weekly engagement and collaboration through webinars, panels and the ability to connect with global sector partners and peers, provide growth indicators and showcase best practice and innovation.

It will produce monthly intelligence with market snapshots and insights and will facilitate access to learning programs for tourism industry leaders to execute 21st century business models.

"I see it as a hub for positive change that will unite the global tourism industry to collaborate for a common purpose – to drive best practice."

■ Bonailie.world



Julie King



The Pinnacles, WA

Package boosts regional recovery

TOURISM BODIES have welcomed the Federal Government's announcement of a Regional Tourism Recovery Package (RTRP).

The funding includes two measures – a \$50 million Regional Tourism Recovery initiative to assist businesses in regions heavily reliant on international tourism and \$200 million for a fifth round of the Building Better Regions Fund.

The RTRP will provide tailored support for nine regional tourism communities. The funding is being administered by Austrade and the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications.

"This fund will help address the great divide in tourism between the regions that have been able to capitalise on some intrastate visitation and those that have not," said John Hart, Executive Chair of Australian Chamber Tourism.

"Whilst tourism in every part of Australia has been decimated, some

regions have been particularly badly impacted by the 96 per cent reduction in international tourism and this support will help them rebuild and adapt their product."

Dr Jeremy Johnson AM, Chair of the Tourism Restart Taskforce, said the \$100 million of infrastructure spend for tourism would assist the regions to rebuild their visitor economy.

"There are many demands on the regions brought about by the change to servicing domestic markets in the short-term. This fund will help the regions to develop the infrastructure needed to do that."

While welcoming the support for regional tourism, Dr Johnson also pointed out the importance of backing in other areas.

"It also needs to be recognised that some of the greatest tourism impact of the COVID-19 response has been in our capital cities. Businesses and workers based in the cities will need support to recover at some stage as well."

■ australianchamber.com.au

MEETING PUSHES NEED FOR AID

THIRTY TRAVEL agencies have staged a meeting with the Health Minister to brief him on the industry's request for a \$125million financial support package.

Lee Midson, Managing Director of Mornington Travel in Victoria, arranged the meeting with MP Greg Hunt as part of AFTA's National Mobilisation Program.

Tom Manwaring, AFTA Chair, joined the agencies from the Flinders electorate to brief Minister Hunt on the critical need for financial aid ahead of the Federal Budget.

"From big travel brands to independents, we saw a diverse cross section of local travel agents come together today online to support each other and our cause," said Lee.

"Working together is the best way for us to navigate our way through the COVID-19 challenge.

"Minister Hunt understood the unique challenges facing travel agents and encouraged the industry to continue to engage with their local members and states."



Taking a liking to Viking savings

VIKING HAS announced the release of more than 150 new departures across its European river cruise program from March to November 2022.

In addition, the 'Explore The Viking Way' sale features

flight credits and savings of up to \$5,000 per couple on the company's most popular river, ocean and expedition cruises.

■ vikingcruises.com.au

Multiple 2022 departures have been released for the following itineraries:

- * The 10-day 'Portugal's River of Gold from Lisbon to Porto' via the Douro River. It is priced from \$4,795 per person, including savings of up to \$1,000 per couple plus up to \$1,000 flight credit per couple.
- * The 11-day 'Passage to Eastern Europe, from Budapest to Bucharest'. It is priced from \$4,695 per person, including savings of up to \$1,000 per couple.
- * The 13-day 'Waterways of the Tsars', a popular Russian discovery from St Petersburg to Moscow. It is priced from \$7,995 per person, including savings of up to \$1,000 per couple.
- * The 15-day 'Grand European Cruise' travelling from Amsterdam to Budapest. It is priced from \$5,995 per person, including savings of up to \$1,000 per couple plus flights included up to the value of \$3,600 per couple.
- * The 10-day 'Tulips & Windmills' discovery of the waterways of the Netherlands from Amsterdam to Amsterdam. It is priced from \$5,195 per person, including savings of up to \$1,000 per couple plus \$1,000 flight credit per couple.
- * The 8-day 'Rhine Getaway from Amsterdam to Basel' is priced from \$3,495 per person, including savings of up to \$1,000 per couple plus \$1,000 flight credit per couple.
- * The 10-day 'Danube Waltz from Budapest to Passau' cruising through Hungary, Slovakia, Austria and Germany. It is priced from \$3,495 per person, including savings of up to \$1,000 per couple plus \$1,000 flight credit per couple.

CEREMONY STEELS THE DEAL

SEABOURN HAS celebrated the commemorative steel cutting for its second ultra-luxury, purpose-built expedition ship.

The as yet unnamed ship is scheduled to launch in 2022, with sister ship *Seabourn Venture* slated to launch in 2021 with a first season of voyages during the Norwegian Winter, where guests may see the Northern Lights up close.

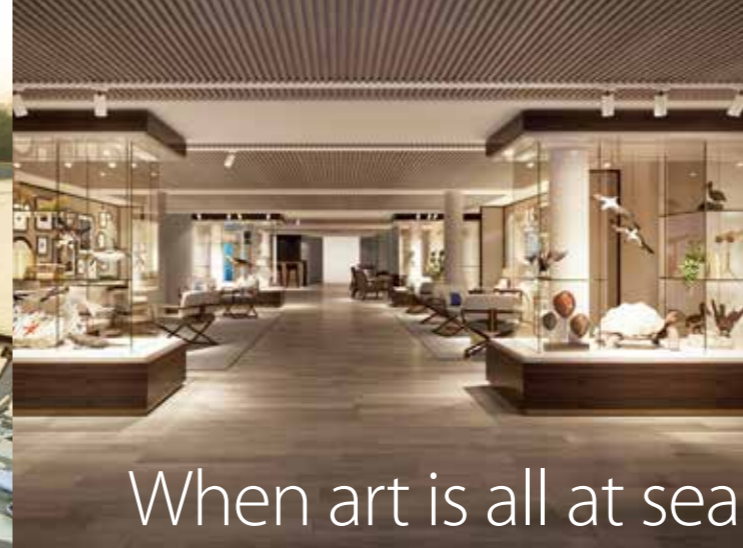
"With two brand new ultra-luxury expedition ships now under

construction, we are setting a new standard of luxury and adventure," said Josh Leibowitz, President of Seabourn.

"This milestone further underscores our commitment to the expedition travel category and I'm confident these ships will deliver extraordinary expedition experiences."

Each ship will feature 132 luxurious oceanfront veranda suites and two custom-built submarines.

■ seabourn.com



When art is all at sea

GUESTS SAILING aboard Silversea's latest ship will enjoy exhibits include framed artwork, sculptures, rare books, original artefacts and unusual objects.

Silver Origin's 195 art pieces comprise 122 framed artworks, 69 sculptures and four installations.

The all-suite, all-balcony, 100-guest ship will begin year-round voyages in the Galapagos archipelago later this year.

The art collection will also combine contemporary and historical pieces to communicate the rich history of travel in the Galapagos Archipelago, as well as the region's scientific significance and its distinctive natural beauty.

Various displays will provide context to the second voyage of Charles Darwin aboard the *HMS Beagle*, focus on the islands' unique wildlife or explore the theme of botany.

"We wanted to ensure that this collection displayed not only historical and traditional artworks, but also incorporated pieces such as watercolours, photographs and paintings of the Galapagos experience, cast from the eyes of contemporary artists and travellers," said Ally Millard, Creative Director at Peter Millard and Partners Ltd., a London-based art consultancy firm.

■ silversea.com



New Year in a new way

AFTER A year we'd all like to forget, welcome in 2021 on a five-night New Year's Eve cruise on the Murray River.

Visit historic Swan Reach and discover the town on a guided walking tour before stopping in at Swan Reach Museum (gold coin donation).

Experience the excitement of cruising through Lock 1, one of 13 along the river, at Blanchetown and enjoy a cellar door tasting and tour at Burk Salter Boutique Winery.

Learn about our history at the Ngaut Ngaut Aboriginal Reserve – one of Australia's most significant archaeological sites – and see ancient rock carvings.

The one-off New Year's cruise departs from Mannum on December 30 and returns January 4, 2021. Early booking saver fares start from \$1,622 per person twin share.

■ murrayprincess.com.au

Azamara cares about being intensive

FEATURING MORE than 80 new itineraries, Azamara has announced the remainder of its itineraries for 2022 and 2023.

The company is also offering more country-intensive voyages than ever before, allowing guests to experience popular destinations as well as hidden gems, all within a single country.

Itineraries include more than 275 ports of call in more than 70 countries. Some 26 of the ports will be offered in Greece, with two maiden ports visited: Syros and Tinos.

Azamara will also return several guest favourites including intensive voyages in Greece, South Africa, Egypt and Israel, as well as trips to the Black Sea.

"As the leader in Destination Immersion, we are always enthusiastic about sharing our new deployment, this year it's even more special as we have the opportunity to announce an extension of our Country-Intensive Voyages," said Carol Cabezas, Chief Operating Officer, Azamara.

■ azamara.com/en-au/2022





A RIGHT ROYAL LINE UP

ROYAL CARIBBEAN has released updates to its 2021 international deployment, announcing upcoming changes in itineraries and homeports.

Tapping market research and valuable feedback from guests and travel partners, the cruise line has adjusted its schedule with the goal of providing guests with greater variety for their 2021 adventures.

Highlights of the updated summer

cruises include new four- and five-night Mediterranean getaways from Barcelona and more island time in the Caribbean with ships sailing from additional, popular U.S. ports including Tampa, Florida and San Juan, Puerto Rico.

Royal Caribbean's other summer 2021 cruises will sail on as planned in the Caribbean, Alaska, Europe and Asia-Pacific, visiting more than 200

destinations in more than 50 countries with 27 ships.

In Europe, new ship *Odyssey of the Seas* will join *Anthem* and *Harmony of the Seas* and make its debut in Rome to kick off its inaugural Europe season.

In Alaska, the region will see the cruise line's biggest season yet with four ships, including newcomer *Quantum of the Seas*.

■ royalcaribbean.com.au

Royal Clipper



Go visit your Mamma Mia!

BIG SAVINGS are being offered on Mediterranean cruises that take you to locations where the hit ABBA music movie *Mamma Mia!* was filmed.

Book by November 30 and guests can save on new cruise-and-stay packages in 2022 with Star Clippers, which operates three deluxe and modern sailing ships.

The company's vessels include the 170-guest *Star Flyer* and the 227-guest *Royal Clipper*. The latter is currently the world's largest fully-rigged

sailing ship, with five masts, 42 sails, 1,765-square-metres of open deck space and three pools.

Two of the new packages feature the Greek islands of Skopelos and Skiathos where the 2007 movie starring Meryl Streep was filmed. Locations visited include the tiny wedding chapel of Agios Ioannis on Skopelos, which is perched on top of a rocky outcrop overlooking the sea, with 202 steps leading up to it.

Starting on June 9, 'Aegean Flyer

2022' is a 22-night itinerary featuring three back-to-back cruises aboard *Star Flyer* in the Aegean.

The round-trip from Athens features 16 islands and destinations in Turkey and Greece, including Skopelos, Skiathos and the popular islands of Santorini and Mykonos.

Including a night in Athens at the start of the holiday, 21-night cruise and free flights from Sydney, Brisbane, Melbourne, Adelaide or Perth, the package is available from \$9,735 per person twin share, a saving of \$2,665 if booked by November 30.

The second package – 'Grand Greece, Turkey and Croatia 2022' – begins on June 23, 2022, and is a 26-night itinerary from Athens to Venice featuring three back-to-back cruises on the Aegean and Adriatic seas aboard *Star Flyer*.

Featuring destinations in Greece (including Skopelos and Skiathos) as well as Croatia, Italy and Montenegro, the package is available from \$11,565 per person twin share, a saving of \$4,190 if booked by November 30.

■ CruiseTraveller.com.au/starclipper2022

Adventures aboard the famous five

FROM GREENLAND to Greece and Iceland to Israel, five Holland America Line ships are set to explore the cultural kaleidoscope of Europe in 2021.

The brand's collection of vessels crossing the pond includes *Rotterdam*, which is slated to debut at the height of the European summer season.

Joining the fleet's new flagship will be *Nieuw Statendam*, *Westerdam* and *Zuiderdam*. Meanwhile *Zaandam* heads to Europe on the popular 'Voyage of the Vikings' itinerary in July.

From April through November, the five ships will offer itineraries ranging from seven to 35 days, as well as longer



Nieuw Statendam

Collectors' Voyages up to 29 days. In addition to transatlantic crossings between Florida and Europe, the ships will visit the Baltic, British Isles, French and Spanish rivieras, Iberian Peninsula, Mediterranean and Northern Europe including Greenland, Iceland, Norway and the North Cape.

"For anyone looking to go to Europe next summer and really connect with a variety of cultures, Holland America Line has put together the most diverse collection of itineraries that embraces the entire region," said Gus Antorcha, President of Holland America Line.

■ hollandamerica.com



POPULAR SHIP GETS AN EXTENSION

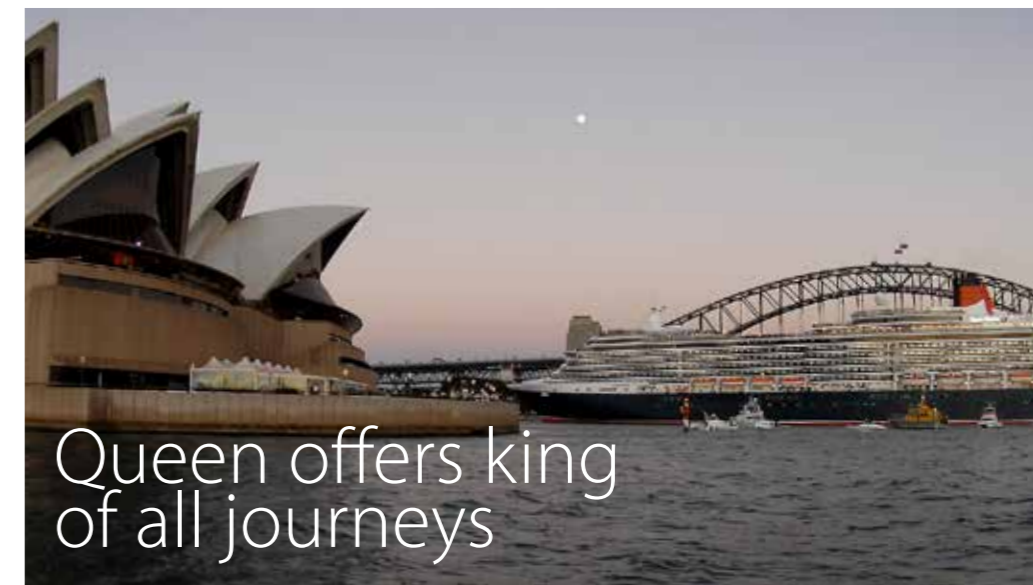
MSC CRUISES have announced that their second ship to make a return to sailing since COVID-19 will have an extended itinerary.

MSC Magnifica will now perform a 10-night voyage across both the west and east Mediterranean.

With a new re-start date of October 19, she will sail a series of seven cruises including an eight-night Christmas cruise departing on December 18 from Genoa.

Following the completion of her updated itinerary, *MSC Magnifica* – one of the cruise line's most popular ships – is due to perform a world cruise in 2021, for the second consecutive year.

■ msccruises.com.au



Queen offers king of all journeys

CUNARD IS offering a 104-night escape aboard its flagship *Queen Mary 2* on her 2022 World Voyage.

The ocean liner will journey through Australia, Asia, the Middle East and Europe, with sailings through the Suez Canal on both the outbound journey and return.

"Our guests have told us they want memorable destinations which combine intrinsic glamour and heritage," said Simon Palethorpe, President of Cunard.

"This unique program spans 16 countries, offering a combined 33 UNESCO World Heritage Sites, which we hope will offer the perfect blend of exploration on shore and relaxation onboard."

The voyage begins in Southampton on January 10, 2022, and returns on April 24, 2022. Prices for an inside stateroom for the complete trip start from \$21,599 per person.

Those sailing the full voyage will enjoy a welcome on board reception, services of a World Voyage concierge and use of a private lounge, a gala event ashore and complimentary daily gratuities.

■ cunard.com

FLYING INTO A FLEXIBLE FUTURE

The global pandemic has had an unparalleled and devastating impact on the aviation industry, with airlines grounding their entire fleets for months and many stopping operations altogether.

Writing for *Traveltalk*, CYRIL TETAZ, Executive Vice President, Airlines, Amadeus Asia Pacific, has flagged the key four areas where flexibility will be critical to airlines surviving - and having a shot at thriving - in the era of COVID.

THE TRAVEL industry has seen its share of setbacks and changes over the past few years. Yet COVID-19 is the biggest challenge the industry has had to face and there is still a long road to recovery.

Latest figures from the International Air Transport Association (IATA) predict that demand for air travel is unlikely to reach 2019 levels again until at least 2024.

COVID-19 has also fundamentally changed what passengers need and want from the flying experience, with hygiene and booking confidence now among the top priorities. With the ongoing threat of 'second waves' and further localised lockdowns, the mid-term future remains highly uncertain.

Despite this challenging backdrop, there are still opportunities for carriers to adapt their operations. But to give customers what they want and to navigate the ongoing uncertainty, flexibility will need to become the

new industry watchword.

Here are four areas where flexibility will be critical for airlines to survive and have a shot at thriving.

1. Disruption management

With the virus outbreaks in the region, particularly Victoria and recently in New Zealand, COVID-19 policies are constantly changing.

In such a scenario, flexible and effective disruption management should be a top priority of airlines, to maintain a high quality of customer service and to reassure reluctant flyers that it is safe to travel internationally again.

The highly unpredictable nature of the situation means that airlines need to ensure their disruption management systems are agile and can respond in real-time so that any changes are managed seamlessly from the passenger's perspective.

The increasing ubiquity of mobile apps and wearables makes it easier



Cyril Tetaz, Executive Vice President, Airlines, Amadeus Asia Pacific

than ever for carriers to communicate last-minute changes with their passengers.

But the holy grail of successful disruption management is also to be able to offer alternative flight options and short-term accommodation if necessary, in a matter of seconds and in a highly personalised way.

2. Cabin configurations

Over the past few months, many airlines have refocused some of their fleets to support repatriation flights, transport of cargo and medical supply

shipments. Some even reported profits in Q2 by focusing on their cargo businesses.

Many repurposed their aircraft by adding additional cargo space to flight cabins and around passenger's seats to apply maximum safety measures.

Agility has been the key, through the seamless integration between airline systems from inventory to reservation, departure control and offer management.

In the future, fully integrated systems would mean that even if unforeseen events like last-minute aircraft changes occur during operational windows, airlines can immediately and automatically reseat passengers and adjust weight and load balance.

With end-to-end automated aircraft configuration and reconfiguration, airlines avoid expensive, time consuming and resource-intensive manual intervention.

3. Increased choice through interlining and codeshares

The reduction in flight routes has led to increased consolidation and collaboration in airlines.

As industry players across the value chain unite to survive, we expect interlining and codeshare agreements to become a mainstay of the industry, ensuring travellers still have as much choice as possible.

In addition to choosing the right partners to collaborate with, for airlines to succeed they will have to put in the right technology infrastructure.

Dynamic customer identification, sophisticated airline policy control to automate flight schedules and codeshare agreements will be the key, as will the ability for carriers to easily work together and with third-party partners.

An example of this is Amadeus' Altéa suite, which is an open system that allows third parties and start-ups to develop on top of the Amadeus technology. Crucially, this helps to fast track development from concept to market, which is more important than ever in the current climate.

4. Flexible cancellation, rebooking and revenue management

Reassuring travellers of the ease of cancellation and rebooking will be critical to tempting them back to frequent flying in the COVID era.

Again, having a smart inventory management system is the key to making the cancellation and rebooking process as easy and seamless as possible for sales partners and the end customer.

This includes using advanced availability management techniques, re-accommodation, seating, etc. It also helps maximise airline network yield, increasing revenues and improving efficiency.

Carriers could also address any under capacity issues by making it easier for their customers to redeem existing reward points. This can be another way to lure travellers back to flying and engender long term loyalty.

Flexible, state-of-the-art revenue management will also be critical for airlines to move quickly towards recovery.

They will need to shift away from models that use historical data in favour of real time demand analysis and merchandising techniques to shape hyper-relevant offers.

Airlines will need to be more responsive to the fast-changing consumer behaviour given the booking lead times are getting much shorter.

Ultimately, despite the aviation industry navigating its greatest challenge to date, airlines can use this time to prepare for the future.

And as some airlines have recently demonstrated, there are still immense opportunities for those who are willing to adapt to the new operating environment.

Flexibility should be the cornerstone of all carriers' mid-term plans - building in a greater level of agility than ever before so that technology, systems and staff can respond quickly as the situation inevitably continues to change.

■ amadeus.com

“Agility has been the key, through the seamless integration between airline systems from inventory to reservation, departure control and offer management.”



IN BRIEF///

Qatar Airways has welcomed the Government's decision to increase the current caps on international arrivals into the country.

The announcement that there are plans to allow an additional 2,000 Australians per week to return home will enable the airline to further support repatriation efforts.

“Since April, we have been the leading airline carrying international traffic to and from Australia,” said Mr. Akbar Al Baker, Group Chief Executive, Qatar Airways.

“While other airlines grounded operations, we kept flying, carrying almost 45 per cent of international passengers in April and 34 per cent in May, helping carry more than 180,000 Australians and international travellers home.

“Despite this, there are still more than 20,000 Australians stranded overseas, so we will continue to work with the Australian Government and remain ready to operate as many flights as possible to bring them home.”

■ qatarairways.com



Aussie expansion is crystal clear

CRYSTALBROOK COLLECTION has announced plans to expand its luxury east coast hotel portfolio in Australia.

The company is set to acquire the boutique Brisbane property, The Fantauzzo. The move marks Crystalbrook's debut in the city and adds to its operations in Sydney, Byron Bay, Cairns, Newcastle and Port Douglas.

Situated beneath the Story Bridge and overlooking the Howard Smith Wharves, the new contemporary hotel features 166 rooms and suites, the renowned Italian Polpetta kitchen and bar, the elevated Fiume bar along with a rooftop pool, fitness centre and meeting spaces.

The company entered Australia in 2017 and have pledged to continue their expansion across the country.

"Australia's east coast is unlike anything else in the world and as a company we are pleased to be able to invest in and support the Australian tourism industry. Brisbane was the next logical step for us," said Ghassan Aboud, Owner of Crystalbrook Collection.

The official handover of The Fantauzzo will occur in the first half of 2021. It will then trade under Crystalbrook Collection with the official new name to be announced in the coming months.

■ crystalbrookcollection.com



VIBE COMES ALIVE

TFE HOTELS is introducing its Vibe Hotel lifestyle brand into Western Australia with the opening of a property in Perth this month.

The 168-room hotel sits in the heart of the city's inner west as part of a mixed-use precinct in Subiaco.

"Vibe Hotel Subiaco offers the chance to experience a different side to Perth in a vibrant and eclectic suburb on the city fringe," said Antony Ritch, CEO TFE Hotels.

"We'll have a rooftop pool for sun seekers and, for those that love al fresco dining, the rooftop Storehouse Restaurant and Bar will offer incredible views over Perth."

The new Vibe boasts a pool, gym, conference space, versatile guest rooms that can transform into three-bedroom suites and a St Marks Road Co. eatery on the ground floor.

Located at the corner of Railway Road and Alvan Street, the 12-storey property is the tallest of the three buildings in the precinct, which is home to commercial office, retail and cinema tenancies.

■ vibehotels.com



Best Western Plus North Lakes in Queensland

Road trip is a real gift

AUSSIERS ARE being encouraged to 'hit the road' and earn gift cards in a promotion being run by Best Western.

The company is rewarding travellers with a \$US25 (approx. \$AU35) loyalty gift card per night to a maximum four nights for stays until October 19.

"Now is a great time for travellers to really explore their own backyard," said Graham Perry, Managing Director of BWH Hotel Group Australasia.

"Whether you're in WA wanting to see the quokkas or the wildflowers, looking for a weekend or school holidays escape in NSW, enjoying the local produce and markets in Tasmania or whale watching along coastal Queensland, we have a property for you to stay in."

Gift cards can be redeemed at any Best Western or SureStay hotel across Australia or New Zealand before the end of March 2021.

■ bestwestern.com



ROCKSTAR WELCOME IN CULTURAL HUB

PROMISING TO blend past, present and progressive, Ovolo South Yarra will open for business early next year.

The property is located near the famed intersection of Toorak Road and Chapel Street in Melbourne's cultural hub.

Each of the 123 rooms will infuse retro-plush, with accents of chrome and colour, including four Rockstar suites all named after famous musicians.

Guests and diners will enjoy the Ovolo kitchen and bar concept, which will be inspired by fresh and locally-sourced produce, ethical eating and conscious cuisine.

Seasonal cocktails and wines sourced from some of Australia's most progressive producers will also feature.

"Ovolo South Yarra will set the scene for an extraordinary hotel experience embodying Ovolo's philosophy of connecting with its customers emotionally and will complement the local cultural scene through its art, design and unique restaurant concept," said Girish Jhunjhnuwala, Founder & CEO of Ovolo Group.

■ ovolohotels.com



These special deals are kicking goals

FOOTY FANS heading north for the 2020 AFL Grand Final on October 24 are being offered special deals by Accor.

Less than two-kilometres from the Gabba and on the southern bank of the Brisbane River, Mantra South Bank is offering rooms for the grand final weekend from \$235 per night (minimum two-night stay – total spend \$470).

The vibrant ibis Styles Brisbane Elizabeth Street is in the heart of the CBD and just an eight-minute drive from the Gabba.

It is offering rooms from \$319 per night on the hotel's 'Kick-to-Kick' package, which includes a complimentary room upgrade to a superior river view room, breakfast and a Sherrin AFL replica game ball to take home.

For a dose of culture with your sports, stay at The Johnson Brisbane – Art Series for two nights and enjoy 15 per cent off.

Prices start from \$347 per night in a studio for the footy final weekend (minimum two-night stay – total spend \$694).

Just a 10-minute drive from the Gabba in Spring Hill, the property takes its design cues from celebrated Australian abstract artist Michael Johnson.

In other news, Accor will bring a luxury hotel brand to Australia for the first time when the Fairmont Port Douglas (above) opens in Far North Queensland in 2023.

It will have 253 rooms, several restaurants and bars, day spa, treetop walk and conference and wedding facilities, all designed around resort-style pools and built to blend seamlessly with nature.

■ all.accor.com

WHY YOUR BUSINESS NEEDS A TECH TICK

In this thought-provoking article for *Traveltalk*, GAVIN SMITH, Director of travel tech firm Element, looks at the technology travel management companies are purchasing in preparation for the 'reboot' of business travel.

WE ARE all being urged to get back to work, get the economy going again, start networking and meeting up.

Even though Zoom has been a lifeline for many, the demand for face-to-face business meetings will return and when it does you need to be ready.

Budgets are tight for every travel business and many are rethinking their technology spending plans in preparation for when people in

business start travelling again.

Others are being more cautious. They know they need to adopt new technologies but they're holding back. Agents are looking to improve the services they provide and for many this starts with the way they manage their business budgets.

Businesses want to track staff expenses more efficiently. According to the Aberdeen Group, who collect and analyse data on buyer behaviour,

up to 70 per cent of companies want to find new ways to manage their travel-related corporate expenses.

In 2019 *The New York Business Journal* reported that companies were spending 10 per cent or more of their annual expenditure on employee travel expenses.

According to Travelex, staff want to explore when they travel on business. Three in five people like to visit local attractions while just under half make a point of exploring the local cuisine.

Many take clients with them and pay for their expenses on the company's corporate credit card.

Agents are buying solutions that optimise expense report processes

“Technology is playing a critical role in the recovery of the travel industry and this year we are seeing new deals being struck and partnerships happening.”

and budget monitoring so that businesses can easily control their expenses and ensure compliance measures are in place when their staff start travelling again.

While this pandemic has forced a scaling back of efforts in certain areas, many TMCs are prioritising their tech needs.

There is an increased demand to self-manage the commercials, suppliers, back-office and management information while corporates are able to configure the travel policies, approvals and reporting.

TMCs are looking for systems that provide New Distribution Capability (NDC) with direct airline connects and hotel consolidators and aggregators.

These platforms give TMCs, travel agencies and consolidators an option to generate bookings outside of many global distribution system processes and related fees.

Trust and duty of care

Unique travel restrictions imposed by each country and the subsequent effect on business travel have placed an even greater emphasis on duty of care within TMCs.

Roles and responsibilities have changed for travel managers in businesses and agents.

Managers now have to review all trips, conduct risk assessments and create internal guidelines and policies on travel.

New platforms such as the Egencia COVID-19 travel reporting hub help

them mitigate the financial impact to their business by providing downloadable data for air and hotel bookings.

Travel consultants need to be fully compliant with these new procedures. Correct information is difficult to access and usually found by searching through lengthy online resources.

Fact checking and dependency on human interpretation increases financial and reputational risks for the TMC and many are investing in technology that gives them access to trusted information.

TMCs are installing the latest permission-based applications such as Travel Radar that enable them to configure and manage their client's policies and ensure that the travel consultant can access the correct information and booking capability.

TMCs are spending on technology that configures the policy for each client around the allowed countries, cities, airlines and hotels.

These new applications close the entire loop of sufficient information and immediate decision making and will drive the next duty of care level for TMCs when the "return to travel" policies and processes are in place.

Technology is playing a critical role in the recovery of the travel industry and this year we are seeing new deals being struck and partnerships happening.

Recently, Flight Centre Travel Group acquired tech company WhereTo for its AI platform that recommends



Gavin Smith, Director of travel tech firm Element

hotels, flights and transportation to employees.

Sabre integrated Mindsay technology to enable automated customer service for TMCs and airlines. At Element we partnered with tech company Zenmer to provide its booking solutions for TMCs.

Similarly, businesses are sharing complementary data to better understand their clients' travel needs, concerns and behaviour in order to provide greater client personalisation.

The industry is getting ready for when travel is high on the agenda and it points toward innovation and technology. TMCs are investing in tech to improve or change the way they do business and helping people stay safe.

Those that offer improved processes and greater duty of care will stand out. Don't get left behind.

■ elementtech.co.uk





2. Dive with Great White sharks

Based in Port Lincoln on the Eyre Peninsula, Calypso Star Charters (CSC) has operated cage diving tours for Great White sharks since 1990.

CSC is the only one-day operator permitted to use natural fish berley to attract the sharks. This sustainable practice provides you with the best possible chance of a sighting and productive interaction. The company also offers the chance to swim with Sea lions.

■ sharkcagediving.com.au



5. Go ballooning over the Barossa

Barossa Balloon Adventures has been flying safely in the skies above the valley since 1986.

The family-owned and operated business offers one-hour flights all year round and seven days a week, weather permitting.

■ balloonadventures.com.au

9. Go off road in the Flinders Ranges

Flinders Experience 4WD Tours run half-, three-quarter or full-day itineraries in the Ikara-Flinders Ranges National Park and other dirt tracks through the region as well as many places of interest.

Tours depart any day on demand from Quorn, Hawker, Rawnsley Park Station and Wilpena Pound Resort campground – and other locations in the Flinders by arrangement.

Enjoy the tranquillity, flora and fauna and the great views from the various lookout points. Tour through the Ikara-Flinders Ranges National Park and see yellow-footed rock-wallabies in Brachina Gorge.

■ flindersexperience4wdtours.com.au

Open for business



1. Swim with giant cuttlefish

JUST ONCE per year, giant cuttlefish migrate and congregate for their breeding season, displaying arrays of luminescent patterns and colours.

Stony Point, located on the coastline of the Upper Spencer Gulf Marine Park in Whyalla, is the perfect spot to witness these visually striking underwater creatures.

Just metres from the shoreline, you'll witness an amazing natural wonder as the cuttlefish turn on their colourful tricks and antics.

The two-day tour itinerary from Adelaide with pureSA includes exclusive cuttlefish insights by a marine expert, sightseeing through the wilderness of the Southern Flinders Ranges and a bushwalk through the rugged Alligator Gorge in the Mount Remarkable National Park.

Tours are priced from \$449 and the next occurrence is from June 21 to July 9, 2021.

■ puresa.com.au

The opening of state borders between South Australia and New South Wales is an encouraging sign that the travel industry might finally be able to start its recovery from the effects of COVID-19.

For those thinking of heading to South Australia, here's a look at some of the best experiences available in the state, which offers something for everyone.

3. Shuck and eat oysters in Coffin Bay

The coastline of the Eyre Peninsula has a reputation for being Australia's seafood hot spot and Coffin Bay is renowned for its oysters in restaurants around the country.

This is the only tour of its kind in the world where you can sit in the water and taste fresh oysters straight out of the sea.

■ oysterfarmtours.com.au



4. Plunge into a sinkhole at Little Blue Lake

The lake is located in the Kanawinka volcanic area between two dormant volcanoes, Mount Schank and Mount Gambier, on the Limestone Coast.

Stairs and a floating pontoon have been installed to help visitors enjoy a cool swim in this natural, water-filled sinkhole.

■ dcgrant.sa.gov.au



6. Meander down the Murray on a houseboat

Murray River Escapes offer private, self-catered houseboat journeys on Australia's greatest river.

An experienced local guide will help you find the perfect nightly mooring site and share their immense knowledge of this river system.

The company's 'Escape On and Off the River' experience allows you to tailor an itinerary of daily activities to suit the group's interests. Activities are based around the themes of food, wine, nature and wildlife.

■ murrayrivertrails.com.au



7. Sleep underground in Coober Pedy

For something a little different, try Dug Out B&B's modern three-bedroom underground accommodation, with natural daylight and ventilation ensuring a comfortable stay.

An air shaft provides fresh air to keep the temperature cool in summer and warm in winter as you enjoy endless views over the desert landscape.

■ cooberpedydugoutbnb.com.au



8. Walk the roof at Adelaide Oval

Enjoy great views of the city and beyond from the roof of Adelaide Oval before testing your nerve with a lean out point 50 metres above the ground.

Take your pick from a twilight climb, sparkling city lights at night or daytime views as far as the eye can see.

■ roofclimb.com.au



10. Circle the d'Arenberg cube

Blend the traditional cellar door visit with exciting discovery, art and family history at the unique d'Arenberg Cube.

Explore the McLaren Vale region, soar above the coast in a Waco plane or helicopter, blend and bottle your own wine, or indulge in a degustation at d'Arry's Verandah.

■ darenberg.com.au

11. Walk on water at Lake Gairdner

Lake Gairdner is Australia's fourth largest salt lake and the site of numerous land-speed record attempts.

The annual Dry Lake Racers event attracts motor enthusiasts from around Australia in March when the lake is dry.

■ parks.sa.gov.au
For more information, visit: SouthAustralia.com

Thirroul Beach



The cycle of life

With Aussies currently restricted to our own country, we are all eagerly looking for interesting and rewarding travel experiences on the doorstep.

Here, JENNY ROWLAND puts the pedal to the bitumen on a three-day cycling tour of the south coast of New South Wales.

FEARFUL OF making commitments and bookings that may be ripped from under you, taking small trips in your own state seems to be the sensible thing to do.

I am not known for being very sensible...but I am learning!

I have been a fan of Tour de Vines (TdV) for some time and last year was lucky enough to ride from Beechworth to Bright in Victoria.

I absolutely loved it, so when the opportunity came to ride TdV's latest tour from Thirroul to Kiama on the sparkling south coast of New South

Wales, I was in my lycra faster than a Queensland border closure.

First stop is the lovely seaside town of Thirroul where we are met by our trusty guide Jeff who, while not actually guiding or riding with us, provides us with the necessary accoutrement to get this show on the road – handy things like bikes and maps.

Great quality bikes I might add – much better than my own two-wheeler at home.

Jeff will also transport our bags through to our first overnight stop, which is the bigger seaside town of Wollongong. He is also on call for us in the event of any mishaps or unfortunate events – such as a failure of the gluteus maximus or massive buttock ache - and of course bag transportation to each of our three stops.

So as we wave Jeff goodbye and weave our way down to the dedicated bike track that hugs the coastline, we decide it's time for some light refreshment and enjoy a cool cider matched with a delectable fish cocktail from 'the Jolly Roger' in McCauley Street. The perfect way to 'carb up' for our tour.

Thirroul Beach

The Illawarra coastal cycle path is a flat gentle ride (I probably shouldn't have overindulged in that extra piece of calamari!) that takes you all the way to Wollongong.

The sun is shining but the wind is nipping so sadly we forgo a salty dip, which is a shame as the ocean is looking so inviting and I have worn my bathers which are playing havoc under my lycra!

A few degrees warmer would have seen us frolicking in the waves and I predict this leg of the tour will be a huge hit in the warmer months.

After two hours of glorious beach-y riding we arrive at our first night's accommodation – the Novotel right on the beach at 'the Gong'.

After a ride around the beachfront at North Wollongong, we check in to our spacious room overlooking the ocean with a luxurious, newly-renovated bathroom. Comfy digs indeed for a couple of sweaty bikers.

Dinner at Steamers Bar and Grill on the waterfront is highly recommended especially if you like oysters – very fresh oysters!

After deep sweet slumbers we are up and ready to ride to Windang.



Jenny at a windswept Kiama Beach

Wollongong to Windang

A hearty breakfast is enjoyed at Mudcat right next to the hotel – fantastic coffee fit for any Sydneysider.

Today starts with a nice warm up cycle around the boat harbour followed by a ride to the Nan Tien Temple, which is the largest Buddhist temple in the Southern Hemisphere and is a great addition to the itinerary, instantly transporting you to Thailand.

If you like vegan food – the laksa here is to die for – and with all these extra calories being burnt you can also afford to indulge in the amazing Chai milkshake.

This place is quite magical and you should allow a couple of hours to explore and experience the peace and tranquillity along with the great views from the top of the temple. Check out the orchids – they are absolutely beautiful.

Next is a ride around the very picturesque Lake Illawarra before arriving at our second overnight stop, Barrack Point Holiday cabins next to Warilla Bowls club.

Cute, cosy cabins with outdoor showers and just a stone's throw away from the sparkling blue waters of Windang beach – an absolute haven for water lovers offering fishing, boating windsurfing and surfing.

In line with the Thai temple theme, we dine at a fantastic Thai restaurant – (I am still dreaming I am overseas.) Make sure you add this to your itinerary and go for the peppered prawns at Harbour Thai.



Novotel Wollongong

Nan Tien Temple



The weather has turned cold and windy so we need a good feed for the conclusion of our big south coast tour.

Windang to Kiama

Day three begins with breakfast at MJ's in Shellharbour before gearing up for a very wild and windy ride to Kiama.

Luckily the scenery en route is so dramatic it almost takes your mind off the hilly climb from the Minnamurra River. A reasonable level of fitness is required for this leg.

In saying that, we were definitely hampered by the gusty north-westerly so without the wind it's probably a breeze (ouch!) and definitely worth the effort as we ride triumphantly into Kiama and reward ourselves with a blowhole visit.

Not quite the Champs-Élysées but a fitting end to a blowy day and an awesome three-day cycling trip.

Check out tourdevines.com.au for all the info on this and their many other super cycle holidays. TdV has a great range of tours that they sell through travel agents.

HOME ON THE RANGES

INTREPID TRAVEL has launched new trips in the cycling and hiking ranges across Australia.

The itineraries include cycling the Victorian Alps to hiking the Larapinta Trail, or seeing Cradle Mountain on foot.

"We have listened to what our travellers want, which is more options to challenge themselves in nature and to take slower, more immersive trips closer to home," said Sarah Clark, Intrepid Travel MD APAC.

"Human powered travel is the antidote to being in lockdown for months, whether by hiking epic trails or cycling iconic terrain."

Two expert mountain guides will be at your side on the 'Cradle Mountain Overland Trek'.



Travellers will make their way through temperate rainforest and eucalyptus groves, across alpine moors and through valleys, taking in views of waterfalls and mountain peaks.

Take the chance to tackle side trips like summiting Cradle Mountain and the island's highest peak Mt Ossa. The six-day trip is priced from \$2,125 per person.

The Larapinta trek is in the West MacDonnell National Park of the Northern Territory and is one of the world's best desert walks.

Hike along the red rock slopes of the West Macs to shadowed gorges,

snaking riverbanks, open plains and mountains filled with a rich diversity of animals and plants. Take in sights like Ormiston Gorge and a rewarding ascent of Mt Sonder.

The five-day 'Larapinta Trek' is priced from \$2,350 per person.

On the 'Cycle the Victorian High Country' itinerary you will be overlooked by Mount Buffalo as you cycle through wine country, visit local Aussie pubs and small gold mining towns.

Open to all levels of cyclists, the four-day trip along the Mountains Rail Trail is priced from \$1,049 per person.

■ intrepidtravel.com/au



Package up two top Aussie icons

CRUISE TRAVELLER has released a new 'slow travel' rail and river cruise package featuring two of Australia's great attractions.

The 10-night 'Australian Paddlewheels and Train Tracks' itinerary is available from July to October, 2021.

It features a four-night cruise along the Murray River aboard the only overnight passenger paddlesteamer on the river – the deluxe, 18-guest *Emmylou* – and a journey aboard the Indian Pacific across the outback.

The tour begins with a night's accommodation in Melbourne before a transfer to the Murray River town of Echuca to board the river boat. During the cruise guests will visit wineries, historic farm stations, indigenous sites and the World Heritage Listed red gum river wetlands at Barmah.

After a night back in Melbourne, guests will fly to Adelaide for a three-night stay and free time to explore the city before boarding the famous train for an overnight journey to Sydney via the outback town of Broken Hill where the train will stop for a local tour.

The package is priced from \$4,595 per person twin share ex Sydney and from \$4,795 per person twin share ex Melbourne. Fares from other cities are also available on request.

■ cruisetraveller.com.au/paddlewheels



'back to nature' experience of camping without the blow up mattress.

"Not only are they incredible accommodation options that can be essentially plonked anywhere there's room for a caravan, they are also more sustainable with the millions of available shipping containers already in circulation able to be converted," said Paul Davies, NRMA CEO.

"Ocean Beach really is the perfect setting for our Glamtainers. Waking up to the peaceful sounds of nature, meeting the local wallabies who hop along the garden and falling asleep to the sound of water lapping at the shore is enough to win over the fussiest of travellers."

■ nrmaparksandresorts.com.au



GET YOUR GLAM ON

WE'VE HAD Glamping but now the NRMA has introduced a new travel concept with Glamtainers.

The two, seven-metre converted shipping containers are kitted out with two queen beds, kitchen, living area, full-sized bathroom and luxury finishes.

They are now available to book at NRMA Ocean Beach on the Central Coast of NSW before being relocated down to NRMA Jindabyne for the 2021 ski season.

Made popular in Europe, Glamtainers are perfect for couples and families seeking the luxury of hotels with the

LORD HOWE Island has just reopened after a six-month lockdown following the repeal of the Public Health Order.

Visitors and residents are now free to travel to and from the island without needing to quarantine.

Lodges and tour operators are hoping this will be a welcome kick start to tourism on the island.

QantasLink has scheduled daily return flights between Lord Howe and Sydney commencing on October 3, operated by the Dash-8 Q200 aircraft.

"It's been very quiet on Lord Howe these past few months and we're looking forward to wowing new and returning guests with the island's incredible natural wonders once again," said Trina Shepherd, Lord Howe Island Tourism Association Executive Officer.

John Gissing, QantasLink Chief Executive Officer, said the airline would continue to monitor and respond to the demand for travel to Lord Howe this spring.

"With ongoing state travel restrictions, we're pleased to be able to help more travellers explore world class destinations like Lord Howe Island, in their own state," he said.

■ lordhoweisland.info

IN BRIEF//

IN A new survey conducted by *Finder.com.au*, more than three in five (61 per cent) participants – equivalent to 12 million Aussies – said they were planning a domestic holiday over the next three months.

Leading the way among preferred holidays are road trips, which half (48 per cent) of those polled said they would undertake before the year's end. That would be equal to some nine million Australians.

Next up is travel by air, with one in five (21 per cent) respondents planning to fly domestically over the coming 90 days.

Take a break at the lake



Redhead Beach

Just a 90-minute journey by road from Sydney, Lake Macquarie is the ideal destination for a self-driving day trip or mini-break.

WITH THE great outdoors being top of the agenda for many visitors, Visit Lake Macquarie has crafted a driving itinerary offering all the regional highlights as you cruise more than 60 kilometres of easy road.

Travellers can take in great views during a 90-minute circumnavigation of the Lake – the largest coastal saltwater lake in Australia – or stop and explore the very best this region has to offer.

Stop 1: Catherine Hill Bay

Drive time from Sydney: 90 minutes.

A State Heritage-listed historic mining village, Catherine Hill Bay features a patrolled stretch of sand twice named among 'Australia's 101 Best Beaches'.

Popular for swimming, surfing and fishing, the beach is home to a former coal-loading jetty which is a favourite subject of local photographers.

If you're looking for a spot to sit

back and unwind, a small but scenic picnic area overlooks the beach and boasts tables, barbecues, toilets and off-street parking – perfect for a sausage sandwich!

Stop 2: Caves Beach

Drive time from Catherine Hill Bay: 15 minutes, travelling 11kms.

This is a perennial visitor favourite. Its extensive network of sea caves and rock pools are ideal for low-tide exploration and are guaranteed to keep the whole family entertained.

It is also home to the Caves Beach Surf Life Saving Club, featuring facilities including a kiosk, bathrooms, barbecues and picnic tables. Pack your sunnies, hat and sunscreen, get your swimmers on and enjoy a coastal visit to remember.

Stop 3: Pelican Reserve Foreshore

Drive time from Caves Beach: 10 minutes, travelling six kms.

Pelican Reserve Foreshore is one of the region's most loved picnic areas, so pull out your rug and claim a spot on the shaded grassy expanses.

This little gem also offers a small sandy beach area and the reserve

is complete with barbecues, covered picnic tables, a boat ramp, public toilets and a fenced playground to keep the kids happy.

Stop 4: Redhead Beach

Drive time from Pelican Reserve Foreshore: 17 minutes, travelling 12kms.

Situated at the northern end of a picturesque 14-kilometre coastal stretch, Redhead Beach backs onto towering red cliffs and is renowned for its shark tower.

Take a dip, try your hand at fishing or join the local surfers. Redhead Beach's Cargo Espresso Bar is also well worth visiting for an early morning coffee, homemade botanical soda or a bite to eat.

Stop 5: Redhead Bluff Lookout

Drive time from Redhead Beach: two minutes, travelling one kilometre.

Head up onto the headland to find one of Lake Macquarie's most impressive views.

Redhead Bluff Lookout is the perfect spot to enjoy panoramic ocean vistas and if you're lucky you might even catch a glimpse of passing whales during migration season.

Stop 6: Belmont Foreshore

Drive time from Redhead Bluff Lookout: 13 minutes, travelling nine kms.

Whether you are travelling with kids or road tripping with friends, Belmont Foreshore is a must. The recently renovated Belmont Baths features a jetty, large netted swimming area, new amenities block, change rooms and foreshore landscaping.

Just a short walk down the road you'll find Common Circus, known for its homewares and gifts as well as fresh, delicious cuisine.

Stop 7: Red Bluff Boardwalk

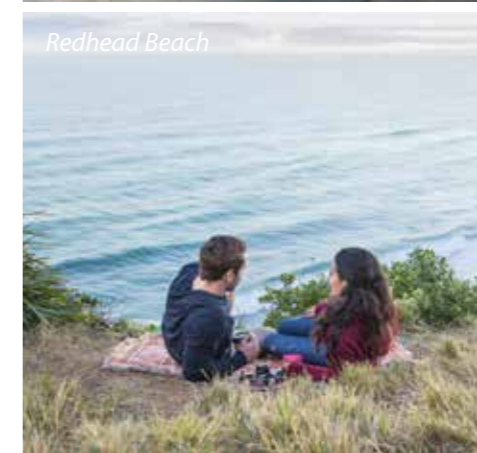
Drive time from Belmont Foreshore: 10 minutes, travelling seven kms.

Lake Macquarie offers walking trails galore, with the Red Bluff Boardwalk being a highlight not to miss. This elevated boardwalk stretches 380 metres with viewing decks over the water at Eleebana.

The boardwalk is part of a nine-kilometre route which travels around the lake from Belmont to Booragul. Along the way you can enjoy picnicking, bike riding, or a visit to one of the popular Warners Bay cafes, all while enjoying the lake scenery.



Pulbah Island



Redhead Beach



Swansea Heads

Stop 8: Warners Bay Foreshore

Drive time from Red Bluff Boardwalk: two minutes, travelling two kms.

You can't say you have been to Lake Macquarie without visiting Warners Bay.

This lively lakeside town has everything from boutique shops to quirky eateries and a foreshore perfect for post-meal strolls. With cafes aplenty this is a foodie's haven.

If picnics are more your style, head over the road to the Lake and pick a nice spot to enjoy the afternoon.

Stop 9: Museum of Art and Culture Lake Macquarie (MAC)

Drive time from Warners Bay Foreshore: nine minutes, travelling seven kms.

Overlooking the shores of Lake Macquarie, the Museum of Art and Culture (MAC), is the premier art destination for the region. This award-winning contemporary arts space hosts a comprehensive collection featuring distinguished pieces.

Alongside a permanent collection are regularly changing exhibitions as well as a diverse visitor program including workshops, installations, performances and other activities.

Stop 10: Toronto

Drive time from MAC: 13 minutes, travelling six kms.

Lakeside relaxation and waterfront dining are a few of the pleasures you can expect to enjoy when visiting Toronto Foreshore. The vibrant sailing scene is clearly evident with a yacht club and marina loved by locals.

Don't forget to stop by one of the most talked about locations to get a bite in Lake Mac: Greg and Audrey's. The delicious American-style food, including their raved-about range of ice creams all made in-house (sundaes served with a mini umbrella!) will have you drooling.

Stop 11: Wangi Wangi Village

Drive time from Toronto: 10 minutes, travelling 12kms.

Wangi Wangi is a well-known holiday spot popular with families and water lovers. Beautiful surrounds, peaceful lake views, good company and friendly wildlife make it the perfect place to relax and unwind.

Wangi Point Holiday Park is nestled on the shores of the lake, offering an ideal location for boating and fishing.

■ visitlakemac.com.au



Ghosties Beach

SISTER COMPANY OFFERS AIR RAISING TOURS

CROOKED COMPASS has launched a sister company giving travellers the opportunity to explore Australia's remote reaches by private aircraft.

Adventure by Air offers a selection of eight signature curated journeys. Sample itineraries include 'Kimberley & Top End', 'Groote & Tiwi Islands' and 'Tempting Tasmania'.

Itineraries can be booked as is, or be modified for an exclusive and personalised journey.

The flagship tour is a 32-day luxury journey circumnavigating the country, exploring the most high-end and remote lodges, homesteads and station stays.

Paired with exclusive experiences and behind-the-scenes encounters, the itinerary can be tailored to meet personal style, pace and budget, with pricing from \$147,000 per person.

Mystery flights are available for the adventurous and spontaneous traveller. Departing from all major airports and select regional airports, the journey includes a private aircraft to a mystery destination and at least one exclusive dining and local touring experience specifically related to the region.

One- or two-day packages start from \$1,700 per person for intrastate travel, or from \$3,500 per person for interstate journeys.

Travellers can choose their aircraft to meet their style of travel, level of comfort and the type of air experience they are seeking. Take your pick from a fixed wing aircraft, helicopter, seaplane or high speed luxury jet.

■ adventurebyair.com



Painted Hills, Anna Creek Station, South Australia



A GREAT DAY OUT

SEALINK HAVE released a new Kangaroo Island 'Sip & See' day tour giving guests the chance to sample the destination's much-loved attractions.

This versatile excursion can be experienced as a day tour - departing by coach from Adelaide or guests can meet the ferry at Cape Jervis - as an 'Escape' one-day, one-night package, or as part of the two-day 'Ultimate' tour.

All tours include return ferry transfers and air conditioned coach touring with a local Kangaroo Island driver/guide who will provide an informative and fun commentary throughout the day.

Highlights of the one-day itinerary include the in-flight birds of prey presentation at Raptor Domain followed by lunch, a history talk and guided tour of the Emu Ridge Eucalyptus Distillery.

The afternoon is spent with visits to Clifford's Honey Farm shop and Kangaroo Island Spirits for some award-winning gin tasting.

Then it's onto False Cape Wines cellar door to taste their premium Kangaroo Island wines while overlooking the bushland and vineyard surrounds before heading back to the mainland.

Operating every Tuesday, Thursday and Sunday until March 2021, the tour is priced from \$256 per person twin share.

The Kangaroo Island Sip & See Escape tour and two-day Ultimate tour departs Adelaide every Monday, Wednesday, and Saturday.

■ sealink.com.au



Resort relieves cabin pressure

BROKEN HILL Outback Resort has marked its second birthday by doubling its number of cabins to meet increased demand.

Twelve extra resort cabins are now open so travellers can enjoy the sunshine, fresh air, big skies, vast spaces and endless horizons of outback New South Wales.

The resort now boasts 24 cabins offering either spa baths or showers overlooking the desert, with 21 also offering large relaxation decks with outback views.

The remaining three cabins - all new - are designed for families or up to five people with two bedrooms and a sofa bed. Each cabin offers king-size bedding, a living area, flat-screen TV and kitchenette.

Opened in 2018 and 13km east of Broken Hill, the resort also offers a fully serviced camp and caravan ground grouped around a 130-year-old pub. It has been completely restored to offer a bar and bistro restaurant with indoor and outdoor seating.

The resort is offering a 10 per cent saving on all weekend stays and three sister properties also owned by Out of the Ordinary Outback until December 31.

"This is a great time for Australians to explore their own backyard and support regional areas, with visitor spending helping to buoy local economies and create jobs," said Scott Smith, Owner of Out of the Ordinary Outback.

■ outoftheordinaryoutback.com.au

OUTBACK MILESTONE

APT IS celebrating the success of its first tour since travel was halted by COVID-19.

The much-anticipated journey departed Brisbane on September 6 with 58 guests joining the nine-day air tour of outback Queensland.

The trip provided guests with scenic flying with aerial views of the vast outback, Cape York, Great Barrier Reef, Queensland Islands and rainforest fringed shores.

Key highlights included staying on Thursday Island in the Torres Strait and relaxing in luxury tropical resorts in Port Douglas and Hamilton Island.

"It's a terrific thing to celebrate this first tour we have been able to successfully complete in the COVID era" said David Cox, CEO of APT.

"It's an exciting milestone and credit goes to our APT team who worked hard to make it happen and we thank all our partners and of course our guests who joined us for this incredible experience."

■ aptouring.com.au



THOUSANDS SEE THE LIGHT

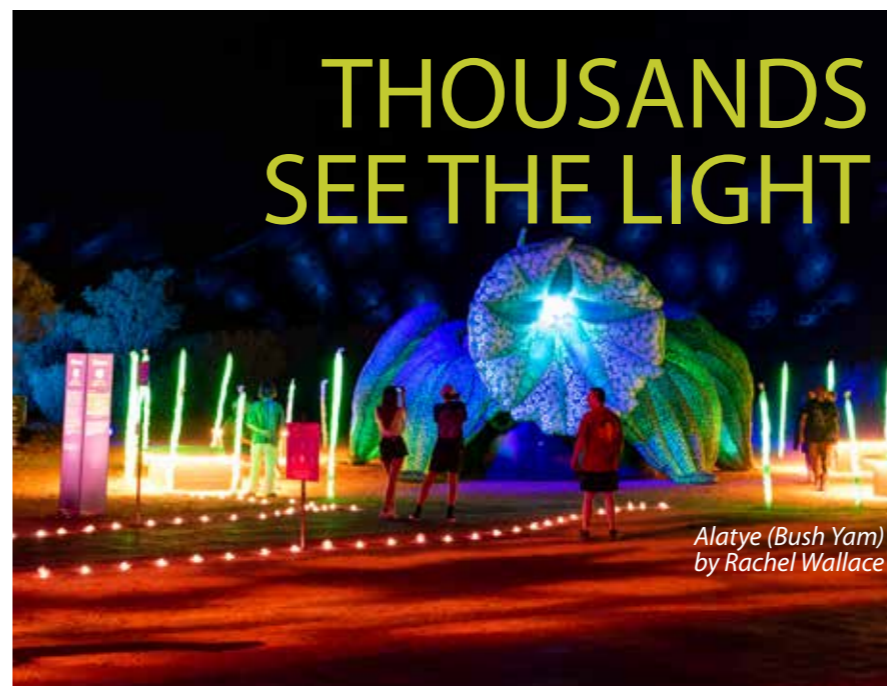
THE FIFTH PARRTJIMA - A Festival in Light has successfully wrapped up in Alice Springs.

A celebration of Aboriginal art, culture and storytelling, the 10-night festival attracted more than 17,000 attendees and featured a wide program of performances, artists, workshops, demonstrations and immersive installations.

Guests enjoyed a light and sound show over two kilometres of the MacDonnell Ranges and large-scale interactive light installations alongside Deep Listening talks, musical performances, cooking and watercolour painting workshops.

The much-loved festival is set to return from April 9-18, 2021.

■ parrtjimaaustralia.com.au



Alatye (Bush Yam) by Rachel Wallace

WE'RE ALL READY FOR A SUMMER HOLIDAY

Reef expeditions, new hotels and wildlife experiences are among the new Cairns and Great Barrier Reef products available for Aussies this summer.

Coral Discoverer

In like Flynn

Crystalbrook Collection has announced that five-star hotel Flynn will welcome its first guests on November 10.

Located on Cairns' Esplanade boardwalk, the property will tempt travellers wanting great views of the Coral Sea from their balcony, glass-bottom hotel pools, a 24-hour gym, or the ultimate tropical escape in the top three floor suites of the Esplanade tower with large balconies.

Flynn's Boardwalk Social offers market-style gourmet food and live music.

■ crystalbrookcollection.com/flynn

Voyage of discovery

Coral Expeditions has launched a series of new seven-night sailings onboard the Coral Discoverer from Cairns.

The nature-based expeditions will take small groups of no more than 72 passengers to explore the pristine outer reefs and lesser-known islands of the Great Barrier Reef under the guidance of an expert team, including a Master Reef Guide.

■ coralexpeditions.com

Let's go wild

Celebrating its 30th birthday, Wildlife Habitat in Port Douglas has opened some new attractions.

The popular wildlife park has launched Rainforest Habitat to give guests an authentic feeling while they spot birds and native animals from the exciting new Licuala Tower and Birdseye Bridge.

The attractions add to the recently completed Nocturnal Habitat, Predator Plank and two new aviaries.

■ wildlifehabitat.com.au

Putting music on the table

Queensland's longest-running folk festival returns for a socially distanced weekend of live music on October 23-25.

The Tablelands Folk Festival will be staged in the picturesque heritage village of Yungaburra.

This year musicians, singers, songwriters, poets and bands from across the state will grace the stage on the Atherton Tablelands for a totally local event.

■ tablelandsfolkfestival.org.au



Oaks Cairns Hotel rooftop bar



Flynn, a Crystalbrook Collection Resort.

Up on the roof

Enjoy the best views of the lagoon from Oak & Vine, the rooftop bar of the newly-opened Oaks Cairns Hotel in the heart of the city's Esplanade.

The cocktail bar serves Nikkei cuisine, a unique blend of Peruvian ingredients crafted with Japanese techniques, and showcasing local produce in dishes like snapper ceviche and baby pork spiced ribs.

■ oakshotels.com/en/oaks-cairns-hotel

Dive, dive, dive

Children aged eight and over can learn to dive with Seal Team, a five-week PADI scuba diving course run by Divers Den.

The Seal Team does an 'Aquamission' once a week at the renovated training centre in Cairns. The program follows on from the popular Scuba Kids program launched in June.

■ diversden.com.au/dive-courses/padi-seal-team



Divers Den Seal Team

It's raining history

Interactive signage including 3D effects and spinning totems bring to life the story of the world's oldest rainforest at the Daintree Discovery Centre.

The centre's Canopy Tower has undergone a makeover to add to the experience of passing through all levels of the rainforest on the aerial walkway.

■ discoverthedaintree.com

Going green

Turtles often join in the annual Great Adventures Green Island Ocean Swim with 1.5km and 3km events as well as a shorter 500m swim for children and novices.

Registration for the event on October 18 includes your transfer to Green Island where you can spend the day exploring the only coral cay on the Great Barrier Reef with a rainforest.

■ green-island.com.au/oceanswim

Sign of the times

Bilingual signs featuring Kuku Yalanji language are being installed in the Douglas Shire to highlight the region's rich Indigenous culture.

Visitors will learn the local name for places like Cape Tribulation, which is known as Kulki, through the Indigenous Language Signage Program, a partnership between Douglas Shire Council and Jabalbina Yalanji Aboriginal Corporation in Australia's only eco-certified destination.

■ douglas.qld.gov.au

Animals after dark

Cairns Aquarium has launched Aquarium by Twilight showing how animal behaviour adapts from day into night.

Offering exclusive after-hours entry, the ecologist-guided tour takes visitors through 10 tropical ecosystems to observe fish, amphibians, insects and reptiles adjusting to the onset of dusk.

A three-course dinner at the onsite restaurant Dundee's is included.

■ cairnsaquarium.com.au/cairns-holidays

Trees release me

Daintree Ecolodge has 'elevated' their rainforest tree houses to a new level of luxury with a makeover of the bayans.

The Lagoon Bayans have a private screened balcony looking out on to the rainforest and the Rainforest Bayans have a private outdoor bathtub where the sights and sounds of the world's oldest rainforest can be enjoyed.

■ daintree-ecolodge.com.au

We're onamission

Paddle, run and mountain bike through the World Heritage areas of the Cassowary Coast in the Ona Mission Multisport Adventure on October 25.

Run Mt Kootaloo on Dunk Island and the wide sandy beach of Mission Beach, ride through the world's oldest rainforest and paddle in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park for an adventure in nature's playground.

■ ccmclub.org.au/events/onamission



Daintree Discovery Centre

To infinity and beyond

International travel may still be some way off, but we can all still dream. And let's face it, we're all going to need a long holiday once the pandemic is over.

So what better place to imagine yourself than in a fabulous infinity pool with a cracking view. Here, we look at some of the best offerings at various Secret Retreat properties across Asia.

▲ Sanak Retreat, Bali, Indonesia

This property is perfectly placed for romantic retreats or family getaways, offering countryside, mountains, volcanoes, waterfalls and beaches.

The rich surrounding nature and peaceful traditional lifestyle of the neighbouring villagers allows guests to relax in luxury while also getting to know the local culture and ways of life.

With 11 traditional yet luxurious bungalows including one-bedroom, two-bedroom and three-bedroom configurations (one with private pool), the hotel accommodates guests from solo travellers through to families.

The infinity pool provides views of the verdant rice fields extending to the mountainous horizon beyond.

▲ Mathis Lodge, Bali, Indonesia

Located among nature and set between the mountains and the sea, this property is in the Tuban Valley, which at 400m above sea level overlooks the Lombok Strait and the Seraya volcano.

Sitting on 80 hectares, the boutique lodge's 30-metre infinity pool looks down the valley towards the ocean, enjoying a truly commanding view of sea and sky thanks to its vantage point within this hanging valley.

Views from the all-day dining restaurant, which features a sundeck, terrace and bar, are also panoramic, while guests can enjoy sea and mountain views from each lodge's balcony sofa and day-bed.

▲ Tiger Mountain Pokhara Lodge, Nepal

Perched 300 metres above the Pokhara Valley in central Nepal, the pool at Tiger Mountain Pokhara Lodge looks across to Machapuchare or Fishtail Mountain in the Annapurna Massif.

It is perfectly located for pre- or post-Himalayan treks, with trained and informative staff on hand to take guests on local treks and day walks to explore local communities, go birdwatching, or just relax in a typical Nepalese rural setting before returning to the lodge for a poolside sundowner.

The boutique lodge places responsible conservation tourism at the heart of its ethos.

The Island Lodge, Mekong Delta, Vietnam

This 12-room lodge is set on Unicorn Island, a home to a quiet community of fruit farmers in the heart of the Mekong Delta.

Located 90 minutes' drive from Saigon, Island Lodge makes for a perfect contrast to the busy and dynamic city, a place to unwind and explore the unique ecology and communities of the Mekong Delta.

The airy main building houses a bar/lounge, a French-Vietnamese restaurant and a patisserie while there is also a spa, sauna and Jacuzzi.

Showcasing river views, eight guestrooms are located on the first floor and with two, two-bedroom pavilions within the lodge's tropical garden.

◀ The Glenburn Penthouse, Kolkata, India

This discrete, elegant residence located in the heart of historic Kolkata enjoys memorable views of the historic city centre from the rooms and verandahs, and is filled with antique Bengal colonial furniture and art.

The drawing and dining rooms are adorned with Hindustan wallpaper depicting scenes from days gone by of rural India.

Enjoy panoramic city views from the infinity pool which looks across to the Victoria Memorial. The terraces echo the homely yet grand interiors and are set with vintage fans, white wicker furniture, tropical plants and marble floors.

The River Resort, Champasak, Laos

This eco-friendly resort on the banks of the Mekong River in the south of Laos features 28 spacious villa-style guestrooms and two infinity pools with panoramic views.

The owners and team at the resort take sustainable and responsible travel seriously, managing their property's impact on the local environment in detail.

Guests can enjoy the verdant, naturally landscaped parkland and 400 metres of Mekong riverscape.

Lao Poet Hotel, Vientiane, Laos

Set in the heart of the capital of Laos, Lao Poet offers a fresh take on a city hotel, drawing inspiration from 1930's Indochine design interspersed with modern, creative touches.

Previously the site of the home of a well-known Laotian poet, it comprises 55 guestrooms and suites spread out over eight floors, each with a unique and special touch.

The rooftop infinity pool comes with a bar and offers views overlooking the Mekong River and the city.

■ secret-retreats.com



CULTURE WITH A CAPITAL G

John Gerrard's Mirror Pavilion. Photo courtesy Colm Hogan

DESPITE THE disruption caused by COVID-19, Galway 2020 European Capital of Culture is back with a re-imagined program.

From now until March 2021, more than 350 artists from Galway and across Ireland will take part in a series of arts and cultural events celebrating the creativity for which the west of Ireland region is renowned.

The new program will offer both live and digital components, ranging over 28 projects and hundreds of events that continue the original theme of 'Language, Landscape and Migration'.

Highlights will include the unveiling of **Mirror Pavilion**, an installation by Irish artist John Gerrard, which was commissioned by Galway International Arts Festival for Galway 2020.

With three sides and the roof clad in a highly reflective mirror and a fourth wall a high-resolution LED screen, the installation is a striking structure.

Promising dazzling moments and experiences on the Wild Atlantic Way landscape, Mirror Pavilion will host artwork at the 4,000-year-old Derrigimlagh Bog in Connemara (October 11-31).

The re-imagined program will also feature **Macnas**, the internationally

acclaimed performance and spectacle company, who will bring a dramatic new interpretation of the world's oldest story to Galway.

The legend of Gilgamesh is an epic tale following a young king as he embarks upon a quest for answers to humanity's fundamental questions about love, power, death and immortality.

Gilgamesh's adventures will unfold across Galway city, county and online, and will see Macnas elevate its signature style to challenge the boundaries and possibilities of traditional theatre and storytelling – outdoors, indoors and at *Macnas.com*

Major Irish theatre company **Druid** will return to perform live in the fields, woods and gardens of Coole Park, a nature reserve that was once the home of Lady Gregory, dramatist, folklorist and co-founder of Dublin's famous Abbey Theatre.

Performed by a company of 12 actors and musicians, and directed by Garry Hynes, *Druid Gregory* (until October 17) will include six of Lady Gregory's one-act plays in a tribute to, and an animation of, her life and works.

This will be followed by a four-

week tour through the towns and communities of County Galway and will include unique one-off outdoor performances at Kylemore Abbey and other landmark sites in the area.

Further online elements will be announced to enable overseas audiences to experience Galway at its best.

■ galway2020.ie/ireland.com

IN BRIEF//

One in four Australians can claim Irish ancestry and there are resources available to check out if you have similar genealogy.

A good starting point is the Irish Government website (*irishgenealogy.ie*), which has records of births, baptisms, marriages and burials from a number of counties.

The National Archives website contains early 20th-century census returns while *rootsireland.ie* has more than 20 million records from the various county genealogy centres on the island of Ireland.



Six tips to a great escape

Winter Upper Hot Springs, Banff. Photo courtesy Noel Hendrickson

Canoeing, Bow Lake

Snowboard, Lake Louise. Photo courtesy Reuben Krabb

BANFF NATIONAL Park is showcasing health and wellness tips, encouraging international visitors to plan ahead for when borders open.

From outdoor pursuits in impressive landscapes to wellness workshops, visitors can enjoy a relaxing and rejuvenating holiday among the pristine wilderness that is abundant in the Canadian Rockies.

Here are the top six wellness and escapism activities to plan for when visiting the region:

1. Pamper yourself with a relaxing spa treatment at the luxurious Willowstream Spa at the Fairmont Banff Springs, which recently underwent a \$3.5 million renovation.

2. Under the expert guidance of Forest Fix, immerse yourself in the sights, sounds and scents of Banff National Park while embracing the simple mindfulness practices that come with forest bathing, EcoYoga and guided hikes.

3. Learn how to become more calm and content through Fairmont Chateau Lake Louise's new Summer Weekend Wellness Workshops. Available to hotel guests only, the workshops are led by two local wellness leaders in Alberta.

4. Alleviate stress and find your inner Zen by participating in a rooftop yoga class at Banff's newest yoga studio, Banff Yoga Practice.

5. Nourish the mind, body and soul by paddling on Lake Louise or Moraine Lake in Banff National Park, absorbing the stillness and silence surrounded by forest pine.

6. Relax, rejuvenate and renew by staying in a wilderness cabin or alpine hotel. Watch the sunset from a mountaintop or simply sip a coffee and admire the inspiring vistas of Banff and Lake Louise.

■ banfflakelouise.com/travel-information

LIGHT UP YOUR HOLIDAY

APT HAS introduced a new Northern Lights small group experience with summer departures for 2021.

The 12-day 'Intimate Rockies & Northern Lights, Vancouver to Yellowknife' tour is priced from \$14,995 per person twin share and includes a super deal air credit of \$1,000 per couple when booked before December 31.

The tour is inclusive of three consecutive nights in Yellowknife, known for its clear skies and flat topography, optimising the chance of capturing clear views of the famous Northern Lights.

Travellers will be in a prime location for viewing the Northern Lights in a private 'ViTeepee' at Aurora Village.

"We saw significant demand for our Winter in the Rockies & Northern Lights tour in 2019 which lead us to expand the touring range to include summer dates," said Mladen Vukic, GM Product, APT.

"The city of Yellowknife is situated underneath the auroral oval so by staying here for three nights our guests will have one of the best viewing locations for seeing the lights of anywhere in the world.

"During summertime people may be lucky enough to also see the beautiful fall colours as well as the majesty of the aurora dancing across the lakes - all while avoiding the winter chill."

■ aptravelgroup.com



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. In which U.S. city was pop star Madonna born?

- a. Baltimore, Maryland
- b. Bakersfield, California
- c. Bay City, Michigan
- d. Birmingham, Alabama

2. Where was the 2015 Rugby World Cup held?

- a. England
- b. South Africa
- c. Australia
- d. France

3. What river flows through Rockhampton in Queensland?

- a. Lachlan
- b. Paroo
- c. Warrego
- d. Fitzroy

4. Where are the Reichenbach Falls, made famous in the Sherlock Holmes books?

- a. Germany
- b. Switzerland
- c. Belgium
- d. Austria



5. The city of Yakutsk in Russia holds which world record?

- a. Coldest city on earth
- b. Wettest city on earth
- c. Least sunshine of any city on earth
- d. Smallest population on earth

6. Where in the Pacific would you find Campbell Island?

- a. Samoa
- b. Tahiti
- c. New Zealand
- d. Tonga

7. Legendary explorer Vasco da Gama is buried in which European city?

- a. Madrid
- b. Paris
- c. Lisbon
- d. Cadiz

8. Which is the only nation to use six colours in their flag?

- a. South Africa
- b. Turkmenistan
- c. Dominica
- d. Zimbabwe



9. Golfer Vijay Singh was born in which Pacific Islands nation?

- a. New Caledonia
- b. Solomon Islands
- c. Fiji
- d. Papua New Guinea

10. Which of these Scottish cities is furthest north?

- a. Inverness
- b. Aberdeen
- c. Edinburgh
- d. Ullapool



11. In which country will you find Narita Airport?

- a. China
- b. Japan
- c. Malaysia
- d. Vietnam

12. What is Australia's smallest capital city?

- a. Canberra
- b. Darwin
- c. Hobart
- d. Adelaide



13. The Petronas Towers can be found in which Asian city?

- a. Kuala Lumpur
- b. Hong Kong
- c. Shanghai
- d. Bangkok

14. Juan Valdez is a brand of coffee associated with which country?

- a. Mexico
- b. Brazil
- c. Venezuela
- d. Columbia

15. In which country is the largest hospital in the world?

- a. Taiwan
- b. India
- c. America
- d. Serbia

For more quiz action, head to our website www.traveltalkmag.com.au or look out for *Traveltease* every Thursday.

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

We're all in this
Traveltalk
TOGETHER



Lake MacQuarie