

Australia's favourite travel news magazine

# Travel *talk*

WWW.TRAVELTALKMAG.COM.AU DECEMBER 2022

## SPECIAL FEATURE

A tale of  
three cities

## CRUISING

First look at  
super ship

## SKYTALK

What's it like  
to fly first class?

# COMPETITION!

## WIN A TRIP TO NEW ZEALAND

*Plus:* How to climb Kilimanjaro and the new hot spot in Indonesia

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Climbing Kilimanjaro was on STEPH OVENDEN's bucket list for seven years. But as she soon discovered, conquering the highest peak in Africa is not for the faint-hearted.

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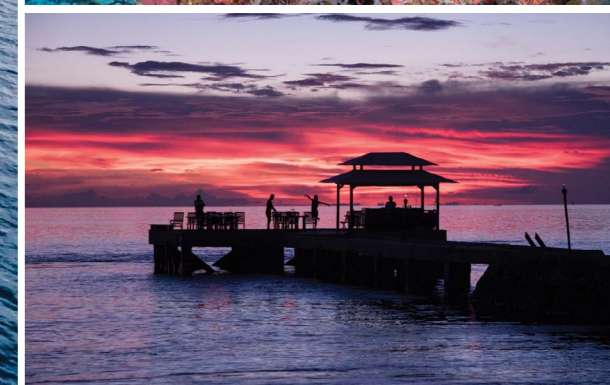
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## An experience without equal

At Wakatobi, we take great pride in providing the ultimate in exclusive and personalised service. Our dive staff and private guides ensure your in-water experiences are perfectly matched to your abilities and interests. While at the resort, or on board our luxury dive yacht Pelagian, you need only ask and we will gladly provide any service or facility within our power. For all these reasons and more, Wakatobi takes top honors among discerning divers and snorkellers.

"Simply put you can't have a better experience! Everything is about service and maximizing your diving and snorkelling. The dives were amazing, and all the staff are first class. At Wakatobi they will accommodate any request, but you hardly need to make any since they have thought of essentially everything."

Dr. Jim and Laurie Benjamin



www.wakatobi.com



## Straight to the heart

AVALON HAVE hosted a group of Australian travel agents on a famil sailing through the heart of the south of France.

Eight senior leaders from Flight Centre Travel Group (FCTG) were welcomed aboard the company's 'Active & Discovery on the Rhone' itinerary.

Hosted by Mitch Spencer, Global Account Manager for Globus family of brands, the group experienced firsthand Avalon's signature Suite Ships.

"I've been to France several times, but on this voyage, we were able to visit remarkable ancient villages that I wouldn't have otherwise thought to visit," said Allie Sparr, Global Head of Brand and Marketing at Flight Centre Travel Group Independent.

"I would highly recommend Avalon Waterways to anyone considering a river cruise."

Itinerary highlights included cycling through Camargue Regional Nature Park to spot flamingos, taking a painting workshop to mimic Van Gough in Arles and sampling local sips in an underground cave wine tasting in Avignon.

"What I love about river cruising and Avalon Waterways is having options to do it my way, I can relax or be as active as I like," said Clinton Hearne, Global Head of Marketing, Flight Centre Travel Group.

» [avalonwaterways.com.au](http://avalonwaterways.com.au)

## Time to swan about

SWAN HELLENIC has launched a trade incentive offering agents the chance to win a cultural expedition cruise.

The promotion is a three-way celebration, marking Swan Hellenic's return to the seas, relaunch on the Australian market and first ever cultural expedition cruises of the Kimberley.

"This initiative is a way to cement our commitment to our valued Australian travel advisor community," said Brigita Devries, Swan Hellenic Pacific General Manager.

"We look forward to providing all the support they need to make the final months of the year special."

The travel advisor completing the most customer bookings with Swan

Hellenic by the end of the year will win a cruise in a stateroom for two to explore the Kimberley or North Sulawesi and the Philippines.

"Helping their clients exceed their dreams, they'll have a winning chance to experience Swan Hellenic's extraordinary expeditions firsthand, seeing what others don't."

» [swanhellenic.com](http://swanhellenic.com)



## WINNERS ARE CASHED UP

THE WINNERS of Brand USA's recent *Da\$h for Ca\$h* agent training program initiative have been revealed.

The USA Discovery Program, Brand USA's official agent training platform, is designed to equip agents with a comprehensive knowledge of the USA.

For the chance to win one of five fortnightly \$100 prizes or the grand prize of \$500, agents were required to complete training badges on a variety of U.S. destinations and themes.

Anne Parkinson from iTravel Peshurst in New South Wales was the grand prize winner of a \$500 gift card.

Winners of the fortnightly \$100 gift card were Josie McPaul, Bayview Travel, Sandra Brasier, Helloworld Berwick, Rochelle King, Helloworld Travel Highton, Callum Teague, TripADeal and Shardai Jutila, RACQ Travel.

"We are thrilled that so many new agents took part in Brand USA's latest incentive," said Clinton White, Director for Australia and New Zealand, Brand USA.

"The depth and diversity of the U.S. is so incredible, and the Brand USA Discovery Program is a valuable tool that helps agents sell to their clients."

» [usadiscoveryprogram.com.au](http://usadiscoveryprogram.com.au)



Q1 What is the name of the world's first sleep pods that Air New Zealand will be introducing in 2024?



Kate Walsh from Wauchope Travel in New South Wales



## FAMIL IS SOMETHING SPECIAL

TOURISM IRELAND hosted a group of Australian travel agents on a famil across the north and south recently.

The participants were all 'Ireland Specialists' who'd taken part in Tourism Ireland's virtual training series during 2022.

The group visited Kilkenny, Limerick, Clare, Galway, Fermanagh, Tyrone, Londonderry and Belfast.

"There really is no substitute for being able to come here and experience what Ireland has to offer at firsthand," said Sofia Hansson, Tourism Ireland's Manager Australia and New Zealand.

"Our aim is that when they return home, the travel agents will be even more enthusiastic about the destination, helping to secure a greater share of their business for Ireland in 2023 and beyond."

"I fell in love with Kilkenny, Irish cream and the food," said Kate Walsh from Wauchope Travel in New South Wales.

"A top tip is to do a food tour wherever you can, you get history, local knowledge and the best local foods all in one."

» [Ireland.com](http://Ireland.com)

## SHOWCASE REVEALS SOME BIG AUSSIE INTENTIONS

OUTRIGGER HAVE staged a week-long global showcase in Australia, their first visit here in more than three years.

Events were held in Brisbane, Melbourne and Sydney to share property news with more than 300 industry guests.

Executives and hotel representatives from Hawaii, Fiji, Thailand, Mauritius and the Maldives showcased the company's recent news and next phase of reinvestment and growth.

Of particular interest was the announcement that Outrigger is actively looking to come back to Australia with a beach resort.

Sean Dee, Chief Commercial Officer, Outrigger, revealed that Australia is currently the number two source market for the company in the world.

"Our mission is still to be the premier beach resort company in the world," he said. "But without you we don't have guests. So thanks for your support all these years."

» [Outrigger.com](http://Outrigger.com)



## THE PRIZE GUYS

TWO WINNERS have each walked off with a seven-night all inclusive holiday to India following a successful Aussie roadshow.

Staged by Kerala Tourism, the events were held in Sydney and Melbourne for wholesalers, tour operators and agents.

Guests learnt about some of Kerala's product offerings such as its backwaters, cuisine, beaches, ayurveda and responsible travel.

New product highlights include Keravan Kerala; caravanning as a new way to experience Kerala and Jatayu's Earth Center, a new tourism destination which holds the distinction of having the largest bird sculpture in the world.

Ash Ladha from Payless World Travel took out the prize in Sydney while Ashley McGough from Intrepid Travel was a winner in Melbourne.

» [keralatourism.org](http://keralatourism.org)



Ashley McGough from Intrepid Travel (centre)

## IN BRIEF///

THE AUSTRALIAN Federation of Travel Agents has announced a plan to appoint custodians to shape and champion the National Travel Industry Awards.

The custodians will act as advisors in lending their expertise and skills to guide the celebration's development each year.

"NTIA has always been about celebrating and recognising the best in our industry," said Dean Long, AFTA CEO.

"The decision to appoint NTIA custodians is an important and meaningful evolution of travel's night of nights.

"We are committed to ensuring NTIA continues to be the pre-eminent awards program."

» [afta.com.au](http://afta.com.au)

## Narelle makes next choice to join group

TRAVELLERS CHOICE is further expanding its national network with another independent business joining the group. Established by owner Narelle Cook in 2008, Next Travels is in Cessnock in New South Wales.

"Like other businesses, I lost all my staff during COVID and I am now struggling to attract them back to the travel industry," said Narelle.

"In the meantime, I'm working seven days a week. I don't think that situation is going to change soon, which means I need to be generating the maximum output I can with a minimum of resources.

"Joining Travellers Choice was an obvious decision for me because I'd seen the backup the group extended to all of its members before, during and after the pandemic."

Narelle added that she was particularly attracted by the group's technology solutions, including booking platform TC One, which offers members access to a vast range of content and the ability to incorporate a powerful B2C booking engine into agency websites.

» [travelagentschoice.com.au](https://travelagentschoice.com.au)



Narelle Cook from Next Travels in Cessnock, New South Wales

## New site helps you cover more

COVER-MORE HAS just launched a new website for consultants which bundles up travel insurance and agent resources in one spot.

The *Cover-More Connect* site includes a 'What type of traveller are you?' quiz to help agents better understand their customer's travel needs as well as their own travel style.

"We understand wading through insurance options with customers can be onerous and time consuming," said Todd Nelson, Cover-More Managing Director Australia.

"It for this very reason we developed a user-friendly solution to cleverly and quickly connect agents with the most relevant information for their specific customer."

On the site, travel agents will find:

- \* Sales tools and guides on topics including what activities are covered by Cover-More's policies



Todd Nelson, Cover-More Managing Director Australia

- \* Answers to common questions about travel insurance

- \* Information about planning travel with COVID-19 regulations in mind and true travel stories.

"Travellers trust their agents to plan their trips of a lifetime, it's an exciting project and they want to have fun while doing it," added Nelson.

"Cover-More Connect supports this process and is an easy way to present the best options to protect their journey."

» [covermoreconnect.com.au](https://covermoreconnect.com.au)



## PORTAL TO A ROYAL PRIZE

ROYAL CARIBBEAN are giving agents the chance to win a \$500 gift card in celebration of their revamped trade partner portal.

On the new portal, called Club Royal, users can expect to find resources to support a client's booking journey, including booking support, marketing toolkits, exclusive offers, deployment releases, training and news.

Dave Humphreys, Director of Sales for Royal Caribbean AUNZ, said that supporting frontline agents is a priority and providing the tools consultants need is central to Club Royal.

"We've relaunched Club Royal with the needs of Australian agents front-of-mind," he added.

"We've created a single portal where agents can answer questions and access resources to sell Royal Caribbean more effectively."

To celebrate the launch, both new and existing Club Royal members can win one of five \$500 Visa gift cards.

To enter, agents over 18 must sign up to Club Royal and complete a short form available on the website, describing in 25 words or less why they love Royal Caribbean. The promotion runs until December 19.

» [ClubRoyal.com.au](https://ClubRoyal.com.au)

## WIN A \$5,000 HOLIDAY

AGENTS HAVE the chance to win a \$5,000 holiday package as part of a new sales incentive running until next June.

To be in the running, use the 'Book Now' feature on the Entire Travel Group (ETG) website, which features more than 350 pre-designed, independent holiday packages.

Every booking made between now and June 30, 2023, will generate an entry into the incentive.

The agent who makes the most bookings during the seven-month incentive period will receive \$5,000 to spend on a holiday package to any of the 28 destinations featured on ETG's website.

The release of the new incentive follows a revamp of the company's website, which saw the introduction of a range of new features that make it even faster and easier to book pre-designed, independent holiday packages.

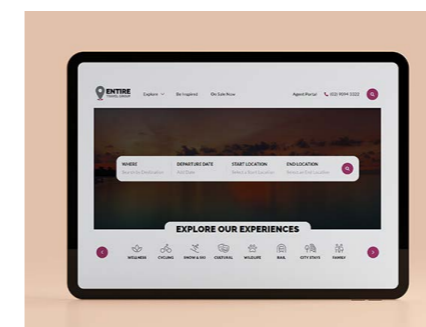
A key feature of the new-look site is its advanced search functionality, which allows travel agents to quickly filter packages by destination, date, or start/finish city.

In addition, agents can now click on unique icons to explore packages organised into a wide range of 'experiences'.

The revamped website continues to give agents the freedom to control prices thanks to the inclusion of Entire Travel Group's Change Agent Sell Price (CASP) feature.

Using CASP, agents can determine the final price for any packages, enabling them to add a service fee, reward a valued customer with a discount or simply drop the price to close a sale.

» [entiretravel.com.au](https://entiretravel.com.au)



## ALL'S FARE ON COMMISSION

NORWEGIAN CRUISE Line has announced it will pay travel advisors commission on non-commissionable fares (NCF).

The company is the first major contemporary cruise line to compensate travel advisors on NCFs for reservations booked outside of the 120-day window.

As part of the brand's 'Partners First' philosophy, NCL provides agents with educational tools, promotions and marketing assets to help them grow their businesses.

"Our Partners First philosophy remains top of mind and our decision to pay commission on NCFs is further proof of our commitment to this community," said Harry Sommer, NCL President and CEO.

"We want our partners to thrive; we want to see their businesses grow all around the world."

The payment of NCFs will go into effect on January 1, 2023, for new reservations made 120 days prior to sailing for cruises departing May 1, 2023, and forward.

To qualify for the NCF commission, travel advisors will need to submit a marketing plan to their NCL sales support team by December 31.

"Our travel partners are incredibly important to us and our business; it is a true partnership," said Damian Borg, Director of Sales, NCL AUNZ.

» [ncl.com](https://ncl.com)

## IN BRIEF///

FLIGHT CENTRE will re-open 35 of its stores nationwide in the coming months after the COVID pandemic forced the global travel agency to place a significant portion of its network into hibernation in 2020.

Brent Novak, Flight Centre Australia General Manager, said a nationwide recruitment drive was underway to fill vacancies in the re-opening stores.

The company currently has 179 travel consultant vacancies and 25 store team leader vacancies.

"Our people are our greatest asset – and our stores are where we get to showcase our travel expertise and form lasting relationships with customers," said Mr Novak.

Once the 35 stores are brought out of hibernation, Flight Centre will be serving customers in 338 stores throughout Australia.

» [flightcentre.com.au](https://flightcentre.com.au)

## NEW CULTURE CLUB OFFERS TOP PRIZES

AN AUSTRALIAN TV personality has just launched her own adventure and tourism business.

Jessica Johnston is the brains behind Club Culture, an online deal site which claims to be Australia's only female-owned travel trade promotions company.

The new business offers people the opportunity to be part of a club (max. 10,000) that provides tourism and adventure experiences as well as member benefits.

The company is also establishing its own community giving organisation, Cultured Hearts, aimed at supporting those in need.

"Club Culture is going to completely reshape and reimagine how people access and enjoy adventure activities and experiences," said Jessica, who appeared in the TV show *Hunted*.

"In addition, Club Culture will offer members giveaways, prizes and discounts from hundreds of Australian brands.

"It will operate on a membership-only basis to ensure we are able to deliver the most exciting deals straight into people's inboxes."

» [clubculture.com.au](http://clubculture.com.au)

Jessica Johnston



## PETS ARE A TURKISH DELIGHT

LOOKING TO travel abroad with your favourite furry friend? Then Turkish Airlines may be your best bet.

Research carried out by Airport Parking Reservations analysed airlines across the world on factors such as the diversity of pets allowed onboard and pet transport costs, to reveal the world's most pet-friendly airlines.

Turkish Airlines came out top with a pet travel score of 7.13/10, charging the least for the transportation of cats, dogs, ferrets and small songbirds, with prices ranging from \$8.15 to \$24.46.

All Nippon Airways came second, allowing a maximum of one pet per passenger on flights, although the airline will transport mammals and birds in cargo, and up to nine distinct species are permitted.

The top 10 was Turkish Airlines, All Nippon Airlines, Spirit Airlines, Sichuan Airlines, Japan Airlines, China Eastern Airlines, Emirates, Air China, Alaska Airlines, Southwest Airlines and JetBlue Airways.

» [airportparkingreservations.com/blog/pet-friendly-airlines](https://airportparkingreservations.com/blog/pet-friendly-airlines)

## HAPPY COUPLES SHUN NUPTIALS DOWN UNDER

AUSTRALIA HAS failed to make the top 10 in new research into where people most want to get married around the world.

Wedding finance experts at *money.co.uk* analysed Google search data to discover the most popular place that couples want to tie the knot.

According to the results, India is the hot place for weddings, topping the search in 38 countries. Australia, Canada, Fiji, Jamaica, Mexico, New Zealand, the USA and Singapore are among the countries searching for weddings in India the most.

Italy is the second-most Googled place for a destination wedding, topping the search list in 28 countries, including Cambodia, France, Greece, Northern Ireland, Scotland, Sri Lanka, Sweden and Thailand.

Turkey and Nigeria are tied in the third position as they both come out on top in 12 countries, while France follows closely with 11 countries searching for weddings there.

The top 10 is rounded out by Greece, Morocco, The Maldives, Hawaii and Portugal.

» [money.co.uk/getting-married/where-the-world-wants-to-get-married](https://money.co.uk/getting-married/where-the-world-wants-to-get-married)



## Caddy joins the team

Siti Hadijah Arifin, fondly known to many as 'Caddy', is the new Deputy Director of Tourism Malaysia Sydney. As she settles into the job, we ask her some searching questions about life, work...and airplanes!

**Q: What was your first ever job and what did you learn from it that you still use today?**

**A:** Citibank. Every day we learnt new things and never stopped learning.

**Q: What's the first thing you do when you start a new position?**

**A:** Get to know my team and what they need to know about me... hehehe!

**Q: What advice would you give someone wanting to start a career in travel?**

**A:** Have passion and love what you do or else it won't go anywhere.

**Q: What has the pandemic taught you about yourself?**

**A:** That you shouldn't take things for granted. Be kind to people and express your love to those you care about in life often because sometimes they might be gone the next day.

**Q: Aisle or window seat and why?**

**A:** Window so I can catch the landing moment.

**Q: Where are you most looking forward to going, now we are travelling again?**

**A:** New York City is always my dream destination, but Malaysia is where my heart belongs, especially now when I am far from the people I care about in life.

**Q: What's the first thing you do when you get into the office?**

**A:** Switch on my laptop and go straight to my email.

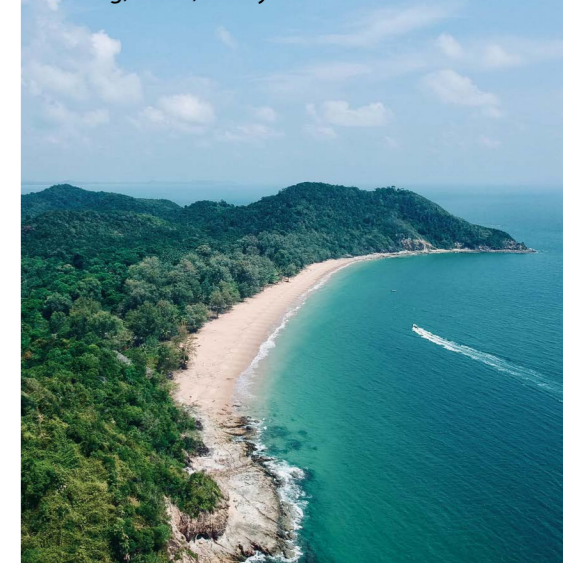
**Q: Where are your favourite spots in Malaysia and why?**

**A:** Johor, my hometown, where I can enjoy my favourite coffee stop and famous food, biryani rice.

» [malaysia.travel](https://malaysia.travel)



Sibu Island, Pulau Sibu, Mersing, Johor, Malaysia



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# Welcome to a modern marvel

Norwegian Cruise Line's newest super-ship will tick the boxes of even the most hesitant cruisers, writes JENNY ROWLAND.

NORWEGIAN CRUISE Line took the brave decision to continue building the groundbreaking *Norwegian Prima* when the pandemic hit – a gamble at the time perhaps but one which has proven serendipitous.

*Traveltalk* was invited onboard *Prima's* maiden sailing from Galveston in Texas, bound for Mexico on a four-night adventure and for a ship of its size, four nights is nowhere near enough.

*Prima* is a marvel of modern oceangoing engineering. From its generously proportioned staterooms, expansive outdoor deck space and \$6m curated art collection, it's the kind of "spaceship" every cruiser desires.

The sheer size of this vessel is off the charts but happily style hasn't become a victim of scale.

There are so many things to do, see, eat and experience onboard, leaving you with the recurring daily question of 'where to start'?

For all its grandeur, *Prima* is not trying to compete to be among the world's largest cruise ships.

With a comfortable 1,646 staterooms onboard, the ship is largely uncrowded in most places and we certainly felt like we had our space.

Inside, Oceanview and Balcony cabins make up the majority of course, with 18 suites for those looking to splurge.

## WHERE TO SLEEP

My balcony stateroom felt incredibly new and well appointed, with a queen bed that converts to two singles as desired, a sitting area with a sofa and floor-to-ceiling glass windows opening onto the balcony.

*Norwegian Prima* boasts the largest variety of suites available at sea and for the ultimate holiday base camp, consider the ultra-premium The Haven.

It's a 'ship within a ship' concept offering more spacious staterooms and suites, accessed only to guests staying within it.

Perks include a personal escort onboard at the start of your voyage and priority access to virtually everything on the ship requiring reservations, such as specialty

restaurants during the busiest dinner times or the best seats at the theatre. It's like the ship is yours.

Guests enjoy a personal concierge and 24-hour butler along with an exclusive restaurant, sun deck and lounge bar: it's the perfect escape when you need your own space. Some might say I'd 'died and gone to haven!'

## WHERE TO EAT

Eighteen different restaurants might sound like par for the course for a modern-day cruise ship, but then you throw in the enormous Indulge Food Hall (a.k.a. the aptly named buffet) which throws at you a further 11 different cuisines and what appears to be another 100 or so dishes.

Consider Indian, Spanish tapas, Oriental-inspired noodles, hearty American spit roast, plus fresh salads and of course, Mexican.

Should the evening call for a more structured and refined approach there are several restaurants more in line with a fine-dining epicurean experience.

Savour some classy French gastronomy at Le Bistro, stylish Italian at Onda by Scarpetta, the Hasuki Japanese grill, hearty Cagney's Steakhouse, Mexican at Los Lobos or fusion style at Food Republic, there's a five-star meal to get your night going.

## WHERE TO PARTY

When it's time to let your hair down, *Prima* offers phenomenal activities for all ages, beginning with 'The Rush' and 'The Drop' - the fastest slides at sea. But things get even faster at the *Prima* Speedway, an evolution of the go-karting attraction first unveiled in 2017 on *Norwegian Joy*.

What began across two decks has now expanded to three on *Prima* and wow, these karts are a white-knuckle thrill ride that gets the adrenaline pumping.

On a more serene level, the Ocean Boulevard is a 4,000-square-metre outdoor walkway which wraps around the entire ship. Wander among the multi-million-dollar outdoor sculpture garden at The Concourse for one of those more reflective moments that we all need from time to time, especially when cruising.

Undoubtedly my absolute favourite thing onboard was the spellbinding live entertainment, found across

numerous venues. World class acts and shows – each of which holding their own against the best Broadway-style productions anywhere in the world – take to the stage each night to captivated audiences and all included in the ticket price.

Now while we were treated to an irrepensible performance by *Prima's* own Godmother – the wonder that is Grammy Award winner Kelly Clarkson – unfortunately she doesn't live onboard, so don't expect her to be part of your entertainment line-up.

Clarkson's performance was in fact a special feature of the ship's launch and also part of Norwegian's 'Giving Joy' campaign, which recognises teachers for the meaningful work they do every day.

Clarkson was an appropriate choice as she is herself a Texan whose mum is a schoolteacher.

What you will find, however, is an equally enthralling musical production set to the tunes of the incomparable Donna Summer, which trumped every other show I've seen this year (and I'm a bit of a theatre buff).

You also can't miss the Fleetwood Mac tribute band, which performs in the Syd Norman Pour House. You could have fooled me if you'd told me Stevie Nicks herself was onstage. There were rumours...if you catch my drift.

## WHERE TO RELAX

If your body is a temple (and even if it needs some renovations), the Mandara Spa will awaken senses you didn't even know you had.

With a Thermal Suite Pass you'll marvel at the two-storey indoor waterfall and the first ever charcoal sauna at sea.

Couple that with a session in the salt and steam room and the innovative ice room for use post-sauna or steam bath and you'll wander out in a daze which will last for days.

## WHERE TO CRUISE

Spells in Florida for the well-trodden Western Caribbean path await *Prima*, as does New York in early 2023 for a short series of cruises to Bermuda.

In May 2023, she will chart a course back across the Atlantic to spend next summer in Europe, offering one-way

sailings between Southampton and the place where it all began, the Icelandic capital of Reykjavik.

## A THOUGHT ON DISEMBARKING

If you want a world class holiday with Norwegian's largest accommodations, immersive entertainment, indulgent relaxation and incredible culinary experiences, *Prima* will make a 'Cruiseaholic' out of even the most rusted-on landlubber.

[ncl.com](https://www.ncl.com)



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**NORWEGIAN PRIMA**  
1 DEC 2023



**14-DAY ICELAND:**  
REYKJAVIK & BELFAST FROM LONDON (SOUTHAMPTON)  
**NORWEGIAN PRIMA**  
17 SEP 2023





# HOW TO SEE THE WORLD

AZAMARA HAS released details of its '2025 World Voyage', visiting 37 countries around the globe.

Taking place on the independent cruise line's latest ship, *Azamara Onward*, the itinerary will include 15 overnights and 31 late stays in port. The 155-night journey will begin in San Diego and end in Southampton.

"Our 2025 world cruise invites travellers to not only see the world, but also take their time in each destination and make memories that will last long after the journey has ended," said Carol Cabezas, President of Azamara.

"With 60 per cent of ports on this sailing being different from those on our 2024 world voyage, this itinerary was carefully curated to give even the most well-travelled guests a new perspective on the world."

Destination highlights will include Hawaii, Samoa, Tonga, Sydney and Stewart Island, New Zealand's southernmost island. This unspoilt destination has less than 500 inhabitants and is home to the Rakiura National Park, which features coastal rainforests, sand dunes, mountain ranges and native wildlife.

The voyage offers more than \$25,000 in exclusive amenities, including \$4,000 in onboard credit, an additional \$3,000 for shore excursions, roundtrip business class air travel, a premium beverage package for two and weekly laundry service.

» [Azamara.com/WorldVoyage](https://www.azamara.com/WorldVoyage)

# THE SUN WILL SHINE IN 2024

THE NEWEST, largest and most innovative Princess Cruises ship will make her debut voyage in February 2024.

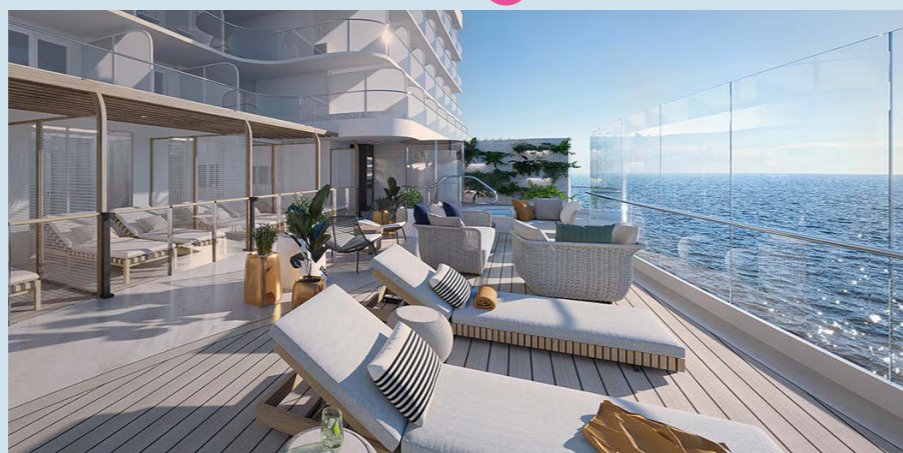
The inaugural cruise of *Sun Princess* will be a 10-day 'Grand Mediterranean' sailing with departure options in Barcelona, Rome and Athens.

The 175,500-ton vessel will boast expansive venues, contemporary entertainment and multi-storey dining rooms. Her maiden voyage will be on February 8, 2024, with additional

Mediterranean sailings through September 2024.

"When you dream of the Mediterranean, you immediately think of sunshine, endless blue water views, colourful and distinctive architecture, incredible cuisine, engaging locals and romantic settings," said John Padgett, President, Princess Cruises.

"It's a perfect match having our



new *Sun Princess* debut in this scenic region because so much of our design inspiration for this next-generation ship comes directly from these iconic destinations."

The 'Grand Mediterranean' cruise features calls in Mallorca, Sicily, Athens, Kusadasi, Santorini and Naples.

» [princess.com](https://www.princess.com)



# A RETURN TO ASIA FOUR SURE

SILVERSEA HAS confirmed its return to Asia with four ships scheduled to sail in the region over the next six months.

The 596-guest *Silver Muse* became the cruise line's first ship to sail in Asia since March 2020 when she departed Singapore on December 2. She will be joined in the region by *Silver Shadow*, *Silver Whisper* and *Silver Spirit*.

Highlights of Silversea's season will include calls in Sri Lanka, Hong Kong and Vietnam, combining opportunities for deep travel to both cities and lesser-visited destinations.

"Asia has long constituted an important sailing region for Silversea Cruises and our guests are eager to return to this enriching, rewarding continent with us," said Barbara Muckermann, Chief Commercial Officer, Silversea Cruises.

The season, which comprises 25 voyages that range from 10 to 20 days, includes a Singapore to Mumbai sailing aboard *Silver Spirit* from March 8 to 24.

Destinations will include Phuket, Chennai, Trincomalee, Colombo, Cochin, New Mangalore, Mormugao (Goa) and Mumbai.

» [silversea.com](https://www.silversea.com)



# EXTRA CHANCES TO MAKE A DATE

VIKING HAS announced a further release of 2024 dates on some of its most popular expedition voyages.

These include the 2024 Longitudinal World Cruise over 65 days from Ushuaia to Milwaukee in February 2024.

Other itineraries with new departure dates include the eight-day 'Undiscovered Great Lakes', eight-day 'Niagara and the Great Lakes' and eight-day 'Great Lakes Explorer'.

The company has also announced the introduction of additional benefits for all 2023 and 2024 Longitudinal World Cruises.

Guests who book before December 31 will receive the Silver Spirits

Beverage Package, complimentary visa services, an additional \$US1,000 per person in shore excursion credit for any optional land programs and \$US1,000 per person in shipboard credit which can be used toward optional tours, spa services, onboard shops and beverages.

"I just love the clever design of our vessels which means that there are so many viewing areas throughout the ship; whether you are outside relaxing on the stunning Finse Terrace, in your stateroom or having dinner, you don't have to miss a thing," said Michelle Black, Managing Director Viking ANZ.

"This considered design feature has also proved extremely popular with our guests that have sailed onboard during our inaugural expedition sailing seasons in Antarctica and North America's Great Lakes with demand for 2024 driving this further release of dates."

» [vikingcruises.com](https://www.vikingcruises.com)

## IN BRIEF///

CRUISE LINES are preparing for an industry-wide switch to shoreside electricity as part of a commitment by Cruise Lines International Association (CLIA) to pursue net-zero carbon cruising by 2050.

"Sydney is set to become the first port in the southern hemisphere to offer shoreside electricity at the end of 2024, but we need more ports and governments around the world to commit to the infrastructure needed to support renewable energy use at berth," said Joel Katz, CLIA Managing Director Australasia.

» [cruising.org.au](https://www.cruising.org.au)

Q2 What was the name of the cabin that Air New Zealand announced earlier this year?



# I'll be back says agent

TRAVEL CONSULTANT Camilla Manson (above) says her recent trip to North America won't be her last after taking part in a cruise famil.

The Personal Travel Manager from Kingscliff in New South Wales was part of a group travelling to Canada and Alaska with Holland America aboard *MS Zuiderdam*.

"Having never been to this part of North America before, the entire week was an incredible learning experience for me," said Camilla.

"There is so much on offer and I'm excited to be able to pass on my firsthand knowledge of this amazing destination to my customers."

Manson was accompanied by her husband on the seven-day self famil cruise from Vancouver.

"The Inside Passage, Skagway, Juneau, Ketchikan and especially Glacier Bay blew me away – from its wild coastline to its incredible wildlife, it is so worthy of its World Heritage status and needs to be protected at all costs."

» [hollandamerica.com](https://www.hollandamerica.com)

» [travelmanagers.com.au](https://www.travelmanagers.com.au)

# TIME FOR A SOLO ACT

AWARD-WINNING tour company Two's a Crowd has just released two new sailings for solo travellers.

Guests can choose from a 13-day all-inclusive Budapest to Strasbourg river cruise departing October 6, 2023, and an eight-day Fiji ocean cruise from September 2, 2023.

The European cruise is held aboard the two-deck sailing vessel, *MS Douce France*. The fully refurbished vessel offers 66 cabins and two suites, a restaurant, lounge bar with dancefloor and sundeck.

On the Fiji cruise, guests will explore the Mamanuca and Yasawa

Islands onboard the five level, air conditioned, *MV Reef Endeavor* which can accommodate 62 solos.

Prices start from \$6,495 for the European adventure and from \$3,997 for the Fijian sailing.

» [twosacrowd.com.au](https://www.twosacrowd.com.au)



MS Douce France



## The Oceania is calling

OCEANIA CRUISES has unveiled its 2024-2025 'Tropics and Exotics Collection' of itineraries.

The new selection includes 157 voyages, spans seven continents and has sailings ranging from seven to 200 days. It also features more than 300 ports of call, with 14 new stops in off the beaten path destinations.

"This new collection of itineraries showcases iconic ports of call along with a wealth of opportunities to explore corners of the globe nearly untouched by tourism," said Howard Sherman, President and CEO of Oceania Cruises.

"With seven brand new or better-than-new ships, the journey will be just as rewarding as the destinations."

Destination immersion is another key element of the collection with a wide variety of voyages focused on singular destinations such as the Amazon, the coastal villages of Brazil, the Arabian Peninsula, Japan and an epic circumnavigation of Australia.

For those seeking to chart a course less travelled there are in-depth explorations of Indonesia and Papua New Guinea and the yacht harbours and tiny atolls of the South Pacific.

Another highlight is an early-spring traverse of the North Pacific that combines Japan's northern prefectures with the rugged Alaska outposts of Dutch Harbor, Kodiak and Whittier.

» [oceaniacruises.com](http://oceaniacruises.com)

## GREG HEADLINES ARCTIC GIG



RENOWNED EXPLORER Greg Mortimer (pictured) will lead an Arctic voyage aboard the state-of-the-art polar ship that bears his name.

The founder of Aurora Expeditions will join guests for the 'Across the Arctic Circle' sailing on the *Greg Mortimer* from Scotland to Norway.

Departing Aberdeen on May 16, 2023, the 15-day expedition will visit the Orkney and Shetland Islands, sail along the Norwegian coast and explore Bear Island and Svalbard before arriving in Longyearbyen on May 30.

"I can't wait to bathe in that exquisite Arctic light once again. It's been a while," said Greg Mortimer, OAM.

"This time it will be even more surreal, being on a ship with my own name on it. I look forward to seeing you there."

The 'Across the Arctic Circle' expedition is priced from \$21,095 per person for an Aurora stateroom twin share.

Meanwhile the company has revealed their latest ship, the *Sylvia Earle*, is on her way to Antarctica to commence her inaugural season on December 10.

» [auroraexpeditions.com.au](http://auroraexpeditions.com.au)



GUESTS ABOARD *Scenic Eclipse* have been part of the world's first submersible night dive to see one of nature's rarest events.

The event took place in Mexico aboard the luxury ship's submarine *Scenic Neptune*.

The Diel Vertical Migration is the largest vertical migration on Earth and involves the movement of millions of quarter-inch long fish larvae, making a 300metre and hour-long ascent in search of food.

The public have never had the opportunity to experience this historic moment, taking place during the 14-day 'Baja and Costa Rica Discovery' sailing, which departed in September.

"We were given rare permission to undertake the night dive, providing our guests a once in a lifetime opportunity to be surprised and delighted with this unique underwater viewing," said Jason Flesher, *Scenic's* Director of Expedition Operations.

"On the dive guests saw baby fish, lobsters and eels, all of which were just millimetres long. It was a truly unrivalled experience."

*Scenic Eclipse* is currently sailing in South America before travelling to Ushuaia to commence her Antarctica season, led by the 20-member Specialist Polar Discovery Team.

» [sceniceclipse.com.au](http://sceniceclipse.com.au)



## Going above and beyond

CELEBRITY CRUISES' newest and most luxurious ship has set sail from Fort Lauderdale, kicking off her inaugural Caribbean season.

Headlining the festivities for *Celebrity Beyond* was the ship's official naming ceremony, led by her Godmother Simone Biles, a 19-time World Champion, seven-time Olympic medallist and most decorated American gymnast in history.

"I can think of no one better to be the Godmother of this incredible ship than the G.O.A.T. herself – Simone Biles," said Jason Liberty, President and CEO of the Royal Caribbean Group, the parent company of Celebrity Cruises.

"Simone's determination, progressive nature, empowered attitude and grace in the face of challenges make her such an inspiration to so many around the world."

Biles officially named *Celebrity Beyond* in a ceremony attended by 2,500 guests and media, capped by a live performance from award-winning singer and songwriter, Leona Lewis.

Ms Biles follows Reshma Saujani of Girls Who Code and Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Malala Yousafzai, who previously inaugurated *Celebrity Apex* and *Celebrity Edge* respectively.

» [celebritycruises.com](http://celebritycruises.com)

## Host with a tale to tell

BEST SELLING author Diana Gabaldon (pictured) will host an Avalon Storyteller cruise on the Danube in 2024.

The creator of the *OUTLANDER* series will spend a week aboard a Suite Ship giving fans a unique insight into the creation of the storylines.

Cruise along the Danube through Germany, Austria, Slovakia and Hungary – stopping at some of Central Europe's most renowned capitals and towns along the way.

"In April 2024, guests are invited to join Diana in Prague for a memorable two-night stay – including visits to *OUTLANDER* film sites from season two of the STARZ series," said Pam Hoffee, President of Avalon Waterways.

"For a week, this renowned storyteller will share an inspired cruise – and daily excursions – with an intimate group of her fans, participating in an onboard book-signing, Q&A and dinners."

Godmother of the *Avalon Tapestry*, Gabaldon has hosted two other fan cruises for Avalon guests while serving as the inspiration for the company's Storyteller Series of cruises.

Other celebrity hosts have included authors Cheryl Strayed, Gillian Flynn, Candace Bushnell, Christopher Moore and band, Sister Hazel.

» [avalonwaterways.com.au](http://avalonwaterways.com.au)



## Very warm welcome back after two years

PORT VILA has been given a boost as Vanuatu welcomed its first international cruise ship after more than two years of border closures.

With more than 2,000 passengers onboard, P&O Australia's *Pacific Encounter* was greeted by a group of traditional warriors blowing Bubu shells, singing ladies, handicraft vendors, transport drivers, government officials, cruise industry stakeholders, diplomatic officials and other



partner agencies.

The newly elected Prime Minister, the Honorable Alatoi Ishmael Kalsakau Maukoro, officiated the welcome ceremony, opening the proceedings by speaking to the assembled crowd and passengers.

"The cruise industry represents an important sector in our economic development and today marks another beginning for our recovery," he said.

Throughout the morning, Port Vila came to life to accommodate guests. The Mama's handicraft and Port Vila main markets were in full swing and cruise passengers, aviation tourists and locals were seen perusing the crafts and vibrant local food selection.

Transport providers, local tour operators and shore expedition companies were all smiles as they greeted visitors before whisking them off to spend the day around the island visiting popular spots such as Eden on The River, Eton Beach, Blue Lagoon, Mele Cascades, the Vanuatu Jungle Zipline and Back to Eden Vanuatu.

» [vanuatu.travel](http://vanuatu.travel)

» [pocruises.com.au](http://pocruises.com.au)



## LET'S GET A LITTLE WILD

AN AUSSIE company is looking to expand its collection of environmentally sustainable and off-grid self-contained accommodation.

Into The Wild Escapes offer guests the chance to switch off from everyday life and reconnect with nature and loved ones. So far, some 40,000 guests have enjoyed an escape with the company in rural Australia.

Their properties were originally designed as tiny homes catering for two to four guests and set in remote locations in regional NSW, Queensland, South Australia, Victoria and most recently in Tasmania.

Each property is constructed on private land, in cooperation with farmers, growers and land holders



around the nation's most picturesque regions.

As part of the experience, the precise address and directions are revealed to guests a few days prior to check-in and location branding is kept to a minimum to ensure peace and privacy.

The number of properties in the collection across the nation is 45 but company founders, friends and business partners Celeste Giannas and

Natasha Weir want to expand to more than 500 properties in the coming five years.

"Although visually our brand is entering a new chapter, our mission remains the same: to support regional communities while offering guests the many benefits of getting off the grid and rewilding," said Celeste.

» [intothewildescapes.com](https://intothewildescapes.com)

## COMING TO YOUR SENSES

SIX SENSES has revealed plans to open its first property in Australia, promising the elegance of a grand estate.

Located 40 kilometres from Melbourne, the Burnham Beeches development in the Dandenong Ranges will have a self-sufficient approach when it opens in mid-2025.

The 22-hectare estate has a three-storey heritage mansion which is one of the finest examples of domestic Art Deco in Australia.

Once transformed it will offer 43 guest accommodations and hospitality venues, including a welcome lounge and terrace, a restaurant with outdoor seating, a library bar and a rooftop retreat.

There will also be a separate two-bedroom cottage with interconnecting one-bedroom suite within the site's Hilltop Retreat. Adding to the guest rooms, the masterplan will incorporate a premium glamping offer to bring the total accommodations to 82.

"For Six Senses Burnham Beeches to be regenerative, it will not be a static place," said Neil Jacobs, Six Senses CEO.

"We'll evolve and respond to bring the rich heritage of Burnham Beeches to life, inviting moments of exploration, discovery, connection to nature and delight through interactive gastronomy, wellness and sustainability experiences."

» [sixsenses.com](https://sixsenses.com)



## TIME TO SPICE THINGS UP

VISITORS TO a popular part of Australia now have a new option with a luxury property open to guests for the first time.

Nestled in the treetops of Flagstaff Hill in Port Douglas in Queensland, Villa Aman offers 180-degree views and is ideal for a family holiday, corporate retreat or private celebration. It is part of the Private Collection by Spicers.

Designed to suit up to eight people, it has four bedrooms, four bathrooms, a magnesium swimming pool, spa and several outdoor entertaining areas.

A stylish refurbishment of this architecturally designed home was completed in August, featuring artworks, generous sofas and furnishings.

Guests enjoy deluxe beds with bespoke Egyptian cotton bed linens, as well as Bemboka blankets and towels. There's also a fully-equipped gourmet kitchen, private driveway and gated entrance.

» [privatecollectionbyspicers.com](https://privatecollectionbyspicers.com)



MATT LENNON hitches a ride aboard an historic tourist attraction that offers a glimpse into a bygone era.

AMID A seemingly endless sea of serenity and sugarcane, a giant, hulking locomotive loudly chugging through suburban Cairns might seem out of place.

Not in the case of the Kuranda Scenic Railway.

In fact, as one of North Queensland's most revered tourist attractions, locals happily wave as it rolls on its daily return journey between downtown Cairns and the 135-million-year-old Daintree, the world's oldest rainforest.

Setting off around 8:30am each day, more than a dozen time-tested and heritage-listed carriages lurch through suburbia and the cane fields before beginning a winding, hour-long run into the MacAlister Range and through the rainforest to the village of Kuranda – 327 metres above sea level. Buffs of railways, décor and history will be in their element onboard the century-old timber rolling stock.

The royal red vintage Heritage Class interiors cater four to a row in opposing pews, each with red leather seats and wooden backboards.

On a warm day, as most tend to be in Cairns, the non-air-conditioned heritage carriages mean hydration is an absolute must, so bring plenty of your own water or fluids.

Seats are allocated in advance, so there's no guaranteeing whether you'll have an aisle or window view. Either way, expect an awkward jostling of the knees with your seatmates.

While Heritage Class carries a certain appeal, upgrades are also available to Gold Class, which features lounge-style chairs and a dedicated cabin steward serving morning or afternoon tea during the journey.

While these carriages also do not feature air-con, the extra space and individual seating is worth the investment.

Whichever way you ride, the journey up or down the mountain is a feast for the eyes. Audio commentary recounts the tale of how the railway came to be – a necessity to appease tin miners and settlers unable to obtain supplies from the coast via impassable tracks inland from Port Douglas.

Highlights of the journey include the crossing of Barron Gorge, with the backdrop of a thunderous waterfall in full flight making for amazing photographs.

Around 10 minutes from Kuranda, a brief stop at the oddly located Barron Falls "station" allows travellers the opportunity to scramble off to capture more images of the surrounding flora.

The train then pulls into Kuranda, where guests can spend a few hours wandering this small village where you can pick up souvenirs or wander among local markets.

There's a butterfly sanctuary, koala gardens and Birdworld, where you can wander among, feed and admire some colourful birds including a safe enclosure for one of the region's enormous (and often cantankerous) cassowaries. And of course, plenty of places to get something to eat and drink or an ice-cream to freshen up.

While the main railway terminal in Cairns is an option for departure, the Kuranda Scenic Railway collects most of its clientele at Freshwater Station, around 20-minutes north of the city itself.

If you're driving from Cairns, there is a carpark at Freshwater Station if you're catching the train in both directions. Transfers are also available between the station and the Skyrail Cable Car, where you can also park your car.

Located adjacent to the train station, the cable-car is your alternative mode of transport to or from Kuranda, if the train only catches your fancy in one-direction.

» [ksr.com.au](https://ksr.com.au)



## PUTTING LUCKY BUMS ON SOME EMPTY PRIZE SEATS

IT'S THE seat that nobody wants but now it could win you a unique prize in a \$230,000 promotion.

Virgin Australia is offering one-of-a-kind bar carts as part of the prize pool in a major middle seat lottery.

Valued at up to \$10,000 each and revived from their former life aboard a Boeing 737, the fully refurbished collector's items have been themed with custom installations and features like a disco ball, boombox speaker, TV projector, popcorn machine and drinks cooler.

"Last month we launched the Bring on Wonderful campaign, a foundation set to elevate every part of the customer journey – taking flying from the ordinary into the wonderful," said Libby Minogue, Virgin Australia Group Chief Marketing Officer.

"The Middle Seat Lottery is the first major customer innovation as part of this mission, giving guests the opportunity to win big by simply sitting in the middle seat.

"We worked to develop a \$230,000 pool of truly unique prizes and we're extremely proud to have items as special as these bar carts on offer – it really is a once in a lifetime opportunity for guests to win these wonderful prizes."

For a chance to win, guests need to enter the competition when they sit in a middle seat on an eligible Virgin Australia domestic flight in specific weeks during the competition period until April 23, 2023.

» [virginaustralia.com](http://virginaustralia.com)



## NO TASTE LIKE HOME

THERE WILL be something distinctly familiar onboard for locals when Australia's newest airline takes to the skies.

Bonza will be the first carrier to offer an entire menu sourced from its home country.

There will be more than 40 products – including many aviation firsts like non-alcoholic beer, banana bread waffles and a snag in a bag – all produced by small to medium Australian businesses.

With no trolleys onboard, travellers will have their food delivered directly to their seat after ordering on the Fly Bonza app.

Menu highlights include Saxbys range of soft drinks, a 158-year-old family business from regional NSW. Sunshine & Sons, and Ned Australian Whisky spirits can be mixed with tonic from Bickford & Sons, or travellers can grab a Preshafruit or bottled Nu-Pure water from Queensland.

"Our all-Aussie menu is something we are very proud of," said Carly Povey, Chief Commercial Officer at Bonza.

"Going all Aussie means we are supporting local businesses and their suppliers. It also means we are helping SMEs get exposure to new markets as the entire menu will be offered on all of our 27 routes."

» [flybonza.com](http://flybonza.com)

## IN BRIEF///

**Qatar Airways** have taken out the title of 'World's Leading Airline' at the 2022 World Travel Awards. It's the first time the carrier has walked off with the prestigious award in the event's 28-year history. Oman Air was announced as the best business class with Etihad celebrated for the best economy class.

» [qatarairways.com](http://qatarairways.com)

**Virgin Australia and Singapore Airlines** have resumed the sale of Virgin Australia codeshare flights to a host of destinations on Singapore Airlines' global network.

Customers are now able to book directly for seamless travel between Australia, Asia, Africa, Europe and beyond. The move is the next step in returning the carrier's partnership to pre-pandemic operations.

» [virginaustralia.com](http://virginaustralia.com) » [singaporeair.com](http://singaporeair.com)



Janine May

## When flying is a class above

We've all dreamed of maybe one day getting the chance to fly first class. JANINE MAY decided that celebrating a milestone birthday was all the excuse she needed. But was it worth the money?

ANYONE WHO says flying first class is overrated clearly hasn't done it!

I'm not sure what was more exciting: knowing that I was travelling to my destination first class aboard Emirates or the actual holiday.

My "Festival of 50" was a month-long jaunt around Europe with my husband to celebrate my 50th birthday, plus an opportunity to see the world after our long two years of COVID shutdown.

We have all missed travelling so we figured let's do it the "right way" and make it special. We work hard, we deserve it, you can't take it with you when you go...we have all said these things to ourselves, but I'm not going to justify it. We like travelling, we like the finer things in life, we are doing it!

I knew it was going to be special and this feeling started at 4am at Sydney Airport when we were whisked past hundreds of people waiting to check in.

What might have been an hour wait was three minutes of calm and fabulous service.

After ignoring the laser stares from the waiting queue, we proceeded to the Emirates lounge where I sat in peace and quiet with a coffee and light breakfast.

Again, all queues were avoided on boarding and we were quickly ushered "left" to our seats. The Emirates A380 is amazing and it was hard to find anything on this aircraft not to love.

The Emirates "pod" had everything you could possibly want. Your own personal mini bar, snack basket, TV, interactive seat controls, Bvlgari amenities and toiletries.

I loved having a shower on board, using all my Bvlgari amenities and Emirates pyjamas, then hopping into my bed made with sheets, pillows and duvet for a full eight-hour sleep.

Having another shower an hour from my destination ensured that I arrived fresh as a daisy, with no jet lag and able to start my day in London as if I'd only been travelling a few hours.

I felt great and the Emirates staff ensured that I felt special, not just a "number". Nothing was too much trouble for them, whether it was preparing a snack or a meal at any time during the flight.

Speaking of which, special mention must go to the meals, which were particularly delicious, presented beautifully and of restaurant quality.

I am a little embarrassed to list all my drinks and meals...no one could

judge me in my pod, but here goes.

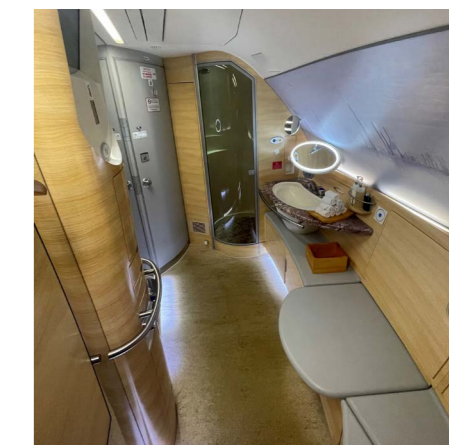
Champagne and warm nuts started the adventure and once we were up in the air, I chose a Porcini mushroom soup with sauteed chanterelles and crème fraiche.

I'm unsure how much time passed until I ordered a prawn cocktail, washed down with a summery cocktail. There were so many choices for mains it was hard to decide.

I was tempted by pan seared red snapper, Sicilian-style with nuts, celery and a currant vinaigrette and roasted veggies, but ultimately went with the seared beef tenderloin with tarragon and shallot sauce, steamed asparagus and potato gratin.

After one month away and currently cruising the Greek Islands I'm sad that my holiday is ending, but still excited knowing that the final leg home via Emirates first class is yet to come.

» [emirates.com](http://emirates.com)



# How to help Aussies in need

AUSTRALIANS ARE being invited to support the flood affected border town of Echuca on the Murray River with special offers on river cruises. Until December 15, Murray River Paddlesteamers is offering savings of 15 per cent for couples, a halving of the solo passenger surcharge to 30 per cent and free wine, souvenirs and gift vouchers for bookings made on three-, four- and seven-night cruises aboard the *PS Emmylou* in 2023 and 2024.

"Echuca and sister town across the river, Moama, have done it tough for the past three years through bushfires, the pandemic and now flooding," said Craig Burgess, Director, Murray River Paddlesteamers.

"But our local tourism industry is resilient, so we want to play our part in attracting visitors back to our beautiful region and the mighty Murray."

In 2023/24, the company will offer three-night 'Discovery' cruises along the Murray one-way from Echuca to Torrumbarry Weir as well as four-night 'Explorer' cruises one-way back to Echuca.

Guests also able to combine the different itineraries to create new seven-night 'All the Rivers Run' journeys round-trip from Torrumbarry Weir.

Carrying just 16 guests, powered by a restored 1906 steam engine and refurbished with deluxe cabins and ensuites, the boutique *Emmylou* featured in the hit 1983 TV mini-series, *All the Rivers Run*, starring Sigrid Thornton.

[psemmyloucruises.com](http://psemmyloucruises.com)



## GET THEE OFF TO EUROPE

BUNNIK TOURS have released their 2023 Europe brochure, their first print regional brochure since 2019.

Featuring three new itineraries, the 2023 program spans across Europe and also features tours in the United Kingdom and Ireland.

"We know a lot of Aussies are keen to get to Europe next year, so we have expanded our range," said Dennis Bunnik, joint-CEO Bunnik Tours.

New to the program is the 20-day 'Italy on a Plate' small group tour along with an 11-day 'Georgia on a Plate' itinerary. Another addition is 'Helsinki to Prague', a 22-day tour from Finland to the vibrant capital of the Czech Republic.

[bunniktours.com.au](http://bunniktours.com.au)



Cappacodia, Turkey

## TOP TIPS ON NEW TRIPS

G ADVENTURES HAS unveiled new trips for 2023, including Mexico, Morocco and Iceland.

More than 20 new Active and Classic adventures that stretch from four to 12 days are now available to book.

Guests can take on Morocco's Mount Toubkal, trek Iceland's lesser-hiked southern coastline, sample authentic mole in Mexico's gastronomic heartland and experience the mountains of Bhutan.

"Our new Classic trips offer even more immersive, authentic experiences to travellers that give back to local communities, and our new Active trips capitalise on the continued post-pandemic trend to get out in nature," said Sean Martin, Managing Director for G Adventures in APAC.

Among the new tours is the 15-day 'The Many Sides of Mexico: Puerto Vallarta to Oaxaca'. Priced from \$3,399 per person, it takes travellers through interior Mexico, visiting towns and cities rich with culture.

Guests will also visit G for Good project Alebrijes Artisan Community in Oaxaca – a collective of local artisans that make intricate wood carvings that help support the local economy.

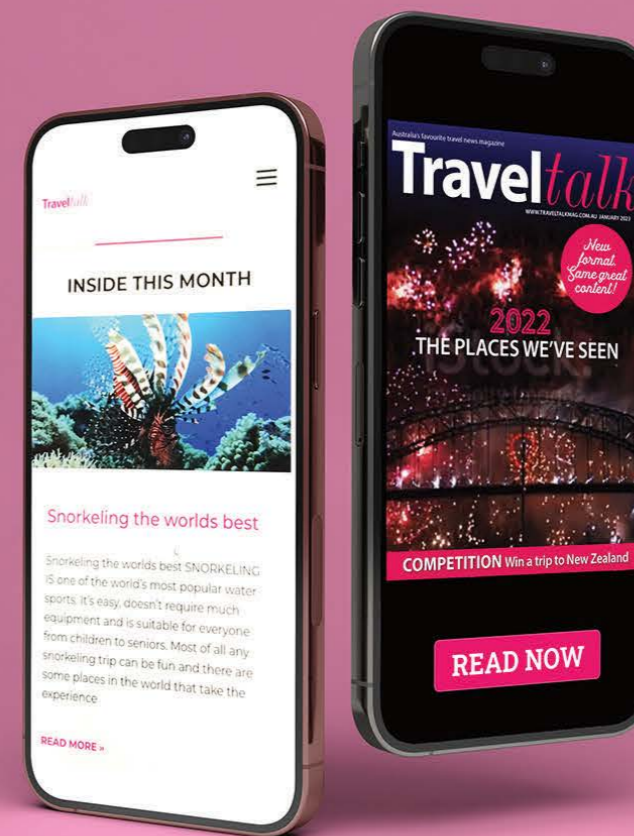
[gadventures.com/new-tours](http://gadventures.com/new-tours)



Iceland

# BIG CHANGES

It's smart.  
It's sexy.  
It's the business.



Coming to a screen near you.  
January 2023.



# SOARING TO NEW HEIGHTS

It's been a long time between get togethers for Travellers Choice, as MATT LENNON reports from their recent annual conference.

BREAKS OF more than 1,000 days between conferences is not a normal occurrence, but then, global pandemics that virtually shut down the world don't normally happen either.

Despite the three-year gap, the mood among more than 200 Travellers Choice member agents, management and partner suppliers at the company's first formal gathering since 2019 was jovial and the forecast optimistic.

As the world continues its march back to how we remember it, the word 'resilience' is used a lot to describe many people and many industries.

But as he opened the conference, Travellers Choice Managing Director Christian Hunter opted for a different word to sum up the atmosphere.

"There will be the chance for reflection on what has passed over the last two-and-a-half-years, a focus on opportunities that lie ahead and importantly, celebrating the fact that no matter what segment of the industry you work in, we are here.

"We are still breathing. We have survived the most challenging time in our sector's history and quite probably, the most challenging time

that our sector will ever face – and that alone is worthy of celebration!"

Appropriately, the theme of the Travellers Choice conference for 2022 was 'Never Normal', which Hunter said was perhaps the best phrase not just to describe the company as a whole, but both the journey the industry has been on and how life has changed irrevocably.

"It would be remiss of me to not acknowledge the resilience of our industry, but particularly of our membership," he continued.

"Each member is a small business. Family businesses that don't enjoy the financial backing of many others. They don't have the luxury of private equity funding or access to capital markets and their challenges were not just about keeping the business afloat, but literally putting food on the table, keeping a roof over their heads and kids in school.

"Their ability to survive the pandemic was down to their courage and determination, their creativity to seek out new business opportunities, their unwillingness to accept defeat and their absolute drive to focus on their customers' needs ahead of their own."



With that went the last formal mention of the pandemic for the entire two-day event as agents rekindled connections with suppliers who had also weathered the turmoil and with each other.

Meeting at Crown Promenade in Melbourne, the event consisted of presentations from partner suppliers along with sessions discussing matters such as the now universally accepted practice of charging fees for service.

Once the formal sessions were over, the conference also included two opportunities for agents to let their hair down, beginning with an immersive experience at Melbourne Skydeck, hosted by Journey Beyond.

Delegates were whisked off via virtual reality on an 11-minute showcase of the major events that make up the social fabric of Melbourne.

Then it was into the elevator for a ride 88 storeys up to the Eureka Skydeck, where food and drinks were served amid wraparound views of Melbourne.

The conference concluded the following evening at the same venue, albeit one floor higher still, with Travellers Choice hosting its 'Three Years in the Making' party.

A dress code of gold symbolised the achievement of the network over the past years and the bright future that lies ahead.

[travellerschoice.com.au](http://travellerschoice.com.au)

Q3 Avani Auckland Metropolis Residences is ideally located to visit Auckland Zoo. True or false?



## Where do we go from here?

In this exclusive article for *Traveltalk*, JOHN HART, Chair of Tourism Training Australia, reviews the recent Federal budget and reveals the huge challenges facing the tourism industry in 2023 and beyond.

THE FIRST Albanese Chalmers budget will serve travel and tourism, and the broader economy, pretty well for the rest of the financial year.

There is support for building inbound demand, investment in aspects of the traveller journey (at airports and in visa processing) and no horrible surprises that many in the industry were nervous about.

In both a tourism and in a general sense, we didn't get everything we wanted. This suggests the balance was about right, especially considering the upside from commodity prices were returned to the bottom line. This will serve us all well in future years.

It is important to consider this budget as a reset budget where the incoming Government had the opportunity to fund their election commitments and review the measures that the previous Government committed to in May.

The various commitments in the FY23 budget are sufficient to get us to July 23 but the real challenge is what comes after that when travel and tourism will be at the most critical point in the



John Hart, Chair of Tourism Training Australia

recovery from COVID-19 restrictions.

There is no hiding from the fact that the return to TAU (Travel As Usual) has been pretty lumpy.

Restarting systems for traveller security screening, visa processing, crewing and transfers have all had their challenges throughout 2022.

Most of these challenges are directly or indirectly related to workforce issues including COVID related shortages. These will take

some time to resolve. Future budgets will need to address these issues specific to travel and tourism.

We (the travel and tourism industry) need to be able to mount more cogent arguments around the need to make the traveller journey more efficient and more competitive with other destinations.

If we are to attract high value travellers to visit Australia and provide the service outbound Australian travellers expect, we need to improve the service offering at all points of the journey. In the out years of the budget there is not sufficient investment to make this a reality.

There were many budget issues that focussed on skills, including Fee Free TAFE places (at nearly \$1 billion). Travel and tourism needs many skilled staff right now. Most estimates place the vacancy level circa 170,000.

This magnitude of shortage means that the desperation of employers for warm bodies to provide service outweighs the need for those with skills to do the job. This will slow our effective recovery from COVID-19 restrictions.

Most estimates place the current level of recovery at 60-70 per cent of what it should be due to staffing constraints.

Our recovery is being stifled by our lack of overseas workers, locals that are prepared to work in our industry and the resilience and capacity of our existing workforce.

While we are all stepping up, we are all struggling to upskill new staff and bring on the next generation while dealing with the surge in demand.

A strategic approach to rebuilding the travel and tourism workforce is an absolute must for 2023 and beyond.

The critical aspects of this plan should be resourced through the Passenger Movement Charge. The collection of \$1.23 billion is not spent servicing travellers in and out of Australia (which was the original intention).

We must give travellers what they are paying for, especially when they are paying top dollar. Returns will follow with the right investment in the traveller journey.

[tourismtraining.com.au](http://tourismtraining.com.au)



Spiritual healer  
Bongi Thabede

# A tale of three cities

Authentic encounters with local people and cultures are the new black in travel. JON UNDERWOOD reports on three very different experiences to be found in Thailand, Malaysia and South Africa.

I WOULDN'T call myself a spiritual man. Usually, the only spirits I enjoy are those that come in a glass with a couple of ice cubes.

So, it was with a mixture of intrigue and scepticism that I met spiritual healer Bongi Thabede.

We arrive mid-morning at her modest home in the Durban township of Umlazi, home to some 400,000 people. It's already baking hot, yet she greets us wearing the immaculate red, white and black regalia of a Sangoma, a highly respected traditional and spiritual healer among the Zulu people.

As we sit on plastic chairs in her driveway, she tells us about her "calling."

A sickly child, Bongi started having dreams and visions at an early age but initially denied her calling, as her mother had done before her. She enjoyed a successful career in middle management until fate seemingly played a hand.

"My life was perfect; money was not an object and I did whatever I wanted to do. Then I lost everything – I was unemployed for two years."

Her elder sister introduced her to a friend who encouraged her to go through the initiation process to become a Sangoma. The rest, as they say, is history. Now she charges patients R100 (about \$AU9.) for an hour's consultation.

"My special talent is ensuring that people connect to who they are. I am not a medium, but I can tap into your paternal or maternal side and I can perceive messages that are coming through from them. That is what I do."

Later, Bongi invites us into her home to try Umqombothi, a traditional beer made from maize, yeast and water, among other things. I'd love to tell you it was delicious – let's just call it one of those things you should try once. She also puts on a spread, which IS delicious.

Despite my lack of spirituality, I found Bongi utterly charming, extremely funny and totally committed to her beliefs. In a world where mental health is now a major problem following the pandemic, who's to say she can't provide comfort in her own special way?

"People have lost so much and normal life is no longer what we are used to. There has been such a lot of change and we haven't had enough time to acclimatise ourselves to the change."

It would be easy for cynics to dismiss this divorced mother of three as a well-meaning but perhaps misguided individual. She's patently aware of this but has no room or time for animosity.

"I think we are scared of the unknown, but I don't need to be validated by anybody. I used to, but it destroys you as a person.

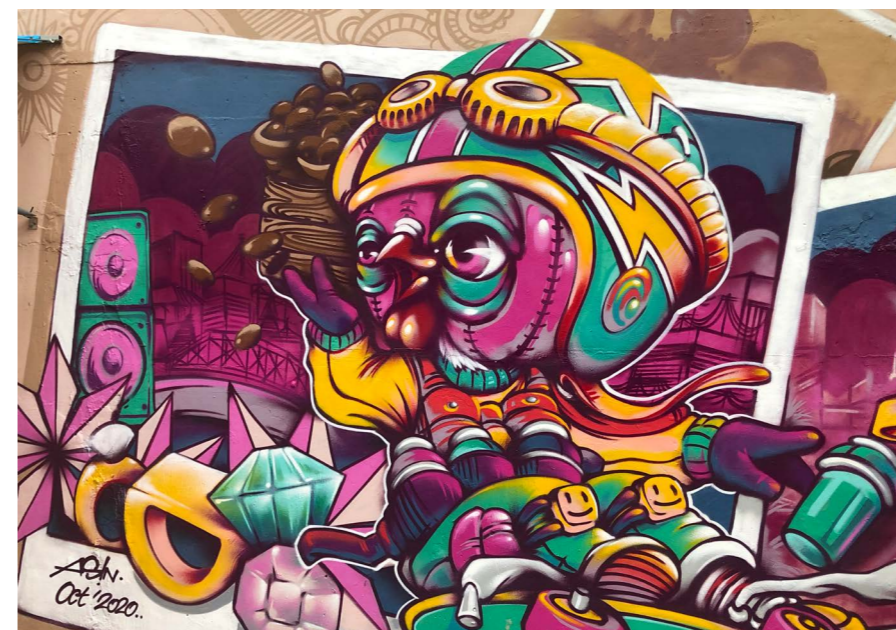
"It's not everybody's cup of tea. I can't force people to believe in what I believe in. That's not how we live in this world. We are free to believe in whatever we want to believe in. But I know that after they've tried everything, I am the last option.

"This is not a cloak that I put on and take off willy-nilly. I don't need anybody to confirm me, except my ancestors. Once my ancestors stop confirming me, that is when I'll be seriously worried."

I'll drink to that... just not with Umqombothi.

» [gladnessthabede@gmail.com](mailto:gladnessthabede@gmail.com)

» [southafrica.net](http://southafrica.net)



## One night in Bangkok

HERE'S A question for you.

At what point did good old-fashioned graffiti become street art? (Answers on an empty spray can, please...)

I mention this because in my travels I have seen this modern art form slowly emerge across the globe, in countries as far afield as England, Malaysia, the United States and Australia.

Now it's making its mark in Bangkok at the Ong Ang Canal project that joins Rattanakosin and Chinatown.

Rattanakosin was established as Thailand's capital in 1782 by King Rama I and the canal, which runs for more than 1,400 kilometres, was constructed on his orders. In the city it used to house a thriving business community but in recent years has fallen into disrepair, with empty homes boarded up, awaiting their fate.

Backed by the Governor of Bangkok, the restoration project features the work of some of Thailand's best-known street artists and is part of a project to turn this somewhat dilapidated district into a tourism and leisure hub.

These renowned paint jockeys include Alex Face, Bigdel, Pakorn & Asin, Bonus Tmc, Mauy & MSV, Alaii, Joker EB and other artists from Happening group (to be honest, I don't know who these guys are – I had to look this up!).

Before COVID, buskers, jugglers and all manner of entertainers would thrill the crowds who gathered here to eat at

a myriad of small restaurants and cafes lining the canal. That vibe is slowly returning and during my visit there was a definite buzz about the place.

Of course, the major drawcard is the murals and there definitely is something for everyone. Whether your taste is to the historical, the anatomical, the comical, the whimsical or the mystical, the colourful art works will delight, amuse and entertain in equal measure.

Being a history buff, I particularly enjoyed the images of a bygone era, when shopkeepers and cart owners would peddle their wares by the canal side. Looking at the pictures you really got a sense of what life must have been like here in 18th and early 19th century Bangkok.

Having strolled around the impressive open-air art gallery, you'll probably have worked up an appetite. Time to check out the street food and restaurants dotted along Khlong Ong Ang Art Walking Street.

If you love Asian food (and you'd be mad not to), this is definitely the place for you, with a nose-twitching aroma filling the air and making the tummy rumble. And the best bit? You can have an amazing meal for just a few dollars. (If you like Indian food, try Mama Restaurant, which I'm told serves some of the best in Bangkok.)

» [tourismthailand.org](http://tourismthailand.org)

### WHERE TO EAT

If street food or small, local eateries aren't on your menu, can I suggest you take a five-minute walk from Ong Ang and try Chom Arun in Phra Nakhon?

Here, you'll pay about \$20 to \$40 for a delicious Thai meal, but the main reason to come here is for the view.

With a rooftop setting, the restaurant offers cracking views of Wat Arun temple, which at night shines like a golden candle. You'll also witness all the action on the busy Chao Phraya River as party boats take revellers up and down the major waterway.

» [chomarun.bkk@gmail.com](mailto:chomarun.bkk@gmail.com)

### WHERE TO STAY

I love hotels that break the mould and dare to be different. Siam@Siam ticks both boxes...and many more besides.

Great rooms, a cracking rooftop space and a cosy café in the lobby. Funky, arty and fun, it's the kind of place that street artists would hang out in.

» [siam@siam.com/bangkok](http://siam@siam.com/bangkok)





# Turning tragedy into triumph

“NEVER LET a good crisis go to waste.”

That quote from Sir Winston Churchill back in the mid-1940s has often been repeated as we emerge from the nightmare of COVID.

In Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia's pulsating capital city, they've taken the advice and put it to good use.

Jalan Panggung is one of the oldest streets in the city, dating back to the 19th century. It sits on the southern part of Chinatown and pre-COVID was a somewhat seedy area frequented by ladies of the night.

Once the pandemic hit, however, the old crowd moved out. Cue a massive restoration and refurbishment program and now this is one of the places to hang out in KL, with a mass of cool bars, funky restaurants and cafes, and impressive street art.

I stumbled across it while dining at Panggung, a theatre-themed restaurant and bar that looks straight out of Baz Luhrmann's *Moulin Rouge!* movie. The cocktails were powerful and colourful, the food was yummy and fresh, and I loved the old movie posters adorning the exterior.

In the past I've thought KL lacked a bit of a heartbeat, being all about huge shopping malls and the famous Twin Towers. I'm pleased to report the patient is not only alive but thriving.

» malaysia.travel

## A REALITY CHECK

I must confess I'm not a big fan of video games, virtual reality and the like. Give me a good walk (preferably around a golf course) any day.

So, it was with a huge amount of scepticism that I visited VR Live in the My Town shopping mall. My mood didn't improve when it appeared that most of the VR games involved shooting, stabbing and generally eviscerating zombies.

Passing on *ZombieJail* and *Horror Hospital*, I opted for the child-friendly car racing game *Crazy Rush*... and was immediately hooked. This was my first VR gaming experience and I could totes see the attraction, as the young folk say.

Having finished a credible seventh I then fought to save the planet in *City Hero* before attempting an Indiana Jones-like adventure in *Azuwa*, which I failed to complete because I kept thinking I was going to fall to my death (trust me, it's that lifelike!). Clearly, I'm more Gerald Ford than Harrison Ford...

Like me, you may still be a little sceptical, but given VAR Live operates 17 such stores in 12 cities around the globe, it seems like this is the future. Expect to see one in Australia soon (you read it here first).

» var.live

## WHERE TO STAY

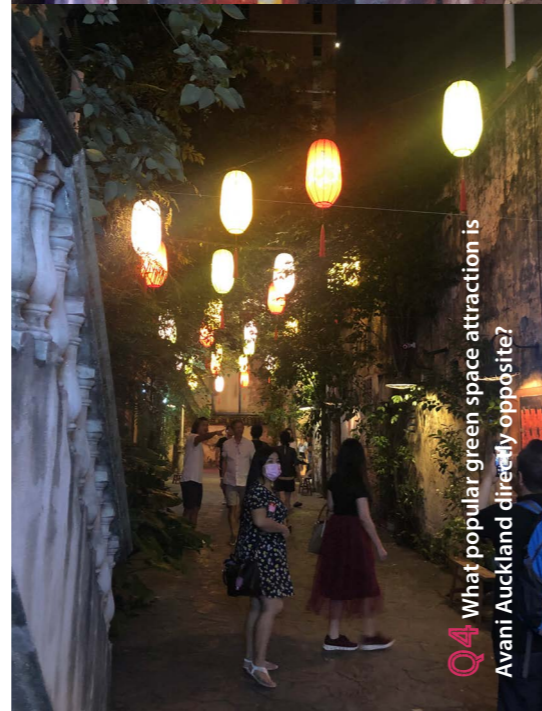
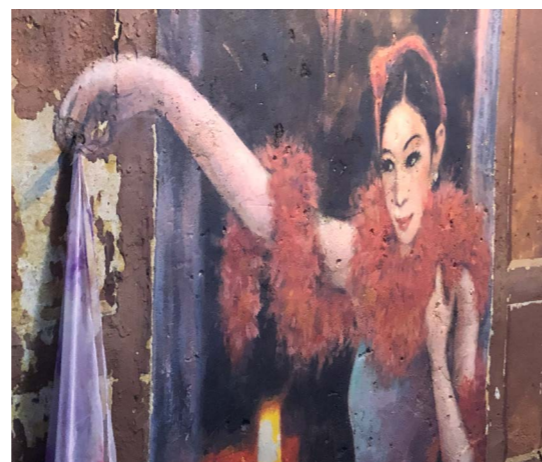
The **Shangri-La Kuala Lumpur** is one of those big, bustling Asian hotels that wraps itself around you like a comfort blanket as soon as you arrive.

It opened back in the 1980's but has been refurbished and modernised over the years to be the sleek, sophisticated and welcoming hotel you come to expect in this part of the world.

The property has 662 rooms – apparently the largest inventory in KL – and mine was incredibly spacious, with a super comfy bed, plenty of storage and an ample bathroom.

The variety of food on offer in the Lemon Garden was impressive – a colleague managed to have pizza, sushi and Malay food all in the one sitting. Arthur's Bar is a great place to hang out if you like your sports and if you're lucky enough to be invited into the Horizon Club, enjoy the experience.

» shangri-la.com/kuala lumpur



Q4 What popular green space attraction is Avani Auckland directly opposite?



# Reaching for the skies

The highest peak in Africa is not for the faint hearted. STEPH OVENDEN reports on her attempt to conquer 'Kili'.

IT'S WELL worth having a window seat if you ever fly over East Africa just in case you get a glimpse of the monster rising out of the clouds that is Mount Kilimanjaro.

At a whopping 5,895 metres, it is the highest peak in Africa and it also claims the title of the tallest free-standing mountain in the world.

I saw it for the first time seven years ago while flying to Malawi; climbing Kilimanjaro immediately went onto my bucket list and recently I had the chance to turn that dream into reality.

My group climbed with Trek2Kili, whom I would recommend wholeheartedly. They are KPAP-approved, which is an important detail for future climbers to check with the companies they choose.

Kilimanjaro Porters Assistance Project (KPAP) ensures that porters, cooks and guides assisting you on the mountain (on whom you will be completely reliant for the duration of the climb, trust me!) get fair wages and working conditions.

I really can't express in words how much these people did for us (although keep reading to see my attempt) so it's essential that you know they're being treated fairly while they help you accomplish what many

climbers will consider the biggest challenge of their life.

Our group (not including the Trek2Kili team, which was around 40 strong) consisted of 18 walkers including a volunteer medic.

The average age was mid-20's, although there were several people in their late 40's or early 50's. We were lucky to have a group that gelled immediately and the range of ages made for good entertainment in our evening charades sessions!

We followed the Machame Route; this can be done over a variety of days, with eight days being the longest and allowing the most acclimatisation (although it is also more expensive and naturally involves more nights of camping).

Our trek was over six days, with five nights camping out on the mountain. The porters carried the tents, food, water and everything else we needed to camp.

They also carried everybody's big hiking bags; we each just carried a smaller day bag containing water, snacks, sunscreen, extra layers etc.

We started out walking through rainforest spotting monkeys and bushbabies, but by the end of day four we hit the rocky terrain of Barafu

Camp, altitude 4,670 metres.

We just had time for a short nap before setting out at midnight to undertake the gruelling night climb to the summit.

I thought our guides and porters had been amazingly helpful so far, but their dedication to getting us to the top blew me away!

When all we could do was keep marching upwards in the dark looking at the feet of the person in front, they were chanting and singing, helping us get out our water (if it hadn't frozen) and generally giving us the energy we needed to keep going.

It was a long and cold night, but so worth it to see the sunrise over the glaciers and even more worth it to get a photo at Uhuru Peak.

Uhuru means "freedom" in Swahili, the native language of Tanzania, and it's easy to see why, standing up above the clouds with a view over what you've just achieved.

I was able to appreciate it even through the headache and nausea associated with altitude sickness!

The other words of Swahili you can expect to learn if you ever decide to tackle Kili are *pole pole* (meaning "slowly") and *hakuna matata* – well known from The Lion King to mean "no worries".

» Trek2kili.com

# Wakatobi resort delivers the ultimate island escape

PRISTINE CORAL reefs, spectacular sunsets, warm personal service, an idyllic natural setting, gourmet dining and ease of travel.

This is the Wakatobi plan for the perfect tropical vacation getaway.

This boutique beach resort earns consistent five-star guest reviews and is known as one of the world's premier destinations for diving, snorkelling, marine life and beachfront relaxation.

Wakatobi sits on a deserted beach on a small island in Indonesia's Banda Sea, providing visitors with a blissful "away from it all" atmosphere.

But though remote, the resort is quite easy to reach by way of private guest flights from Bali.

On arrival at Bali's international airport, travellers are met by Wakatobi's concierge team, which facilitates details of arrival and layovers, including hotel transfers and requested activities.

While awaiting morning flights to Wakatobi, guests relax in a VIP airport lounge. On arrival at the resort's private airstrip, the staff once again takes care of everything, leaving guests free to relax and enjoy lunch and beach time or prepare for an afternoon dive or snorkel excursion.

Wakatobi's iconic oceanfront villas and traditionally styled bungalows are set in a waterfront palm grove overlooking the coral reefs.

Accommodations provide a full suite of modern amenities and can

include special touches such as Asian-style outdoor showers, private plunge pools and oceanfront decks.

Guests are treated like honoured family members by an attentive hospitality team that takes pride in delivering the highest levels of personal service.

Many visitors have described the dining experience at Wakatobi as a highlight of their vacation. Meals are served in a beachside dining room with open and al fresco seating.

Each day the resort chefs prepare a diverse range of culinary offerings that include international and Indonesian favourites. The kitchen also accommodates bespoke entrees and fulfill special dietary requirements.

Directly in front of the resort beach is the House Reef, which many have called the world's best shore diving and snorkelling experience.

This expansive site stretches to either side of the resort and is available to divers and snorkellers day and night.

The site includes seagrass meadows and lively coral reefs that are home to thousands of species of macro marine life.

A fleet of custom-built dive boats provides daily access to more than 40 dive and snorkelling sites within Wakatobi's private marine preserve.

All boats offer expansive and fully shaded seating, large deck-level bathrooms, freshwater showers and

convenient water entries. In addition to exceptional diving and snorkelling opportunities, Wakatobi provides a relaxing atmosphere for a tropical beach vacation.

The resort is family-friendly, with nanny services and supervised children's programs. There is an on-site spa and a water sports centre offering kayaks, paddleboards, and seasonal kiteboarding lessons.

Guests can hike nature trails, take local island tours, enjoy private beachside dinners, hop a boat for an afternoon excursion to a deserted island and sample cultural programs such as Indonesian cooking demonstrations.

Wakatobi is also recognized as a global leader in private-funded conservation efforts. The resort's Collaborative Reef Conservation Program is funded by a portion of guest revenue.

This innovative initiative supports the marine preserve, sponsors mooring projects, makes direct lease payments to area villages and fishermen in exchange for honouring "no-take" zones and provides a full range of additional social benefits to the local community.

To learn more or book a visit to this idyllic destination contact:  
Linda Cash, Guest Experience Representative  
E: [linda@wakatobi.com](mailto:linda@wakatobi.com)

 [www.wakatobi.com](http://www.wakatobi.com)



## A name to remember

DANA BROWN uncovered more than she expected on an expedition cruise in Indonesia. Find out why she's now singing its praises from the rooftops.

YOU'VE MOST likely never heard the name Wakatobi roll off someone's tongue before.

You could even be forgiven for thinking the name sounds like somewhere you'd find in Japan.

But in reality, you'll find this tranquil paradise hidden far from the crowds in southeastern Sulawesi, Indonesia.

I discovered it by chance as I sailed on an expedition from Bali to Papua New Guinea on the inaugural voyage onboard *Heritage Adventurer*.

I had spied Wakatobi on the itinerary but to be honest, I overlooked it in a haze of excitement for some more well-known places like Komodo and Raja Ampat.

Silly me! Now I've had the opportunity to experience Wakatobi's aquatic wonderland firsthand, I'm singing its praises from the rooftops.

This is one of the reasons I fell in love with expedition cruising. It gives you a taste of an area and if you fall head over heels for the place like I did, you can start planting seeds to go back and spend time there in depth.

Now if this is not a sign, I don't know what is.

Onboard the ship I had the opportunity to spend time with Dr Thomas Bauer, who is the Team Leader for the Integrated Tourism Masterplan for Wakatobi.

While we only had one day on the ground (and underwater) in Wakatobi, I spent two weeks onboard probing Thomas with more questions.

What really stood out to me was that the destination is being developed as one of six up and coming must-visit regions in Indonesia.

This will help relieve pressure on the over tourism that is happening in certain areas in Bali and show how much more Indonesia has to offer.

Sadly, like many places over the past couple of years, flights have been drastically cut at the moment. I did find two workarounds though.

You can do what I did and visit Wakatobi as part of an expedition cruise. You still travel a significant distance but you don't notice because you're too busy enjoying everything the ship has to offer.

Or, you can do what I plan to do when I go back. If you line up a stay at Wakatobi Dive Resort you can fly direct on their guest charter from Bali to the resort's private air strip in two-and-a-half hours.

Even though Wakatobi is relatively unknown and completely secluded, this resort has built a reputation as the place to go for world-class diving and unpretentious luxury.

Not to mention there is no other dive resort in more than 150 kilometres and you have exclusive access to this stretch of pristine reef at the world's epicentre of marine biodiversity.

Wakatobi is a part of the Indo-Pacific Coral Triangle. Home to six of the world's seven marine turtle species, more than 700 kinds of coral and thousands of types of fish. Plus, new and undocumented species continue to be discovered here.

The real question though is, how soon can you get there? Since Wakatobi is going to be developed over the coming years, you really want to go now to experience the unspoiled natural environment before it becomes well known.

Plus, who doesn't want to be the first of their friends to visit? Pictures courtesy Dana Brown.

 [wildheartedworld.com](http://wildheartedworld.com)

# WIN A TRIP TO NEW ZEALAND



Now international borders are re-open, New Zealand is back on top of the must-visit list for Aussie travellers. One lucky reader is going to win flights and a three-night stay in vibrant Auckland.

## LOOKING TO SPREAD YOUR WINGS? DISCOVER WHY AIR NEW ZEALAND IS A BETTER WAY TO FLY.

Air New Zealand seamlessly connects you from Australia to New Zealand. And when in New Zealand, it's easy to hop from one adventure to the next, with their domestic network flying you to 20 destinations across the country.

So, you could be walking the black-sand beaches one day and skiing the alpine slopes the next – there really is something for everyone.

As the world re-opens and travellers are flying to exciting destinations around the world once again, Air New Zealand is leading the way in terms of innovation.

Earlier this year they announced their Cabin of Possibility on their new Dreamliners, due to arrive in 2024.

This future cabin experience will give you more choice than any other airline in the world, providing the best sleep in the sky regardless of which cabin you choose to fly in.

This includes a new Business Premier Luxe™ seat, designed for customers looking for more space and privacy, and Skynest™, the world's first sleep pods in the sky.

Innovation has driven the new cabin experience from nose to tail and the Skynest™ concept will be a world-first for Economy travellers.

But this cabin innovation was no small feat, it took 170,000 hours over five years to bring to life.

So, the new experience is designed around creating a home away from home that leaves you feeling refreshed and raring to go at your destination.

And throughout this journey of innovation, one of the key pillars and

areas of focus for Air New Zealand has been Sustainability.

To reduce inflight impact, Air New Zealand's future cabin experience includes more sustainable serviceware, reducing the weight of premium serviceware by up to 20 per cent and removing more than 28 million fossil-fuel-derived single-use plastic items.

Now, not only will this more sustainable serviceware be delivered on the new aircraft, but it is already available on current international Air New Zealand services. From October this year, the airline rolled out the offering to their existing fleet.

So, with innovation on the horizon, sustainability at the core and their breadth of network, discover why Air New Zealand is a better way to fly.

[airnewzealand.com.au](http://airnewzealand.com.au)



## AVANI'S GUIDE TO THE PERFECT AUCKLAND ESCAPE

Combining the great outdoors with eclectic dining, cultural activities and family-friendly fun, Auckland is the perfect holiday destination and the Avani Auckland Metropolis Residences is right in the heart of the action.

Enjoying a prime downtown location in the centre of the city's vibrant shopping district and opposite popular Albert Park, Auckland's Avani is in the city's tallest residential building, taking the meaning of 'the sky's the limit' to new heights.

The wow factor starts the moment you enter the lobby, a majestic century-old courthouse which has been transformed for today's traveller with facilities including a well-equipped gym with guided workout routines, indoor heated pool, indoor and outdoor spas, and a sauna to soothe weary muscles after a day's exploring Auckland's cosmopolitan entertainment, eateries and attractions.

Rising from the historic lobby to the contemporary accommodation above, guests can choose from one- and two-bedroom suites with sweeping park or harbour views and separate living spaces, ensuring everyone has plenty of space to spread out and chill out.

Each suite also has laundry facilities and a fully equipped kitchen so guests can bring home a basket of goodies from the City Farmers' Market – pastries, artisan bread and cheeses, French crepes – and tuck into a gourmet feast in the comfort of their suite.

Anyone travelling with kids in tow knows that happy kids mean happy parents and Avani has the young ones covered with baby cots, child-friendly cutlery and crockery, and a range of free kids' movie and TV channels to choose from.

Fortunately, the hotel is situated a hop, skip and jump from family-friendly attractions including Albert Park, the Auckland Art Gallery, which is home to a vast collection of Maori and Pacific works, and the Auckland

Zoo, a guaranteed hit with kids keen to get up close and personal with a kiwi, discover the new High Canopy Habitat, or ooh and aah over a baby orangutan.

Also nearby, the iconic Auckland Sky Tower is New Zealand's tallest man-made structure, with panoramic 360-degree views for kilometres.

A prime spot for a celebratory dinner, a spot of sky-high yoga, or photography fans, it's a must for any Auckland itinerary.

Travellers keen to explore the city's nightlife can stroll to the Aotea Centre to catch a show, or sample the lively nightlife and restaurant scene at Viaduct Harbour, conveniently located close to the hotel.

[avanihotels.com](http://avanihotels.com)



## HOW TO ENTER

We've hidden **four questions** based on the information on these pages within the December issue. All you have to do is find the questions, work out the answers and head to our website to enter.

**The winner drawn after the competition closes will win two return Economy flights to Auckland with Air New Zealand and a three-night stay in a one-bedroom suite at the AVANI Auckland Metropolis Suites.**

**For full terms and conditions, see our website. Good luck!**

[CLICK HERE TO ENTER](#)

AIR NEW ZEALAND

AVANI  
Hotels & Resorts



*Mount Cook, New Zealand*

