

Australia's favourite travel news magazine

Traveltalk

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COVER IMAGE: Cover picture courtesy istock

It's time to travel back to *the future*

There's a new TV series that's just debuted on Aussie screens which I think you'll enjoy.

It's called *The Time Traveler's Wife* and stars Rose Leslie and the hunky, James Bond candidate Theo James. It's based on the bestselling book by Audrey Niffenegger (which I also highly recommend).

OK, this isn't *Gogglebox* and you may be wondering what on earth a random TV show has to do with this magazine, apart from the fact it has the word 'travel' in the title.... or at least bits of it. Bear with me.

I've recently returned from my first overseas trip in more than two years. I flew with our national airline and was impressed by their clever safety video, which takes us through decades of airplane travel.

Using vintage planes and authentic crew uniforms (along with some outrageous hairstyles), the video covers 100 years of flight, from the 1920s up to present day. You see where the time travel reference comes in now?

It got me to thinking that our grandparents (and probably even some of our parents) never got the chance to experience the world like we do now. Within just a few hours we can be sampling cultures and communities that they would never have dreamt of being able to access back in the day.

Modern air travel is safer, faster, more enjoyable and affordable for a wider range of the population.

Sure, COVID-19 put a pretty big spanner in the engine, but truth be told, we are exceptionally lucky to live in an era when it doesn't take more than four weeks to get from the UK to Australia. Indeed, by 2025 Qantas hope to be flying us to London and New York in less than a day.

International travel isn't a right: it's a privilege and is one we should never take for granted.

Of course, many Aussies are understandably cautious about travelling overseas now for various reasons.

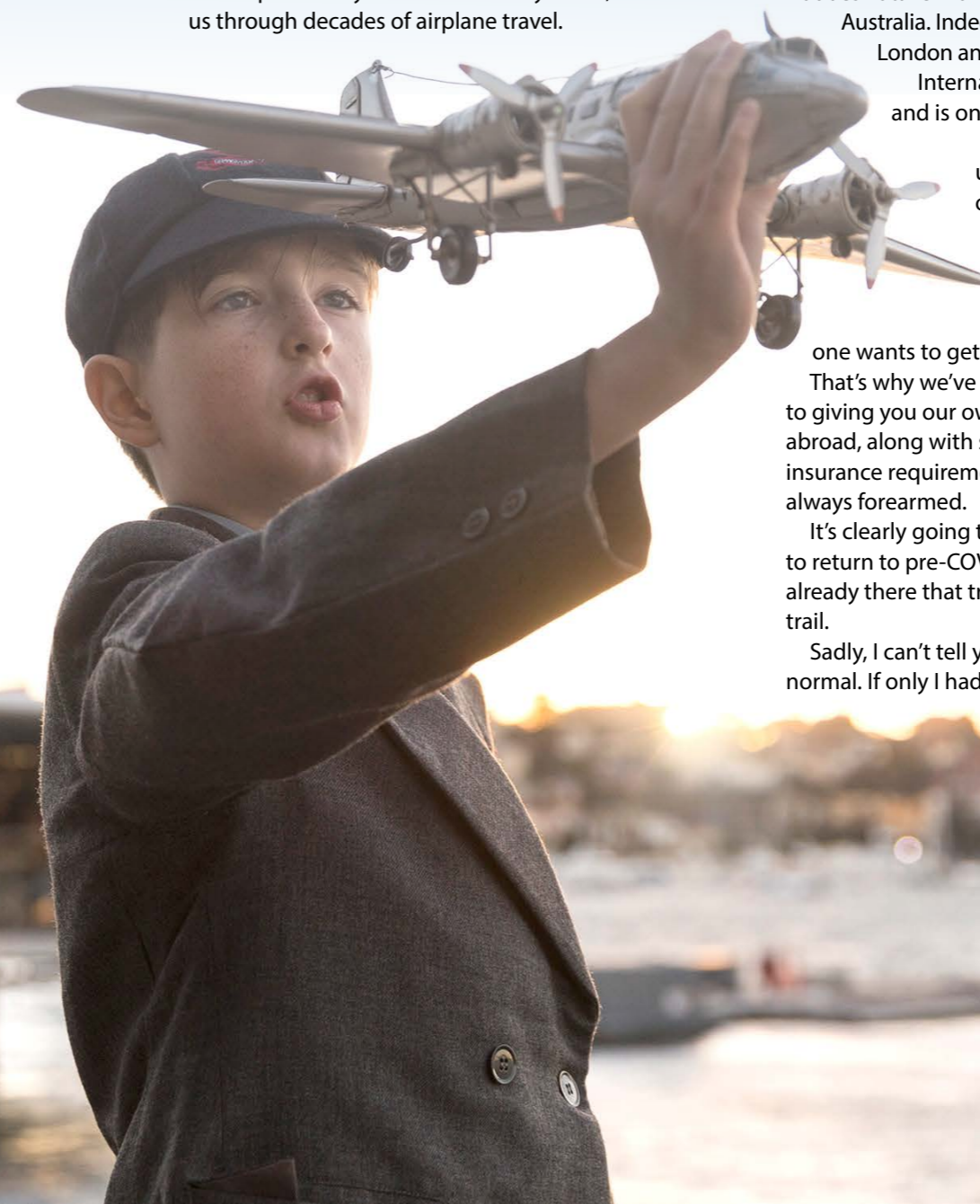
COVID-19 is still at the forefront of most minds, along with uncertainty over potential isolation requirements should you test positive overseas. No-

one wants to get trapped in a foreign country.

That's why we've dedicated several pages in this issue to giving you our own recent experiences when travelling abroad, along with some exceptionally helpful advice about insurance requirements for cruise passengers. Forewarned is always forearmed.

It's clearly going to take a while for consumer confidence to return to pre-COVID days, but the encouraging signs are already there that travel is well and truly on the comeback trail.

Sadly, I can't tell you when things will be fully back to normal. If only I had a time machine...



Picture courtesy Qantas



LEARNING TO LEAVE AGAIN

As the world slowly starts to open up again, Aussie travellers are going to be curious just how easy it is to fly internationally in the post-COVID era. Here two *Traveltalk* writers reveal their adventures when going overseas, with somewhat different experiences.

THERE'S A famous English proverb which states good things come to those who wait.

Having waited 30 months to travel

internationally, I kind of expected to win the lottery!

Fortunately, a trip to South Africa was the next best thing, yet even then the fates appeared to be conspiring against me, writes **Jon Underwood**.

My flight from Sydney to Johannesburg was postponed for 24 hours because of a fuel shortage caused by the terrible floods afflicting Durban. But what's one day when you've waited almost 1,000 to fly?

Curious to see how check-in has changed in the intervening time, I arrived at the airport with some trepidation.

Only 48 hours earlier, social media had gone into meltdown with images of 300-metre-long queues just to get

through security. We were advised to arrive four hours before our 11am departure, just in case.

Whatever issues they'd had must have been addressed because a quick passport scan and a seven-minute wait later and I was kicking back in the Qantas lounge. If you've got three hours to kill, there's no better place to be.

Boarding our 787-9 Dreamliner was quick and efficient. On the way to my seat I chatted with Teaghan, one of the Qantas crew. She was also taking her first flight in two years and as we talked I actually thought she was going to shed a tear or two. It really brought home just how badly affected cabin crew were by the pandemic.

Down the back of the bus it was a 3-3-3 configuration and it felt so new I could swear I smelt wet paint.

Leg room in the aisle seat was adequate for someone 1.8m tall and once we had pushed back, I settled in to enjoy the impressive variety of movies, games, music and the like available on the entertainment console.

Unfortunately, watching

superheroes battle the forces of evil when the lady in front has pushed her seat back into your abdomen isn't ideal. It seems some things about airline travel never change.

I'm pleased to report that almost all my fellow passengers adhered to the strict mask wearing policy onboard. Even when sleeping we were advised that we needed to remain masked up. Fourteen hours is a long time breathing through fabric but a necessity in these COVID-affected times.

Meals were hearty and plentiful. Think red curry chicken, braised wagyu beef and even the old chicken parmi, accompanied by a decent selection of adult beverages. After four movies I managed to grab a couple of hours sleep before our scheduled landing in Joburg.

The takeaway from my first overseas trip in more than two years is that you should definitely allow more time for unexpected circumstances and potential delays. If you find yourself with an extra hour to kill at the airport, so be it. At least you won't be stressed or worse, miss your flight entirely.

Other than that, and apart from the current necessity to wear a mask onboard, nothing much seems to have changed. Airport prices are still outrageous, electronic passport scanners are still a godsend and Qantas still offer a damn fine service.

Hopefully it won't be another 30 months before I'm flying again, or even better, winning the lottery.

*** Editor's footnote:** It's a good idea to check you have all your necessary documents with you when flying, such as international vaccination certificates and your Digital Passenger Declaration (DPD), which you need to complete before coming back into the country.

You can do this seven days before returning and online. It does take a bit of time but it's much better than queuing to do it when you get back to Australia.



THERE ARE a lot of 'unknowables' when it comes to travel. But when you're packed and ready to go, your departure date shouldn't be one of them, writes **Jenny Rowland**.

Checking in at Sydney International Airport on a Saturday was an easy, relaxed affair... a welcome contrast to the stressful week prior to flying when I was told by Webjet that my flight had been moved one day forward and to a different airline.

When I enquired if I could return one day later it was assumed I wasn't accepting the schedule change and my flight was duly cancelled. I was informed three days before my departure date.

This is slightly embarrassing for me. I'm a travel industry media publisher and have always encouraged everyone to use travel agents.

But it's been a long time between flights and I was seduced by cheap fares. Basically, I was a complete plonker, booking an airline ticket with an online platform.

What possessed me? Never again!

I did manage to get the flight reinstated but spent more than SEVEN precious hours on the phone and created more drama for myself than a MAFS commitment ceremony.

Though busy, my Singapore Airlines flight was just like pre-pandemic days. Check in was great, we departed on time and from my economy seat (45K), I tried to claim back some of those seven hours in front of a decent sized flat screen with a squillion entertainment options. Heaven.

There was a USB port to charge my poor overworked phone and I was eager to sit back, relax and bask in the euphoric, albeit masked, excitement of travelling to the UK after almost three long COVID years.

Book with a travel agent. Save yourself the stress, the phone calls and let them do all the work to find the best value flights.

*** We'd love to hear your stories and experiences as international travel finally takes off. Please send them through to editorial@traveltalkmag.com.au**



WHY CRUISE COVER IS CRUCIAL

Domestic cruising has finally got the green light, with international itineraries not far behind. Here, **VICTORIA ROY**, Principal Solicitor, Victory Travel & Cruise Lawyers, offers a timely reminder that Aussies need to consider their travel insurance needs when booking a cruise.

MEDICARE AND PRIVATE HEALTH COVER

Surveys by Smart Traveller and Comparetravelinsurance.com.au in 2017 found that the majority of Australians were unsure if Medicare covered them on cruises.

In fact, cruise passengers are **not** covered by Medicare or private health funds, even on domestic cruises.

While ships have medical centres, the doctors do not need Medicare Provider Numbers. This means that passengers cannot claim rebates.

TRAVEL INSURANCE ESSENTIAL, NOT OPTIONAL

Passengers may optimistically think that they won't get sick or injured on their cruise. This is a risky assumption.

Medical treatment on a ship is pricier than on land. A consultation for seasickness or after an injury could easily cost a few hundred dollars.

Others might hope to patch themselves up until they get home to avoid the costs of the onboard medical centre. However, some conditions cannot wait.

If a passenger has a heart attack, burst appendix or serious head injury, they will need specialist hospital attention urgently. This means an emergency air evacuation which can

cost tens of thousands of dollars even in Australian waters. This puts the cost of a policy into perspective.

COVID-19 ISSUES

As well as serious medical conditions and injuries, passengers also have COVID-19 issues to consider.

Cruise lines are requiring negative tests to board. If a passenger tests positive, neither they nor anyone in their household can cruise. This results in cancellation fees.

Some cruise lines are providing free of charge medical care and evacuation if a passenger tests positive on the ship. However, the passenger is still liable for cancellation fees for the remainder of the cruise, the cost of missed shore excursions and so on.

Travel insurance is therefore more necessary now than ever before.

CHOOSING A POLICY

Passengers need to take care when choosing a policy.

Annual policies and credit card policies that passengers used to rely on might not have caught up with today's post pandemic passenger needs.



Victoria Roy, Principal Solicitor, Victory Travel & Cruise Lawyers

Some travel insurance policies on the market cover COVID-19 but not cruising, while others cover cruising but not COVID-19. To be protected, passengers need to find a policy that covers COVID-19 and cruising.

Another complication is that passengers might need an international policy even if they are going on a domestic cruise.

This is because Australia's territory only extends 12 nautical miles from shore. Beyond that is international waters. This is where most cruise ships sail even on sampler cruises and domestic itineraries.

Passengers therefore need to answer the insurer's questions accurately when getting a quote. They should also read the PDS carefully before buying a policy.

WORTH EVERY CENT

I have represented many passengers who have been injured in cruise ship accidents. I've therefore seen firsthand the value of insurance when things go wrong.

For example, I have had clients without insurance who have spent port days getting treatment to avoid the cost of the ship's doctor.

In contrast, for clients whose travel insurers arranged for medical evacuation back home, their policies were worth every cent.

That's why my mantra is simple: if you can't afford insurance, you can't afford to go.

For more information on cruise insurance, Victoria is offering a free on demand webinar for agents. Visit:

» victorytravelcruiselawyers.com.au/cruise-insurance-webinar-for-travel-agents/



AGENTS BONE UP ON THE LATEST CRUISE NEWS

CRUISE LINES International Association (CLIA) has celebrated Australia's return to cruising with its first CLIA LIVE education event held in Melbourne.

The session brought together dozens of travel agent members for two days of training. It was the first in an initial series of four events to be held in Adelaide, Brisbane and Sydney. Further events in Perth and Auckland will be announced later in the year.

CLIA LIVE offers a format in which representatives from the world's ocean, river and expedition cruise

lines gather in the one forum to share product insight.

The events suit both new-to-cruise travel agents as well as more experienced cruise specialists looking to update their knowledge.

"Having everyone back together again in Melbourne showed how much enthusiasm and passion there is for cruising right now, especially as we head into our revival in Australia," said Marita Nasic, CLIA Australasia Director of Membership & Events.

» cruising.org.au



Your ticket to a free holiday

MALAYSIA AIRLINES has announced the return of Sky is the Limit 2022, a reward scheme designed to give frontline travel consultants the opportunity to earn free flights.

"We are excited that Malaysia has finally opened its borders to overseas travellers after 24 months," said Giles Gilbert, the Regional Manager for Malaysia Airlines Australia & New Zealand.

"Malaysia Airlines is appreciative of the support from the trade and is pleased to re-introduce Sky is the Limit 2022 to reward consultants with a holiday of their own.

"Whether it's a long weekend to Kuala Lumpur or an extended trip to London, we hope that this rewards scheme will gift you the holiday you deserve."

Agents who sell 20 return economy class tickets to Malaysia during the campaign period will receive one free economy class flight to Malaysia. The promotion runs from now until July 31.

» malaysiaairlines.com



HOSTS WITH THE MOST

HAWAII TOURISM Oceania has co-hosted a trade fam to relaunch a popular Waikiki resort after its \$80 million transformation.

Held in conjunction with Hawaiian Airlines and Outrigger Hotels & Resorts, the visit saw invitees attend a relaunch event at Outrigger Reef Waikiki Beach Resort.

During the duration of the trip to Oahu, guests completed site inspection tours at all Outrigger properties.

They also visited Kualoa Ranch Private Nature Reserve where they participated in the *malama* experience, travelled to Iolani Palace to learn some important pieces of Hawaii's history, toured Pearl Harbor and explored world class cuisine in downtown Honolulu.

» gohawaii.com/au



Travel in the lap of luxury

SMALL IS beautiful when it comes to modern travel trends with Aussies eager to immerse themselves in local cultures without the crowds or the need for speed.

Abercrombie & Kent's range of Luxury Small Group Journeys deliver comfort and service in some of the world's greatest destinations. And the good news is there's still availability on a range of 2022 tours.

With a minimum of two and a maximum of 18, tours come to life with A&K's Resident Tour Directors, who offer one-of-a-kind local insights. The depth of unique itineraries is impressive, with countries such as Egypt, Israel, Morocco, Japan, India, Botswana, Kenya, Spain and Sweden covered.

Explore the history and iconic monuments of the land of the pharaohs on A&K's 10-day 'Egypt & The Nile' tour. Guests will explore archaeological treasures with an expert Egyptologist and cruise for four nights along the Nile aboard *Sanctuary Sun Boat IV*.

Highlights include the Grand Egyptian Museum, the Great Sphinx, the tombs of King Tut and Seti I, and the Temple of Luxor. It is priced from \$12,880 per person twin share.

Staying in the east and travellers can journey through two historic lands on the 14-day 'Jordan & Israel: Ancient Wonders' tour. Guests will visit Petra, stay overnight in Wadi Rum and discover Israel, from Jerusalem to Tel Aviv.

You'll discover additional UNESCO World Heritage Sites and learn about modern local life from a Christian family during a private lunch at their Bethlehem home. The tour is priced from \$14,180 per person twin share.

The timeless walled city of Fes, the bustling medina in Marrakech, viewing local Berber life in the rugged High Atlas Mountains and staying at A&K's exclusive Desert Tented Camp



nestled among the towering dunes of the Sahara.

These are just some of the highlights of the 12-day 'Splendours of Morocco' tour, which is priced from \$11,965 per person. Explore souks full of treasures, savour delicious local cuisine, marvel at ancient medinas, bustling kasbahs and towering minarets, and relax in elegant hotels.

[abercrombiekent.com.au/travel-styles/small-group-journeys/luxury-small-group-journeys](https://www.abercrombiekent.com.au/travel-styles/small-group-journeys/luxury-small-group-journeys)

WINGS OVER THE WORLD

There's no finer way to explore a remote destination than by private plane, saving you time to get more out of the experience.

Wings Over the World journeys combine A&K's luxury small-group travel experience and privately chartered flights.

There are 17 incredible WOTW itineraries to choose from, covering must-visit sights in Europe, Africa, Latin America and the Middle East.

Limited from 12 to 18 guests, tours depart from separate airport terminals, allowing for fewer crowds and faster security procedures. Experienced crews offer personalised in-flight service in a comfortable, sociable atmosphere.

Among the many inclusions are hand-selected luxury accommodations, breakfast in bed, a travelling bell boy handling luggage, laundry service, internet access and 24-hour on-call support.

'Wings Over the World East Africa' sees guests enjoy the highlights of three countries, including mountain gorillas and chimpanzees in Uganda. You'll also visit Tanzania and Kenya on this 11-day tour, which is priced from \$55,625 per person.

Cultures and culinary treasures (including fine wines) are the order of the day on the 'Wings Over Argentina, Chile & Brazil' itinerary. Tick off Iguazu Falls and Patagonia's memorable landscapes on this 12-day tour that is priced from \$54,925 per person.

[abercrombiekent.com.au/travel-styles/small-group-journeys/wings-over-the-world](https://www.abercrombiekent.com.au/travel-styles/small-group-journeys/wings-over-the-world)

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For 60 years, Abercrombie & Kent has been creating inspiring luxury adventures on all seven continents in the world's most remarkable locations, sharing rare encounters and unique cultures. Now more than ever, as the world reopens, our extensive global network of dedicated professionals in more than 55 offices across 30 countries is here to help you navigate the new world of travel.

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www.abercrombiekent.com.au





Uluru

This tour is an Aussie beauty

THERE'S NO doubt the Outback has a special place in the heart and mind of most Australians, with its intensely spiritual and historical significance.

After showcasing this special region for more than 22 years, Outback Spirit are proud to be considered Australia's leading small group outback tour operator.

On their six-day 'Red Centre & Field of Light Spectacular' tour, guests can explore the rugged beauty of Australia's heartland, including the West MacDonnell Ranges, Kings Canyon, Uluru and Kata Tjuta.

You'll enjoy access to some of the most memorable parts of Australia, visiting locations that other tour operators don't include, allowing you to get off the beaten track to truly explore this captivating part of our country.

The itinerary begins in Alice Springs, where travellers will undertake a brief tour of the town before dinner in the DoubleTree by Hilton hotel.

Day two sees guests travel the Mereenie loop through the Western MacDonnell Ranges to Kings Canyon. Enjoy the scenic drive and visit Standley Chasm and Ormiston Gorge before checking in to the Kings Canyon Resort.

Several walks are available here,

including the six-kilometre rim walk featuring views of the Watarrka National Park before descending into the 'Garden of Eden'. A less arduous walk is also available along the canyon floor (2.6km). Upon returning to the resort there is an opportunity to take helicopter flights over the Canyon and National Park.

On day four you'll witness Uluru, the second largest monolith in the world. Rising from the red desert, this impressive rock formation carries great spiritual and cultural significance.

Enjoy a unique 'Sounds of Silence' dining experience under the stars with canapes and chilled sparkling wine, overlooking the Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park.

As the sun sets and darkness falls, listen to the sound of the didgeridoo and indulge in premium bush tucker, before relaxing by the campfire and listening to the resident star talker decode the southern night sky.

The final evening on tour sees the desert come to life at the internationally acclaimed 'Field of Light' display at Uluru.

Aptly named Tili Wiru Tjuta Nyakutjaku ('looking at lots of beautiful lights'), the exhibit features 50,000 slender stems crowned with

frosted spheres, spread across an area the size of seven football fields.

Founded in 1999, Outback Spirit is part of Journey Beyond, a national business focused on bringing Australia's most unique and iconic experiences to life.

As an eco-certified company, Outback Spirit is dedicated to conserving the environment and helping support local communities. Guests can rest assured they are using resources wisely with minimal impact on the environment.

Experienced and professional tour guides paired with a five-star all terrain Mercedes Benz fleet ensures guests travel in comfort and style, without compromising safety.

The tour is priced from \$4,595 per person twin share. Tours operate between March and October and there is still limited availability on trips this August, September and October.

Included in the price are all meals for the duration of the tour and five nights of good quality to exceptional accommodation, including two nights at the five-star Sails in the Desert Resort. All park and entry fees are also covered, including the Field of Light installation at Uluru.

outbackspirittours.com.au

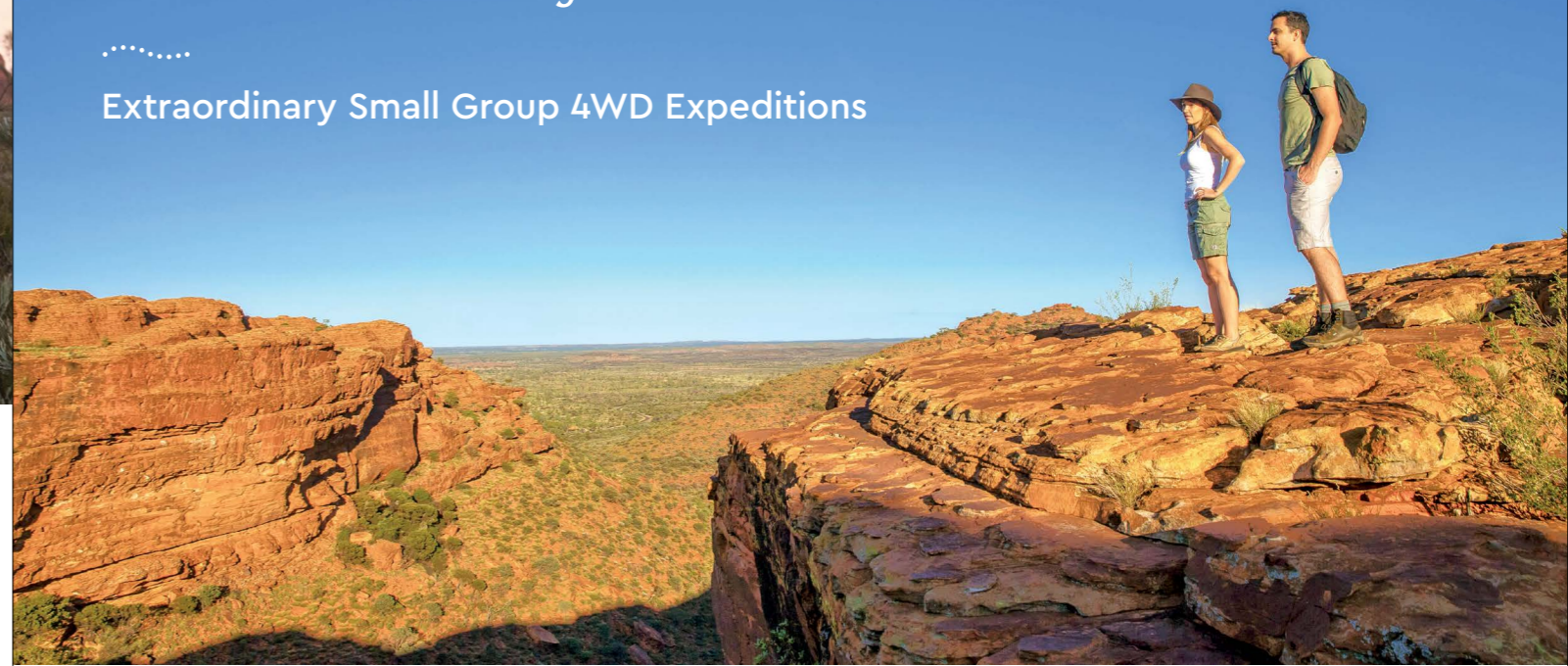


THE RED CENTRE

Different in every sense



Extraordinary Small Group 4WD Expeditions



When people think of the Outback, it's often the centre of the country that first comes to mind. Sunsets over desert plains, vibrant red dirt, towering ghost gums and crisp winter nights. It's an area made for adventure and has played host to some extraordinary expeditions over the years. Outback Spirit's experienced and professional tour guides paired with a state of the art 4WD Mercedes Benz fleet ensures guests experience the best of the Red Centre without sacrificing comfort and style.



Red Centre & Field of Light Spectacular

6 Days | Mar - Oct 2023 | Small group size 26

Highlights of the adventure include:

- Visit World Heritage Listed Uluru and enjoy a guided base tour
- Admire the internationally acclaimed 'Field of Light' display at Uluru
- Explore the rock formations of Kata Tjuta (The Olgas) & Walpa Gorge
- Guided Kings Canyon walk plus visit Standley Chasm & Ormiston Gorge
- Dine under the stars at the 'Sounds of Silence' dining experience

from \$4,795* pp

FIND OUT MORE



*Terms and conditions apply. Visit outbackspirittours.com.au for more information.



BASH RAISING CASH FOR KIDS

TRAVEL through some of this country's most remote, historic and memorable locations while raising funds to help Aussie kids who are doing it tough.

The Variety Bash was first held in 1985 following an idea by Dick Smith in which he invited his mates "for a drive in the bush".

That event raised \$250,000 for Variety – the Children's Charity helping kids living with disability, disadvantage or illness.

This year's Bash will see eight events taking place across Australia from August through to October with the aim to raise more than \$7 million nationally.

Most events are 10 days long and in addition there's a myriad of other Variety touring events such as jet ski and motorbike journeys to choose from.

"It's a great way to experience the outback while making new friends and you've got the security of knowing you have a full support group including mechanics and first aid crews," said David Small, Variety Australia General Manager.

"Not only do we help kids via the funds raised, but we bring important economic impact to the regional towns we visit."

variety.org.au



Discover ancient living heritage

THE FIRST Nations owned-and-operated Budj Bim Cultural Landscape Tourism on Gunditjmarra Country in Victoria's far Southwest is set to launch on July 1.

The new Indigenous cultural experience will offer visitors the chance to discover the region's ancient living heritage where evidence of society working around a system of life-filled waterways dates at least 6,600 years.

The experience is located in and around Budj Bim National Park and Tae Rak (Lake Condah) beyond Victoria's picturesque Great Ocean Road, a popular natural attraction for both Australian and overseas visitors.

Budj Bim (meaning 'high head') erupted some 37,000 years ago, resulting in lava flows and waterways that allowed the Gunditjmarra to establish one of the world's most extensive and oldest aquaculture systems.

Kooyang (eels) were sustainably farmed and used both as a food source and for trade.

The Budj Bim Cultural Landscape was inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage list in 2019, the first Australian landscape to be included purely for its Indigenous cultural values.

budjbim.com.au

Saddle up for three wheeling tours

AUSTRALIAN CYCLE Tours has expanded its range of self-guided, supported and guided experiences, adding three new tours in Queensland.

The new tours have been crafted to deliver hassle-free active holidays to cycle-loving travellers.

The six-day 'Townsville and Magnetic Island Cycle' features a guided route along the north and south bank of the Ross River and Riverside Lagoons as well as an exploration of the coast north of Townsville and Pallendarra Wetlands.

Further south, the four-day 'Brisbane Valley Rail Trail Self Guided Cycle' features the plains of the Brisbane Valley before climbing into the trail's end in Wulkuraka.

For those looking for an extended experience, the eight-day 'Brisbane Valley and Kilkivan Rail Trail Combined Cycle' combines the Brisbane Valley Rail Trail with the nearby Kilkivan to Kingaroy Rail Trail.

The six-day itinerary is priced from \$1,290 per person twin share, the four-day is from \$890 (ppts) and the eight-day journey is \$1,290 (ppts).

australiancycletours.com.au



UP TO 40% OFF EVERY GUEST

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BOOK NOW

Up to 40% off applies to new bookings made between 2 June 2022 and 5 July 2022. Eligible bookings will receive a discount of up to 40% off the passengers' cruise fare* on all sailings departing on or after 2 June 2022. Savings applied to cruise fare at checkout. *Taxes, fees, and port expenses are additional and apply to all guests. 50% Reduced Deposits applies to new bookings made between 2 June 2022 and 5 July 2022. 50% Reduced Deposits provides a reduced deposit of 50% per person on all local sailings departing on or between 9 October 2022 - 15 April 2023 and 4 October 2023 - 13 April 2024. Deposit amount varies by sailing length. Deposit amounts due will automatically reflect the 50% reduced value on the booking invoice for eligible bookings created during the promotional period, after 5 July 2022, deposit values will increase back to the original values as stated in our booking terms and conditions. General Conditions: Prices and exact cruise itineraries are subject to availability and change. See <http://www.royalcaribbean.com/aus/en/terms-and-conditions/promotions> for full promotional terms and conditions.



Onward into the future

A GROUP of Aussie agents were on hand to see Azamara welcome the latest addition to their fleet at a glittering ceremony in Monte Carlo.

Prior to the ceremony, *Azamara Onward* sailed from Barcelona to Monte Carlo on a five-day pre-inaugural voyage, stopping in Marseille and Porto Venere in Italy along the way.

Upon arrival in Marseille, guests had the opportunity to immerse themselves in the destination through a 'Marseille City Sights' shore excursion, discovering the charms and history of one of France's most colourful ports.

"Following two years of pause, we look forward to pressing onward with new mindsets, new adventures, and new opportunities to learn how we can be better travellers," said Beth Santos, CEO of Wanderful and the ship's Godmother.

Following the naming ceremony and traditional christening, the vessel set sail for an 11-night maiden voyage throughout the Mediterranean, departing from Monte Carlo and concluding with an overnight stay in Ravenna, Italy.

azamara.com



It's Carnival time in Oz

CARNIVAL HAS announced its first cruise back in Australian waters in more than two years.

Departing from Sydney on October 2, the cruise will be a three-day sailing aboard *Carnival Splendor*. Fares start from \$437 per person twin share for an interior cabin.

"Thanks to a scheduling availability, we're extremely pleased to welcome guests back onboard *Carnival Splendor* earlier than expected," said Kara Glamore, Carnival Cruise Line Australia Vice President.

"It's great that she will be kicking off our season in Australia ahead of our 10th Aussie birthday in October."

carnival.com.au



Sports star is Beyond excited

ONE OF the most decorated gymnasts of all time has been announced as the Godmother for *Celebrity Beyond*, the latest ship to join the company's fleet.

American Simone Biles (above) is a 19-time World Champion and seven-time Olympic Medalist. The artistic gymnast will name the new ship at the official ceremony in Fort Lauderdale on November 4.

Ms Biles joins Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Malala Yousafzai and Reshma Saujani, founder of Girls Who Code and the Marshall Plan for Moms, who serve as godmothers of sister ships *Celebrity Edge* and *Celebrity Apex*.

"I have a lot of great memories of cruising with my parents while growing up, so I am beyond excited to serve as godmother of *Celebrity Beyond*," said Biles.

"I am honoured to join such a distinguished group of game-changing women and appreciate the important message this designation holds in recognising our accomplishments and hopefully inspiring the next generation of women."

Celebrity Beyond will spend the summer sailing nine- to 10-night itineraries in the Mediterranean.

celebritycruises.com/au

EMERALD CRUISES



LUXURY YACHTING AROUND THE MEDITERRANEAN AND BEYOND



Infinity-style pool



Owner's Suite



Explore local towns with access to small ports

MEDITERRANEAN · ADRIATIC COAST · RED SEA

Emerald Cruises launches state-of-the-art luxury yacht cruising to ports only smaller yachts can access.

With world-class services and just 50 spacious suites, Emerald Cruises offers an intimate cruising experience to spectacular locations including the Dalmatian Coast, the French and Italian Rivièras, the Greek Islands, Turkey and the Red Sea.

8-day luxury Mediterranean yacht cruises start from only \$5,694 per person*

For more information visit emeraldcrises.com.au or call 1300 286 110

*Conditions apply. For FULL conditions refer to emeraldcrises.com.au. All prices based on per person twin share, cruise only. Valid on new bookings only. Cruise from \$5,694pp based on E08D 23/9/23 departure in a Category D Oceanview Stateroom including Earlybird Fare. Prices, Dates, Price, Availability subject to change and correct as of 23/3/22. A fuel surcharge may apply at final payment. Emerald Cruises (a division of Scenic Tours Pty Ltd). Booking code EVMAT12.



DISCOVER LUXURY YACHT CRUISING

A new era of luxury yacht cruising has just dawned with the recent launch of Emerald Cruises latest innovation, *Emerald Azzurra*.

WHILE SOME cruise lines are focusing on building mega-liners, Emerald Cruises specialises in stylish, small-ship cruising.

Emerald Azzurra is the first of two luxury yachts, with identical sister yacht *Emerald Sakara* set to debut in 2023. Gleaming white against the brilliant blue skies of the sparkling Mediterranean, the head-turning design resembles that of a spectacular superyacht.

With a maximum of just 100 guests on board, these luxury yachts are small enough to dock in the heart of the Old Towns of the Mediterranean, with fascinating local sites, history and culture just an easy stroll away.

In Croatia for example, guests walk from the ship to join the guided tour of Rovinj Old Town and can spend time in Zadar after exploring the Old Town, listening to the Sea Organ with its unique music created by the lapping waves. *Emerald Azzurra* is almost within touching distance, ready to welcome guests back onboard.

At 110 metres long, *Emerald Azzurra* is large enough to ensure a supremely comfortable cruise with all the amenities you could wish for.

La Cucina is the main restaurant with the option to dine indoors or alfresco on the Terrace. Enjoy delicious buffet breakfasts and lunch, and fine

a la carte dining in the evening with a choice of locally inspired cuisine: classics like grilled salmon or juicy steaks, and generous share plates.

Light meals like flatbreads and salads, and gelati, are also served in the Aqua Pool & Café.

Relaxed luxury is the vibe onboard and it's apparent at every turn. The Amici Bar & Lounge is a welcoming space with comfortable low sofas, think velvets and satins, and marble coffee tables.

The bar has an impressive Bombay Sapphire display, serving a wide range of exotic cocktails and beers, and is the place to meet fellow guests and swap stories of the day's adventures.

The Observation Lounge is a cosy space with board games and views to die for. Help yourself to a selection of tea and coffees and get lost in a book,

comfortably cocooned in an Mbrace lounge chair.

The Sky Deck, the top deck, features the Sky Bar. With 360-degree views, it's the ultimate spot for taking in every angle of the breathtaking scenery, like cruising into Kotor Bay, Montenegro, and for unwinding with a sundowner, cooled by the gentle breezes of the Med.

The Spa offers indulgent massage and spa treatments and a wellness program with complimentary infrared sauna, yoga and Pilates classes. The well-equipped gym boasts Technogym equipment. Top tip: do make time for a quick work out to enjoy guilt-free desserts every day!

Emerald Cruises is renowned for offering award-winning river cruises and exceptional value, a philosophy which also applies to its yacht cruise collection.

Complimentary wine and beer are served with lunch and dinner, and all meals are included, along with tipping, gratuities and Wi-Fi.

Several guided tours are included on each itinerary, like the Great Pyramids and Petra on Red Sea cruises, guided tours of Ephesus and ANZAC Cove in Turkey, and Corfu Town in Greece, just as examples.

In other words, the essentials are included. DiscoverMORE optional tours are available for guests to tailor the cruise to their own interests, where specialist foodie tours, or jeep tours for those with a taste for adventure are on offer.

EmeraldPLUS cultural experiences are also included, like a Klapa performance (traditional acapella) in the cellars of Diocletian's Palace in Split, a mussel cooking demonstration and tasting in Butrint, Albania, or a tour of Sorrento with gelati tasting.

Active guests will love the included EmeraldACTIVE program, where a hike on Kotor's city walls, to Forte Filippo at Porto Ercole in Italy, or on Cephalonia Island, Greece are on the agenda. There are even GoCycle ebikes available for use in ports. Emerald Cruises has truly thought of everything.

Emerald Azzurra welcomed her first guests in March on the 'Best of the Red Sea' inaugural cruise before making



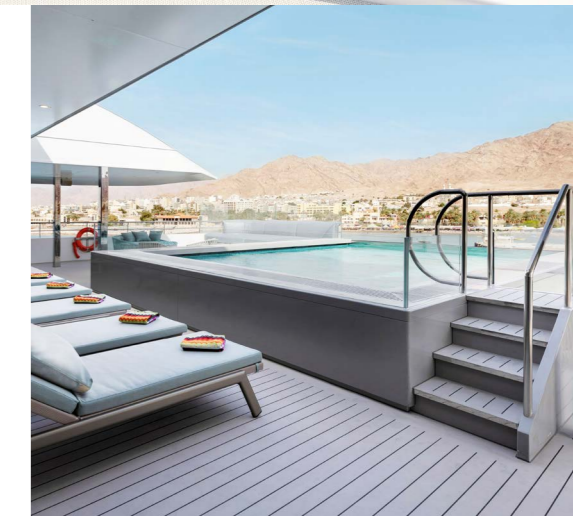
her way to spend the European summer in the Mediterranean.

Custom designed for warm water coastal cruising, the luxury yacht offers several eight-day cruises, many of which can be combined into longer 15-day cruises. Epic cruises of 19 days or longer are also available on selected dates. See the brochure and website for more details.

Popular combinations are the 15-day 'Discover the Mediterranean' cruise from Athens to Venice (or vice versa) via Parga, Cephalonia, Saranda (Albania), Kotor (Montenegro), Dubrovnik and charming Adriatic Coast towns and islands like Split, Hvar, Korcula and Sibenik.

The 12-day 'Aegean Gems' cruise, roundtrip from Athens, explores the stunning Greek Islands of Santorini, Mykonos, Rhodes, plus Kusadasi, and Cannakale, the gateway for ANZAC touring, in Turkey.

The highlights of the best-selling 15-day 'French & Italian Coastlines' cruise are Menton in France, Corsica, and Portofino, Sorrento, Amalfi and



Crotone in Italy, before the cruise ends in Dubrovnik.

Emerald Azzurra will also cruise the Arabian Gulf and Arabian Peninsula in December 2022 and January 2023, with great offers still available.

Earlybird offers for 2023 are out now. Eight-day 'Mediterranean Enchantment' cruises start from \$5,340 per person twin share.

Contact 1300 286 110 or visit emeraldcruises.com.au for more information.



The Queen to call Australia home in 2023

QUEEN ELIZABETH'S 105-day homeport season Down Under will begin in November next year with a voyage in Western Australia.

The luxurious ship is starting her Australian residency with a six-night voyage from Fremantle on November 7, 2023.

She will then be embarking on a series of short break and roundtrip voyages from Melbourne and Sydney totalling 47 ports of call.

Some of the highlights of *Queen Elizabeth's* season include an all-new 10-night exploration of Queensland's coast and islands, the ship's inaugural 14-night roundtrip calling into exotic ports of the South Pacific, and Cunard's highly sought-after Christmas and New Year voyage to New Zealand.

Queen Elizabeth then departs Sydney en-route to Japan on March 10, 2024.

Two more Queens will also be heading Down Under with *Queen Mary 2* due here as part of her world tour.

The famous ship will call into Fremantle on February 17, 2024 and continue along Australia's southern and eastern coastline where overnight calls to Melbourne and Sydney unlock the possibility of exploring after dark.

Queen Victoria will also visit Sydney on March 3, 2024 as part of her world tour. A fourth ship, *Queen Anne*, will be entering service in early 2024.

cunard.com



THAT'S THE SPIRIT

NORWEGIAN SPIRIT is heading for Australia, marking NCL's return to our waters for the first time in almost three years.

The ship is sporting an extensive, bow-to-stern \$US100 million revitalisation and is the last of the 17-strong fleet to return to action.

She will be sailing through the South Pacific, visiting eight ports in 12 days, with departures commencing from Papeete on the Island of Tahiti.

Spirit will then debut here for the very first time on December 22 for her inaugural local sailing season, visiting ports across Australia and New Zealand.

"When Norwegian Spirit debuts in Australia, she'll showcase the most extensive and expensive revitalisation in our company's 55-year history," said Ben Angel, Vice President and Managing Director, NCL APAC.

ncl.com

Viking's Great big debut

VIKING OCTANTIS has kicked off its inaugural season in the Great Lakes, becoming the largest passenger vessel ever to transit the Welland Canal.

The new, purpose-built ship will remain in North America until early October 2022, sailing a variety of itineraries between Toronto and Duluth.

A second expedition vessel, the *Viking Polaris*, will debut later this year and will join the *Viking Octantis* in the Great Lakes for the 2023 season.

viking.com

Viking Octantis, Welland Canal



Hotel offer straight from the art

ART LOVERS are being encouraged to take advantage of a special view-and-stay package being offered ahead of a major exhibition.

The initiative has been launched by W Brisbane and the Queensland Art Gallery /Gallery of Modern Art (QAGOMA).

The offer has been timed to coincide with *The Soul Trembles*, a major exhibition of works by leading international artist Chiharu Shiota showing at GOMA from June 18.

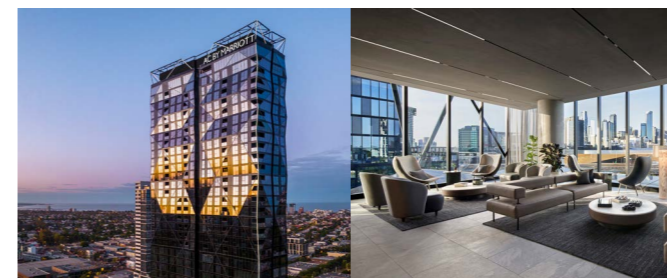
GOMA is the exclusive Australian venue for the survey show that includes more than 100 artworks ranging from large-scale installations, sculpture and video performance to

photography, drawing and set design.

The first five-star hotel to open in Brisbane City in 20 years, W Brisbane marked the re-entry of the W brand back into Australia when it opened its doors in mid-2018.

Available to book now on stays between June 18 and October 3, the package is priced from \$569 per night. Apart from a room it includes breakfast for two, two speciality cocktails and two tickets to the show.

marriott.com/offers



Debut for AC is ok

AC HOTELS by Marriott has unveiled its first hotel in Australia with the opening of a new property in Melbourne.

Located in one of the city's premier events, arts and entertainment precincts, the AC Hotel by Marriott Melbourne Southbank features 205 rooms and suites, signature dining and an infinity pool and cocktail bar with skyline views.

The hotel offers close proximity to public transport, South Melbourne Market, Melbourne Convention Centre, South Wharf shops and eateries, the Arts precinct and other first-class amenities.

"It marks the 14th brand entry within Marriott Bonvoy's portfolio in Australia," said Sean Hunt, Area Vice President, Australia, New Zealand & Pacific of Marriott International.

"With the border re-openings, we look forward to welcoming guests and travellers through distinctive and diversified branded experiences while they explore our wonderful country."

achotelmelbournesouthbank.com

A lyf less ordinary

A NEW concept in hotel living has just made its debut in Australia.

lyf Collingwood in Melbourne is designed for 'next generation guests who want to forge connections and nurture a strong sense of community'.

The property features 105 studio rooms with a choice of the 'One of a Kind' studio or the 'Two of a Kind' offering, custom-designed for mates or colleagues travelling together.

"Start-ups and technopreneurs don't just want a conference room – they want fun, creative spaces and the opportunity to explore. They want to bond and network organically," said Shermaine Chong, lyf Residence Manager.

"They want a team who can help them really discover the fabric of a neighbourhood – the secret bar, the pop-up restaurant, the late-night comedy gig.

"Our guests want authenticity and community – they want somewhere to stay that is much more than just somewhere to sleep."

The property has a networking lounge, Wi-Fi, a communal kitchen and a laundry space with an old school arcade-style games machine.

discoverasr.com





Virgin jumps into bed with two new partners

VIRGIN AUSTRALIA and Qatar Airways have unveiled a new partnership that will expand both airlines' networks, lounges and loyalty programs.

The agreement, which commences mid-year, was announced at the start of the Arabian Travel Market in Dubai.

Virgin customers will be able to directly access Qatar's route network of more than 140 worldwide destinations, including the Middle East, Europe and Africa.

Virgin is also partnering with United Airlines to expand the travel gateway between Australia and the United States.

The new deal will triple the airline's reach into the Americas, with customers to access more destinations and more benefits when travelling to cities across the United States, Mexico, the Caribbean and South America.

The partnership will also extend United's large Australian presence, as the airline offering more flights here than any other U.S. carrier.

These include daily direct flights from San Francisco and Los Angeles to Sydney, with flights from Houston and direct services to Melbourne expected to resume later in 2022.

» virginaustralia.com » qatarairways.com » united.com



Flying at a premium

AUSSIE FLYERS can now get a taste of the premium economy offering from Emirates.

The airline made the new cabin class available on June 1 on high-traffic A380 routes from Sydney, London Heathrow, Paris Charles de Gaulle and Christchurch.

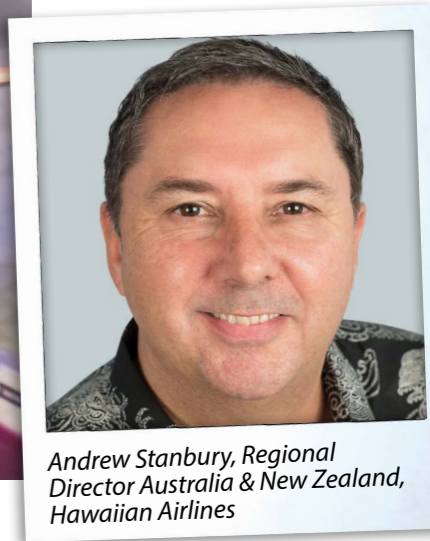
The premium economy cabin is located at the front of the main deck with 56 seats laid out in 2-4-2 configuration. On the Emirates Boeing 777, up to 24 seats will be installed in a dedicated cabin section between business and economy.

"As with everything we do, Emirates premium economy will be exceptional in its class, with minute attention given to every aspect of the customer experience," said Sir Tim Clark, President Emirates Airline.

Those flying premium economy will enjoy leather seats with a pitch of up to 40 inches, 19.5 inches wide and reclines eight inches to a cradle position.

"Customers trading up from economy will be getting excellent value."

» emirates.com



Andrew Stanbury, Regional Director Australia & New Zealand, Hawaiian Airlines

Pressing the restart button

Hawaii is likely to be top of most people's wish lists as international travel slowly begins to open up. Here we talk to ANDREW STANBURY, Regional Director Australia & New Zealand, Hawaiian Airlines, about how his company plans to bounce back from COVID-19.

Q: How did the global pandemic affect Hawaiian Airlines?

A: Like nearly all airlines we faced the need to ground aircraft, resize our workforce, service and refund affected guests as well as take a multitude of actions to preserve cash.

Operating in multiple geographies meant navigating constantly changing settings regarding COVID responses while always preparing to restart with no firm timeline.

Ensuring the safety and wellbeing of our people and guests was a high priority from the beginning and Hawaiian did an outstanding job staying true to its value of *malama* (caring).

While the U.S. domestic market never closed completely, the international recovery has been slower and uneven. I don't think we ever expected Australia to be our first market to reopen but once we hit critical vaccination targets there's been a steady easing of restrictions allowing us to return to service in December 2021.

Since then, as each restriction has been lifted, consumer confidence has

grown in step and we now see demand growing at a pace faster than 2019.

Q: What changes have you implemented now that international travel is possible again?

A: We're bringing a sharper focus to our operation in Australia.

We have announced the indefinite suspension of our Brisbane service and we will concentrate first on rebuilding our Sydney services which are currently operating five times weekly.

Our Auckland services are also scheduled to recommence three times weekly on July 4.

Q: How do you see the future of airline travel going forward?

A: I think most people see a gradual recovery over several years for global aviation.

But I'm optimistic that as a quality carrier focussed predominantly on leisure travel to and through its Hawaiian home, our recovery will come at a faster pace.

Q: Why is the Australian market so important to Hawaiian Airlines?

A: There's just such a great fit between what Hawaii has to offer and what so many Australian travellers want. There's nowhere else that has everything Hawaii has, all in one place.

As a result, Australian visitors are among the longest stayers, highest spenders and importantly, an adventurous Australian mindset means tourism benefits are more widely dispersed around the state.

Q: Do travel agents still have a part to play in delivering your message and selling your product?

A: Absolutely. Consumers will always choose what's right for them in terms of how they book travel. Given the complexity around international travel, the value of expert advice is as high as ever.

We're also seeing a growing awareness among Australian travellers about Hawaiian's mainland USA network to 16 cities and I think good travel agents have a huge role to play in building better solutions for U.S. bound travellers.

Q: What kind of experience are Australians going to get onboard a HA flight?

A: They're going to experience the authentic Hawaiian hospitality the airline has always been famous for.

They'll enjoy everything you've come to expect on Hawaiian from complimentary entertainment and meal service, options for extra comfort and every passenger is entitled to a huge 64kg baggage allowance, perfect for bringing all that shopping home.

» hawaiianairlines.com.au



Four up for Fiji

AFTER A hiatus of three years Fiji Airways have announced their return to a major Australian city.

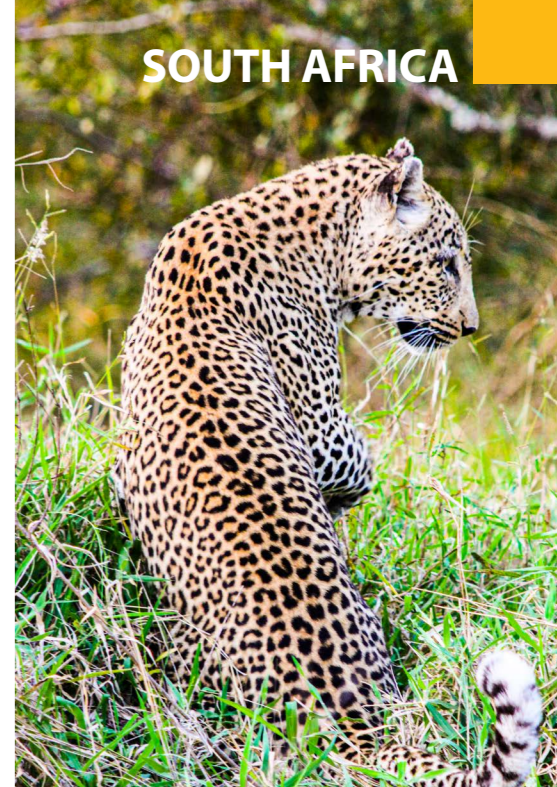
The national airline will resume twice weekly direct services to Adelaide from Nadi commencing on July 4.

This marks the fourth Australian leg for the airline after Sydney, Brisbane and Melbourne. Fiji Airways currently operates two flights daily out of Sydney and daily flights out of Melbourne and Brisbane.

"The increase in our aircraft fleet allows us to cater to the demand out of Adelaide," said Andre Viljoen, Managing Director and CEO of Fiji Airways.

Return economy airfares start from \$649 per person and return business class airfares from \$2,299 per person.

» fijairways.com



ANIMAL MAGIC COMES OUT OF AFRICA

Safari is one of the greatest travel experiences on earth. **Jon Underwood** visits a game reserve where incredible experiences await around every corner and learn why a safari holiday might not be as expensive as you think.

BENS IS staring intently at the ground, scanning the dirt for any tell-tale signs. After more than three hours, he is a man on a mission.

We sit in reverential silence, watching a master tracker at work. Only the occasional bird cry from deep within the African bush breaks the silence. The tension is palpable.

"Female leopard. Crossed here. We're close," he says, circling a paw print with his bamboo cane. The word leopard is enough to make the hairs stand up on the back of my neck.

We're in MalaMala, the first privately owned and commercially operated game reserve in South Africa. It was founded by Michael Rattray, who pioneered the concept of shooting animals with cameras, not guns, back in the 1960s.

At more than 13,000 hectares, it is

also one of the largest reserves and borders the famous Kruger National Park.

The day before we'd flown up from Johannesburg to the property's private air strip, a glimpse of giraffe and elephant below whetting the safari appetite. Now here we were, in the thick of the action.

As Bens continues to scan the dirt, movement to the right catches my eye. There, about 20 metres away, I spot the leopard climbing the grassy bank of the dry riverbed we've been driving through. This is a favourite haunt of the spotted cat as it provides cover, water and prey.

Like an over-excited kid on Christmas morning, I yell "there, there, there!" and Ben's guns the powerful Land Cruiser off in pursuit.

What follows is one of the singular

most exciting moments of my life.

Leopards are notoriously shy, secretive animals and the hardest of the 'Big Five' to spot. There are 80 of them within MalaMala, but with thousands of hectares to hide in, that's a difficult and well camouflaged needle to spot in a very large haystack.

One of the advantages of a private reserve is that you can go off road during your three-hour game drive – and when I say off-road, I mean off-off-road! Bens skilfully manoeuvres the big green machine through prickly thickets and around thorny bushes, eager to catch up with the elusive cat.

He needn't have worried. For there, nestled in the long grass, is the two-year old female we've been following for so long.

She doesn't seem bothered, angry or perturbed by our presence and for the next 30 minutes, we follow her as she crawls, sprints and bounces through the bush. At one point she heads straight for us, walks around the front of the vehicle and passes so close I could reach out and pat her (I choose not to!).

It's hard to put into words the emotions you feel when you are this

close to one of nature's true wonders.

When you've only seen such beautiful creatures in TV documentaries, pictures and on the occasional zoo visit, this is an almost surreal experience. No cages, no bars – just nature as she always intended it to be.

I really should go out and buy a lottery ticket because during our two-day stay at MalaMala we were blessed with three separate leopard sightings. It's why this place is so renowned for the quantity of its wildlife and the quality of the interactions.

Here, they don't do the 'Ferrari Safari' experience where you race around to try and tick off the 'Big Five' in a day. Guides like Bens and Mike take their time to give guests a genuine feeling of what it's like to track big game...and the euphoria you feel when it finally happens is remarkable.

The previous morning we'd only been out about 10 minutes when we came across a basking pride of lionesses. They'd killed a zebra during the night and were totally satiated.

I ask Mike what would happen if, even in this docile state, one of us was foolish enough to exit the vehicle.

"They'd kill you instantly," he says. Ask a stupid question...

As we sit and watch the slumbering cats, a couple of male lions break cover behind us. It's slightly disturbing

to know that just a couple of metres away might be something waiting to turn you into lunch. That's probably why impala look perpetually nervous.

Both bear the scars of recent territorial battles with other male lions: clearly in this neck of the woods it takes brute strength to be the king of the jungle.

"This is the best game viewing in South Africa," says Mike as we watch the lions move off into the bush. "You'll never see the amount of predators elsewhere that you will see here."

It's hard to argue. Apex predators aside, we see rhinos, hippos, elephants, hyenas, giraffes, zebras and all manner of wild creatures over the course of just 48 hours.

Back at camp and tales abound among guests about their various sightings over sumptuous dinners and delicious lunches. The food here is five-star restaurant quality, all served with that genuine African welcome.

In between game drives you can relax in the pool, enjoy a massage or head to the gym. The rooms are large and luxurious, perfect for an afternoon nap before the evening game drive.

You can fall asleep listening to the sounds of the African bush and dream of your next life-changing animal encounter. At MalaMala, it definitely won't take long.

malamala.com

Left and above: Animal encounters at MalaMala. Below: Trackers Bens (left) and Mike and MalaMala Camp. Pictures by Jon Underwood





BIG GAME ON A SMALL BUDGET

CHRIS SUCHET-PEARSON from Travel Africa explains how safari can be an affordable and safe holiday option.

Q: What makes South Africa such a great place to safari?

Truly a rainbow nation, South Africa is friendly and welcoming with a diversity of well managed national parks and game reserves.

From huge, world-famous areas such as the Kruger National Park and its adjoining private game reserves, to smaller, lesser-known but equally impressive reserves, such as Addo Elephant National Park and Mountain Zebra National Park, this country has something for everyone.

Q: There's a perception that safari is expensive and out of the reach of most Aussies. Is this true?

Certainly not. South Africa has a wide range of safari destinations with accommodation that caters for all budgets: from camping through to affordable three- and four-star guest houses, as well as five-star deluxe luxury lodges.

Most safari experiences publicised and promoted in Australia are for private game reserves with their luxury lodges and why not, they offer amazing accommodation, sumptuous meals and incredible wildlife encounters.

However, what few people in Australia know is that most of South Africa's national parks are owned and

operated by the government and they all have accommodation and facilities that are priced for the local population and thus are accessible and affordable.

Q: So, what are the options for those looking to see wildlife on a budget?

The most affordable option is staying in rest camp accommodation within the National Parks (either camping or staying in rondavels, chalets or safari tents) and self-driving to search for animals and birds.

By doing this you can spend as long or short a time with the wildlife as you like and you don't have to rush off because other safari vehicles are waiting in line!

If the self-drive option is not for you then a guided multi-day tour into the parks is a great idea, especially if you are a family or small group of friends travelling together.

You have your own open safari vehicle and safari guide, and stay in the rest camp accommodation, with all meals included.

* Founded in 2013, Travel Africa is a family-owned business run by husband-and-wife team, Chris and Sandie, who between them have visited and/or lived in southern Africa on numerous occasions over the last 30 years.

▶▶ travelfricayourway.com.au



Chris and Sandie from Travel Africa

In other smaller private game reserves that adjoin Kruger (for example the Manyeleti or Balule Reserves) and across South Africa there are a great many three- and four-star private safari lodges. What you will receive here is an amazing bush and wildlife experience at a more affordable price.

And finally, because you can enter many of South Africa's national parks as a day visitor, there are many great value guesthouses and hotels based in the towns and villages outside the parks.

Q: Are self-drive holidays and tours in Africa safe?

We find that self-driving in southern Africa is as safe as driving in any other part of the world as long as common sense is used – we wouldn't self-drive with our three children time and time again if it wasn't!

As with anywhere in the world, we can't guarantee anyone's complete safety, but we design all our self-drive itineraries with our clients' safety as the number one priority.

The roads are well maintained (overall) and road signage is very good making it easy to navigate, especially as we include a GPS or Wi-Fi Router and data so you can follow Google Maps.

Hope flows at major travel show

After a two-year hiatus due to the pandemic, Africa's Travel Indaba has been held in Durban. *Traveltalk* Managing Editor Jon Underwood reports from this flagship event which sparks real hope that travel is finally back.

THEY WORKED around the clock to get it ready, but all that effort paid off with Africa's Travel Indaba 2022 declared a resounding success.

The three-day travel showpiece attracted 3,700 delegates and hosted 14,000 successful meetings between buyers and sellers. Some 55 countries were represented, including 19 from the African continent.

Traveltalk was invited to attend the event, the third most important travel show of its kind in the world. It was staged at the Inkosi Albert Luthuli International Convention Centre in Durban, a city devastated by recent floods.

"The 2022 Africa's Travel Indaba was an incredible show. We pulled it off against all the odds," said Lindiwe

Rakharebe, CEO of Durban ICC.

The theme of this year's event was 'Africa's stories, your success' and tourism officials were keen to stress that both South Africa and the continent in general were open for business.

"Africa's Travel Indaba is a springboard for the continent to achieve even greater levels of recovery," said Lindiwe Sisulu, South Africa's Minister of Tourism.

"We are here because we have a collective responsibility to reignite the African continent's tourism growth and economy."

Ms Sisulu described Indaba as a proudly Pan-African show that helped showcase the continent's unique heritage, culture, nature and urban experiences that make Africa a rich and varied, all-year destination.

"But we have come to realise that responsible tourism has to be the way of the future.

"We have to practice tourism that minimises carbon footprints, conserves energy and water, reduces waste and plastic consumption and ensures that the community benefits. It is not just an option. It is vitally important."

After a two-year hiatus because



of COVID-19, the minister said it was crucial to see the annual show continue to develop, in order to drive growth and improve tourism numbers.

"By bringing together a range of our best and most unique stories and products from across the continent we can promote them to the rest of the world.

"The tourism industry has been hardest hit but we are resilient enough to stand up and recreate what has been before. Together we can breathe again and live again."

Traveltalk puts minister on the spot

One of South Africa's top tourism officials has assured Australians that his country is safe to visit post COVID-19.

Mr Themba Khumalo was speaking at a media briefing held during Africa's Travel Indaba 2022.

The Acting CEO of South Africa Tourism was quizzed by *Traveltalk* on concerns about the safety of international visitors travelling to the region.

"Every country has its challenges, every city has its challenges," he responded.

"I can assure you that this country and this continent is in a completely different mindset and attitude to people that are coming in for a holiday.

"I can also assure you that everyone coming in from Australia or anywhere else in the world is welcome and will be able to enjoy a safe holiday within our country."

▶▶ #travelindaba2022 ▶▶ southafrica.net



Ms Lindiwe Sisulu, South Africa's Minister of Tourism, with Mr Themba Khumalo, Acting CEO of South Africa Tourism



Penang

A newcomer goes abroad

Rookie traveller **BRENDAN VESTERGAARD** encounters bats, crocodiles and a haunted house on a whirlwind trip around Malaysia.

MY PLAN was a little crazy. Four states in eight days. Absolutely mental? Maybe, but it was worth it.

It was also possibly the only time I didn't dread eight hours sitting on a plane with cramped legs and a literal pain in the ass.

I was heading towards Malaysia and one of the most memorable travel experiences of my life.

TRAVEL REQUIREMENTS

First, the basics. You need to have three essential requirements when travelling to Malaysia: An International

COVID-19 Vaccination Certificate, a completed pre-departure form and overseas vaccination details via MySejahtera traveller profile.

There is no quarantine, no COVID-19 insurance required (although highly advised), no pre-departure testing and no on-arrival testing.

The International COVID-19 Vaccine Certificate can be accessed via Medicare online, while MySejahtera is downloadable via the app store.

The pre-departure form must be done within seven days before departure, which should take about 20-30 minutes to complete.

PENANG

Penang is a state of absolute complexity and diversity within its food, architecture and culture.

I explored the past and the present on the streets of Georgetown on a historical and cultural walking tour. Here, locals are committed to a

centuries-old way of life – working in the same business as their forefathers.

Temples, churches and mosques are in close proximity and harmony with one another, while the facades of Indian, Chinese, Malay and European architecture remain unchanged.

On the walls of each street, murals of arts and storytelling capture Georgetown's wild and bountiful history.

Swapping from history to culinary, I found myself lost in the flavours of the unknown, sipping sour plum juice and eating nasi lemak, nasi goreng, durian, cendol and fish head curry – yes, a complete fish head inside a curry.

As for attractions, I undertook the world's highest high-rope course in Penang, ziplining, balancing and walking backwards 239 metres above the ground at The Top, before taking the world's steepest funicular train at Penang Hill/Habitat.

LANGKAWI

Langkawi is a tropical playground gifted with emerald hues, monumental limestone cliffs and a cluster of 99 islands.

Racing from island to island via jet-ski, I saw wild eagles and swam with a backdrop of forested islands with Mega Water Sports, as well as lazing in a saltwater Jacuzzi on a catamaran with Tropical Charters.

Quite frankly, I was won over. Yet things took a turn with Rimbawi Geo Discovery, who run a mangrove tour that eventually leads to a cave inhabited by around 7,000 bats!

Pitch black, I stood still, surrounded by deafening screeches and the stench of guano as bats flocked around me.

It was abnormally mesmerising, but not as nightmare-inducing as the crocodile show in Crocodile Adventureland. Never in my life did I think someone would stick their hand inside a six-metre-long crocodile – yet alone lie down on it!

Craving something a little lighter, I said my final goodbye to the island via the Langkawi Skycab, which showcases dramatic views of deep chasms, cliff walls and the iconic emerald seascape.

KUALA LUMPUR

This place is utterly massive. The Petronas Twin Towers frame the skyline as I stroll through an obscene amount of shopping malls in KLCC and Bukit Bintang. At night, this behemoth of a building is an eye-candy experience that dazzles the entire cityscape of KL.

Contrary to the urban scene, I took a day trip to the Batu Caves and slowly walked up a flight of 272 rainbow-coloured steps to the enchanting scenes of light peering from inside the cave. I felt a great sense of peace as I tried to understand the significance of the temple.

Nature, too, made its appearance at the KL Bird Park, where 200 different species roam around, displaying exotic calls and feathers.

But most surprising was Hauntu, an immersive live-action haunted house experience that puts you as the leading character through a series of rooms and scary encounters.

Jack in the Box music, ghosts,

carnage and crying, I was dumbfounded by the sheer terror of it all – hopefully, the closest and only interaction I'll ever have with paranormal activity.

MELAKA

Deep-rooted with colonial historical sites, Melaka is a combination of Europe and Asia.

My first stop was at the time capsule of traditional Malaysian houses in Mini Malaysia and ASEAN cultural park.

This attraction showcases traditional houses from every state in Malaysia. Walking from house to house you'll encounter cultural activities like batik painting, henna hand art and traditional Malaysian dancing.

On the way to Red Square was something to marvel at...and something extremely tasty. If thick shakes and coconuts ever had a baby, it would be the coconut shake. All I can say is try it...even if you're lactose intolerant!

I strolled through Red Square, famous for its red pastel-coloured Dutch buildings and the Melaka River. In the evening, Jonker Street livens up with night markets and the city shines with vivid colours everywhere.

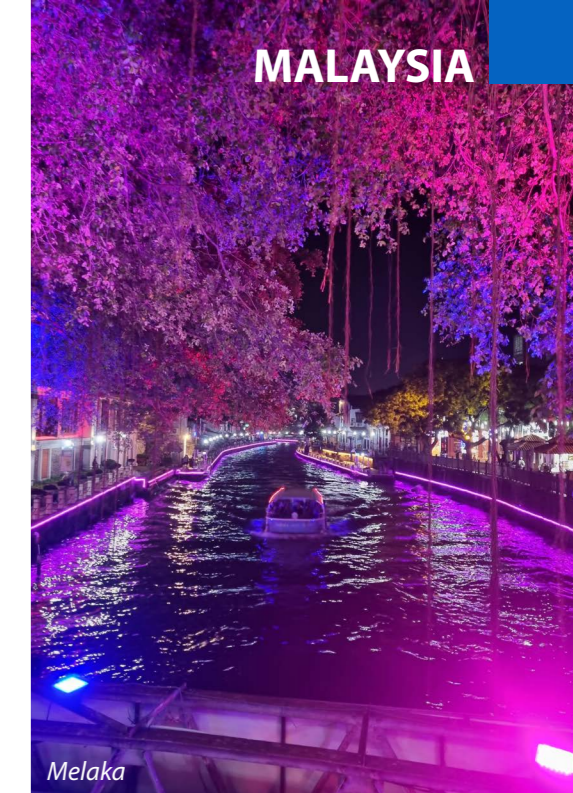
My time in Melaka was completed with a night cruise along the river, where luminescent light stretches along the canal, bridges and trees.

So, there it is. Malaysia. It's wild, surprising, compelling and abundant in fantastic destinations.

But most notably, organising and travelling throughout the country was astoundingly easy. So, come discover Truly Asia, Malaysia.

Brendan is the Assistant Marketing Officer for the Malaysia Tourism Promotion Board.

 malaysia.travel



Melaka



Kuala Lumpur



Langkawi



BACK TO BALI DYNASTY RESORT

DO YOU have the urge to plan a holiday with your little ones?

It is good to know that Bali has reopened to the world, so now everyone can fly and reconnect with the island of paradise after two years!

All parents want the best for their kids when it comes to a family holiday. Staying in a hotel with your kids can be enough to cause nervous exhaustion for any parent, especially if they get loud and restless.

If you're looking for the perfect place in Bali for your next family vacation, consider Bali Dynasty Resort.

The resort offers loads of options to keep your kids busy and entertained as there are numerous activities available for them to play around with.

Imagine your little prince or princess having a fun time on the 56-metre waterslide flowing into the pool: the resort provides a kids' pool with its own Dynasty Waterpark.

There is also a kids' club, teens club, kids' playground and daily activities scheduled. Be assured your kids will never get bored while staying at Bali Dynasty Resort.

While your kids are enjoying their fun time, parents are welcome to relax at the adults-only lazy pool or work out in the gym. Ladies who fancy some pampering can indulge themselves at Ashoka Spa.

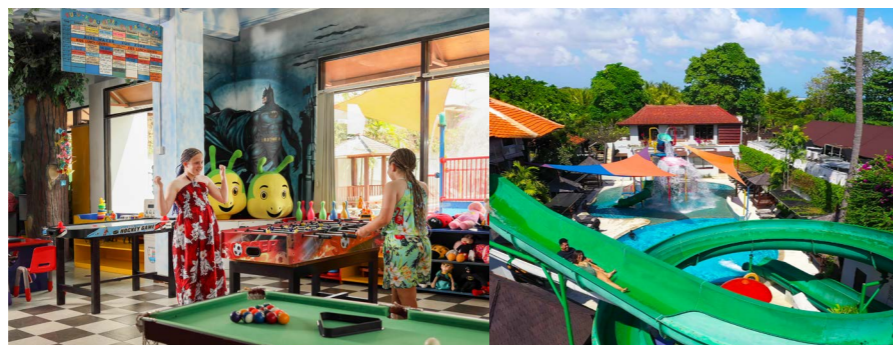
Grown-ups can also enjoy live music with cold beers or cocktails during the twice-a-day 'happy hour' at Sunset Bar or waltz their way to the only Irish bar on the island, Gracie Kelly's.

Bali Dynasty Resort's family room sleeps up to five people and comes fully equipped with one king bed, one bunk bed and one trundle bed.

This type of room is dedicated for and extremely popular with families.

Strategically located on the famous South Kuta beach strip, Bali Dynasty Resort is only 10-minutes' drive from the airport and within walking distance of many restaurants and bars, Kuta Art market, Waterbom Park and two large shopping malls.

Everything you need is only a few steps away from the resort. The beach, bars, clubs, shops, fancy and local restaurants, the art market and even a 24-hour medical centre – they are all accessible to walk in less than 15 minutes.



SPECIAL OFFER

In order to welcome travellers back to the island, Bali Dynasty Resort is now offering special deals for families.

Stay a minimum of five nights and save up to 20 per cent on stays up until December under the 'Back to Bali Dynasty Resort' deal.

With the minimum five nights stay you will enjoy freebies from the resort's Bali Value Booklet.

These include one free themed night buffet dinner, a free spa experience, free return airport transfer, free access to the kids and teens club, free resort activities, free access to Dynasty Waterpark and its giant waterslides, and 'happy hour' twice a day.

To book, visit our website and use the promo code **BALIHOLIDAYS**.

➔ bdr.pphotels.com/promotions?promotionalcode=BALIHOLIDAYS



BALI Dynasty RESORT
SOUTH KUTA - BALI



balidynastyresort



BACK TO BALI

Take advantage of this special offer and save up to 20% for stays up to **December 2022!** Stay a minimum of **5 nights** with extra **FREE** benefits thrown in to make this a deal too good to miss!

Enjoy **FREE** 1X Themed Buffet Dinner, **FREE** spa samplers, **FREE** return airport transfer and many more! You'll also enjoy **FREE** access to the Kids Club & Teens Club, **FREE** resort activities, **FREE** access to Kids Water Fun Zone and it's giant waterslide, and of course 2 times a day **Happy Hour** and much more!

Book now and use our promo code **"BALI HOLIDAYS"**!

The Signature of Indonesian Hospitality

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*MalaMala Game Reserve, South Africa.
Photo courtesy Jon Underwood*