

Australia's favourite travel news magazine

# Traveltalk

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**REVEALED**  
10 top travel  
trends for 2022

**ARABIA**  
Hot dates in  
the desert

**DOMESTIC  
TRAVEL**  
Queensland's  
fantastic five

**COMPETITION**

Win a trip to Canada!

*Plus:* Community tourism in Malaysia & cherry blossoms in Japan

## EDITORIAL

**Jon Underwood**

Managing Editor (print)

Email: jon@traveltalkmag.com.au

**Gaya Avery**

Managing Editor (digital)

Email: editorial@traveltalkmag.com.au

## ART DIRECTOR

**Vanessa Pribil**

Email: production@traveltalkmag.com.au

## ADVERTISING

**Jenny Rowland**

Mobile: 0414 746 146

Fax: (02) 9969 3390

Email: jenny@traveltalkmag.com.au

## DIRECTORS AND ASSOCIATE PUBLISHERS

**Jenny Rowland**

**Jenny Evans**

Sydney Office: 24 Chandos Street

Manly Vale

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## DISTRIBUTION AND SUBSCRIPTIONS

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Win a trip to Canada



COVER IMAGE: Canada.  
Picture courtesy iStock

# Learning to love *travel again*

## ADDICTION CAN be a dangerous thing. It can take you to places where even the Satnav doesn't go.

At the risk of being publicly ostracised, let me say that I am an addict.

To travel.

I've just come back from my first trip "overseas" for more than two years. Remember the time when you dreaded the whole getting to the airport, check-in, queuing, sitting next to the Brady Bunch or Incredible Hulk, kind of thing? Now I couldn't care less.

Just getting onto an airplane and actually going somewhere was such a thrill – almost like doing it for the very first time, which was ironic seeing as I flew Virgin...

The destination almost didn't matter (although it was fantastic) – the point of the exercise was to feel like we're actually returning to some semblance of normality.

I'm forever telling my children that as a species, person-kind has done wonders. With a tip of the hat to Messrs Wright and Wright, airplane travel has opened up the world like never before and the last two years have really brought home how much we love exploring other cultures and civilisations.

I'd forgotten the sounds, the smells and the sensations of flying – even a 20-minute boarding delay because the catering truck was late seemed somewhat risible. I mean, when you've waited two years to fly, what's a 20-minute wait for a sausage roll?

Our seats were excellent, the food and wine were delicious and Persia in the cabin was a delight. "Cabin crew, arm doors and cross check" never sounded so sweet.

Just to see the safety demonstration and wonder (again) just how quickly you could actually put on a life jacket in a crisis and summon enough breath to blow through the mouthpiece was like rediscovering chocolate.

Chatting to the passenger next to me who worked for a jeweller and had more rings on his fingers than Elton John. Trying to pee while the plane was bouncing around, that funny feeling in your ears, the distant sound of a baby crying....

Once on the ground, a smooth transit through Hobart Airport and it was off into the wide blue Tasmanian yonder to explore and entertain.

Having been starved of visitors for so long, the locals were extremely helpful, welcoming and enthusiastic. For our part, it felt great to be playing just a small part in pumping much needed funds back into local pockets.

Welcome back travel. By goodness we've missed you.

**\* Talking of travel, don't miss the chance to win a trip to Canada in our fantastic competition. Someone is going to win flights and accommodation for two in Vancouver. Good luck!**

## YOUR CHANCE TO HELP UKRAINE

THE INTREPID Foundation has launched an emergency appeal to provide relief for communities affected by the crisis in Ukraine.

Intrepid's not-for-profit organisation has provided an upfront \$50,000 donation towards the appeal with the Australian Red Cross.

At least 660,000 people have been forced to flee from their homes and these numbers are expected to grow significantly in coming days and weeks.

Many people who remain in Ukraine do not have access to water or electricity and are seeking emergency shelter. Intrepid has cancelled all trips in Ukraine and Russia for the foreseeable future.

Red Cross teams are stationed on the ground in Ukraine and surrounding countries to provide first aid, supply medicine and equipment, food, water, shelter and essential items, and repair vital infrastructure.

» [www.theintrepidfoundation.org/t/ukraine-crisis-appeal](http://www.theintrepidfoundation.org/t/ukraine-crisis-appeal)

## NEW DEAL IS GOOD NEWS FOR AUSSIE TRAVELLERS

AUSSIERS MAKING plans for international trips in a post-COVID world are the big winners from a new luxury travel partnership.

TravelManagers Australia has just signed a deal with the U.S.-headquartered Signature Travel Network (STN).

The agreement provides the network of personal travel managers (PTMs) throughout Australia with access to STN's extensive programs and supplier connections.

"That includes access to Signature's VIP Hotel and Resorts program, which features more than a thousand luxury properties located in 90 countries," said Grant Campbell, TravelManagers' Chief Operating Officer, "as well as its land and tour program with 85 preferred destination specialists in more than 130 countries."

Campbell says the partnership comes as a result of TravelManagers' extensive research and in-depth discussion with stakeholders.

"Having undertaken a thorough analysis of the quality and range of product offered by Signature and its peers, we are confident that Signature delivers the best possible offering to suit Australian travellers."

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



Grant Campbell, TravelManagers' Chief Operating Officer



# You'll love this campaign



AUSTRALIANS ARE being encouraged to reconnect with loved ones in a new promotion from Tourism NT.

As part of its award-winning 'Seek Different' campaign, the tourism body has released three TV commercials encouraging us to rekindle ties with friends and relatives.

Running until March 31, the TVCs highlight the emotional need to physically reconnect after years limited to virtual connection. Iconic destinations Uluru, Alice Springs and Darwin are featured and aim to inspire Australians to visit the Territory for a truly different and meaningful holiday.

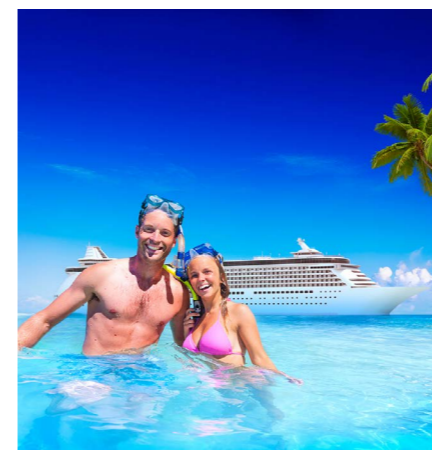
"There is no better time for friends and family to safely reconnect and no better place than the Northern Territory to explore somewhere different together," said Tony Quarmby, Executive Director of Marketing at Tourism NT.

The launch of the new Seek Different creative coincides with the final weeks of the NT Summer Sale, the Northern Territory Government's biggest incentivised summer tourism campaign which offers significant savings to fully vaccinated Australians.

"Australians can save up to \$1,000 off their NT summer holiday. It's the perfect opportunity to get away and reconnect with loved ones," added Quarmby.

The NT Summer Sale will also run until March 31.

» [www.tourismnt.com.au](http://www.tourismnt.com.au)



## GREAT NEWS FOR CRUISE

"Australia is still the only major cruise market in the world without confirmed plans for cruising's resumption, so it's important that governments work in partnership with the cruise industry to achieve a swift solution."

Mr Katz added that more than seven million people had sailed successfully in dozens of other countries where cruising had already resumed, with stringent new health protocols in place.

"Cruising has changed enormously in response to the pandemic and the work done with medical experts around the world has resulted in health protocols that have been successful in mitigating the risks of COVID-19.

"Most cruise lines have cancelled sailings through to the end of May and it will take several months to prepare ships for their return, so we need governments to sign off on industry protocols as soon as possible so we can begin a careful and responsible revival of cruise tourism in Australia."

The prolonged suspension of cruise tourism has also seen CLIA lodge a pre-budget submission with the Federal Government.

The submission highlights the extensive losses suffered by Australian travel agents, tourism operators, industry suppliers and other local businesses since cruise operations were halted almost two years ago.

It also calls for the government to

THE GOVERNMENT has given the green light for Australia's three eastern states to work with the cruise industry on a possible re-start of business.

The decision by the national cabinet has been hailed as a breakthrough in the eventual resumption of cruising in Australia.

Joel Katz, Managing Director Australasia, Cruise Lines International Association (CLIA), said it was hoped the extension of the cruise ban to April 17 would be the last before international cruise ships can return to Australia.

"We can now see hope for thousands of Australians whose livelihoods depend on cruise tourism," said Mr Katz.



Pictures courtesy Game of Thrones Studio Tour

## STARS OPEN NEW GoT EXHIBIT

THREE OF the stars of the hit TV series *Game of Thrones* were on hand to open a new visitor attraction in Northern Ireland recently.

Fan favourites Isaac Hempstead Wright (Bran Stark), Kristian Nairn (Hodor) and Nathalie Emmanuel (Missandei) helped launch the studio tour at Linen Mill Studios in Banbridge.

Guests can step inside the Great Hall at Winterfell where Jon Snow was proclaimed the 'King in the North,' and see Daenerys Targaryen's imposing Dragonstone throne.

Props, weaponry and visual effects are also part of the exhibit, while visitors can learn more about the skills and craftsmanship that helped bring the show from script to screen.

"As we prepare to restart tourism from overseas this year, the opening of this truly world-class visitor attraction is excellent news for Northern Ireland tourism, helping to give us significant 'stand-out' in the very competitive international marketplace," said Niall Gibbons, CEO, Tourism Ireland.

*Game of Thrones* aired in more than 200 countries and territories, culminating in record-setting ratings. The next iteration of the franchise, *House of the Dragon*, is set to premiere in 2022.

"We are proud to be part of the legacy of the beloved *Game of Thrones* franchise and we can't wait for fans around the globe to step inside and immerse themselves in all corners of the Seven Kingdoms and beyond," said Julian Moon, Head of EMEA Warner Bros. Consumer Products.

» [www.gameofthronesstudiotour.com](http://www.gameofthronesstudiotour.com) » [www.ireland.com](http://www.ireland.com)

# 10 TRAVEL TRENDS FOR AUSSIES IN 2022



G ADVENTURES have identified the top 10 trends for travelling in 2022, with insights into how Aussies want to travel and where they want to go.

The company took a survey of its previous clients to see just what the immediate future of travel is likely to look like.

## 1. Community tourism is the solution to responsible travel

Travellers are looking for adventures that support community tourism and trails are a great way for tourists to spread wealth through multiple smaller villages.

## 2. Travellers care most about supporting local people

The most important factor for Aussies when they travel is that their money benefits local people. This trend has been intensified by the impact of the pandemic on countries that rely on tourism for their economic survival.

## 3. Travellers will have a bit more cash to splash

With staying in spurring a savings boom, travel-starved Aussies say they have increased their travel budget for their next international holiday. Their travel dollars are likely to take them on bigger adventures than they might have thought possible before.

## 4. 'Workations' increase in popularity

As the world shifted to remote

working, companies realised office confines were no longer required to ensure productivity.

Previously the domain of the digital nomad, 'workations' have hit the mainstream. An increasing number of people plan to combine work with travel in future.

## 5. Hostels will make a big comeback

The need for social connection among young travellers is strong with many Aussies aged 18-34 saying they were likely to try a hostel experience following the pandemic.

## 6. Travellers want to disconnect from their devices

Workationers aside, while travellers want to reconnect with people and places, they are desperate to disconnect from the online world while on holiday.

## 7. The staycation is over - travellers want to go further afield

The domestic holiday appeal is wearing off as the pandemic rolls on. A lot of Aussies say they are less likely to take a 'staycation' in 2022.

## 8. Lockdown life has led to a desire to be more active

Some 67 per cent of those surveyed want to be physically active on their next holiday and with 63 per cent of travellers polled saying their

physical and mental wellbeing is a top consideration when booking a holiday, taking a hike never sounded more appealing.

## 9. Travellers are prioritising wellbeing and mental health

Aussies are looking to take their next holiday in a way that not only helps them to reconnect, but optimises travel as a means of revitalisation.

## 10. Revenge travel is out, reconnection travel is in

Consumers are hungry for new experiences and connections. Although the term 'revenge travel' – the urge to travel to make up for lost time in lockdown – gained popularity over the course of the pandemic, reconnection travel is the top reason for travelling at 40 per cent, with revenge travel – booking a trip to make up for lost time – coming in at just 16 per cent.

"This pandemic has woken travellers up and given them a chance to reflect on how they were travelling before," said Bruce Poon Tip, founder of G Adventures.

"It only takes a small number of people to make a huge difference, and travellers are finally seeing how smart choices can positively benefit local people, and deliver a richer travel experience at the same time."

» [www.gadventures.com](http://www.gadventures.com)



## TRAIN TOURS OPEN EARLY DOORS

HIGH DOMESTIC demand has led Journey Beyond to open its 2023 rail season earlier than ever before.

Travellers now have access to rail journeys and uniquely Australian experiences aboard The Ghan, Great Southern and Indian Pacific.

"With many Australians continuing to choose to explore their own backyards, people are keen to make the most of all Australia has to offer," said Peter Egglestone, Chief Commercial Officer for Journey Beyond.

In 2023, The Ghan will have twice weekly departures from April to September, the Great Southern will extend its summer season across February 2023 and the Indian Pacific will have greater capacity, with more carriages being added to select departures.

The release of the 2023 season also sees a range of new holiday packages, combining journeys and destination-based experiences to help guests create the perfect holiday experience.

The re-imagined, all-inclusive 15-day 'Ultimate Territory Tour' takes guests on a journey from Adelaide to Darwin by rail, road and red earth.

Guests board The Ghan in Adelaide, heading to Australia's Red Centre, Alice Springs, before venturing deep into the outback with premium small-group operator Outback Spirit to discover Uluru and its surrounds.

Back onboard The Ghan from Alice Springs, guests travel to Darwin, later crossing the Territory into Kakadu and Litchfield National Parks. The journey ends with a sunset Darwin Harbour Cruise. The tour is priced from \$10,920 per person.

» [www.journeybeyond.com](http://www.journeybeyond.com)



## THE PRICES ARE RIGHT ON EUROPE

APT IS offering guests the chance to travel to Europe in 2023 at 2022 prices when booking by May 31.

The promotion comes with the company unveiling its pre-release program and brochure, giving a sneak peek into its 2023 Europe schedule.

Included is the ever-popular 15-day 'Magnificent Europe' river cruise from Amsterdam to Budapest. Cruising on the Rhine, Main and Danube rivers, the trip takes travellers through the Netherlands, Germany, Austria and Hungary.

Prices for guests who book by May 31 start from \$6,495 per person twin share, with flights included and a saving of up to \$1,000 per couple.

The 15-day Balkans river cruise also makes a return, with pricing starting from \$6,795 per person twin share.

APT has also reintroduced the 'Colours of Morocco' small group journey, which combines with its Douro river cruise.

Meanwhile Travelmarvel has also released its Europe program for 2023 with a number of offers and savings available until March 31.

The river cruise program features the company's flagship 15-day 'European Gems' trip from Amsterdam to Budapest. Prices start from \$5,495 per person twin share with flights included, plus a saving of up to \$1,000 per couple.

Cruises will traverse the Rhine, Main and Danube rivers aboard Travelmarvel's new state of the art and spacious contemporary river ships, the *Polaris*, *Capella* and *Vega*.

Also new in 2023 are several Croatia coastal cruise itineraries, featuring extensive explorations of the Adriatic Coast and Dalmatian Islands.

The eight-day 'Adriatic Coastal Cruise' traces the length of Croatia's coastline and begins at \$3,495 per person twin share. All these cruises take place on the *MV Princess Eleganza*, with no more than 36 guests.

» [www.aptouring.com.au/europe](http://www.aptouring.com.au/europe) » [www.travelmarvel.com.au](http://www.travelmarvel.com.au)





# FIVE TOP TIPS TO A BETTER BUSINESS

**ROSLYN RANSE** is the founder of Travel Agent Achievers, a community built with the aim of helping consultants run a more efficient business. In this exclusive article for *Traveltalk*, she reveals her top tips to make your business better.

EVERYONE IN the travel industry knows how easy it is to get sucked in by the day-to-day tasks of planning trips and liaising with clients and let all the back end 'business stuff' fall by the wayside.

After two of the toughest years the travel industry will ever face, it's harder than ever to get motivated but now, more than ever, travel advisors need to re-start, re-ignite and begin rebuilding their businesses.

Here are five tried and tested Travel Agent Achievers tips to run a smoother and more successful travel business:

## 1. Ask yourself: why did you get into the industry?

At the heart of who we are, there is a reason. Whatever it is, this is something that you can come back to when things are tough. It will help spur you on, when you get a new booking, or need to go out there in search of new bookings.

## 2. Make a plan

Even though you may feel like you are in survival mode and everything around you is uncertain, you can still take control of what you want to achieve and decide what your goals are.

What sales figures do you want this year? What destinations do you want to focus on? Block off time in your diary to plan your marketing, your events and have a look at your sales stats.

Having a plan in place allows you to focus and know what to do next. No more guessing. It's action time.

## 3. Identify WHO you want to work with

Think through all the clients that have been amazing over the last couple of years and also those that you no longer want to serve.

Once you know who you want to work with, or the destination you want to promote, your marketing strategy will become clearer. (Don't worry, you will still get other clients, but your tunnel vision will speak directly to those that you want to work with.)

## 4. Stop working for free

You are the EXPERT and your expertise is valuable. You are there to get your clients the best possible result and that is what you are being paid for.

The past two years have been filled with too many days spent refunding, rebooking and often working countless, thankless hours for free.



Roslyn Ranse, founder of Travel Agent Achievers

If you're not sure where to begin, start by assessing the value that you provide to your clients, determine how much you should charge for each and every booking that you make and create a fee system for your travel business. You deserve to be paid for the work that you do.

## 5. Surround yourself with people that 'get' you

We all know that family and friends can hold us together when things get rough, but the travel industry is also a special community that can support and encourage you, as well as share knowledge, experience and resources to help you stay afloat and move forward.

For more information, visit

» [www.travelagentachievers.com](http://www.travelagentachievers.com) or check out the Travel Agent Achievers Podcast.

*Travel business owners and travel advisors who want help mapping out a successful future can join the Travel Business Foundation Program or a full planning day coming up in June.*



Stanley Park, Vancouver

## How to become a specialist

TOURISM VANCOUVER has launched an interactive online training program for agents.

The Vancouver Specialist Program is an educational tool designed to expand knowledge on the destination, thereby helping increase sales.

Interactive, intuitive and engaging, the program also helps deliver tailored itineraries for clients.

Agents who complete the course will receive a Vancouver Specialist certificate as well as access to special benefits and sales resources.

» [www.ourismvancouver.com/vsp](http://www.ourismvancouver.com/vsp)



## Entire solution is an industry first

A BOOKING platform that allows agents to seamlessly customise, quote and book an entire range of independent holiday packages has just been launched.

The new proprietary software allows travel advisors to tailor hundreds of independent packages across 28 destinations from Entire Travel Group.

No time-consuming login details are required for agents to fully utilise either the platform's Quote Now or Book Now features. Agents simply choose a package and room type, add essential details then select from a range of Freedom of Choice options, which are included in the package price.

The package can be further enhanced through the inclusion of optional extras proven to be popular with Australian travellers – ensuring the final itinerary meets each customer's individual needs while saving agents time and optimising commission.

"Our new booking platform is an exciting industry first," said Brad McDonnell, Managing Director, Entire Travel Group.

"The last two years provided the opportunity of time, which we have used to deliver an industry-leading platform that offers a new level of service and support to our industry partners.

"Our success will be measured by the ability for agents to make more commission in less time to assist in their recovery."

» [www.entiretravel.com.au](http://www.entiretravel.com.au)



Brad McDonnell (left) and Greg McCallum from Entire Travel Group

## Singing their way to America

WE'VE ALL heard of singing for your supper...but what about singing for your holiday?

A unique promotion offering agents the chance to showcase their musical talent and win a trip to America comes to an exciting climax this month.

Organised by Oklahoma Tourism with partners Brand USA, United Airlines and Visit Grapevine, the themed competition features a one-off talent show in Sydney on March 18.

To make it to the show, agents had to deliver their own rendition of a song from Rodgers & Hammerstein's

classic musical, OKLAHOMA!, along with a short message on why they wanted to visit the state.

One of the five contestants to make it through to the final will be chosen as the winner by a panel of industry leaders and the audience.

The lucky winner will earn two economy class tickets to DFW, two nights in Grapevine, Texas, before hitting the road to Oklahoma for seven nights. Here they can get their kicks on Route 66, attend a rodeo or sample some traditional BBQ.

» [www.TravelOK.com](http://www.TravelOK.com)



Picture courtesy Oklahoma Tourism & Recreation



# Solid silver reasons for a big celebration

VIKING IS celebrating a significant milestone as the company begins its 25th anniversary year.

The purpose-built *Viking Octantis* has started its first Antarctic season, meaning the award-winning cruise line now explores all seven continents.

By the end of the year, Viking will have welcomed a second identical expedition ship, as well as two new ocean ships, new Viking Longships in Europe and new purpose-built vessels for the Nile, Mekong and Mississippi rivers.

“When we started Viking 25 years ago, we wanted to do things differently – and since then, our mission has resonated with curious travellers,” said Torstein Hagen, Chairman of Viking.

“With the arrival of the *Viking Octantis*, we are offering our guests the opportunity to explore this unique part of the world in comfort and in the most responsible way possible.”

*Viking Octantis* will spend the Austral summer in Antarctica, before travelling north to be named in April in New York

City by her ceremonial godmother, Liv Arnesen, the world-renowned Norwegian explorer and educator.

## Rolling down the river

Viking has released its 2023-2024 river cruises brochure covering destinations from Central Europe to Egypt, Asia and America.

The 240-page brochure features new European river cruise itineraries, including four new cruises that take in Europe during the festive season.

New festive itineraries that take in Europe’s famous Christmas markets as well as the regions usual highlights, include the eight-day ‘Christmas on the Rhine’ from Amsterdam to Basel. It is priced from \$3,995 per person in a Standard stateroom, including savings of up to \$1,000 per couple and \$1,000 flight credit per couple.

Or the eight-day ‘Christmas on the Danube’ from Budapest to Regensburg. It is priced from \$3,995 per person in a

Standard stateroom, including savings of up to \$1,000 per couple, and \$1,000 flight credit per couple.

Michelle Black, Managing Director Viking ANZ, said the new brochure and itineraries reflect feedback from guests wanting to explore further and throughout the festive season.

“We are excited to showcase so many new itineraries for 2023 and 2024, providing you with more choice than ever before,” she said.

## Viking Down Under

As the world begins to return to travel and exploration, Viking has announced that two of its award-winning ocean ships will arrive in local waters for the 2022-2023 Australia and New Zealand cruise season.

This is the first time two Viking ships will be in the region and reflects the company’s commitment to supporting cruising in the Australian market.

*Viking Orion* will return to her seasonal Sydney and Auckland home ports between November 2022 and March 2023.

The company’s newest ocean ship, *Viking Mars*, will arrive in December and depart on a special New Year’s Eve sailing from Sydney to Auckland.

» [www.vikingcruises.com.au](http://www.vikingcruises.com.au)



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\*Conditions apply. Prices are per person, in Australian dollars, based on double occupancy, subject to availability, includes all advertised discounts and correct at time of printing. Guests are required to be fully vaccinated against COVID-19 at time of travel. Grand European River Cruise based on 19 November 2023 departure. European Sojourn River Cruise based on 11 July 2023 departure. Paris & the Heart of Normandy River Cruise is based on 19 November 2023 departure. Economy class flights included up to the value of \$1,800 per person. Flight credit included up to the value of \$500 per person. Included Flights and Flight Credits will be booked by Viking and with Viking's choice of airline from major gateway cities in Australia. These offers are valid on new bookings made between 5 March – 30 April 2022 unless sold out prior. Risk-free guarantee applies to 2022 departures only. For full terms and conditions visit [viking.com](http://viking.com)

# NEW SEASON GOES GLOBAL

AURORA EXPEDITIONS has launched its 2023 Arctic & Global season, featuring new itineraries and exploration of an entirely new region.

The company's new 2022-23 brochure features seven fresh itineraries and marks Aurora's first expedition to the Islands of the Atlantic, including Cape Verde, the Canary Islands and the Azores.

"We have pioneered exploration for more than 30 years and discovery is in our DNA," said Hayley Peacock-Gower, CMO of Aurora Expeditions.

"We are especially delighted to add the Islands of the Atlantic to our expeditions for the new season, a region known for its exceptional biodiversity, wildlife encounters and rich culture and history."

Other remote experiences featured in the new brochure include voyages to Alaska, Raja Ampat & West Papua, Baja California, Scotland and Ireland, Costa Rica and the Panama Canal, the European Arctic, Canada's Northwest Passage, as well as an extensive 2022-23 season in Antarctica.

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



## A view to a thrill

GUESTS STILL have time to book a European adventure aboard the *Avalon View*, the latest addition to the company's fleet of Suite Ships.

The new 16-day tour for 2022 is 'The Danube from Germany to the Black Sea', visiting Germany, Austria, Slovakia, Hungary, Croatia, Serbia, Bulgaria and Romania.

Highlights include sailing through the Danube's dramatic horseshoe bend (pictured above), visiting vineyards and historic castles of the Blue Danube and spending time in Vienna and Bucharest – the 'Paris of the East'.

It is priced from \$8,890 per person and the cut off booking date is March 28.

The company is also offering savings on its 'Romantic Rhine' cruise, an eight-day journey visiting Germany, Holland, France and Switzerland.

Taking in Amsterdam, Cologne and Strasbourg, the cruise also visits wine towns, Germany's Black Forest and has many a historic stop off, such as to the red-walled castle ruins of Heidelberg.

The lead in price is \$2,437 per person and the cut off booking date is March 28.

Launched in 2021, the Globus 'Undiscovered North America' holiday series takes globetrotters down less-travelled highways, lanes and scenic country roads.

On this eight-day tour travellers will explore Southern California, visiting the popular Golden State getaways of Palm Springs and Santa Barbara.

Visit the 18th-century mission in San Juan Capistrano, tour the Rat Pack's mid-century modern homes in Palm Springs and taste perfectly aged reds and whites in the wine regions of Temecula and Paso Robles.

Itinerary highlights also include a Jeep tour through Joshua Tree National Park and soaking up some rays along San Diego's more than 100kms of beaches.

The lead in price is \$4,553 with cut off dates for booking April 4.

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

## Reap some top rewards

CELEBRITY CRUISES has announced the launch of a new agent loyalty program, Celebrity Rewards.

Agents can begin earning points on all deposited bookings, redeemable for a reloadable Celebrity Rewards Mastercard, or e-gift cards from retailers, including Netflix, Myer and Ticketmaster.

During March and to celebrate the launch, the cruise line is offering agents the chance to earn double the points on all sailings up to April 30, 2023.

To be eligible for Celebrity Rewards, agents must first graduate from Celebrity Cruises' training program, Celebrity Learning.

» [www.TheCelebrityCommitment.com.au](http://www.TheCelebrityCommitment.com.au)



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FIJI ON SALE Book by 31 Mar 2022

**Tokoriki Island Resort**

Tokoriki Island Resort is Fiji's most awarded adults-only boutique luxury island resort. With warm Fijian hospitality and caring attention to detail, Tokoriki Island Resort is the perfect Fiji island escape or honeymoon.

ENTIRE BONUS OFFERS

- Roundtrip complimentary helicopter transfers between Nadi Airport and Tokoriki
- Complimentary 2 x 45 min massages per person per stay
- Complimentary fruit plate & bottle of French sparkling on arrival

FIJI ON SALE Book by 31 Mar 2022

**Yasawa Island Resort & Spa**

Yasawa Island Resort and Spa is an exclusive all-inclusive resort on one of the most remote and unspoiled islands of Fiji. Swim in crystal clear waters, explore any of our 10 private beaches, dive on vividly colored corals, connect with an ancient culture or indulge in Fiji's first beachfront spa.

ENTIRE BONUS OFFERS

- Return Plane Transfers between Nadi Airport and Yasawa Island Resort & Spa
- FJD\$150 Resort Credit per stay
- 3-hour Excursion to the Blue Lagoon Caves

FIJI ON SALE Book by 31 Mar 2022

**Royal Davui Island Resort & Spa**

Private, secluded Fijian barefoot luxury at its best! Located in the spectacular Beqa Lagoon, Royal Davui Island Resort is one of Fiji's best private adults-only resorts for couples offering some of the best all-inclusive services.

ENTIRE BONUS OFFERS

- Roundtrip Plane Transfers from/to Nadi (30min scenic flight to Pacific Harbour)
- 1x Free Night included
- 1x 60 Minute Couples Massage for 2

FIJI ON SALE Book by 31 Mar 2022

**Likuliku Lagoon Resort**

Likuliku Lagoon Resort is a haven of subtle luxury for adults only and reserved exclusively for guests in-residence at the resort. A wilderness island retreat, it is the first and only resort in Fiji with authentic over water-bures, in a natural ocean lagoon, surrounded by a protected marine sanctuary.

ENTIRE BONUS OFFERS

- Roundtrip Helicopter Transfers included between Nadi Airport and Likuliku Lagoon Resort
- Receive a complimentary bottle of Veuve Clicquot on arrival
- Complimentary Snorkelling Trip for two adults when staying in a Beachfront Bure

# HOW TO GET SHUT EYE IN THE SKY

Health expert APRIL MAYER from Amerisleep reveals tips from frequent and experienced travellers on how to sleep better in the sky.

## DO I NEED A FLIGHT PILLOW?

Investing in a decent neck support pillow for flying will be a lifesaver and can help stop any neck pain as it will properly support your neck.

It will also help you sleep as you won't feel the need to fidget to get your head comfortable regularly.

You may also find an eye mask useful for light exposure and if you are unable to get a window seat and have control of the blind.

## HOW SHOULD I BUCKLE MY SEAT BELT?

How you buckle your seatbelt is important for any chance of a good night's undisturbed sleep in the sky.

The idea is that you should buckle

it over your blanket instead of under it. That way, flight attendants can see you are wearing it and won't need to wake you in the case of any turbulence.

This will also stop the buckle feeling uncomfortable and awkward while you sleep.

## WHAT CLOTHES SHOULD I WEAR?

It's very important to wear something comfortable and that isn't too restrictive or stiff such as tight jeans.

Layers are important also as it can feel cold after time on a long-haul flight, this way you also have the option of removing layers if you get too hot.

## HOW AND WHERE SHOULD I SIT?

Try to reserve a window seat if you can, this way you can lean on the window if need be and be in control of your light exposure.

It's a good idea to not cross your legs either as this can reduce blood flow in your legs and make you susceptible to blood clots or being in pain when you wake up.

Also make sure to recline your chair, as this will put less pressure on your lower spine ensuring a better night's sleep.

## WHAT SHOULD I EAT?

Try not to overindulge before a flight and go for something light, so you're not bloated and can doze off easier and avoid being kept awake by feeling too full.

## WHAT SHOULD I LISTEN TO?

Find a podcast you find relaxing and listen to it several times before bed in preparation for your flight. This way you will be familiar with it and associate it with sleep when the time comes to sleep.

Noise-cancelling headphones will also help you get a more undisturbed sleep.

## IS THERE ANYTHING I CAN TAKE TO HELP ME SLEEP?

Our experts suggest taking a dose of magnesium before take-off. It's a natural supplement that will make it easier for you to rest easy.

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



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## AIR CANADA SIGNATURE CLASS

Air Canada's premium travel experience offers a range of enhanced amenities, including exclusive lounge access, concierge and priority services – such as baggage handling – and more. On board, relax and unwind with a fully lie-flat seat, savour delicious seasonal food, and premium wines selected by sommelier Véronique Rivest.

Experience the Air Canada Signature Class cabin on flights from Australia to Vancouver, and take advantage of convenient connections to major destinations across Canada and the U.S

[aircanada.com/signatureservice](http://aircanada.com/signatureservice)

## Daily service from Etihad

ETIHAD AIRWAYS will increase its Melbourne and Sydney services from five per week to daily from March 27.

From this date the airline will offer 14 weekly flights between Abu Dhabi and Australia.

The new daily services will be operated using a fleet of Boeing 787 aircraft in a two-cabin configuration and have been timed to offer travellers a mix of morning and evening departures that provide convenient two-way connectivity to Europe, the Middle East and Africa.

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

\* Our own Jenny Evans flew with Etihad recently from Sydney to Abu Dhabi. Read her flight review here:

[www.traveltalkmag.com.au/skytalk/flight-review](http://www.traveltalkmag.com.au/skytalk/flight-review)







## COMEBACK QUEEN RETURNS TO AUSTRALIA

EMIRATES HAS increased its service to Brisbane to daily flights with the flagship A380 also making a comeback.

Flights will offer 14 first class suites, 76 business class lie flat seats and 426 ergonomically designed seats in economy.

“As an international airline that has been serving Australia for over 25 years, we are especially delighted to boost our services to Brisbane, adding more seats and frequency on flights to Dubai and bringing back our signature aircraft to the Queensland capital,” said Barry Brown, Emirates Divisional Vice President for Australasia.

Australians returning home and travelling onwards to other points can access any of 30 destinations in Qantas’ domestic network, made possible through its longstanding partnership with Emirates.

With the addition of Brisbane to Emirates’ A380 network, the number of destinations served by the flagship aircraft on a scheduled basis will reach 29.

Emirates currently offer twice-daily A380 services between Dubai and Sydney. Daily A380 services to Melbourne began in February, making Brisbane the third point in Australia to resume its signature A380 services. Perth services will increase to four times weekly on April 1 and then daily on May 1.

» [www.emirates.com](http://www.emirates.com)



## Bonza takes to the skies

DUBBED THE largest launch announcement in Australian aviation history, Bonza has revealed its plans for the future.

Australia’s only independent low-cost carrier has unveiled its route map, airport bases, head office location and all-digital approach.

Sunshine Coast Airport has been named the home base with an initial two based aircraft and Bonza’s head office. Melbourne Airport is named the second airport base to welcome two of the company’s fleet of Boeing 737 MAX.

Twenty five routes will take Australian travellers to 16 destinations: Albury, Avalon, Bundaberg, Cairns, Coffs Harbour, Gladstone, Mackay, Melbourne, Mildura, Newcastle, Port Macquarie, Rockhampton, Sunshine Coast, Toowoomba Wellcamp, Townsville and the Whitsunday Coast.

The route map accounts for the first five aircraft and Bonza plans to operate up to eight in its first year of operation.

“We will give Aussies more options at ultra-low fares to explore their own backyard,” said Tim Jordan, CEO of Bonza.

Flights are due to go on sale within the next two months, with Bonza’s first flight targeted for mid-year subject to regulatory approval.

» [www.flybonza.com](http://www.flybonza.com)

### IN BRIEF///

\* QANTAS HAS announced it will add Broken Hill to its domestic route network for the first time, with the airline to begin direct flights from Sydney.

From April 8, the national airline will operate two weekly return flights between Sydney and Broken Hill with its 50-seat Q300 aircraft.

The flights will operate on a Monday and Friday to offer Broken Hill residents an easy long weekend in the city and allow visitors to make the most out of their outback exploration. Fares will start from \$269 one-way.

» [www.qantas.com](http://www.qantas.com)

\* SCOOT HAVE announced they will be expanding their Vaccinated Travel Lane (VTL) network to a total of 17 destinations, following the Singapore government’s announcement on the easing of COVID-19 travel restrictions.

Customers can look forward to flight routes across five counties and territories, including Athens, Cebu, Hong Kong, Krabi, London (Gatwick) via Bangkok and Phuket.

» [www.flyscoot.com](http://www.flyscoot.com)

## ENJOYING A TALL STOREY

OAKWOOD PREMIER have debuted their first property in this country, the 40-storey property one of the tallest single-purposely built structures in Australia.

Boasting 392 apartments and a sky bar with 360-degree views, the \$150m Oakwood Premier Melbourne overlooks the Yarra River in Southbank.

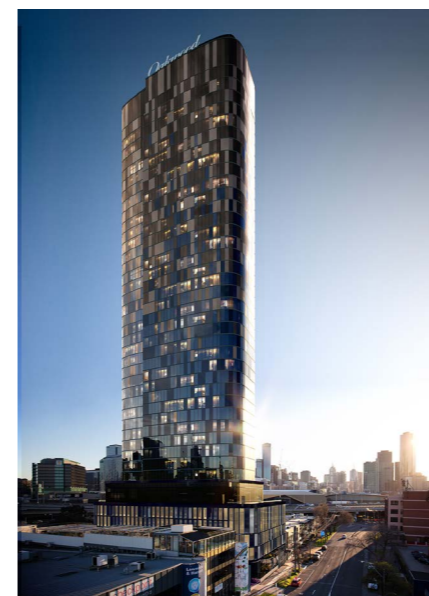
Catering primarily to executives and business travellers, the hotel offers guests access to innovative tech and communication devices in their rooms along with a newly launched room service feature for added convenience.

“The location of Oakwood Premier Melbourne is so central; guests will have all of what Melbourne has to offer at their very doorstep,” said Andrew Donadel, General Manager, Oakwood Premier Melbourne.

Some 132 of the rooms have been designed for transient guests on short stays while the remaining 260 serviced apartments are made up of studios, one-bedroom and two-bedroom suites for mid- to long-term guests.

There’s also an all-day restaurant called Fifth, a premium bar in the lobby, state of the art indoor/outdoor fitness centre, three private meeting rooms, two large multipurpose function areas, a co-working space and a lounge and games centre.

» [www.oakwood.com/premier-melbourne](http://www.oakwood.com/premier-melbourne)



## AC GETS THE OK IN OZ

THE AC Hotels by Marriott brand is due to debut in Australia with the first hotel set to open in Melbourne in April.

The 205-room AC Hotel by Marriott Melbourne Southbank incorporates modern design inspired by the urban locale and the brand’s European heritage.

Guests will enjoy a contemporary foyer, elevated check-in lounge, pool, bar and restaurant.

“The AC brand is synonymous with sophisticated design with purpose, so guests have everything they need and nothing they don’t,” said Harry Singh, General Manager of AC Hotel by Marriott Melbourne Southbank.

Facilities include an outdoor, infinity edge pool spanning the width of the building, 24-hour fitness centre and food and beverage outlets including the AC Lounge – a modern co-working space by day and a social hub by night.

The AC opening marks Marriott International’s ninth hotel in Melbourne and the third new hotel to open in the Victorian capital over the last 12 months.

» [www.ac-hotels.marriott.com](http://www.ac-hotels.marriott.com)

## Talented trio serve up a treat

SHERATON IS bringing together some of Australia’s most inspiring chefs to deliver an unforgettable culinary experience.

Manu Feildel (*My Kitchen Rules*), Adrian Richardson (*Good Chef Bad Chef*) and Colin Fassnidge (*My Kitchen Rules*) will be putting on the ultimate spread with a strong sense of community.

Taking place from 11:30am to 3pm on April 8 at the Sheraton Grand Mirage Resort Gold Coast in Queensland, the event will be aboard the super yacht entertainment venue – The YOT CLUB.

Adrian will kick off the feast with his Gold Coast inspired spanner crab spaghetti, followed by Colin’s porchetta with a watermelon fennel and pea salad.

It’s not a feast without dessert so Manu comes to the table with his Port Douglas inspired almond blancmange with tropical fruit salad.

“Sheraton Hotels & Resorts are all about bringing people together, and food and drink always play an integral part as that connection between people,” said Sean Hunt, Area Vice President – Australia, New Zealand & Pacific at Marriott International.

» [www.goldcoasttickets.com.au](http://www.goldcoasttickets.com.au)





Jared Lee, Vice President for Southeast Asia, Southwest Pacific & Indian Subcontinent, Qatar Airways

# FLYING HIGH INTO 2022

In the second instalment of our exclusive interview, JARED LEE, Vice President for Southeast Asia, Southwest Pacific & Indian Subcontinent, Qatar Airways, explains why the Australian market is so important to the airline.

**Q: You've won 'Airline of the Year' a record six times. What puts you ahead of the competition?**

**A:** Our commitment to service excellence, network, sustainability and bio-safety is at the core of everything we do. We have a mission to be the best and we are relentless in pursuing this.

In terms of products, we're forever pushing the envelope and making innovative improvements. Our award-winning Qsuite would be the best example as we incorporated many first-class elements into our business class offering where passengers can enjoy individual suites.

We also take care of our economy passengers with improvements such as the launch of a premium economy meal named Quisine in October 2019 where we have bigger portions and premium items such as individual bottled water and even Godiva chocolate. You can't get better than this for an economy meal!

**Q: You were the first to achieve a five-star COVID-19 Airline Safety Rating, so passenger safety is clearly paramount?**

**A:** One of the biggest changes to our operations has been the implementation of increased hygiene and safety measures for both passengers and staff.

For cabin crew, this means strict bio-security screenings and PPE. Passengers are required to wear face masks at all times and we also give out face shields for any passengers who want that extra protection.

We use the most advanced HEPA air filtration systems on board all aircraft and also introduced Honeywell's state-of-the-art Ultraviolet Cabin System as a further step in cleaning.

**Q: Why is your relationship with Australia so important?**

**A:** The Australasia region has always been a key market for Qatar Airways. In fact, it is a special one for me personally and professionally as I led the Australian team that started our Australian operations a little over a decade ago.

We've had exclusive offerings such as onboard menus curated by an Australian celebrity chef and an ongoing corporate sponsorship with

the Sydney Swans and more to give back to the local community.

We are proud to have been one of the few airlines to never stop flying to Australia during the pandemic and have helped carry more than 330,000 Australians and international passengers home since March 2020.

We've worked closely with governments, embassies and travel companies to operate close to 400 charters helping reunite almost 100,000 people with their families including more than 2,500 Australians.

Australian Government data from the Bureau of Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Economics showed that during our repatriation efforts, Qatar Airways helped take home almost 10 times more passengers in and out of Australia than our nearest competitors.

**Q: Can you reveal any exciting plans Qatar Airways have in the pipeline?**

**A:** With 2022 being World Cup year and the year that we celebrate our 25th anniversary, there'll be a lot of exciting deals and offerings coming up, so do watch this space.

We will be reinstating more capacity as more state borders open up and we look forward to helping more Australians return home soon!

**Q: Finally, what is your favourite holiday spot in Qatar and why?**

**A:** The inland sea. This is one of only a few places on earth where the desert meets the sea. It is a sight to behold and also a tranquil getaway from the city amid the cool clear water and the vast desert.

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



## An unforgettable stopover in Qatar

Your clients can turn one holiday into two, making the most of their journey with the **'World's Best Value Stopover'** packages by Discover Qatar starting from AUD19\* per person per night, including hotel stay and more.

Visit [qatarairways.com/tradeportal](http://qatarairways.com/tradeportal)

\*Terms and conditions apply





# Sweet tips for a hit honeymoon

COUPLES PLANNING the perfect getaway after their wedding are being encouraged to consider Abu Dhabi.

Whether you want to indulge in rich culture and heritage, dive into a gastronomical journey, or simply get away from the hustle and bustle at a picturesque beachside resort, Abu Dhabi fits the bill.

## 1. Idyllic romantic getaway to Zaya Nurai Island

A honeymoon on a private boutique island surrounded by tranquil sea and crystal clear water is the perfect way to ramp-up the romance.

Located in the Arabian Gulf, Zaya Nurai Island is a mere 15-minute boat ride from the shores of Abu Dhabi.

The island's luxurious all-villa hotel has a memorable beachfront view. All the villas come with private pools and the best of in-room amenities. They also have a renowned spa and wellness centre where you can

sit back and relax with a couples' massage.

There's no better way to unwind than with a romantic dinner on the beach as you watch the sun set over the horizon.

» [www.zayanuraisland.com](http://www.zayanuraisland.com)

## 2. Romance under the stars at Saadiyat Beach Club

Built along the shores of the picturesque Arabian Gulf, Saadiyat Beach Club combines natural beauty with a sophisticated contemporary design.

Treat your loved one to a night of romance under the stars with a specially-curated multi-course menu featuring irresistible Mediterranean flavours in an intimate seaside setting.

It is priced at \$300 per couple with a five-course menu including a selected house beverage and \$440 per couple for a five-course menu including a selected premium house beverage.

» [www.saadiyatbeachclub.ae](http://www.saadiyatbeachclub.ae)

## 3. Be wowed at Louvre Abu Dhabi

Designed by Pritzker Prize-winning architect Jean Nouvel, this cultural beacon shines fresh light on the shared stories of humanity.

It is the perfect place to revel in the dynamic nature of the contemporary Arab world while celebrating the region's vibrant multicultural heritage.

Its permanent collection comprises more than 600 pieces of art, displayed across 23 state of the art galleries, all under a giant 180-metre-wide metal dome which weighs the same as the Eiffel Tower.

Drawn from civilisations from all around the world, the works tell the story of shared human experiences from ancient times to the present day.

» [www.louvreabudhabi.ae](http://www.louvreabudhabi.ae)

## 4. Challenge each other to adrenaline-filled adventures

If you and your partner love adventurous holidays, Abu Dhabi has got you both covered.

Couples can take a trip to Ferrari World Abu Dhabi, immerse themselves in the exhilarating Arabian-themed futuristic Yas Waterworld Abu Dhabi, or experience new heights at indoor adventure hub CLYMB.

Outdoor adventures include kayaking through mangroves, dune bashing in the desert and 4x4 desert safari excursions.

» [www.ferrariworldabudhabi.com](http://www.ferrariworldabudhabi.com)

## 5. Pamper your partner with a shopping spree

With luxury malls offering everything from gold and designer watches to traditional markets offering spices, fragrances and textiles, the city's shopping options are as eclectic as it comes.

Be spoilt for choices at Yas Mall, Abu Dhabi's biggest shopping centre, which offers an impressive array of stores, including international retailers and eateries, and a 20-screen cinema operated by VOX Cinemas.

Wander spacious avenues and explore more than 370 stores and more than 60 indoor and outdoor restaurants and cafés.

» [www.visitabudhabi.ae/en/things-to-do/shopping/yas-mall](http://www.visitabudhabi.ae/en/things-to-do/shopping/yas-mall)

» [www.visitabudhabi.ae](http://www.visitabudhabi.ae)



Clockwise from left: Debbie Bean attends cooking class in Krabi; Annette Fyfe reconnects with suppliers; Jo Patton scuba diving

# THE THAI-M IS RIGHT

Here, three travel consultants report back on recent trips to Thailand that mark their first visits to the Kingdom since the pandemic hit.

ANNETTE FYFE isn't afraid to admit that a few tears were shed when she returned to Thailand recently.

That's largely because her Thai the Knot Weddings business has been largely on hold since COVID hit.

"It's hard for me to put into words just how amazing our trip was," said Annette, who is the TravelManagers representative for Victoria Point in Queensland. She spent three weeks with her family in Phuket and Khao Lak.

"After the events of the last two years, I wasn't prepared for how emotional it would be to be back in a place I love and to catch up with my suppliers.

"There were a few tears of pure happiness shed, just to be in another country and enjoy some semblance of normal life."

Annette admits to feeling a little anxiety while keeping abreast of the changing rules and regulations that now apply to international travel, but notes that the actual journey was very smooth and straightforward.

"I was surprised by how streamlined it was on arrival in Phuket and how quickly the PCR test results were returned, after which we were free to enjoy ourselves.

"I made a lot of videos during my visit to show clients what Thailand is like today. Some couples are already

rescheduling their Thailand weddings for later this year and I couldn't be more excited – I love what I do and I can't wait to get my business back up and running."

Debbie Bean, PTM representative for Tarneit in Victoria, spent two weeks in Bangkok, Hua Hin, Krabi and Phuket with her husband. She says safety standards throughout their visit were excellent.

"On arrival in Bangkok we were taken off to a separate room to be tested and then to another separate room to check-in," she said.

"There were temperature checks every time we went to a restaurant or shopping centre and it almost felt like business as usual!"

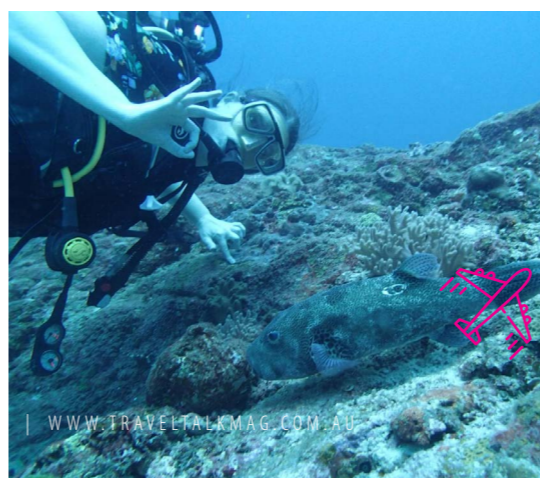
Jo Patton, who is TravelManagers' representative for Ulladulla in New South Wales, enjoyed 10 nights in Phuket with her partner.

She was pleasantly surprised that although some local businesses and tours were not yet open, there was still plenty to see, do and experience.

"Without the usual crowds, it was a very relaxing holiday," said Jo. "For me, the highlight was spending my birthday on a scuba diving day trip – the first time in decades that I'd been diving and the first time ever with my partner!"

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

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





# COME DISCOVER WITH US

Malaysia is open from April 1, making it the perfect time to discover what this fascinating destination contains.

For a start, Malaysia is one of the world leaders in Community and Sustainable Tourism and here we look at just two of the areas where visitors can really make a difference.

## A RURAL TOURISM INITIATIVE IN SABAH

TO MANY, living in a rural community may not be too foreign as we all have our own sense of what village life is like.

Apart from the many marine and nature parks, wildlife sanctuaries, forest reserves and myriad attractions that are prominent tourism products in Sabah, further exploration and experiences can be found in the region's rural areas.

This is where community-based

tourism, or CoBT for short, comes in.

Community-based tourism is an initiative to promote sustainability and improve the livelihood of the locals in an area by encouraging the involvement of that community in developing and managing their own tourism destination and products.

Besides adding socio-economic value to the community, travellers are also looking to experience signature tourism activities combined with off-the-beaten-track activities to add more depth to their trips.

Scenic views of the countryside combined with cultural experiences makes rural life an ideal getaway for those looking to escape the hustle and bustle of city life.

Over the years, rural districts in Sabah have stepped up and activated their respective tourism committees. These villages have blossomed into attractive, 'must-visit' places while still maintaining their natural beauty.

Communities offer such activities as paddy planting and harvesting, rubber tapping, river fishing, playing of traditional instruments and games, production of traditional handicrafts and cooking local dishes. Visitors can also enjoy jungle trekking, hiking,

camping and stargazing.

The Sabah Rural Development Ministry, along with the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Environment Sabah, has been supporting local communities with sustainable initiatives towards developing their district tourism offerings.

Places such as Kadamaian have received international accolades, such as becoming a recipient of the ASEAN Community Based Tourism Standard 2019-2021 at the ASEAN Tourism Ministers' Conference in Vietnam in 2019.

This success has seen a positive improvement in the livelihood and socio-economy of the local rural community.

Although remotely located in the interior of Kolosunan village at Inanam in Kota Kinabalu, Kolosunan Eco-Tourism offers plenty of rural adventures.

Hiking trails along the river lead to an impressive waterfall and there's also the opportunity to camp, enjoy catch and release fishing, experience a bio-educational or nature interpretation tour and take part in a tree planting initiative.

Learn about traditional herbs,

discover unique living things and explore Dusun's culture and traditions through the stories of the locals themselves.

Homestay Desa Cinta Kobuni is a 40-minute drive from Kota Kinabalu International Airport. Here visitors can discover the authentic life of the Bornean people.

Take part in handicraft making, traditional cooking and sports, and cultural performances. Other outdoor activities include a 3.8km jungle trek and waterfall tour, while Desa Cinta Kobuni is also ideal for a picnic and camping.

At Pinahawon Masakat View, start with a hiking trail to the 575-metre Kolonutan Hill. The rugged path and uphill climb includes the exploration of a waterfall and 'Gakod Runggou', the protruding giant buttress root of a tree.

Set in Pinahawon Village Inanam, the location is accessible by car via the Jalan Tuaran-Kiulu road and takes about 90 minutes to reach from Kota Kinabalu City.

» [www.sabahtourism.com/rural](http://www.sabahtourism.com/rural)

## SARAWAK

SARAWAK IS home to all five sea turtle species: the Green Turtle, Hawksbill Turtle, Olive Ridley Turtle, Leatherback Turtle and Loggerhead Turtle.

All of these species are critically endangered worldwide and therefore the state government has set up a network of coastal and marine national parks dedicated to their conservation.

The best coastal sites to view nesting turtles are Similajau National Park near Bintulu and Tanjung Datu National Park on the southwestern tip of Sarawak.

However, the largest number of turtle landings, mostly of green turtles, take place on the islands of Talang-Satang National Park, just a short boat journey from Kuching.

The largest of these islands, Pulau Satang Besar, is open to visitors and local tour operators offer day and overnight trips, including a visit to the turtle hatchery.

Satang Besar offers excellent snorkelling – free swimming sea turtles are often seen around the reefs just offshore from the island's beach.

The park's main turtle conservation

centre, Pulau Talang-Talang Besar, is usually closed to visitors. However, Sarawak Forestry, custodian of Sarawak's National Parks, offers an opportunity for hands-on involvement in turtle conservation through its Sea Turtle Adoption Programme.

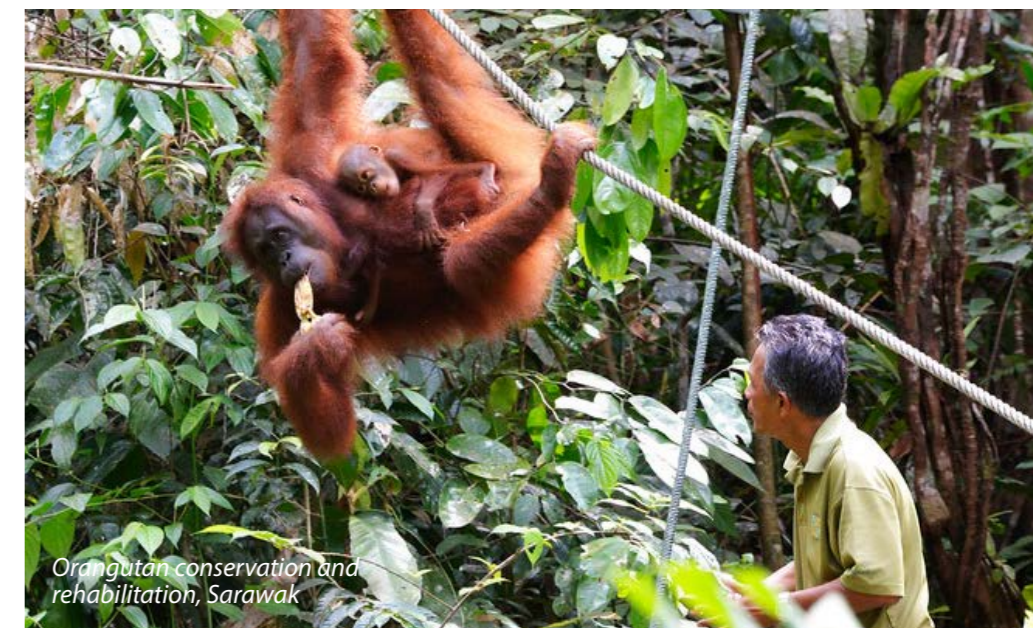
Visitors spend four days working with professional conservationists, learning about turtles and taking part in conservation activities including: beach patrols to locate turtle landings; monitoring of nesting activities; tagging and measuring turtles; transferring eggs to the hatchery; releasing hatchlings and data recording.

Talang-Satang National Park (Talang-Talang Island) is only open to volunteers from May to September. Priority is given to those participating in the conservation program.

» [sarawakforestry.com/sea-turtle-conservation-program](http://sarawakforestry.com/sea-turtle-conservation-program)

Orangutan conservation and rehabilitation is expensive, challenging and time-consuming. However, it is essential for the survival of one of our closet relatives in the animal kingdom.

The Orangutan Junior Volunteer Program is an exciting and affordable learning experience targeted at schools, colleges and universities that allows students (aged 23 and under) to learn about orangutan biology and habitat, then put this knowledge to practical use in hands-on conservation activities.



Orangutan conservation and rehabilitation, Sarawak

To ensure retaining their interest in and engagement with the orangutans following their visit, each student gets to adopt their own orangutan for a full year.

All participants receive a certificate acknowledging their contribution to Sarawak's orangutan conservation program, as well as a certificate of adoption.

Annah Rais Longhouse is a Bidayuh settlement about 100km south of Kuching, at the foothill of Borneo Highlands near the mountains marking the border to Kalimantan.

Other than the authentic longhouse experience, it is also famous for the hot springs nearby.

Kampung Annah Rais is a large Bidayuh village centred around a centuries-old bamboo longhouse, one of the finest still in existence. The Bidayuh make up about eight per cent of Sarawak's population and were formerly known as Land Dayaks.

They are gracious hosts and village is the perfect place to discover Bidayuh culture and learn about their fascinating way of life.

» [www.sarawaktourism.com](http://www.sarawaktourism.com)

For more information on Malaysia, visit

» [www.malaysia.travel](http://www.malaysia.travel)

*Malaysia*  
Truly Asia



# CHERRY OH BABY

Cherry blossom season is a national obsession in Japan, with its arrival eagerly awaited by locals for centuries. Here we look at the top spots to see the best blooms.

THE ANNUAL cherry blossom (sakura) forecast has been released, putting the Japanese into a state of high excitement.

Buds are expected to bloom early for the 2022 season, beginning in the southern part of the country from March 24. Tokyo and Hiroshima are tipped to be the first places to enjoy the delicate pale pink flowers.

For the Japanese, sakura season is more than just a pretty time of year. Cherry blossoms hold such appeal in their culture because of what they symbolise: a time of renewal, the fleeting nature of existence, the transience of beauty and the essence of 'being in the moment'.

Tracking the 'cherry blossom front' is a national obsession and forecasts of the dates when cherry blossoms will start to flower (kaika) and reach full bloom (mankai) are religiously checked and re-checked as the season gets closer.

When the blooms arrive, millions

flock to parks and city streets to enjoy harami – picnicking under the blossoming trees.

In **TOKYO**, the first place you must go is Ueno Park. There are more than 1,000 trees, most of them lining the pathway between Keisei Ueno Station and the Tokyo National Museum.

The branches from either side are so long that they reach out overhead, creating a tunnel-like effect.

**MOUNT YOSHINOYAMA** has remained a top viewing spot for centuries, with more than 30,000 trees of different varieties. It is said that the first cherry trees here were planted more than 1,300 years ago.

The trees can be seen during early to mid-April as guests walk the mountain trails, ride the ropeway up the mountainside, or enjoy the pink trees from the nearby town.

With ancient landmarks and quaint streets on every corner, **KYOTO** makes for picture-perfect cherry tree spotting.

**IBARAKI** prefecture often goes overlooked by travellers, but it deserves attention. Ibaraki doesn't just have the typical cherry trees, but also the double-flowering type.

As the name suggests, this variety has twice as many petals. Head to Shizumine Park in Nakashi City, where 2,300 of them grow.

The further north you go in Japan, the later the sakura season. The **TOHOKU** region makes up six of Honshu's prefectures and consists mostly of rural communities, national parks and hot spring resorts.

Tohoku has plenty of hidden cherry blossom gems to discover like Shirakawago, the Takayama Spring Festival and Lake Towada.

**HOKKAIDO** is the last area of Japan to experience the cherry blossom bloom. You'll miss the main thrust of the season, but that's when they'll start blooming in Hokkaido.

Compared to bustling Tokyo and Kyoto, the atmosphere in Sapporo feels homey and laid-back. Although one of Japan's largest cities, Sapporo has plenty of places to catch the cherry blossom bloom.

» [www.japan.travel/en/au/](http://www.japan.travel/en/au/)

Outback Queensland Picture courtesy Tourism and Events Queensland



# TRY THIS FANTASTIC FIVE

Discover Queensland has identified five destinations across the state for you to consider in 2022.

## Scenic Rim

It's easy to see why this was named as one of the world's hottest travel destinations for 2022 by *Lonely Planet*.

Set among scenery of lush rainforests and mountain ranges in an ancient volcanic caldera, Scenic Rim is a haven of nature, food and adventure.

Immerse yourself in the heart of the region by staying at the secluded Kooralbyn Valley Resort – the largest rammed earth eco-construction in the Southern Hemisphere.

While you're there, take in the scenic views at the Canungra Valley Vineyards or grab a cuddle from the local animals while on a 'Canungra Valley Vineyards and Alpaca Farm' half day tour.

## 1770

This charming town in Gladstone offers rocky headlands, golden beaches, sunset kayaking, nature a-plenty and overnight Castaway experiences.

The best way to take in all the sights is a Larc full day tour – a bright pink amphibious tour bus. Brush up on the town's colourful history as you explore Bustard Bay – a beach that has remained largely unchanged since Captain James Cook sailed ashore over two centuries ago – to tidal creeks and Middle Island.

For easy access to all the must-see sights in the region – such as Lady Musgrave Island – stay at Pavillions on 1770, situated between the pristine seaside towns of Agnes Water and 1770.

## Whitsundays

Explore the world-famous Tropical Queensland attraction of coral cays and memorable scenery. The Whitsundays is one of the world's best beach destinations, renowned for its white sand, flat surf and turquoise waters.

Enjoy panoramic views over the islands and waters with a Whitsundays tandem skydive. Alternatively, explore the region by booking a Premium Whitsundays day cruise – where you can snorkel in the coral reef, walk the Hill Inlet and spend some R&R on Whitehaven Beach.

## Outback Queensland

Beyond the state's 6,967km coastline, Outback Queensland features untamed natural beauty that offers many rich experiences, from self-guided drives to historic sites and short hikes that reward you with picture-worthy landscapes.

A must-do on any trip to the outback is Carnarvon Gorge. Expect highlights a-plenty on a Carnarvon Gorge guided discovery day tour from Roma as you travel with ecologists to discover Aboriginal sites and natural rock formations, visit a working cattle property and embark on a scenic walk to marvel at the natural wonders and surrounds.

## Daintree Rainforest

This famous region is home to the world's oldest surviving rainforest with examples of plant species that existed millions of years ago. Be dwarfed by king ferns and giant bull kauri pines, marvel at Mossman Gorge or discover the rainforest at night.

Explore the Daintree River on a wildlife cruise and experience the hidden wonders of the area's ancient waterways. Watch for the flash of blue that gives away the cassowary, discover unique birdlife or look out for crocodiles from the comfort of your seat.

At the Daintree Wilderness Lodge you can sleep nestled among lush tropical gardens. The eco-lodge is surrounded on all sides by the World Heritage-listed Daintree National Park and is ideally situated halfway between the Daintree River and Cape Tribulation.

» [www.discoverqueensland.com.au](http://www.discoverqueensland.com.au)



Fitzroy Falls

# Back in the saddle again

It's been almost a year since *Traveltalk* editor JON UNDERWOOD last travelled anywhere. Here he dips his toe into the new world of travel with a mini-break in one of Australia's most picturesque destinations.

I'VE FORGOTTEN many things in my life. My password, my phone, my bank account number...sometimes even my own name!

But I never thought I'd ever forget how to holiday.

I mean, it's a pretty simple premise. Pick where you want to go, book it and then pack a bag. Simple.

The universal party pooper that is COVID has kept most of us grounded for the past two years. Travel writers are no exception and my suitcase has sat forlornly in the cupboard like an abandoned lover.

Fortunately, the recent easing of travel restrictions meant my wife and I could plan a mini-break (albeit within our own State) so we headed off to explore the Kangaroo Valley, a two-hour drive south of Sydney.

Like a POW tunneling out of a German prison camp, the sense of

freedom was almost palpable. The unusually wet Sydney summer meant the greenery of the scenery was eye-catchingly vivid...although sadly the rain did also keep the kangaroos away.

Like many savvy Aussies I used a vacation rental app to research and book our accommodation and **The Secret Garden Cottage** proved to be as charming and intriguing as the name suggested.

Just a stone's throw from the centre of town, it was the perfect base to explore both the immediate vicinity but also to branch out on day trips to Bowral, Berry and Nowra.

It also had the added bonus of sweeping views from a specially built observation deck at the top of the hill at the back of the property and encounters with native wildlife. We enjoyed time with the family of echidnas which call the back garden

home, particularly the daddy, whom we christened 'Spike'...

## CAUGHT BY THE KANGAROO

**Kangaroo Valley** is exactly what you would expect from a country town: quaint, peaceful and welcoming (you know you're in the right place when the local pub is called The Friendly Inn).

Aware of how tough the locals have been doing it with no tourist income during COVID, we made sure to visit the local stores to stock up for Christmas. Lollies, clothes, books or objet d'art, you won't be short of ideas. Make sure you check out The Nostalgia Factory for one of the best candle selections I've ever seen...or smelt.

You won't be short on dining options either, with the Inn delivering

quality pub meals and the Valley Curry House and the Jing Jo Café Restaurant offering delicious Indian and Thai cuisine respectively.

Kayaking, mountain biking and horseback riding are popular ways of exploring KV, one of the only seven closed valleys in the world. Historians can pour over Hampden Bridge, which opened in 1898, or go bushwalking to the Fitzroy Falls and discover just how amazing the scenery around here can be.

## GETTING OUR GRAPES ON

They say that when one door shuts, another one opens...and in our case it turned out to be a cellar door.

With our favourite local winery temporarily closed, we ventured to the **Bendooley Estate** in Berrima on the recommendation of a travel colleague – and what a discovery it was.

Part winery, part library, part art gallery, the estate covers a number of bases and does it with unmistakable Southern Highlands charm and elegance. The designers were certainly on their game with soaring, intricate wooden ceilings a highlight, along with expertly-manicured grounds and gardens.

So to was the food. My Milawa blue cheese pizza with apples, grapes, local honey, pine nuts and wild rocket was the stuff of legend, while my

wife chowed down on sesame spiced pumpkin with parmesan mousse and golden beetroot. Yum!

You can stay on the 80 hectare property in luxurious cottages so as not to have to walk too far once you've done a wine tasting or enjoyed a fabulous dinner in the impressive cellar door.

## OUT ON THE TOWNS

**Bowral** has long been a favourite Southern Highlands getaway so it was great to re-connect after such a long time. Much bigger and busier than Kangaroo Valley, it still retains that country town feel and we found the welcome to be as warm as ever.

Being a couple of weeks before Christmas, all the stores had their decorations up and even though checking in via app at every shop was time-consuming, the general sense of optimism was infectious.

The town has everything a visitor could want: shopping aplenty, quality dining options and nearby attractions, including wineries, the Bradman Museum and International Cricket Hall of Fame.

We'd briefly visited **Berry** some years ago on the way back from a family holiday and always promised we'd go back someday. It didn't disappoint, with oodles of craft and antique shops, clothing stores, cafes and restaurants to get lost in.

The town doesn't look like it's changed in decades and much of the architecture along the main street is still authentically, historically Australian. I'm pleased to report that business seemed to be good with plenty of visitors out and about – a coach party even pulled up outside the famous Donut Van.

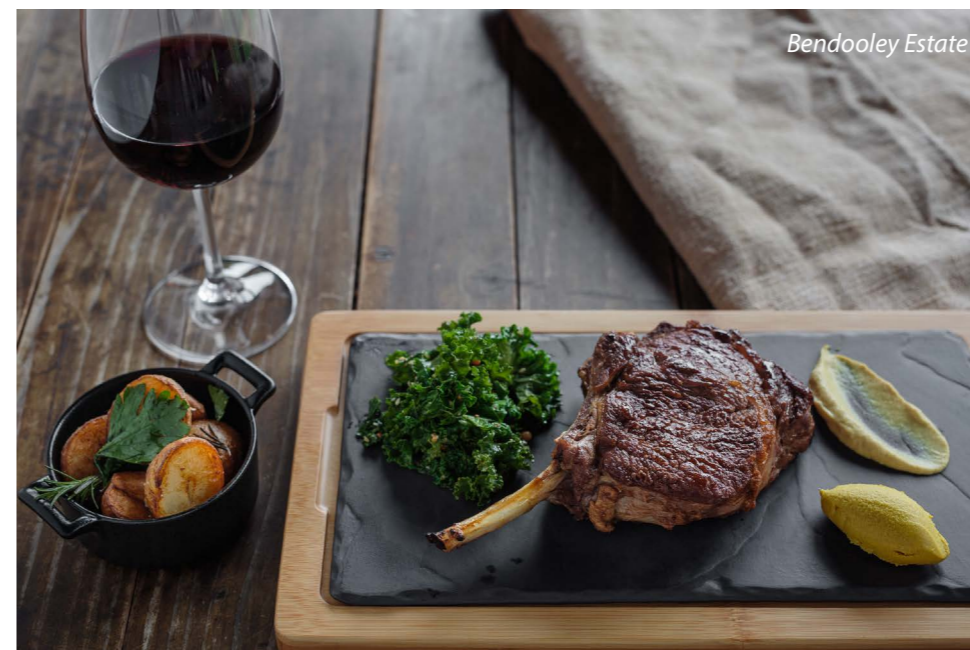
Having blown the Chrissie pressie budget, we decided it was time to do some actual sight-seeing and headed off to the **Crookhaven Lighthouse** near Culburra Beach.

Sadly, this was the only disappointment of the trip, as the light has long since gone and all that remains is a graffiti-strewn concrete building. The only reason for mentioning our visit is that the views afforded from the surrounding headland are worth making the trip for...just.

## BACK TO THE FUTURE

It was great to be travelling again and while it will take time for the local travel industry to recover there are encouraging signs that better times are ahead as we (hopefully) emerge from COVID.

One thing is for sure. We are extremely fortunate to have such a fantastic destination on our doorstep to explore. Yet another reason why it's the Lucky Country.



Bendooley Estate



» [www.thesecondgarden.cottage.com.au](http://www.thesecondgarden.cottage.com.au)

» [www.bendooleyestate.com.au](http://www.bendooleyestate.com.au)

» [www.southernhighlandsfestival.com.au](http://www.southernhighlandsfestival.com.au)

» [www.visitkangaroovalley.com.au](http://www.visitkangaroovalley.com.au)



Vancouver. Photo courtesy Destination Vancouver/Albert Normandin

# WIN A FANTASTIC TRIP TO CANADA!

AS TRAVEL restrictions ease across the globe, Air Canada is committed to rebuild their international network and continue as a global carrier connecting the world with Canada.

Along with their industry-leading Air Canada CleanCare+ program, flexible bookings options, same terminal connections at Vancouver International Airport (YVR), U.S. customs pre-clearance, a shorter elapsed travel time and more, travelling to North America with Air Canada makes your travel safe and seamless.

Air Canada's non-stop service from Sydney to Vancouver has resumed operating three-times a week but services will now ramp up to daily starting May 1.

On their Boeing 777-200LR, you have a choice of three classes of service (elevated Air Canada Signature Class, spacious Premium Economy, and comfortable Economy Class).

You can also take advantage of their rewarding Aeroplan program, with great features for every step of your journey and flight redemptions with their extensive network of partner airlines, including Virgin Australia. Air Canada's partnership with Virgin Australia allows you to earn frequent flyer and status points through Virgin's rewards program, Velocity.

## Air Canada offers the most seamless transit experience

Air Canada offers simple and efficient connections when travelling through Canada to your final destination. It is the only airline to offer a seamless transit experience when flying internally in Canada beyond Vancouver International Airport (YVR).

When you transit in YVR to fly onward domestically, whether it be to Victoria and Kamloops or further afield to Toronto or Montreal, you do not need to retrieve your luggage or rescreen at security.

No other airline has this ease of entry to Canada because with other options you are connecting from one airline to a different airline, so passengers transiting in YVR on other airlines must collect and recheck in their baggage and go through security again.

This ease of transit is exclusive to Air Canada passengers, making Air Canada quite unique and the obvious choice for the most comfortable end-to-end journey when travelling from Australia to Canada.

## Travelling to the U.S? Easily pre-clear U.S. Customs in YVR

Travelling to the U.S. has never been easier thanks to Air Canada and YVR. Passengers can pre-clear U.S. Immigration and Customs in YVR and land as a domestic passenger. Due to YVR security technology you also do not need to retrieve baggage in transit to U.S. unlike when you transit through U.S airports like LAX or SFO, making YVR a great stress-free gateway into the U.S.

## Get Travel Ready!

It can be difficult to stay up to date on how the pandemic is impacting the way we travel. To assist you with your travel plans at every step of your journey, visit Air Canada's Travel Ready hub. Here you will find the latest updates on travel requirements, COVID testing solutions, flexible booking options and more. You can also find the latest travel restrictions and entry requirements to Canada on the Government of Canada website.

- » [www.aircanada.com](http://www.aircanada.com)
- » [www.aircanada.com/travelready](http://www.aircanada.com/travelready)
- » [www.travel.gc.ca/travel-covid](http://www.travel.gc.ca/travel-covid)

## BRITISH COLUMBIA

Canada's westernmost province, British Columbia embraces nearly 100 million square hectares of mountains, forests and beaches, cosmopolitan cities and friendly towns.

Set between the Rocky Mountains and the Pacific Ocean, BC's diverse landscapes encompass more than 13 world-class ski resorts, thriving wine regions, thousands of kilometres of coastline, all offering unbeatable opportunities for outdoor adventure and urban experiences.

A visit to **Vancouver**, consistently voted one of the world's most liveable cities, offers great value, combining the excitement, nightlife and shopping of a young, modern city with access to mountains, oceans and the great outdoors.

The compact, walkable downtown core reflects the region's multiculturalism and vibrancy, found in the city's distinct shopping neighbourhoods and world-class fusion cuisine.

No day in this city is typical: start with a waterfront breakfast at Granville Island Public Market and end with a sunset cocktail on a mountain-top patio.

Anchored by the stylish neighborhoods of Gastown and Yaletown, the **JW Marriott Parq** is at the epicentre of downtown Vancouver's dynamic entertainment



JW Marriot Parq, Vancouver



district near Rogers Arena, BC Place Stadium and Queen Elizabeth Theatre.

After exploring the city's attractions, relax in the Spa by JW, workout in the hotel fitness centre, or sample innovative regional cuisine in the hotel's distinct restaurants and lounges.

In the evening, retreat to waterfront, luxury accommodations with floor-to-ceiling windows and scenic city, ocean and mountain views.

If visiting for business or social reasons, host your event in 5,500 square metres of venue space, including Vancouver's largest hotel ballroom.

- » [www.destinationvancouver.com](http://www.destinationvancouver.com)
- » [www.marriott.com](http://www.marriott.com)
- » [www.HelloBC.com](http://www.HelloBC.com)

## HOW TO ENTER



We've hidden FIVE icons throughout the pages of this issue, related to Canada.

**You're looking for a Moutie, airplane, grizzly bear, maple leaf and hockey stick. All you have to do is find all five, head to our website and tell us which pages they are on.**

**All correct entries will go into a prize draw for two return economy class tickets with Air Canada from Sydney to Vancouver and three nights for two people at the JW Marriott Parq in Vancouver.**

**Terms and conditions apply, see our website for details. Good luck!**

» **CLICK HERE TO ENTER**

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AIR CANADA

