

Australia's favourite travel news magazine

Traveltalk

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

Special
report

Could this be the
future of flying?

**TRAVEL
AGENTS**

Your \$125m
survival
package

**DOMESTIC
TRAVEL**

Paradise
found

We're all in this

Traveltalk

TOGETHER

Plus: SIX GREAT WAYS TO BAG A TRAVEL FREEBIE!

EDITORIAL

Jon Underwood

Managing Editor (print)

Email: jon@traveltalkmag.com.au

Gaya Avery

Managing Editor (digital)

Email: editorial@traveltalkmag.com.au

Rebecca Lawson

Sub Editor

ART DIRECTOR

Vanessa Pribil

Email: production@traveltalkmag.com.au

ADVERTISING

Sydney: **Jenny Rowland**

Mobile: 0414 746 146

Fax: (02) 9969 3390

Email: jenny@traveltalkmag.com.au

Perth: **Debbie Sproule**

Tel: (08) 6406 1358

Mobile: 0403 833 295

Email: debbie@traveltalkmag.com.au

DIRECTORS AND ASSOCIATE PUBLISHERS

Jenny Rowland (Sydney)

Debbie Sproule (Perth)

Perth Office:

PO Box 3104 Kingsley WA 6026

DISTRIBUTION AND SUBSCRIPTIONS

Tel: (08) 6406 1358

Email: distribution@traveltalkmag.com.au

PUBLISHED BY

Pointer Publishing Pty Ltd

ABN 92 150 111 701

PO Box 3104 Kingsley WA 6026

Tel: (08) 6406 1358

Website: www.traveltalkmag.com.au



Annual CAB audited circulation average: 5,944. Ave G/A annual emag downloads 540. TOTAL CIRC 6,484 PER ISSUE Oct 2018 to March 2019



While every care and precaution has been taken in the preparation of Traveltalk, no liability can be accepted for errors or omissions herein. Information is published in good faith to stimulate independent investigation by the reader. Views and opinions expressed in Traveltalk do not necessarily reflect those of the management.

All articles are fully protected by copyright. To obtain written permission to reproduce any material please contact the managing editor on editorial@traveltalkmag.com.au

CONTENTS

4 AGENTtalk

12 BOOK IT NOW

14 INDUSTRYtalk

16 NEWStalk

18 CRUISEtalk

22 SKYtalk

24 PROPERTYtalk

27 ANIMALtalk

28 DOMESTIC TRAVEL

32 OVERSEAS TRAVEL

34 TRAVELTEASE QUIZ



COVER IMAGE:
Mount Augustus in WA. Picture courtesy Rob Mulally/Georgia Rickard



Night Noodle Markets, Melbourne

Get well soon

IT'S COMING up to two months since we were Melburnians, writes *Gaya Avery*.

Eight weeks to acclimatise to a slightly warmer winter (what will I do with my coats?), eight weeks to remember that they're jaffles not toasties, middies not pots, potato scallops not potato cakes.

In that time, people have told us again and again how lucky we were to get out before the border shut, before curfews. And they're right of course.

But I miss Melbourne for all her cliches and hidden secrets, I miss the openness of strangers, the music that wafts from garage cafes, her art (official and un-). I miss the short drive getaways to vineyards and ski-fields, mountains and hot springs.

But Melburnians can't travel now. Limited to five kilometres (unless for very valid reasons), they are stuck in a lockdown worse than before.

So, from the rest of us not (yet) locked down, we're thinking of you and I can't wait to revisit when it is safe to do so.

But not everyone thinks this way. COVID-19, like fluorescent lighting, shines a harsh light on who we are.

Sometimes it's great. There are many people coming together to ensure that our neighbours are cared for and loved. They put themselves at risk to look after others. They shop for those who can't, support small businesses and just check in with a kind word or a phone call.

Other times I'm worried we're going to come out of this not proud of who we have become.

"Good fences make good neighbours," wrote Robert Frost in a country now (sort of) building a wall along parts of the U.S./ Mexico border.

Our state borders have always seemed such a non-event. Now these borders matter against an enemy we can't see.

But with all this talk of hard borders comes a form of 'Othering' that is never good. We have safety zones now; we care about postcodes and suburbs and want to keep IT out. But IT can very quickly become THEM.

Travel used to be a conduit through US v THEM. It was a means of practicing empathy.

Sure, you can study a place's history, try and experience its culture from afar, but it is through frequent travel, away from our at home routines, that we can live, even for a short time, another way.

We don't need to experience things to know them. But getting your make up done by a Berber woman in the deserts of Wadi Rum, picking strawberries in Bacchus Marsh, talking rugby with a Japanese monk, crawling through the Cu Chi tunnels, floating in the Black Sea, eating apricots from a tree in Castelfidardo, listening to a tale of heartbreak on a flight to Chicago, all of it changes you, informs you so that the 'Other' is not so different after all.



GRAB YOUR ESSENTIAL CREDENTIALS, AGENTS

THE AUSTRALIAN Federation of Travel Agents (AFTA) has reported strong demand for its new Micro Credentials Program, designed to offer members access to short, sharp, high-impact courses.

The courses allow travel businesses and their staff to learn new skills during downtime, providing a competitive edge when the market rebounds.

Launching in partnership with Learning Vault, AFTA's online digital education partner, the initial micro credentials offering encompasses roughly 60 courses, with new courses added every week.

"The feedback so far from our AFTA/ATAS members is that our Micro Credentials Program is the perfect way to quickly and easily upskill and retrain and validate skills acquired on the job," said Darren Rudd, AFTA CEO.

"Members appreciate the fact that the program allows you to learn in short bursts across more than 60 initial key skill areas with more modules to be added.

"Early winners with our AFTA/ ATAS members include the Micro Credentials on Workplace Operational Planning, Social Media, Building Your Project Plan, Coaching and Mentoring as well as for the two free options Breath in, Breath Out and Working Remotely."

Each micro credential is aligned to a training unit within the nationally recognised Vocational Education and Training (VET) Qualification Framework.

Completion of each micro credential, which typically takes eight hours and costs \$19.99 per course, generates a 'digital badge' which makes AFTA members' credentials more visible, valuable and verifiable.

"AFTA is proud to be leading the way with this ground-breaking approach which delivers in such a powerful and important way for members."

Meanwhile AFTA has announced it will be reducing its operating hours to Monday to Wednesday from September 1 due to COVID-19. ■ afta.com.au/micro-credentials



This little tool helps you market

SILVERSEA CRUISES has enhanced its online suite of marketing resources and sales tools for travel advisors.

Named Marketing Central, the revamped platform will enable travel advisors to grow their businesses, offering access to an expanded portfolio of tools that have been designed to make selling Silversea easier than ever.

It includes simplified access to a robust inventory of marketing assets, the latest incentives and fares available to travel advisors, with web pages optimised for faster loading times.

Additional featured materials include Silversea's latest brochures, destination toolkits that can be used to build a destination-based campaign and selling tools designed to generate business and improve advisors' skill sets.

Travel advisors can also browse and quickly download company images, videos and logos, view current exclusive offers, access press releases and connect with the sales support team.

"In the current environment, digital marketing is more important than ever and we have moved quickly to enhance our digital marketing tools to support our travel advisor partners with their marketing activities," said Barbara Muckermann, Silversea's Chief Marketing Officer.

"Our goal is to make it faster and easier for travel advisors to leverage Marketing Central's wealth of information and tools to grow their business with Silversea, especially now when their clients are dreaming more and more about their future travels."

■ my.silversea.com

Thai and win a prize

THERE ARE prizes up for grabs in a series of webinars being run by Tourism Authority of Thailand.

Entitled *Friday Morning with Amazing Thailand*, the series provides information on what is happening in the country during this unprecedented time.

The next two sessions are on September 11, with the subject Family Travel, and on September 18, looking at Responsible Tourism.

The webinars start at 11am and agents need to register for the chance to win the prizes.

■ amazingthailand.com.au

Sweet solution to COVID's rocky road

AGENTS ARE finding all manner of ingenious ways to get through the gloom of COVID-19 but this may just be the sweetest of them all.

With her shop empty, Sue Brownley, owner of Belmore Travel in the Melbourne suburb of Balwyn, needed to do something that would maintain their profile and their connection with the local community and loyal clients.

The Travellers Choice member responded to the coronavirus crisis by transforming the office into a lolly shop, offering clients confectionery from all around the world.

"You've got to show people you are still here; that you're not going anywhere," said Sue.

"And we were also encouraged by the fact that people were still dropping by the shop just to say hello and have a quick chat."

The shop, A World of Lollies, has only been operating for a few weeks but has reported brisk sales of

"delicious Lockdown Lolly Packs and Iso-Packs", which the agency can safely deliver.

"We've had a lot of grandparents sending lollies to their grandkids, who they can't see. And it's been nice to hear back from people who've received the sweets that they really enjoyed the surprise."

The shop's biggest seller has been Rocky Road, produced by a local Melbourne company. And in terms of international sweets, New Zealand's Perky Nana bar is proving a hit.

"It's a nice additional sideline, which I think we'll continue with even once COVID is over. It's a good use of space and it might be a nice touch if, for instance, we reward clients with a Perky Nana when they book a trip with us to New Zealand."

Ultimately, she says the lolly shop has also helped keep her sane.

"You can't let it all get you down and it's uplifting to put smiles on



Lolly good idea: Sue Brownley of Belmore Travel

people's faces. My advice to other agencies is come up with an idea and give it a go. It's better than sitting around doing nothing!"

Have you come up with an ingenious use of your office space? Drop us a line at editorial@traveltalkmag.com.au

■ travelagentschoice.com.au

Calls for \$125m survival package for agents

THE GOVERNMENT is being asked to provide a multi-million dollar support package for Australian travel agents.

The call comes with an estimated \$4bn worth of bookings still to be processed on consumers' behalf and funds returned to Australians.

The Australian Federation of Travel Agents (AFTA) has called on the government to provide the \$125m support package as well as a range of business relief measures.

AFTA's pre-budget submission highlights the fact that travel agents, tour operators and travel wholesalers are on the pandemic frontline supporting consumers.

The organisation estimates 80 per cent of the current workforce is working full time on refunds, cancellations and credits in an effort to help consumers.

This is all while being among the worst hit of Australian businesses with 90 per cent-plus revenue drops and little sign of real recovery without the

resumption of international travel.

"Right now, the primary priority of our members is doing everything they can to obtain the maximum refund for their customers," said Darren Rudd, AFTA CEO.

"The continued professional management of this process is vital. The monies returned will, and are already, stimulating the Australian economy. The billions of dollars still outstanding will continue to deliver a very positive economic outcome for the nation as they are returned. But the process of managing that return is complex and lengthy."

In a comprehensive media release announcing the package push, AFTA highlights that pre-COVID, the Australian travel industry and those working within it were a vibrant, viable and expanding sector.

In 2018-19, Australians spent more than \$46 billion on international travel for commerce, cultural and leisure reasons, plus visiting family and friends.

This represents the largest import sector of the Australian economy and is a position that has been consistently growing for more than 10 years. Indeed, the Australian travel sector experienced year-on-year growth of 11 per cent and has maintained growth of 7.2 per cent over the past five years.

IN BRIEF///

AFTA HAS also developed a National Mobilisation Program to aid their campaign to get a support package approved by government.

It offers a toolkit on how to lobby your local MP to back the campaign. In addition, a National Mobilisation Program Webinar will take place at 2pm (AEST) on September 9. To register, head to: afta.com.au

Other points raised by AFTA include:

- * In 2020, ATAS had more than 2,700 accredited locations throughout Australia, representing close to 1,400 businesses, employing 40,000 Australians across the country and benefitting their families.

- * Some 70 per cent of international travel is booked through travel agents, yet the International Air Transport Association has forecast air travel will not return to pre-2019 levels before 2024.

- * The nature of the travel payment ecosystems means travel agents do not receive the bulk of payment until months after travel has been completed.

- * At the end of March 2020, 53 per cent of travel agent forward leisure bookings by value were for international air travel and together international air and cruise made up two-thirds of travel agent total transaction value.

- * Agents are interwoven in the fabric of their local communities and are dedicated tax-paying, mostly small businesses, contributing more than \$28 billion annually to the Australian economy.

"Travel agencies have zero revenue coming in, an enormous amount of refunds still to process which means they're currently operating on a negative cash flow basis and have no end in sight on the continued closure of domestic and international borders," added Mr Rudd.

"Travel agents and wholesalers are working through the complicated process of refunds and credits under COVID-19 conditions (resources and systems stretched beyond capacity) repatriating outstanding funds of approximately \$10 billion, which will be reinvested in Australian businesses, including tourism in Australia.

"These funds represent an enormous stimulus for the Australian economy, which require the expertise of travel agents to ensure the maximum value is returned to our customers.

"Now, more than ever, travel agents are proving their value to their customers and the increasing number of non-customers who have turned to them for support.

"Add to this the specialised expertise required to navigate the individual terms and conditions that each supplier has and the complexity becomes obvious.

"This is not a role that is easily absorbed by Government even if the personnel resources were available.

"AFTA is firmly of the view that the survival of those employed in the thousands of small to medium-sized businesses, currently providing a valuable service to an estimated four million Australians, warrants special consideration and the allocation of a specific industry grant.

"AFTA proposes a comprehensive package of measures to bridge the financial impact of the travel sector by assisting both AFTA accredited agents and non-AFTA members and their customers through the direct impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on their businesses and travel plans, and back to profitability from late 2021.

"This is a critical time for our sector and unless we all work together, there are many businesses which will not survive. We don't want that to happen.

"This is a sector which has spent generations helping Australians get overseas for commerce and culture, family and friends reunions and now it's time for our society to help them in return and by doing so help restart our economy."

■ afta.com.au

“This is a critical time for our sector and unless we all work together, there are many businesses which will not survive. We don't want that to happen.”

IN BRIEF///

AFTA HAS asked the government to provide a range of support initiatives to ensure the sector's survival, the most significant of which include:

- * Scaled Back to Business grants forecast to be an average \$40,000 based on total transaction value in FY19 to assist them to stay in business, cover some operational costs, continue the work of both returning refunds to customers and assisting travellers in 2021 and beyond

- * Back in Business concessional loans of up to \$100,000 per agency outlet to sustain business and service to travellers, delivered through commercial banks, backed up by a three-year Commonwealth guarantee. These loans will enable viable businesses to endure the COVID-19 related downturn and slow return to profitability

- * The critical need to get Australians travelling again through the establishment of travel bubbles and through Government promoting the purchase of travel through Australian-owned travel businesses.





Sam, Merran and Jeremy Blockey, Cape Trib Farm. Picture courtesy Daintree Food Trail

(TTNQ) is a small but incredibly devoted and passionate team; they live and breathe TNQ and I'm proud to be a part of a team like that.

With so many diverse experiences we have to offer in this region, TNQ is truly a unique destination for Australia and the world. What better reason to promote it and take on a role like this.

Q: Tell us something people might not know about TTNQ?

A: We are only a lean team of 15! That says a huge amount when you consider that we promote such a large region of Queensland in not only leisure, but business events as well. Our team really does it all.

Q: What's coming up in the region that's got you excited?

A: Summer! I'm so excited to share all the amazing experiences in TNQ that are unique to our summer in the tropics: the endless waterfalls, the tranquil and secluded rainforest walks, the clarity of the reefs and energy of the marine life. Summer in the tropics is unlike any other.

Q: Is there one travel experience that really stands out for you?

A: My trip to Costa Rica and Panama in 2014. My friends arranged the itinerary and I (for the first time) just went with the flow.

We really immersed ourselves in the local life and it would be the best cultural experience I've had to date.

Q: What's your top travel tip?

A: Plan some of your trip, but always leave a little time for the spontaneous experiences.

Get to know the locals and ask them what they love to do; you never know what you may get to experience off the beaten path.

■ tropicalnorthqueensland.org.au

Platform opens for business

A VIRTUAL meeting platform has just been launched allowing agents to book a sales call with their local MSC Cruises Business Development Manager.

'Sales Connect by MSC – A World of Discovery' provides a 30-minute session via video or phone call.

The time can be utilised to cover anything the agent would like to learn

more about, including the re-start of sailings, health and safety protocols, product training, current promotions, business development planning and group opportunities.

"Considering the reduced hours for many travel agents, this new platform allows for flexibility in booking a time, which will not impact on our valued travel partner's day," said Lisa Teiotu,

Sales Director AU/NZ at MSC Cruises.

"It is so easy to book a one-on-one or group session with your MSC Cruises BDM to provide support and for us to engage with our partners."

The company recently announced an extension on the validity of their Future Cruise Credits until the end of 2022.

■ msccruises.com.au

HELPING YOU GET CONNECTED

CLUB MED Connect is a new online appointment creator designed to provide extra support for agents.

The platform allows users to:

- * Choose the time and date that best suits them to organise a meeting with Club Med personnel
- * Select the meeting length (30 mins or one hour) and the preferred way to 'connect' (video conference/in person/phone call)
- * Specify the topic: training, update, planning
- * Select the best Club Med representative to meet with, whether that be the regional Business Development Manager, a member of the meetings and events team, or a marketing specialist.

■ clubmedta.com.au



TIME TO TAKE A HIKE

AGENTS HAVE put their best feet forward at a hiking event organised by the Papua New Guinea Tourism Promotion Authority.

Held at Springbrook National Park in Queensland, the activity was designed to help keep the industry active, inspired and connected while travel restrictions are still in place.

The get together was lead by Aidan Grimes from Our Spirit, who has walked the Kokoda Track more than 120 times.

Aidan provided agents with an

insight into what walking the eight-day Kokoda trek is like and relayed many stories from his experiences on the track and from his travels throughout Papua New Guinea.

The group of 19 agents, suppliers and industry friends certainly enjoyed the experience and the PNG tourism organisation plans on hosting the hike each month throughout Brisbane and the Gold Coast moving forward.

If you are interested in taking part or want further information, contact Holly@example.com.au

LANI'S LIVING THE DREAM

Lani Strathearn had an "epic" start to her new role as Marketing Manager for Tourism Tropical North Queensland. Here, she explains why she took the job and offers some essential travel tips.

Q: Where was the last place you travelled and where would you like to go next?

A: Technically, the epic relocation road trip from Melbourne to Cairns in three days (plus two weeks' isolation in New South Wales!).

In terms of the most recent holiday, it was back to Canada and USA to catch up with close friends from when I lived there.

Next, I would love to explore more of Tropical North Queensland (TNQ) and up to Cape York. I love the contrast in landscape and experiences this region has to offer.

Q: Besides your passport, what's the one thing you never travel without?

A: It's probably to be expected, but my phone. It is my right arm when travelling – copies of documents, camera, access to local blogs on top tips, directions – I could go on.



Lani Strathearn, Marketing Manager for Tourism Tropical North Queensland

Q: Why did you take up this role?

A: Dream destination and dream role – what more could I ask for?

I have always been incredibly passionate about the tourism industry and a huge advocate of the amazing experiences our country has to offer.

Tourism Tropical North Queensland



Picture courtesy Daintree Food Trail



Success is pivotal for flexible friends

The coronavirus pandemic has forced many agents to use their talents in new ways and to adapt their business models.

In this exclusive report for *Traveltalk*, two personal travel managers reveal how they used their skills in creating custom-made overseas holidays to design and run their first domestic tour.

BEFORE COVID, Julie Painter and Michelle Schulze hosted women-only tours to a range of exotic destinations such as Fiji, Vietnam, Sri Lanka and Nepal.

With international travel banned, the TravelManagers' representatives for Mount Colah and Grays Point in NSW respectively had to come up with a whole new game plan.

Last month, they hosted a 'Ladies Escapes' group of 20 to the Blue Mountains near Sydney. The sold-out event was a huge success with future tours now in the pipeline.

"We've been absolutely delighted by the response to the Blue Mountains tour," said Michelle.

"COVID has meant that we had to be even more adaptable and flexible

than usual, but in reality it's just another aspect of managing our guests and the operational elements of the tour."

The trip began with an optional two-hour bushwalk at Wentworth Falls on the Overcliff-Undercliff loop track featuring great views of the cliffs and Mt Solitary followed by a relaxing lunch at Café 92 at The Conservation Hut with its sweeping valley vistas.

"COVID has required us to take a different approach with different people reacting in contrasting ways," added Michelle.

"We took it upon ourselves to remind people when using handrails to be COVID-safe and use sanitiser, which we provided together with masks. Some people are very aware while others are more relaxed."

Accommodation was at the heritage listed Carrington Hotel where participants appreciated a meet and greet bonding session before enjoying an a la carte dining experience.

"Our tours are about bringing together groups of like-minded women and our weekend sampler to the Blue Mountains has been no different," said Julie.

"Fifty per cent of participants had previously travelled with us and while the rest of the group were first timers this ensured an excellent opportunity for all of us to make new friends and to mix and socialise while enjoying a variety of food and experiences."

The highlight of the weekend was a hands-on, social distancing creative painting class guided by a professional artist, while the final activity was a bushwalk over the Grand Canyon Track at Blackheath.

"One of the reasons we operated the Blue Mountains weekend was to keep the travel flame alive," added Michelle. "We have found that, like us, our clients are itching to travel."

The success of the weekend has led the pair to look at a weekend escape to Mudgee and a 'Rain Forest and Reef' tour to Queensland, along with a midweek break to the Blue Mountains.

"With the onset of COVID we've decided to incorporate support for a charity in all future tours which commenced with BAY BABES raising money for breast cancer research as the charity for our Blue Mountains weekend," said Julie.

■ travelmanagers.com.au



Julie and Michelle with their artistic creations



Get set for your post-COVID boom

THE NUMBER of consumers prepared to book their holidays with travel agents is likely to soar once the pandemic is over.

In a massive morale boost for agents, a new survey has revealed that consumer bookings are likely to greatly surpass pre-COVID levels.

Compiled by travel industry technology company, Traveport, the *Guide to Travel Recovery* revealed that 33 per cent of all travellers expect a rise in their use of agents in the future. And 65 per cent of those believe that travel professionals will be the best placed to provide the safety information they need.

The report also showed that it is millennials (44 per cent) and not older travellers that feel this way.

Overall, the study showed that the majority of travellers would be ready to hit the road again, but only if airlines, airports, hotels and car hire companies implement 10 safety measures throughout their experience.

The most critical of these are a demand on social distancing rules, mandatory use of facemasks and easy access to sanitising gel or wipes, gloves and masks, at all parts of the travel journey.

Consumers also want fully flexible or refundable flight tickets.

"This study highlights the criticality these measures are now playing in restoring traveller confidence," said Greg Webb, Traveport CEO.

"However, for the majority of travellers to return to the skies, the industry now needs to work together to not only ensure a wide array of safety measures are in place throughout the travel journey, but to collectively communicate these changes to travellers using a range of channels and merchandising technologies."

The *Guide to Travel Recovery* took into account the opinions of 5,000 travellers across the U.S., UK, Australia, New Zealand and India, along with 29 leading travel suppliers.

SNAFFLE A RAFFLE TICKET

CHIMU ADVENTURES is raffling off a trip to Antarctica to encourage further donations to the Footsteps For Food (FFF) movement.

The incentive comes as James McAlloon, Chimu's Relationship Manager, continues his fundraising trek across Australia. Due to border closures, his marathon effort will now conclude at Uluru in mid-October.

The trip to Antarctica is set to take place in November 2021 and the raffle will be drawn when James arrives at his final destination.

A donation of \$40 will get you 10 entries into the raffle, with the proceeds going to help South American families in need. So far, McAlloon has raised more than \$24,000 for FFF.

■ raffle.chimuadventures.com/footstepsforfoodraffle





La Fortuna Suspension Bridge in Costa Rica

Enjoy travel in a bubble

G ADVENTURES HAS released a program of 80 tours providing new private travel benefits for groups of family and friends.

The 'Book Your Bubble' collection is in response to a company survey which revealed that 35 per cent of travellers intend to take their next trip with friends and/or family members post-pandemic.

Additional benefits being offered across the tours, which include Active, Marine, Classic and 18-to-Thirtysomethings travel styles, include

more flexible booking conditions and incentives such as discounted tours for trip organisers.

"We want to ensure travelling is made as attractive as possible following this pandemic," said Bruce Poon Tip, Founder of G Adventures.

"The Book Your Bubble Collection makes booking a private tour more flexible and affordable than ever before."

Tours that feature in the collection include:

* An eight-day 'Northern Thailand: Hilltribes & Villages' trip ideal for a group of friends aged 18 to 39. It is priced from \$749 per person, departing from and returning to Bangkok.

* Get an active crew together to hike the Inca Trail on an eight-day 'Inca Discovery' trip which is priced from \$1,679 per person departing from Lima and finishing in Cusco.

* A seven-day 'Classic Highlights of Portugal' trip which is perfect for couples and is priced from \$1,499 per person travelling from Lisbon to Porto.

* Bring the family together for some quality time on the 'Maldives Dhoni Cruise' tour. It is priced from \$1,499 per person for the seven-day marine trip from Male return.

"G Adventures is a company built on changing lives through travel and there are local people who need our support, so we're doing all we can to encourage travellers to get back out there and start making a difference again as soon as it is safe to do so."

■ gadventures.com

EXPERIENCE THE ULTIMATE DAY TRIP

AUSSIERS CAN still enjoy the world's most unforgettable sightseeing flight...with no passport required.

From November, a Qantas 787 Dreamliner will travel across the Southern Ocean and take guests to see the vast white wilderness of Antarctica, all within a day.

The plane has been privately chartered by Antarctica Flights and will do a total of seven trips to the white continent from most capital cities.

Each flight provides a full day Antarctic experience, with polar expeditioners onboard to talk through the unique environment on view.

With 19 planned routes to match the day's weather conditions, no two flights are ever the same, each lasting from 12 to 14 hours.

Each flight will accommodate around 220 passengers with a choice



of seating options from business through to explorer economy. Strict COVID protocols will be in place to ensure the health and safety of all guests onboard.

"Antarctica Flights offer the ultimate one-day adventure," said Bas Bosschieter, CEO of Antarctica Flights.

"It's a chance to see this extraordinary white wilderness from the air and learn about the southernmost continent from polar experts, at the same time as experiencing the fabulous new Qantas 787 Dreamliner."

Prices start at \$1,199 in explorer economy and range up to \$7,999 for business class deluxe.

■ antarcticaflights.com.au

Departure dates and locations are:

- Melbourne – November 15
- Sydney – November 22
- Melbourne – December 31
- Perth – January 26, 2021
- Brisbane – February 7, 2021
- Adelaide – February 14, 2021
- Sydney – February 21, 2021



NEW TOUR OFFERS HEALTH AND CARE

THE TRAVEL Concierge Sri Lanka has created a special package for friends aimed at health and wellbeing with a sustainable theme.

The eight-night 'Ceylon Collective Care' tour is based on the west coast of the island.

Guests will stay at The Mudhouse, an eco-lodge spread throughout a large expanse of forest on the outskirts of a small village flanked by lakes and blessed with abundant birdlife, wildlife and natural beauty.

Moving on, travellers will enjoy sun, sand and surf in Kalpitya before spending a night in Colombo, staying at the eclectic boutique property Aathma (which has hosted film star Margot Robbie).

"We wanted to make it easy and affordable for a small group of friends to escape and come to enjoy our beautiful homeland and Sri Lankan hospitality," said Laahiru Jayamanne, Executive Director, The Travel Concierge Sri Lanka.

Priced from \$US1,475 (approx. \$AU\$2,050) per person twin share, the itinerary includes a local cooking lesson, visit to the Paramakanda Temple, complimentary Shiastu massage, yoga sessions, kite surfing and participation in a mangrove planting project.

■ anz@ttsrilanka.com



Show your metal on treasure hunt

A NEW range of quirky and innovative tours will offer guests the chance to search for buried treasure.

Launching next month, Treasure Hunt Tours give participants the opportunity to use metal detectors while learning about the history of the location in which they are exploring.

Initially debuting in Melbourne and Sydney, the new excursions are the brainchild of Melbourne-based small group and private tour operator, 69 Tours.

"As an experienced metal detectorist and treasure hunter I cannot wait to share this great hobby with my tour guests," said Peter Solanikow, Founder and Head Guide of 69 Tours.

"I particularly love the excitement of kids when they find their first treasure."

Each tour begins with luxury transport to the first location where guests participate in a short workshop on equipment use. The company also provides child-friendly equipment weighing just one kilogram.

At the completion of the workshop, participants are given a complimentary souvenir coin purse to stash their finds.

The tours begin in Melbourne in October and conclude in April, with a break in January during which time itineraries are conducted in Sydney.

'Melbourne Treasure Hunt101' is a

two-hour introductory tour starting at \$50 per person, in which two locations are explored. It includes complimentary drinks, souvenir coin purse, special present and use of equipment.

The more comprehensive 'Melbourne Treasure Hunt' lasts four hours and has all the inclusions of the introductory tour plus an extra location to explore, dinner and an additional workshop on silver coin cleaning. It is priced from \$100 per person.

The 'Sydney Treasure Hunt' begins at \$75 per person and has three various durations of between two to six hours with all the inclusions of the Melbourne tours.

■ 69tours.com





Darren Rudd,
Chief Executive
of AFTA

'MACRO-LEVEL' CHANGE COMING FOR AGENTS

INNOVATION IN technology and the way travel advice is packaged and delivered will help drive an overall change in the travel agency sector.

That's the view of Darren Rudd, the new Chief Executive of the Australian Federation of Travel Agents (AFTA).

Speaking to *Traveltalk* in his first interview since taking up the role, Mr Rudd said he believed the core function of providing advice and years of applied and detailed nuanced wisdom would remain for agents, but the structure of the sector was definitely under consideration for change.

"I think more on a macro-level that this sector will transform," he said.

Rudd believes that innovations in the packaging and delivery of an agent's products and services are on the way.

"For example, the experience of pre-familiarisation with a destination using artificial intelligence, 3D and virtual reality, and all those other sorts of things that other sectors use daily."

The new AFTA boss added that within the travel agency sector there was already a whole range of innovation, which hasn't even been identified as that.

"The development of IT application of artificial intelligence, alliances with different suppliers and providers ...there's a lot of innovation and

creativity in the sector. So I think that will drive some change anyway."

Rudd also flagged the importance of recognising this creative output.

"With passion comes creativity and with creativity comes passion. I think there is a lot of that in this sector.

"I just don't know that we're actually talking enough about the innovative lengths that some people are going to, to retool, to look at products and how they sell and deliver them.

"So coming through this period, a lot of people are focusing on 'what have I got to do to do things better or differently?' like any improvement process.

"And I think we're going to get some interesting developments. I think overall, every sector in the broader economy is doing that introspection right now."

Rudd added that he is also seeing a greater degree of collaboration in the travel industry.

"I've been meeting with airlines and other key stakeholders in the ecosystem and they pretty much all have a degree of realism in that the only way we're going to get through this is if we all work – and maybe work a little bit differently – together.

"So again, from that will come innovation and different approaches."

■ afta.com.au

COVID-19 POLICIES NOW COME AS STANDARD

THE COUNCIL of Australian Tour Operators (CATO) has developed a new set of standard agreements and policies in response to COVID-19.

These include industry standard booking terms and conditions, short form supplier agreements and a privacy policy, all written specifically for Australian-based tour operators and wholesalers.

"A real challenge in our lobbying and consultation efforts with regulators and the media during the COVID crisis has been that the variation across operators T&C's, so consistency of messaging has been difficult," said Brett Jardine, Managing Director, CATO.

"Once adopted by the majority of CATO Members, this will provide consistent delivery of best practice for all concerned and enable operators to take collective positions if an event like this pandemic ever arose again."

■ cato.travel



Six ways to bag a travel freebie

Who doesn't love a little something for nothing? In this exclusive article for *Traveltalk*, BILL TSOUVALAS, Managing Director at Savvy (right), lifts the lid on credit card perks and how they can save you money on travel.

Complimentary travel insurance

Many credit cards, especially at Gold or Platinum level, offer free travel insurance if you purchase your flights or travel with the card. For some destinations, this can save you hundreds, even thousands, if you're flying with family.

Though travel insurance coverage varies, it could help you cover lost baggage, medical expenses and transit accidents. Remember to read your terms and conditions to see what's included.

Converting points into flights, accommodation, or upgrades

Frequent flyer points are for flying, right? Some rewards or frequent flyer programs not only give you the opportunity to take up reduced price or free airline tickets, they can also be spent on hotels or upgrades, from economy to business class for example.

You may also spend points on upgrading your hotel room, gaining access to Wi-Fi, or complimentary breakfasts.

Virgin Velocity, Qantas Frequent Flyer, Emirates Skywards, Etihad Guest, Singapore Airlines KrisFlyer and many others all offer these services.

Consider a personal loan

Though credit cards can give you lots of freebies, there's no such thing as a "free" flight. You're paying for your rewards and points through added interest, annual fees, or other charges.

Considering a personal loan could reduce overall interest compared with a credit card.

A personal loan is a fixed term loan that you pay off in manageable instalments until it's done; a credit card (if you're not careful) can spiral out of control if you only make the minimum repayments.

Personal loans usually have lower interest rates than most credit cards, too. Though you need to spend a bit of time applying for a personal loan, the money you save will be more than worth it.

Travel vouchers

Some credit cards reward cardholders with complimentary travel vouchers, such as Virgin Velocity



cards. They essentially refund part, or all, of your annual fee with a voucher that you can spend on travel or accommodation.

Airport lounge passes

Some credit cards, such as Virgin Velocity or American Express, give you passes to their airport lounges.

Airport lounges are almost like hotels without the private rooms: you can dine in, work at private offices and take advantage of premium comfort before you board. Some passes even give you priority boarding.

Using a concierge service

If you have a platinum or premium credit card, you may have access to a worldwide concierge service.

A concierge helps you book flights, hotels, concerts, restaurants and events. American Express, Visa and MasterCard, when you upgrade your card to a premium or platinum tier, offer a concierge service of some kind.

They can also be used in case of emergency, such as requesting replacement cards if they've been lost or stolen.

Savvy is a financial institution based in Adelaide and Sydney.

■ savvy.com.au

Open borders and save our business

THE AUSSIE tourism industry has launched a major grassroots campaign calling on the nation's top politicians to re-open state borders.

As part of the #SaveAussieTourism initiative, an open online letter has been endorsed by industry leaders as well as smaller independent operators.

It appeals to our political leaders to demonstrate a way forward to restore interstate travel and protect the domestic tourism market.

The list of signed supporters spans the breadth of the industry, from accommodation and tour operators to travel agents, vehicle hire companies, industry bodies and regional destination offices.

Craig Bradbery, Chief Operating Officer of Baillie Lodges who penned the open letter, said the industry's opportunity to benefit by reaching a whole new market of domestic travellers had been dashed by the ongoing changes to state border restrictions.

"There's been so much support and pent-up demand to date from domestic travellers, but now as we've been forced to ask our guests to once again postpone their trips and re-arrange flights, people are fed up and losing confidence in the whole idea of planning and booking a holiday," he said.

"For the tourism industry, this should have been our moment – a chance for Aussie travellers to discover the many wonders of our own remarkable country.

"But as state borders like Queensland and the Northern Territory now look to remain closed, tourism businesses can't survive for an extended period solely on the support from intrastate travellers."

The tourism industry, which directly employs around 660,000 Australians, has been hard hit by the coronavirus pandemic. Many operators have been



forced to close since the onset of the virus in March, resulting in employee stand-downs and massive financial losses.

The losses to the tourism industry in turn impacts a swathe of other industries and millions more workers in both metropolitan and regional areas which service tourism businesses, from food producers to local retailers.

The regional spread of people and businesses impacted reaches deep into virtually every electorate across the country. Tourism is vital to the health of regional economies across Australia.

James Thornton, Chief Executive Officer of Intrepid Group, said Australians were keen to support local tourism.

"The travel industry will only begin to recover through certainty and confidence in state border policy," he said.

"The national cabinet and state governments need to work collaboratively to offer clear and consistent guidelines on when borders will open."

The unpredicted extensions to state border closures have forced many businesses that had already put coronavirus safety measures in place to reconsider their economic viability.

"Now's the time to plan positively, to support employment and businesses in each state and across the country, and to ensure that Australia retains its diverse and incredible tourism offering for when international travel resumes," said James Baillie, Founder of Baillie Lodges.

"The groundswell of support for the campaign is reassuring and demonstrates the uniquely collegiate nature of the tourism industry in support of a common goal for good."

■ saveaustraliantourism.com



AUSSIES SHOW THEIR SUPPORT FOR AUSSIES

A RECENT campaign has shown Australians are booking domestic trips for their next getaway, with a strong sentiment to support regional destinations.

The 'Holiday Here This Year' initiative was organised by Luxury Escapes and Tourism Australia. It is the largest campaign the online travel company has ever undertaken in terms of volume, content and performance.

Running in June, the multi-channel, destination-focused promotion showcased travel opportunities across the country. It reached more than 4.5 million Australians over the two-week period, generating thousands of bookings.

Its success aligns with the wider bounce back Luxury Escapes are seeing in intrastate and interstate travel for the majority of Australian states and territories.

Product views for intrastate travel were up 180 per cent and interstate product views up 100 per cent in June compared to the 12 month average, with revenue also up for the regions that have eased restrictions.

Cameron Holland, CEO of Luxury Escapes, said the success of the promotion demonstrates Australians are hungry and ready to travel again.

"We're seeing a very strong recovery in the states that have reopened for intrastate and interstate travel, and by joining forces with Tourism Australia we can help get travellers back to the communities that really need their support.

"With 42 per cent of bookings in this campaign made for a regional destination, and bushfire-affected regions like the Blue Mountains being in the top three booking destinations, it's clear there's a real desire among Aussies to take a domestic holiday and support the local travel businesses than have had an incredibly challenging year so far."

The partnership with Luxury Escapes was part of Tourism Australia's broader 'Holiday Here This Year' promotion, with a further partner campaign launching this month.

"Our consumer research shows that more than half of Australian travellers are keen to travel or are considering

travel around Australia once they can, and this demand has certainly been reflected in the results from this recent targeted campaign, which has exceeded our expectations," added Phillipa Harrison, Managing Director, Tourism Australia.

"A key focus for us has been on boosting visitation to our regions and in particular those areas that were directly impacted by the summer bushfires, which have continued to prove popular with Australian travellers.

"Although some travel restrictions remain in place around the country, we need to continue to encourage those who have the means to, to book a holiday or tourism experience, as the recovery of our industry hinges on Australians getting out and exploring their own wonderful country."

Luxury Escapes are one of a number of local travel brands to partner with Tourism Australia for the year-long campaign, with a further joint promotion between the brands lined up later this year.

■ luxuryescapes.com; tourism.australia.com



Amsterdam

THE WORLD IS MORE THAN ENOUGH

VIKING HAS launched its 2021-2022 *World Cruises* e-brochure, showcasing three epic voyages.

The 136-day 'Viking World Cruise' visits 27 countries, 56 ports and includes overnight stays in 11 popular cities.

The voyage sets sail on December 24, 2021, from Fort Lauderdale to London and includes three new ports of call: Phillip Island in Victoria, Eden in NSW and Yangon, Myanmar.

Guests can also choose a shorter, 119-day portion of the sailing, '2022 Viking World Horizons', which departs

from Los Angeles on January 10, 2022, and visits 22 countries and 49 ports before ending in London.

Also showcased in the brochure is Viking's 18-day 'Panama Canal & Coastal Holiday' itinerary which departs December 24, 2021, from Fort Lauderdale and sails to Los Angeles via Mexico, Colombia, Costa Rica, Nicaragua and Panama, including a full transit of the Panama Canal.

World Cruise voyages will sail on the 930-guest *Viking Star*, one of the company's award-winning small ships in its fleet of seven ocean vessels.



Pricing for the 'Viking World Cruise' starts at \$75,995 per person and the 119-day '2022 World Cruise Horizons' starts at \$69,995 per person based on double occupancy.

Meanwhile Viking has also released two new departures in September 2021 for its popular 22-day 'Grand European & Viking Fjords' combination river/ocean voyage from Bergen to Budapest.

The voyage combines the company's 15-day 'Grand European' river cruise between Budapest and Amsterdam with the eight-day 'Viking Shores & Fjords' ocean cruise between Amsterdam and Bergen, including a seamless transfer between ships in Amsterdam.

■ vikingcruises.com.au



A symphony of savings

CRUISE TRAVELLER has announced savings on a new luxury fly, cruise and stay package for December 2021.

Free domestic and international flights and savings of up to 51 per cent are available for couples on the 17-night, all-inclusive 'Facets of Australia' package for bookings made by September 30.

The itinerary begins on December 4, 2021, with guests enjoying a free two-night stay in a five-star hotel in Perth and a free day trip to Rottnest Island. Travellers then board Crystal Cruises' ultra-luxury, 848-passenger *Crystal Symphony* for a 15-night voyage to Auckland.

Ports include Bunbury near the Margaret River wine region, Adelaide, the scenery and wildlife of Kangaroo Island, Melbourne for pre-Christmas shopping, Sydney and the Bay of Islands in New Zealand.

Including the flights, an onboard open bar, a specialty dining experience, Wi-Fi and gratuities, the 17-night package is available from \$10,340 per person twin share.

* In other news, four more small ship cruise companies have partnered with Cruise Traveller.

Albatros Expeditions, Oceanwide Expeditions, Captain Cook Cruises Fiji and Murray River Paddlesteamers have linked with CT, which now represents 53 boutique, luxury and expedition cruising operators around the world.

■ CruiseTraveller.com.au/facets



SO NERA, SO FAR

AQUA EXPEDITIONS has added a new vessel to their fleet, taking guests into the depths of the Peruvian Amazon in total luxury.

Aqua Nera has been custom-built following the success of sister vessel *Aqua Mekong*. The 20-suite river ship was built in less than a year, with workers clocking in eight hours per day, six days a week.

The ship left Vietnam on August 31 to make her 35-day journey from Ho Chi Minh via a specially-reserved heavy lift transport vehicle to be delivered in Belém in Brazil, some 9,233 nautical miles away.

Once her crew takes possession in Brazil, *Aqua Nera* will navigate the entire length of the Amazon, an upriver transfer that will take a total of 15 days and 1,494 nautical miles to her home port of Iquitos.

Aqua Nera will operate alongside the *Aria Amazon* following her maiden voyage in late 2020.

The expedition will feature cuisine by Pedro Miguel Schiaffino, one of Peru's finest chefs, who is celebrated for creating refined cuisine from native Amazonian produce.

Every day, expert naturalist guides will conduct small group excursions that reward guests with up-close wildlife encounters in the world's most bio-diverse rainforest.

Voyages on *Aqua Nera* start from approximately \$5,730 per person for a three-night itinerary (four- and seven-night itineraries are also available).

■ aqualexpeditions.com



Photo courtesy Filippo Vinardi/Fincantieri

I see ships on the seashore

MSC CRUISES have celebrated the float out of their latest ship, due to come into service next year as part of the company's continued investment plan.

MSC Seashore will offer more cabins, bars, lounges and restaurants, and the highest ratio of outdoor space per guest of any ship in the fleet.

"*MSC Seashore* will in fact be the largest and most innovative cruise vessel ever built in Italy, featuring the latest and most advanced environmental technology currently available," said Pierfrancesco Vago, Executive Chairman, MSC Cruises.

"She will also be one of two new ships for which we will receive delivery in 2021 thus underlying our belief in the long-term growth prospects of the sector."

Seashore becomes the third of four vessels in the company's Seaside class of ships, following *MSC Seaside* and *MSC Seaview*, which launched in 2017 and 2018 respectively.

With a maximum capacity of 5,877 guests, the new vessel will offer a wider range of accommodation with more suites, including 28 more terraced suites, two suites with private whirlpools.

The MSC Yacht Club will see two new cabin categories with 41 deluxe grand suites and two owner's suites with whirlpools.

MSC Seashore will offer the popular 'West Mediterranean' itinerary calling at Genoa, Naples, Messina, Valletta, Barcelona and Marseille.

■ msccruises.com.au

To Russia with love

EMERALD WATERWAYS have released their new *Russia 2021* brochure featuring cruises on the Volga and Danube Rivers.

For 2021, Emerald Waterways is also introducing a new river ship to its portfolio, the recently refurbished *MS Nizhny Novgorod*, built to sail the Volga. Featuring two itineraries, the program onboard the *Novgorod* begins sailings next May.

"Emerald Waterways' latest river cruising program offers exciting options to discover Russia in 2021," said Angus Crichton, Director of Sales, Marketing & Product for Emerald Waterways & Evergreen Tours.

The 11-day 'Imperial Charms of Russia' itinerary invites guests to discover both traditional villages and vibrant cities as they sail from St Petersburg to Moscow.

Highlights include a guided tour of the UNESCO World Heritage-listed city of St Petersburg, a Shashlik lunch in the picturesque village of Mandrogi, a visit to the Monastery of St. Cyril on the White Lake and a guided tour of Moscow.

Exclusive to Emerald Waterways, the 20-day 'Imperial Charms of Russia with Enchantment of Eastern Europe' river cruise offers the highlights of the lower Danube River with guided tours of Bucharest and Belgrade.

Also included are visits to Veliko Tarnovo, Baba Vida Fortress and Lepenski Vir, a guided biked tour in Belgrade and hikes as part of the included Emerald ACTIVE

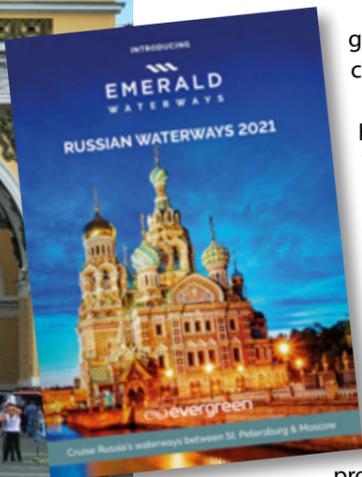
program, plus a home-hosted lunch with a Croatian family.

Early bird savings of up to \$3,000 per couple are available when booked by September 30.

■ evergreentours.com.au/emerald-waterways



St Petersburg



Celebrity heads to the Kimberley

LUKE NGUYEN'S gastronomic journeys through Vietnam, Cambodia and Myanmar have become a popular highlight of APT's Southeast Asia tours.

Now the company has announced the return of their long-time ambassador, acclaimed chef, author and TV personality as the host of an exclusive Kimberley adventure in 2021.

The celebrity (pictured above) will join APT's 14-day 'Kimberley Coastal Cruise & Purnululu Experience with Luke Nguyen' tour departing July 8, 2021.

The journey includes a nine-night cruise on a small expedition ship, the *MS Caledonian Sky*, two nights in Kununurra and two nights at APT's Bungle Bungle Wilderness Lodge.

Guests will share Nguyen-inspired meals with the man himself as he hosts the dining experiences, including a special three-course feast at the wilderness lodge, and savour dishes he has influenced throughout the journey.

"I've heard so much about the Kimberley being an inspiring and special place to visit and I can't wait to get there," said Nguyen.

"I am excited by the prospect of being involved in shaping the menu for the cruise and for the opportunity to learn more about incorporating native ingredients while sharing my love for food."

■ aptravelgroup.com



Positive thinking for the future

A SURVEY by Celebrity Cruises has seen travel agents across Australia predict a positive future for domestic cruising.

Despite the ongoing challenges facing the industry, 43 per cent of agents who completed the survey have remained steady cruise supporters since early May.

Although cruise restrictions remain in place until September 30, 89 per cent of agents believe Australia-only cruises will be popular once restrictions ease.

Once additional health and safety measures are in place, agents say clients will opt for longer six- to eight-night cruises.

With 84 per cent of agents believing overnight stops are important to their clients, the results indicate a positive outlook for week-long local sailings that include a selection of Australian ports.

Indulgence is a priority with 40 per cent of agents believing luxury escapes will be the most highly sought after holidays. Unsurprisingly, relaxing beach holidays ranked second, a continual favourite among Australian travellers.

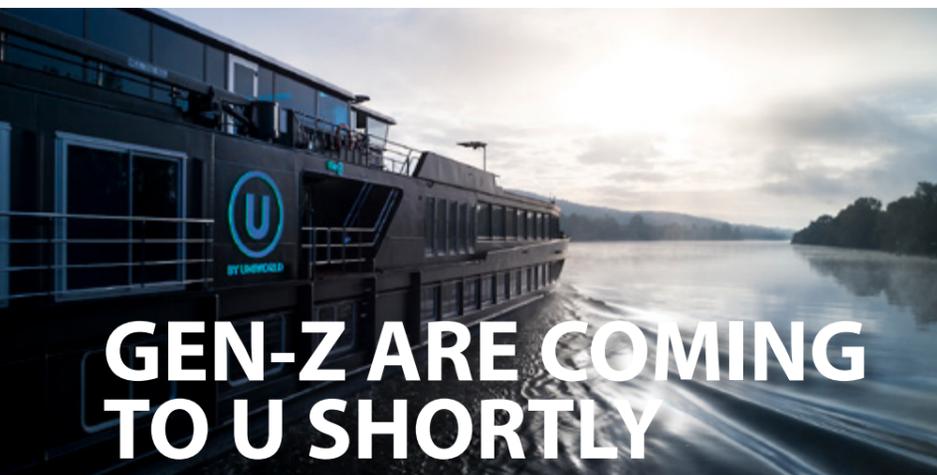
To further enhance health and safety protocols, Royal Caribbean Group recently announced the launch of their Healthy Sail Panel.

The team of 11 globally recognised medical, public health and maritime operations specialists will develop ongoing recommendations for the industry to advance public health responses and improve safety.

The work will be shared publicly, providing a gold standard for cruise lines and other travel and leisure sectors facing similar challenges. Initial recommendations were set to be released by the end of last month.

"We are working around the clock to ensure that once the government green light is signalled, we will be fully prepared to sail safely again," said Susan Bonner, Vice President and Managing Director, Celebrity Cruises AUNZ.

■ celebritycruises.com/au



GEN-Z ARE COMING TO U SHORTLY

U BY UNIWORLD'S plans for the upcoming 2021 season include a new family program, a foodie-themed cruise and more onboard inclusions.

"Our mission for 2021 is to re-connect and remind our guests why they love to travel," said Ellen Bettridge, President and CEO of U by Uniworld.

"We've seen a huge increase in interest for travellers seeking smaller cruise ships next year."

The company has announced the launch next year of 'GenZ on U', a new

family program exclusively for teens and their parents.

On six select sailings, guests can celebrate special milestones, graduations and birthdays, or simply connect as a family with unconventional experiences that both generations can enjoy.

U's first foodie-themed cruise will set sail on July 24, 2021, in collaboration with top food influencer Salvatore DiBenedetto, known as The GrubFather.

On this 'Rolling on the Rhine' cruise, guests will experience a specially

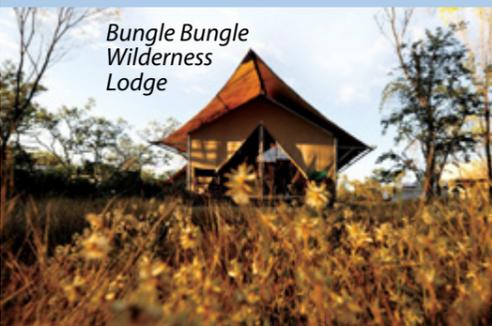


curated menu, excursions and onboard activities that were created by Sal and the U team first-hand.

New inclusions will see beer and wine included at lunch and dinner, and roundtrip airport transfers.

"We're introducing these unconventional experiences that align with our traveller's playful and adventurous energy and will bring even more value to our sailings than before with our new inclusions."

■ ubyuniworld.com



Bungle Bungle Wilderness Lodge



Picnic Bay, Magnetic Island, QLD
Photo courtesy Tourism Australia/
Townsville Enterprise Ltd

FLYING INTO THE UNKNOWN

Most of us are reluctant to fly at the moment, unsure of just what we'll encounter. Here, *Traveltalk's* JENNY ROWLAND reports on her first flight since the corona virus hit and finds there's a sting in the tale.

SO HERE'S why my magical week on Magnetic Island that I gloated about shamelessly came to a premature and stressful end.

Premier Anastacia Palaszczuk closed the Queensland borders once again while I was there and that decision had everyone scurrying home in a mad panic.

We are living in crazy, crazy COVID times: those of us in the travel industry have been hit hard both professionally and personally as travel is our livelihood, lifestyle and passion.

So for me, getting on a plane to visit my 'bestie' up on Magnetic Island was beyond exciting.

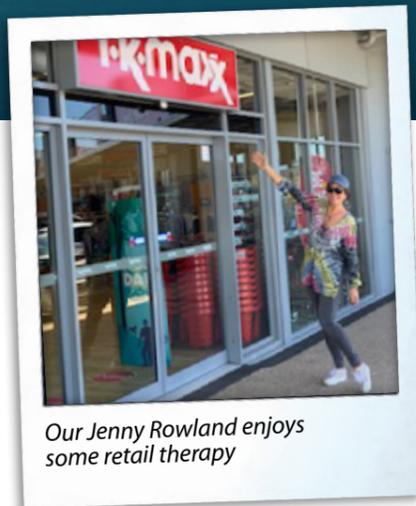
I dutifully downloaded my COVID-19 border declaration,

answering the questions about my recent whereabouts (honestly) and packed my neglected suitcase with great alacrity. Even uber-ing to the airport had me grinning from ear to ear.

I had managed to secure a return ticket with Jetstar for sub \$350, which had also put a big smile on my face. Add to this the dismal weather forecast for Sydney and let the gloating begin! Get the picture?

I'd be a liar if I said I had no trepidation with flying during COVID but the sheer joy of travel trumped any minor anxiety.

Upon arrival at Sydney airport I was surprised to see a busy, bustling terminal with probably 70 per cent of



Our Jenny Rowland enjoys some retail therapy

travellers masked. Social distancing was kind of observed in the lines but not enforced. My border declaration was sighted at check in and a few questions were asked and I boarded a totally packed plane.

We were all issued face masks and most people chose to wear them. The flight was on time and relatively normal. Arrival was slightly weird and reminiscent of going through immigration as we had to line up and

have our border docs sighted and answer a few questions once again. Then it was time to grab my bag and disappear into the tropical sunshine.

While waiting for my bag my phone pinged and I received a message from the Queensland government (I know I'm important....!). No, it wasn't the Premier welcoming me to her State but a reminder of my obligation to get myself tested at the slightest sniff.

A few other COVID texts came through while I was sunning myself on 'Maggie' so clearly we visitors from New South Wales were on the radar. Thankfully for me no sniffing or any other significant health issues ensued so I got on with enjoying my lovely Queensland break...

Until the text from Jetstar arrived informing me that my return Saturday flight had been cancelled!

No explanation, no alternative

NEWS UPDATE///

AIR NEW Zealand has put a further hold on bookings to Australia due to government restrictions.

The Australian Government has extended its cap on international arrivals until October 24.

There is currently a cap of 25 passenger arrivals per flight into Brisbane and around 40 passenger arrivals per flight into Sydney. International passenger arrivals into Melbourne are not currently permitted.

Cam Wallace, Air New Zealand Chief Commercial and Customer Officer, says the airline is placing a hold on future bookings to Melbourne until late October to prevent further disruption to customer journeys.

"We know this is not an ideal situation for people wanting to return home to Australia and our teams are working to minimise disruption to customers as much as possible."

■ airnewzealand.com.au

“ I'd be a liar if I said I had no trepidation with flying during COVID but the sheer joy of travel trumped any minor anxiety. ”

flight, just an offer of a credit (thanks very much) and good luck with getting home.

With the borders being closed due to three (yes, three) COVID cases in Queensland, I briefly toyed with the idea of extending my stay, which would have been great.

Yet with all the uncertainty and the possibility of NSW going into a lockdown and maybe having to pay for a hotel for two weeks I decided I'd better try and get an alternative flight.

Imagine my horror when I saw that one-way flights from Townsville to Sydney were all more than \$1,000 and most of them included overnight

stopovers in Brisbane.

Luckily, I managed to secure the last seat on a Qantas flight for \$400.

I know these are crazy times but this seems like price gouging, plain and simple. Jetstar cancels my flight and offers a \$144 credit – rebook Qantas and pay \$400!

It's so sad. The flying public is going to need all the encouragement they can get to re-board planes and start traveling again. With airlines manipulating fares like this, it's just another reason to stay put.

Rant and gloat over!

At least Maggie was beautiful.

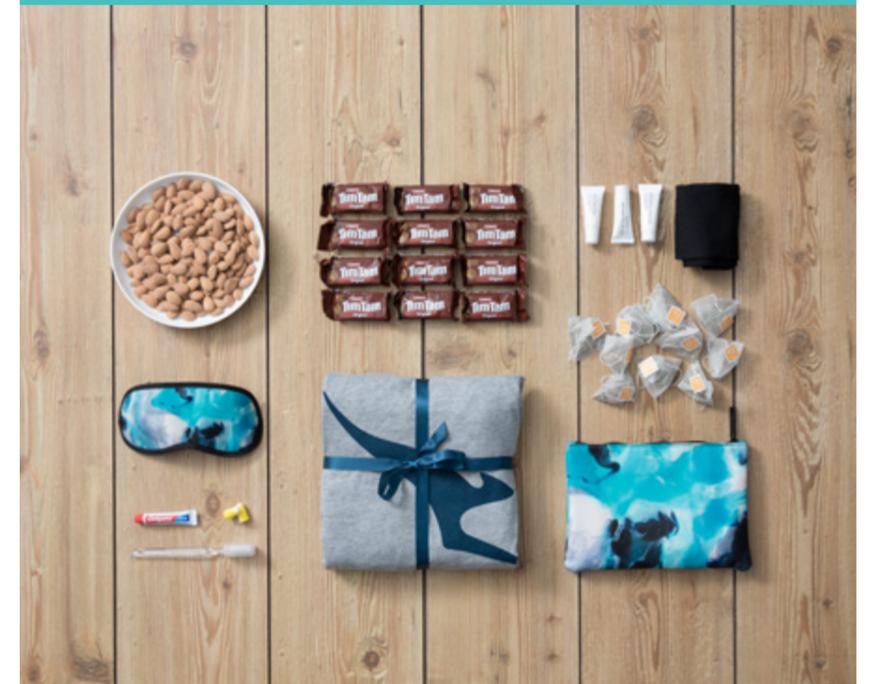
Flying Kangaroo hops to the rescue

QANTAS HAS turned its excess stock of pyjamas, amenity kits and snacks in to care packs for people doing it tough during the COVID-19 crisis.

With all Qantas international flights and the majority of domestic flights currently suspended, the airline has an oversupply of items.

These include business class pyjamas and amenity kits featuring ASPAR skin products, as well as Tim Tams and snacks that would normally be offered to passengers travelling in premium cabins.

An individual can send up to 10 packs anywhere in Australia via Qantas.com for \$25 per pack or 4,350 Qantas Points, including delivery.





The Sebel Mandurah



Novotel Barossa Valley Resort

HOME HOLIDAY IS A DONE DEAL NOW

ACCOR HAS released a range of state-by-state accommodation deals for travellers looking to embark on a holiday closer to home.

In Queensland, Mantra Sun City is offering a deal on a relaxed beachside Gold Coast holiday. Stay three nights in a one-bedroom apartment from \$345 (Sunday to Friday) in total for two people.

This offer is valid for sale until September 30 for travel until September 17, 2021.

The Novotel Sydney Darling Square is running a 'Holiday Saver Package' from \$194 per night.

Guests can enjoy overnight accommodation in a superior room with a bottle of wine on arrival, a \$50 food and beverage credit per stay, car

parking, in-room Wi-Fi and a 12pm late check-out. It is valid for sale and travel until December 30.

If you're in South Australia, the well-appointed Novotel Barossa Valley Resort has a deal from \$186 per night (two-night minimum stay). This offer is valid for travel from mid-September.

Located just a short 50 minute drive south of Perth and overlooking the Mandurah Estuary, The Sebel Mandurah has rooms from \$155 per night (two-night minimum stay).

Deals are also available in Tasmania, the ACT and Northern Territory.

■ all.accor.com



SUITE SUCCESS AFTER REFURB

A FOUR million dollar refurbishment of Fraser Suites Sydney has just been completed.

The award-winning luxury residence suites are located in the heart of the vibrant mid-city shopping and entertainment district.

The transformation of all 201 suites, including deluxe studio, one- and two-bedroom, and penthouse suite inventory, includes all new

bedheads, sofas, coffee tables, chairs, desks, carpet and decorative lights.

The property also boasts original artwork and ergonomic workstations in every room with new smart televisions to be in place by yearend.

The new-look rooms are complemented by refreshed pool and gym facilities and updated meeting rooms featuring the latest InFocus smartboard technology.

"Fraser Suites Sydney prides itself on delivering an exceptional guest experience and this project really reflects that," said Matthew Rubie, Country General Manager for Frasers Hospitality Australia.

"Our apartments are well known for their impressive footprint so we wanted to maximise this advantage by reimagining each space to create modern, light-filled residences for our guests."

■ frasershospitality.com



Experiences without piers

PIER ONE Sydney Harbour has partnered with some of Australia's best creators and innovators to offer locals something fun and unexpected.

The property has launched 'The Creator Series', a program of unique activities which begins this month with art and beauty as the initial focus.

Napoleon Perdis, Australia's leading cosmetic and beauty brand, will bring their new experience to the pier: Napoleon Perdis Beauty Collective.

Guests will enjoy sunset cocktails and canapes ahead of the two-hour makeup workshop, led by industry professionals in a COVID-safe environment.

The package includes cocktail or bubbles, canapes, the workshop and a \$50 Napoleon Perdis e-voucher to spend on products. It costs \$150 per person.

Other local creators joining the upcoming series will include the team from POHO Flowers and the folk at Archie Rose Distillery, each bringing their signature creative flair to the pier in the coming months.

The 189-room heritage, boutique hotel is set on the doorstep of the Walsh Bay arts and theatre hub, Sydney Harbour and CBD.

■ pieronesydneyharbour.com.au



Debut in the Docklands

NESUTO HAVE unveiled their first property to open in Victoria, a \$100m new build slated for January 2023.

The 211-key Nesuto Docklands will be located in The District Docklands precinct in Melbourne. The property adds to the company's existing portfolio of 11 operating and one pipeline hotel and apartment hotels in Australasia.

"At Nesuto we are nimble and work with owners to find sensible solutions," said Mark Ronfeldt, CEO of Daiwa Living Nesuto.

"Nesuto Docklands is testament to

that approach. Our unique hotel and apartment hotel model allowed us to completely tailor our approach to the development and deliver a property which will service the variety of needs of the mixed-use precinct."

Located at 80 Waterfront Way, the apartment hotel will feature 58 one-bedroom, 20 two-bedroom and 133 studio apartments. Rooms will have fully equipped kitchens, separate bedrooms, open plan living and dining spaces, plus internal laundry facilities.

■ nesuto.com

New twist on old fave

EVERYTHING OLD is new again with a former motel now reborn as a chic boutique hotel with a touch of glam.

The Loea Boutique Hotel is located opposite the Maroochy River on Queensland's Sunshine Coast.

The property offers double, twin and family rooms, with décor inspired by the beach. It features a soft white colour palette, locally sourced rattan furniture, brass fixtures and luxury bed linen. Prices start from \$170 per night for a double room.

Guests are greeted with a vintage food truck van-come-reception, serving up drinks and locally sourced food supplied by Gather by Bonnie.

Other features include a luxe outdoor magnesium pool surrounded by a communal alfresco lounge area and garden, local organic skincare products in the room and a private outdoor deck for each suite.

There are classic white cruiser bikes available for guests to use, perfect for exploring the Maroochy River as they take the pathway to nearby Cotton Tree.

"New products and experiences are an important part of keeping up with consumer demand," said Craig Davidson, Interim CEO of Visit Sunshine Coast.

"They provide fresh incentive for visitors to stay longer and spend more, entice new visitors to the region and encourage return travellers to try something new."

■ loea.com.au





LEAP INTO THE LAP OF LUXURY

THE PRIVATE villa at Hermes Estate has re-opened its doors to welcome guests looking for the height of luxury.

The five-star property is located in the heart of the Mid North Coast of New South Wales, a short drive from Coffs Harbour by private chauffeur and just minutes from beaches, mountains and quaint local towns.

This opulent retreat is home to only two rooms within one villa and as the only guest on site, the entire two-hectare estate and support staff are at your full disposal. Guests have a personal assistant available to them 24/7 during their stay.

Hermes Estate offers a range of high quality indulgences, both complementary and available at additional cost.

Specifically, 'Vacation Guests' will enjoy a complimentary bottle of chilled Dom Perignon champagne and Haigh's chocolates or fine canapés on arrival. Alternatively, 'Wellness Guests' can enjoy herbal infusions and fresh fruit.

Other items on offer include a cellar of Penfolds wines, Hennessy X.O cognac, Glenmorangie Scotch whisky



and a variety of premium cigars. A private French chef is on hand to prepare gourmet meals throughout your stay.

The private villa can be booked for \$5,000 per night per room until September 30, when the tariff will rise to \$11,000 (all inclusive for a minimum two-night stay).

■ hermesestate.com

THIS RETREAT IS WELL AHEAD

SPICERS CLOVELLY Estate in the Sunshine Coast Hinterland has launched Montville House, a luxuriously appointed stand-alone guesthouse.

Located in nine hectares of landscaped grounds, Montville House offers six self-contained suites and a marble-tiled en-suite, including a freestanding limestone bath.

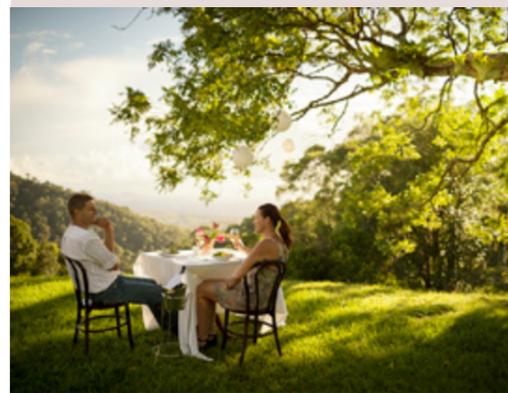
Guests have access to a stylish lounge/library with open fireplace, private covered veranda and tranquil gardens.

Available for individual stays or for private group booking for friends, family and corporate retreats, the property adds to Spicers Clovelly's existing 10 suites in the main guest house and the three-bedroom French Cottage.

Montville is a destination town replete with galleries, craft shops and fashion boutiques on the road winding along the ridgeline of the Blackall Range, with spectacular views over the Sunshine Coast.

Bed and breakfast rates for a suite start from \$589 per night per room. Two night minimum stays apply for weekends.

■ spicersretreats.com



Toolkit aims to end animal exploitation

THE TRAVEL industry is being urged to put an end to the exploitation of wildlife in entertainment venues following the collapse of tourism from COVID-19.

Intrepid Travel has teamed up with World Animal Protection (WAP) in encouraging travel companies to take responsibility for ending the practice forever.

The two organisations are providing tour operators with a complimentary Animal Welfare Policy Toolkit that is customisable and free for download from Intrepid's website.

The intention behind this initiative is to create an easily accessible way for tourism companies to implement more ethical wildlife practices into their businesses.

The toolkit includes steps that can be taken to become wildlife-friendly, including information on how to draft animal welfare policy for travel companies.

It also contains a full editable animal welfare policy that is modelled on Intrepid's and WAP's contact for additional support, such as resources to help educate customers or staff.

"The COVID-19 crisis has provided our industry with an opportunity

to redefine what tourism looks like once travel resumes and to use this time to forge a new path for a more responsible, sustainable and ethical future," said James Thornton, CEO of Intrepid Travel.

"We must put real action behind our words and as operators who facilitate experiences all around the world it is our responsibility to protect the environment and all of its living species. "The very least we can do is ensure our practices are not causing harm to the wildlife who call the destinations we visit home."

According to WAP, up to 550,000 wild animals are currently enduring lifetimes of suffering at tourist entertainment venues globally.

Activities such as riding elephants, taking photos with tigers, lion walks and dolphin performances are examples of popular tourist attractions that can cause lifelong trauma for wild animals.

The impact of COVID-19 has made the situation even more dire, with at least 85 elephant camps in Thailand forced to close as a result of the pandemic.

"We are at a turning point when it comes to our relationship with wild

animals," said Audrey Mealia, Global Head of Wildlife at World Animal Protection.

"For too long, these intelligent, sociable creatures have been the victims of a cruel trade, just to entertain tourists on holiday.

"Wild animals are destined for a life of suffering and brutality behind the scenes, cruelly as entertainers under the guise of innocent fun for visitors.

"Tourists are duped into believing they are helping wild animals and the conservation of the species, while in reality they are creating the demand for such activities."

World Animal Protection has been campaigning for more than 10 years to end the cruelty of wild animals used for entertainment.

Most recently, they launched a campaign calling on governments to commit to a global ban on the wildlife trade and for all travel companies to vow to be wildlife-friendly by removing sales of entertainment venues and focusing on responsible wildlife-friendly alternatives instead.

■ intrepidtravel.com/animal-welfare; worldanimalprotection.org/wildlife-friendly-travel-companies

IN BRIEF///

ONE OF Australia's most popular tropical island retreats has announced it will re-open for visitors on September 26.

Lizard Island enjoys a private setting at the northern end of the World Heritage-listed Great Barrier Reef in Queensland. The property has just 40 beach house-style suites and more than 20 private beaches ready to be explored.

A raft of private and guided experiences are also on offer, including a private luxury boat charter for fishing, snorkelling and diving excursions on the reef.

■ lizardisland.com.au



Perth's own island paradise



Traveltalk's DEBBIE SPROULE takes off to Rottnest Island for a winter escape.

WE ARE all trying to stay positive in our "new normal" and I must say I feel blessed to live in a country like Australia that offers a vast and diverse landscape where we have so much to explore in our own backyard.

I live in Western Australia and the borders are currently firmly shut to the rest of Australia and the world.

We are still free to holiday within our own state and Rottnest is a quick and easy getaway for us West Australians to break those COVID blues.

Getting there

Having never been to Rottnest in the wintertime I was a tad concerned about the weather.

I need not have worried for we were blessed with two glorious sunny days. We took our own bikes over by Rottnest Fast Ferry, which is a short 20 minutes from Fremantle or 40 minutes from Hillarys Boat Harbour.

Cycling

For me, cycling is by far the best way to see the whole island and we biked the full 28kms around, stopping at most of the coves and bays on the way.

The different colour blues of the ocean and the white pristine beaches were just as vivid in the winter as in the summer, the photo opportunities were endless and each view was as memorable as the last.

The favourites for swimming include The Basin, Little Parakeet Bay and Salmon Bay, and Cathedral Rocks offers great views of the seal colony.

Walking and culture

We also ventured on to some of the walking trails. There is a 45km Whadjemup Bidi walking trail broken into five sections each offering culturally and environmentally significant landmarks along the way and perhaps an opportunity to access previously unseen parts of the island.

Dining and relaxation

After a full day of bike riding and walking, a signature massage at the Karma Spa was all we needed to iron out all the knots and aches from the days' activities. We left the spa feeling relaxed and revived.

All that remained was to find somewhere for dinner. As it turned out there were only two places open due to the island being so quiet one week after the winter school holidays.

The best option was the Gov's Sports Bar offering hearty pub meals, a log fire, a bonus trivia night and bucket loads of atmosphere, all of which made it a great night.

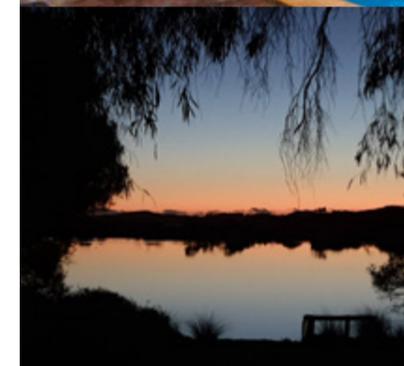
During the daytime most of the cafes and shops were open but best to check online before you book.

Golf and lawn bowls

On our second morning we strolled over to the golf course for a quick nine holes, followed by a game of lawn bowls.

I highly recommend it for a bit of fun: the course was quiet, scenic and "quokka free" due to the installation of the new fence. If you're a beginner like me it is a perfect introduction to the game, a great way to relax and I'm now considering taking it up in my retirement.

After golf, we grabbed a quick lunch at the Rottnest bakery and hopped back on our bikes, this time to see



GOOD KARMA ON ROTTNEST

KARMA ROTTNEST is a heritage-style hotel set in impressive surroundings and offering a serene retreat to relax, unwind and indulge after a day of exploring the island.

We stayed in a recently renovated, premium lakeside room with a comfortable king-size bed, a private balcony overlooking the lake, a large TV, lounge area and plenty of space.

The view of the sun setting across the lake was beautiful and visits from the cutest quokkas kept us entertained morning and night.

Karma is in a great location, being in the centre of Thomson Bay, opposite the ferry, close to the cafes, shops and bus stop.

Our bags were taken directly from the ferry to the resort so we could start our day of exploring immediately from the ferry with no need to check in straight away.

The resort also has a cocktail bar and dining choices of the Riva restaurant or the more relaxed pub-style dining at the Gov's Sports bar.

Entertainment available includes the golf course, lawn bowls, a tropical pool for those hot sunny days and best of all for me was Karma Spa where I thoroughly enjoyed the signature Karma massage.

■ karmagroup.com

more of the salt lakes and up to the Wadjemup lighthouse in the centre of the island.

The Whadjuk people are the traditional custodians of Wadjemup and the island is a significant site for Aboriginal people and their heritage.

We love our Rotto here in WA: it's rich in history, a haven for nature-lovers, surf chasers, boaties, sun worshippers and just about everyone else.

The icing on the cake was the trip home (door to door) only took just over an hour. No stress with flight delays, queues, customs or airport lounges. Happy days!

■ experienceperth.com; karmagroup.com; rottnefastferries.com.au



Bloomin' great tours of Aussie gardens

AFTER SPENDING 20 years uncovering the world's most enchanting gardens, Botanica World Discoveries has launched a new range of home-based tours.

Australia has some truly diverse and inspiring gardens, while art, history and culture can be found within our capital cities and towns along the way.

Each Botanica discovery is carefully curated to pique the interest of gardeners and non-gardeners alike, offering insightful adventures along the way.

All bespoke trips are accompanied by an expert guide and incorporate visits to private gardens and popular attractions, along with art, music and gourmet experiences.

"When travelling with Botanica, you will be delighted by the glorious sights and wonderful gardens around Australia," said Judy Vanrenen, Botanica Founder.

"From hopping aboard a paddle steamer for a Murray River cruise, uncovering the vivid autumn colours of Bright, or heading to Norfolk Island to enjoy access to private gardens including Music Valley Garden, the choices are equally tempting."

New tours include:

* Eight-day 'Norfolk Island History & Gardens', departing April 12 and October 10, 2021. It is priced from \$4,995 per person twin share. The guide will be Sophie Thomson, Presenter of *Gardening Australia* on the ABC.

* Eight-day 'Murray River Red Gum & Gardens by Paddle Steamer & Colours of Bright', departing April 24 and

September 11, 2021. It is priced from \$5,995 per person twin share.

* New guided tours for Lord Howe Island, NSW and Tasmania in the autumn and Kangaroo Island and Flinders Ranges are due to be launched shortly.

"Meeting the private garden owners and travelling with a small-sized group

of people with similar interests offer a whole new dimension to your travel experience," added Judy.

"Botanica holidays are enriched with handpicked cultural experiences, which incorporate themes such as history, art and music, as well as general sightseeing."

■ botanica.travel



KIDS GET FREE HOP TO KANGAROO ISLAND

FAMILIES ARE being offered the chance to make significant savings on a trip to Kangaroo Island in South Australia.

With SeaLink's 'Kids Go Free Deal', up to three children aged three to 14 years travel free on the company's Kangaroo Island ferry when accompanied by at least one paying adult and a vehicle.

Australia's third largest island provides wildlife, coastal scenery, beaches and adventure activities, such as kayaking and quad biking. The island has excellent fishing opportunities and there's a chance to snorkel with dolphins on an ocean safari cruise.

The deal is for bookings before October 11 for travel between October 12 and December 9. It offers savings of up to \$150 per family.

■ sealink.com.au/specials/kidsgofree

JUST WILD ABOUT FLORA

ONE OF the greatest flower shows on Earth is currently underway with Western Australia's 2020 wildflower season up and running.

A selection of guided and non-guided tours are available across the State, in line with seasonal blooming periods, which started in the Pilbara and is now continuing into the Mid-West, Gascoyne, Goldfields and Wheatbelt.

On the Coral Coast, visitors to Lesueur National Park will find a number of its 900 species starting to flower.

Other wildflower hotspots in the region include Coalseam Conservation Park, famous for its everlastings, and Pindar and Mullewa for the rare wreath flower.

During September the season will reach Perth's botanical gardens, nature reserves and national parks, including

Kings Park and the Botanic Garden, which showcases around 3,000 of WA's 12,000 species of native flora – 60 per cent of which are found nowhere else on Earth.

The wildflower season will then sweep through the south west, finishing in November.

One of just 36 biodiversity hotspots in the world, WA offers more than 8,000 unique varieties of wildflowers in the region's forests and coastal heaths, including the Stirling Range, Torndirrup and Porongurup National Parks, and along the iconic Cape Track.

Flora enthusiasts unable to visit because of COVID can track what wildflowers are blooming across the State via the WA Visitor Centre's interactive online Wildflower Tracker.

■ westernaustralia.com/wawildflowers



Coalseam Conservation Park

Royal Hakee in Fitzgerald River National Park. Pictures courtesy Tourism WA



New trips come full cycle

WORLD EXPEDITIONS has launched a brand specialising in a new range of local, self-guided cycling adventures.

Itineraries with Australian Cycle Tours are diverse enough to be suitable for introductory cyclists – including families with young children – through to experienced cyclists looking for a challenge.

While there are a couple of guided experiences on offer, the vast majority of the new range is self-guided, offering flexible itineraries that include accommodation, bike hire, luggage transfers, route notes and maps, expert advice and GPS

information. Many offer optional e-bikes.

"In regions such as Europe, self-guided travel is a well-established and highly desirable style of travel and we've worked hard to create some amazing and affordable local packages using the same model," said Sue Badyari, CEO of World Expeditions.

"Travellers are looking for uncrowded, outdoor experiences that give them the chance to reconnect with nature and the natural world, at least partly in response to isolation and having been contained for so long."

Itineraries are in place now in New South Wales, Victoria, Western Australia and Tasmania, with other States to follow.

In Victoria, the six-day 'Great Victorian Rail Trail Self-Guided Cycle' follows Australia's longest rail trail through towns and countryside from Mansfield, in the foothills of the Victorian Alps, to Tallarook.

The trail passes over Lake Eildon into Bonnie Doon, through the state's longest trail tunnel near Yea and along the Goulburn River. It is priced at \$1,490 per person.

■ australiancycletours.com.au





Look back in wine

While it may seem a long way off at the moment, international travel will eventually return. Here, we look at some of the great experiences awaiting wine and history lovers in Switzerland.

Winery Schloss Salenegg

Dating back to 950AD, the Winery Schloss Salenegg in the Canton of Graubünden is one of Europe's oldest wineries.

Producing award-winning wines since 1968, the von Gugelberg family blends traditional wine making processes with modern methods.

Just over an hour by train from Zurich, the castle's location, Maienfeld, is famous as the setting for Johanna Spyri's *Heidi*.

Vufflens Castle

This impressive castle in the Canton of Vaud was once the residence of racing driver Michael Schumacher and his family.

Surrounding the fortress is eight hectares of vineyards and the wine is produced in the castle's cellars by the House of Bolle. While the castle itself is not open to the public, visitors can walk through the vineyards and courtyard.

By train, Vufflens Castle is 45

minutes from Lausanne or an hour from Geneva.

Schloss Crest

Located in the Canton of Geneva and just under an hour from that city by train and bus, the Château Du Crest or Crest Castle is the only wine producing château in the left bank of Lake Geneva.

Visitors can enjoy the sprawling 15 hectares of vineyards and the variety of wines produced from Chasselas to Cabernet to Merlot. The ancient tradition of pressing the grapes continues today, albeit with the help of modern technology.

Château de Villa

Offering the most renowned specialties of the Valais, visitors can taste wines produced by more than 110 wine producers in the region. Wine enthusiasts can also sign up for their seasonally themed wine seminars to learn more about the local produce and locals.

By train, the château is 85 minutes from Lausanne or two-and-a-quarter hours from Geneva.

Reichenau Castle

Boasting a spectacular setting on the confluence of the Upper and Lower Rhine, this historic castle is a working winery used by the Tschärner family. Dating back to the 17th century, the estate also includes an impressive garden.

Above: Crest Castle
Below: Château de Villa



The recommended way to experience the castle is with a guided tour led by Gian-Battista von Tschärner, followed by a wine tasting. It is just under two hours by train from Zurich.

Castello Luigi

Purchased by Luigi Zanini in 1998, the old farmstead was later transformed into the Castello Luigi.

Situated in the Canton of Ticino, Luigi also constructed a deep spiral cellar under the vineyard, ensuring all vinification work is carried out by gravity alone. Over the years the vineyards have extended to cover more than 125,000 square metres.

To get there from Lugano takes under an hour via train and short bus ride.

■ MySwitzerland.com



Revel in the room to roam

SEE THE shrines, pagodas and temples of Tokyo and Kyoto and find serenity in the art of a Japanese garden.

Survey the armies of Terracotta Warriors, still standing guard over the Emperor after 2,000 years.

Find Zen in a tai chi class or take a train passage in India for a safari in search of the elusive Bengal Tiger.

Globus, Cosmos, Monograms and Avalon Waterways are encouraging travellers to visit must-see places and enjoy

behind-the-scenes adventures in Asia in 2021.

"We get travellers up close to the must-see sites and introduce them to special moments in time," said Gai Tyrrell, Managing Director Australasia of Globus family of brands.

With an average of just 20 guests per departure, all 2021 Globus and Cosmos Asia holidays are Small Group Discovery tours, promising room to roam.

India

Beyond a sunrise visit to the magnificent Taj Mahal – India's sparkling jewel – lies priceless experiences throughout India.

Travellers can hop in a rickshaw for a ride through Delhi's centuries-old Chandni Chowk bazaar, sit down for traditional Indian cuisine in the home of a noble family in Jaipur, embark on open-air safari game drives or sail down the Ganges, the holy river of Hinduism.

Sample holidays include:

- * Seven-day 'Spirit of the Ganges' (Avalon Waterways) priced from \$5,305
- * Eight-day 'India's Golden Triangle' (Monograms) priced from \$1,494
- * 10-day 'Icons of India: The Taj, Tigers & Beyond' (Globus) priced from \$3,550

Japan

In 2021, travellers are invited to try traditional hot sake, matcha green tea and enjoy the views from neon-lit Tokyo to time-honoured Kyoto.

Peaks, palaces, pavilions and pagodas provide picture-perfect backdrops, while visitors can enjoy hands-on calligraphy classes, kimono fitting and interactive cooking demonstrations.

Sample holidays include:

- * Seven-day 'Best of Japan' (Monograms) priced from \$3,171
- * 10-day 'Discover Japan' (Globus) priced from \$6,924
- * 10-day 'Timeless Japan' (Cosmos) priced from \$4,894

Cambodia & Vietnam

Witness the wartime tunnels of Cu Chi, take a fishing lesson on the Thu Bon River and sample a cyclo ride around vibrant Hanoi.

From the mystical temples of Angkor Wat to the picturesque pagodas of Hue, a trip to and through Vietnam and Cambodia is a must-do.

Sample holidays include:

- * New 10-day 'Taste of Vietnam & Cambodia' (Monograms) priced from \$1,962
- * 12-day 'Simply Vietnam' (Cosmos) priced from \$2,669
- * 13-day 'Vietnam & Cambodia: A Grand Adventure' (Globus) priced from \$4,690
- * Eight-day 'Mekong Discovery' (Avalon Waterways) priced from \$4,059

China

Ancient wonders, modern cities, timeless traditions. Like a classic Chinese dumpling, a tour through China is filled with flavour, zest and delectable elements of surprise.

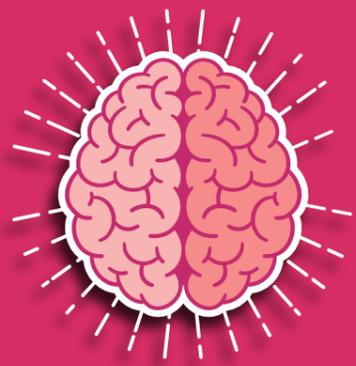
From the hutongs of Beijing to the longtangs of Shanghai, the Far East delivers an exceptional holiday in every way.

Sample holidays include:

- * Nine-day 'China Experience' (Cosmos) priced from \$2,643
- * 14-day 'Flavours of China & the Yangtze' (Globus) priced from \$5,167

* All prices listed above include promotional discounts.

■ globusfamily.com.au



HOW SMART ARE YOU?

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

1. The headquarters of the United Nations is located in which city?

- a. New York
- b. Brussels
- c. Paris
- d. Geneva

2. Actress Charlize Theron was born in which country?

- a. France
- b. South Africa
- c. Denmark
- d. Canada

3. Where did Dian Fossey mainly spend her time studying gorillas?

- a. Angola
- b. Rwanda
- c. Uganda
- d. Gabon

4. Where would you find the Freycinet National Park?

- a. France
- b. Canada
- c. New Caledonia
- d. Australia

5. Jaipur is the capital of which Indian state?

- a. Kerala
- b. Gujarat
- c. Rajasthan
- d. Sikkim

6. Which of these is the largest lake entirely in Europe?

- a. Lake Ladoga
- b. Lake Onega
- c. Lake Peipus
- d. Lake Vattern

7. What is the official currency of Kuwait?

- a. Dollar
- b. Dram
- c. Dalasi
- d. Dinar

8. Which of these places is furthest north in South Australia?

- a. Port Pirie
- b. Port Lincoln
- c. Port Augusta
- d. Port Wakefield



9. The fictional city of Gotham is home to which superhero?

- a. Superman
- b. Batman
- c. Spider-Man
- d. Iron Man

10. Which famous U.S. landmark featured in the movie *An Affair to Remember*?

- a. Empire State Building
- b. Grand Canyon
- c. Times Square
- d. Washington Monument

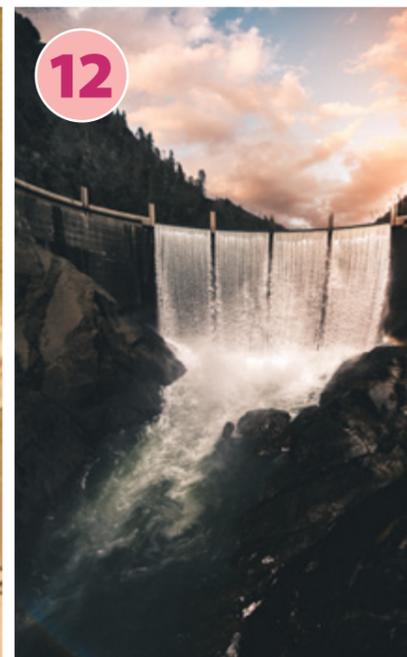


11. On which island did Napoleon Bonaparte die?

- a. Elba
- b. Corfu
- c. Saint Helena
- d. Crete

12. The Kariba Dam lies between which two African countries?

- a. Algeria and Libya
- b. Mali and Niger
- c. Zambia and Zimbabwe
- d. South Africa and Namibia



13. The pasty is usually linked with which English county?

- a. Sussex
- b. Cornwall
- c. Devon
- d. Somerset

14. The Canberra Pact of 1944 was signed between Australia and which other country?

- a. Papua New Guinea
- b. New Zealand
- c. Singapore
- d. Malaysia

15. William Penn founded which American city in 1682?

- a. Philadelphia
- b. Chicago
- c. Detroit
- d. Los Angeles

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

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



We're all in this
Travel*talk*
TOGETHER



Thailand