

**FLIGHT CENTRE®**

THE

# EXPERTS

Issue No 10

## WILD ABOUT AUSTRALIA

DISCOVER A LAND OF WONDERS



**3 EPIC JOURNEYS**  
EXPLORE AUSTRALIA  
IN TWO WEEKS FLAT

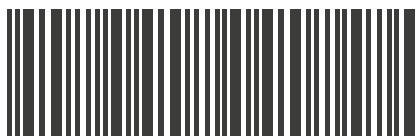
**QUEENSLAND**  
EXPERIENCE THE  
SUNSHINE STATE

**SCENIC VICTORIA**  
VISIT MELBOURNE,  
THEN HIT THE ROAD

**STOPOVER GUIDES**  
STAY IN SINGAPORE,  
DUBAI OR BANGKOK

**50%**  
**LOWER FARES**  
IF YOU BOOK  
**FIVE MONTHS**  
AHEAD NOT **TWO**

**GET 3 HOURS**  
OF YOUR LIFE BACK

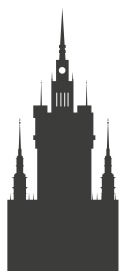


**PER**  
PERTH

**QANTAS**  
**NON-STOP**  
TO **PERTH** IN  
**17 HOURS**



**30%** OF AUSTRALIAN HOLIDAYMAKERS  
FLY TO AT LEAST TWO PLACES



EDINBURGH IS THE  
**CHEAPEST**  
UK DEPARTURE POINT

**AUSTRALIA IS IN**

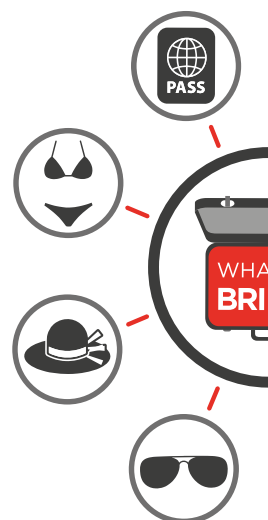


**FLIGHT CENTRE®** WAS BORN IN

**TWO WEEK WALKABOUT**

**FLIGHT CENTRE** CUSTOMERS  
NOW SPEND AN AVERAGE OF

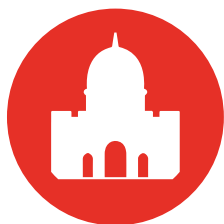
**12 DAYS**  
**DOWN UNDER**



## MOST POPULAR STOPOVERS



DUBAI



ABU DHABI



SINGAPORE



HONG KONG



BUSINESS CLASS IS  
**10% LESS**  
THAN IN 2016



PREMIUM IS  
**34% LESS**  
THAN IN 2016



## OUR DNA



SYDNEY IN **1982**

WE'RE HERE &  
WE'RE THERE TO HELP  
**1,554 STORES**  
**9,167 PEOPLE**  
IN AUSTRALIA

FLIGHT CENTRE  
SELLS OVER  
**1.3M** TICKETS FOR  
AUSTRALIA  
EACH YEAR



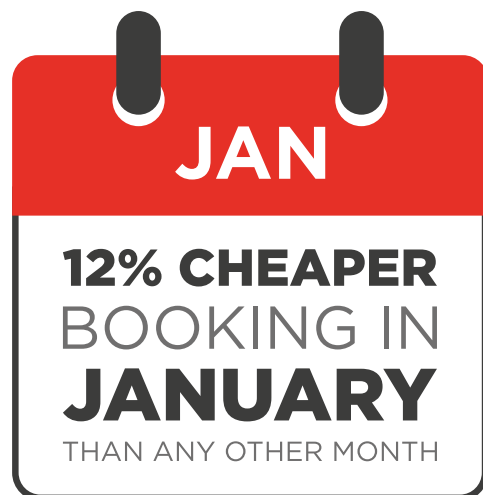
YOU'RE MOST LIKELY TO VISIT  
AUSTRALIA IF YOUR NAME IS:

### BOARDING PASS

Passenger Name  
**DAVID**  
To  
Sydney  
Seat  
55A

### BOARDING PASS

Passenger Name  
**SUSAN**  
To  
Sydney  
Seat  
55B



**JAN**  
**12% CHEAPER**  
**BOOKING IN**  
**JANUARY**  
THAN ANY OTHER MONTH

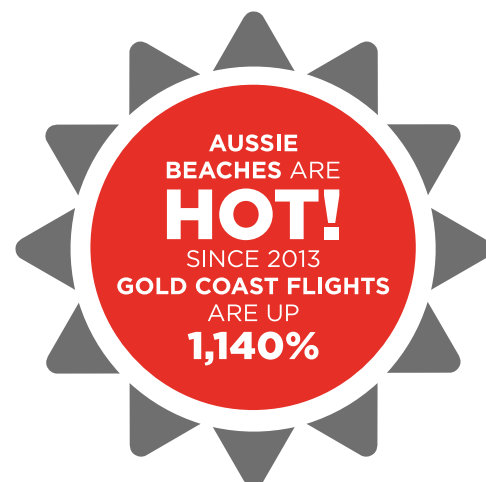
YOU CAN FLY TO



**DESTINATIONS  
DOWN UNDER**



**LOW FARES**  
TO AUSTRALIA  
& **FLASH SALES**  
EXPECTED THROUGHOUT 2017



AUSSIE  
BEACHES ARE  
**HOT!**  
SINCE 2013  
GOLD COAST FLIGHTS  
ARE UP  
**1,140%**





# East Coast Beaches and Reef

BEST  
BUYS

- Cruise on the Great Barrier Reef
- See beautiful Millaa Millaa Falls
- Indulge at Mungalli Creek Dairy
- Explore the magnificent Whitsundays
- Experience island life on Hamilton Island
- Indulge in an Aussie BBQ lunch
- Explore Fraser Island by 4WD
- Relax on the beaches of Noosa
- Check out amazing wildlife at Australia Zoo
- Discover bohemian Byron Bay
- Visit iconic Cape Byron Lighthouse
- Dine on Sydney's harbourfront

**13 day Guided Holiday from**

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# Join us Down Under...

## Welcome to this very special issue of *The Experts*, which is devoted to Australia – a country we love.

It's one of our favourite places for so many reasons: not only is it a spectacular and diverse holiday destination, but it's also where Flight Centre was born – in Sydney, in 1982.

Since then, we have expanded globally and have established ourselves as one of the biggest independent travel companies in the world. We now send more than 1.3m people per year all over Australia – that's more than any other travel company bar none.

Take it from our Experts – there's never been a better time to visit. Australia is becoming more and more accessible as increased seat capacity on bigger jets helps to keep flight prices down. As of March 2018, the journey will get even easier with the introduction of a new, non-stop route that will cut flying time from London to Perth to just 17 hours.

The days when a trip 'Down Under' was considered a once-in-a-lifetime expedition are long gone. On average, our customers now spend just 12 days there and increasingly view Australia as simply another holiday spot they can return to again and again.

All of the highly qualified Travel Experts in our network of more than 80 UK stores are Aussie Specialists – most having spent a great deal of time travelling or living there. Like this magazine, they are brimming with ideas on how to make your holiday special.

Australia is in our DNA. Perhaps it's time to let it get under your skin too. Flight Centre, the World's #1 to Australia, can help you make it happen. Find out more inside.



**Alison Zacher**  
Retail Managing Director



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**MEET THE TEAM** Editorial: Donna Hardie, Andrea Hunt, Ruth Railton, Ian Taylor, Dean Buckley, Laura Hill, Michelle Hird, Lisa Jacobs, David Sharman, Jennifer Bourne  
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*The prices of flights and holidays featured in this publication are correct at time of going to press (April 2017). Please call us to obtain a quote to suit your specific travel dates.*

### FLIGHT CENTRE™

The widest choice of airfares and tailor-made holidays

### FLIGHT CENTRE™ First and Business

The premium airfare and luxury holiday Experts

### FLIGHT CENTRE™ Business Travel

Low-cost, no-contract business travel for small to medium-sized companies



## Voted by you

Alongside our four accolades at the 2016 British Travel Awards, including Best Regional Travel Agency (winner) and Best Holiday Company to Australasia (silver), we are delighted to be the first travel retailer to be Reader Recommended by the Good Housekeeping Institute (GHI), with all reviews saying Flight Centre offers good value for money.



## At your service

On the hunt for Aussie Rules football tickets or turkey and all the trimmings in the middle of summer? Our Travel Butlers are here to make your trip to Australia even more memorable. Designed to enhance your tailor-made Journey or Escape, the complimentary concierge service can help with everything from snapping up hot tickets to events to arranging dinner with a view (as well as a babysitter if you need one). Headed up by Vicky Savage, who hails from Melbourne herself, our team of Travel Butlers will make sure you're in safe hands.

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**What makes us The Experts?** Our staff have lived and travelled all over the world, and each one of them is passionate about travel and adventure. We build on their knowledge with extensive training to ensure they have the tools to deliver first-class service and an outstanding travel experience.







## CONTRIBUTORS

Meet your travel guides – writers and journalists we've hand picked for their wealth of travel expertise



### THREE EPIC JOURNEYS

Editorial consultant and travel writer Lauren Jarvis takes us on three two-week journeys in Australia: "You'll leave with memories to last a lifetime – and plans to return." **p10**



## EXPERIENCE QUEENSLAND

Award-winning editor and travel junkie Ellie Fazan dives into all that Queensland has to offer: "The air is thick with adventure." **p18**



## SCENIC VICTORIA

Travel journalist Rupert Mellor recommends venturing to Victoria for its compelling capital Melbourne and scenic road trips: "You'll be richly rewarded." **p30**



# EXPERT VIEW

Travel news, hotels, food, top tips and tech:  
ideas from those in the know

## UP IN THE AIR PHOTOGRAPHY

**In association with Tourism Australia, SkyPixel has launched its first national aerial photography competition – Australia From Above – to capture and showcase the country's raw, natural beauty from a different perspective.**

With its dramatic coastlines, vast, arid Outback and lush rainforests, Australia is a photographer's delight. Now, the competition is calling pros and amateurs alike to get up high, using whatever aerial platform they can get their hands on, and snap the country's stunning landscape, wildlife and culture from above. Get inspiration for your travels and photos by checking the glorious eye-in-the-sky entries at [skypixel.com/events/australia](http://skypixel.com/events/australia). Winners announced on 19th May.



Sydney has some of the best beaches for ocean swimming, and each year thousands of people take the plunge

Photography: Getty Images, Phaidon/Colin Page





Dan Hunter leads a team of chefs and gardeners committed to sustainable and organic farming and cooking



## Brae book: fresh from the farm

Said to be the pioneer of modern Australian food, multi-award-winning chef Dan Hunter has released his debut book *Brae*, packed full of recipes and stories from his eponymous restaurant. Deep in the countryside, 80 miles from Melbourne, rustic farmhouse restaurant Brae has been attracting diners from all over the world since 2013, thanks to its fine dining approach to local cuisine. Now readers can enjoy a taste of this through the hardback book as Hunter explores the impact of place on his cooking. Brought to life through exquisite photography, it's a feast for the eyes.



## ONCE UPON A TIME IN TASMANIA...

Stay at Hobart's storytelling hotel, MACq 01, and open the door to a tale of Tasmania. Set to open in June, the hotel has 114 rooms, each telling the unique story of a real character who influenced the island's rich culture. From heroes and villains to explorers and inventors, every person's spirit is celebrated through the interior design and display of artefacts. The story doesn't end there though. The hotel is situated on Hobart's Old Wharf – one of the earliest sites of European settlement in Tasmania. Enlist the help of the hotel's Master Storyteller to uncover the dark secrets and triumphant tales of Sullivans Cove and Salamanca Place.



## Top travel tech

We've rounded up some clever on-the-go gadgets to make your journey a breeze



### BACK UP ON THE GO

Never miss out on that lust-worthy landscape. Plug the Leef iBridge into your iPhone and back up your photos so you can make room for more. **Leef iBridge 3 32GB mobile memory drive, £59.99**



### FIND IT FAST

Ever lost your keys in the sand? Attach this smart tracker to your keys, wallet or suitcase and you'll be able to track their whereabouts from your phone. **Tile Mate Bluetooth tracker, £23**



### AND BREATHE

The Fitbit Charge 2 heart rate and fitness tracker has short, guided breathing sessions that you can follow from your wrist. Perfect for calming the nerves of anxious flyers. **Fitbit Charge 2, £139.99**

## FLIGHT CENTRE™



## Aussie know-how

Leanne Broutta is our new Australia Destination Owner. Her job is all about keeping up with what's going on Down Under to ensure you get the best possible experience while you're away.

Having been to Australia 13 times (and counting), Leanne explains why it definitely shouldn't be a once-in-a-lifetime trip: "Each time you go back, it's like exploring a new country. You can see loads in two weeks and it's a year-round destination."

She doesn't let a fear of flying hold her back either: "My friend reminded me that it's not often we get to sit back and relax for 24 hours and just watch great films."

As for creepy crawlies? "I've only ever seen one spider in Australia!"

THREE EPIC JOURNEYS

Since opening in 1973, the iconic Sydney Opera House has become Australia's top tourist destination

# HIT THE HIGHLIGHTS

Can you really see enough of Australia in a fortnight? Yes you can. *Lauren Jarvis* takes us on three two-week Journeys covering the wonders Down Under. First up, Sydney, Rock & Reef...

1





**T**hanks to excellent domestic flight connections, you can easily tick three of the country's biggest attractions off your Australian wish list in two weeks flat. Transporting you from city to rock and then reef, this Journey will leave you with memories that last a lifetime – and plans to return for another adventure Down Under...

## Set your sights on Sydney

Discover a city that ranks alongside the best when it comes to breathtaking locations: cruise past the world-famous Sydney Opera House, or climb to the top of the vertiginous Harbour Bridge, and you'll soon understand why. There's plenty more to explore too. Catch the ferry to laid-back Manly to rack up some beach and bar time, or hit the buzzy area of Five Ways in Paddington for its independent shops, inviting eateries and charming mix of classical and Victorian terrace buildings. Then there's the legendary Bondi Beach, the place to be for people-watching or catching an Aussie wave. Foodies will find award-winning fare across town, from classic to contemporary, while the vineyards of nearby Hunter Valley are perfect for a tipsy day trip.

## Go walkabout at Uluru

Your next stop is Australia's Northern Territory, a remote land of ancient rock formations, unique wildlife and a raw, wild beauty. This is the country's Red Centre – though in fact the desert colour palette shifts from orange to ochre, purple to salmon pink. Join a local indigenous guide on a personal walkabout of the sacred Aboriginal site of Uluru, listening to the Dreamtime creation stories – or Tjukurpa – and looking out for kangaroos, perentie lizards and thorny devils as you go. Or trek around its base, allowing the tranquil pools, swaying desert oaks, cave shelters and rock art to soothe the soul. At sunset, ride a camel across the sand to a Sounds of Silence dinner in the desert, with wonderful food, Aboriginal dancing and, as the Rock falls under a cloak of darkness, a dazzling display of stars. This is one of Earth's very special places, and you'll never want to leave.

## Marvel at the reef

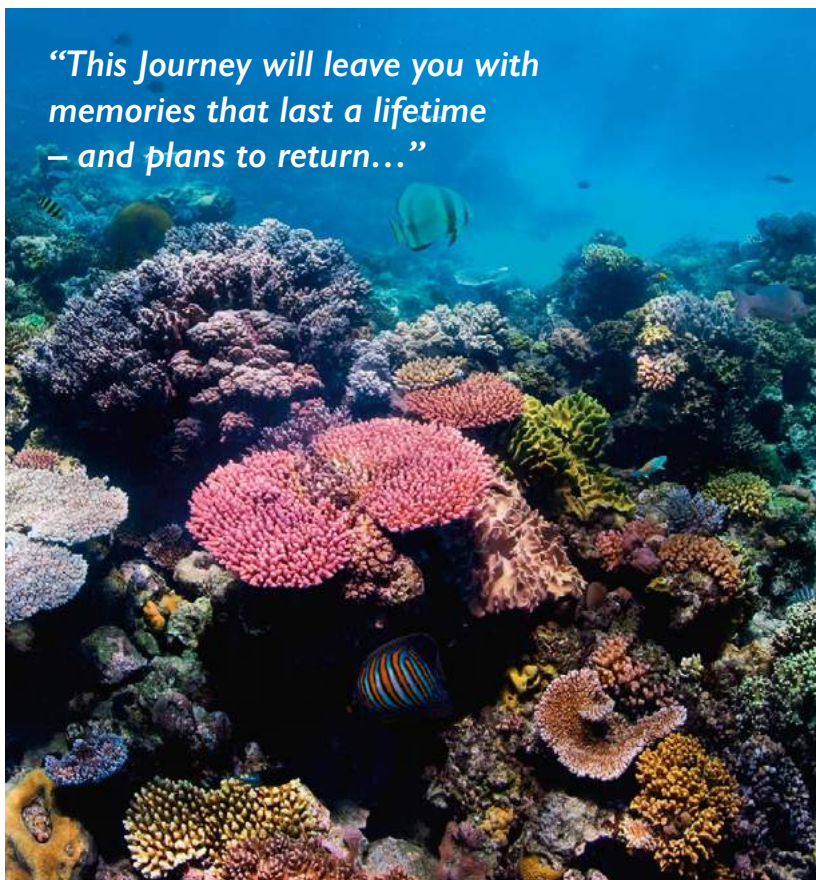
Luckily the last stop on your Journey is equally enchanting, so you're guaranteed to end your antipodean trip on a high. Queensland's Great Barrier Reef is the planet's largest coral reef system, and home to turtles, rays and myriad fish, plus 30 species of whales, dolphins and porpoises. A UNESCO World Heritage site, the reef's diving and snorkelling spots are some of the best. After flying to Cairns, you'll head to the laid-back, tropical town of Port Douglas, where you'll catch a boat to the Outer Reef and take the plunge. Not sure about dipping your toe in? Kick back on one of Queensland's famously beautiful white-sand beaches, or take a glass-bottom boat tour to see under the waves with your head above water.

Following your incredible reef experience, head to Daintree to immerse yourself in the scenic gorges, remarkable waterfalls and wildlife of the oldest surviving tropical rainforest on Earth and another UNESCO-listed gem. Now that's a trip to remember. →

Top: The monumental Uluru rises to 348m amid the desert landscape  
Bottom: Explore the incredible ecosystem of the Great Barrier Reef



*"This Journey will leave you with memories that last a lifetime – and plans to return..."*







THREE EPIC JOURNEYS

# THE BEAUTIFUL SOUTH

Lap up Adelaide's laid-back city vibes, food and wine, before wandering into wilderness and unwinding at the beach

While smaller than most of the country's other state capitals, you'll soon feel at home in the welcoming little city of Adelaide. And with many of South Australia's best attractions within easy reach, this self-drive Journey will give you plenty of time to explore – and indulge.

## Discover Adelaide

Whet your appetite with Rundle Street. Here, you can grab a coffee with the locals at Cibo, before strolling around the tranquil Botanic Gardens and treating yourself to dinner at Orana. Its imaginative tasting menu is packed with delicious ingredients from Adelaide's hills, forests and shores. Buzzy Central Market is a great place to check out more foodie delights, before getting a culture fix at the South Australian Museum, with its fascinating natural history exhibits, or the Aboriginal collection at the Art Gallery of South Australia.





From far left: Tour the Barossa Valley vineyards, take a flight over Wilpena Pound and go wild on Kangaroo Island



*“For unique wildlife encounters, hop aboard a ferry to Kangaroo Island, a haven for native species”*

## Sip and sup

The wine around Adelaide is some of the best in the world. You'll find two beautiful, highly respected producing regions within 90 minutes of the city. McLaren Vale is 20 minutes away, and the acclaimed Barossa Valley, known for its Shiraz, is also nearby. Slightly further afield is Clare Valley, with its boutique wineries and award-winning Rieslings and Cabernet Sauvignons. With this level of temptation on offer, a tour is a must. Sample the wines, enjoying leisurely lunches in the excellent vineyard restaurants, and slowing to rural South Australia's relaxed rhythm. You won't regret it.

## Walk on the wild side

The rolling hills and rugged ranges of South Australia provide the perfect backdrop for adventure. Head out on the highway to the Ikara-Flinders Ranges National Park where picturesque hiking trails await, before taking a short scenic flight to appreciate an overhead view of the park and stunning natural mountain amphitheatre of Wilpena Pound.

For unique wildlife encounters, drive through the photogenic Fleurieu Peninsula, then hop aboard a ferry to Kangaroo Island, one of the country's havens for native species. Furred, finned and feathered: all of Australia's creatures seem to be here, from wallabies to koalas, echidnas to kangaroos, while the ocean abounds with whales, seals and penguins, too.

## Break for the coast

Before you head back to the UK, dedicate some time to the beach – the coastline around Adelaide boasts some of Australia's finest. There's a pristine stretch of golden sand for everyone, and plenty of sunshine to match. It's a recipe for relaxation.

The coastal resort of Glenelg, a stone's throw from the city, is a favourite, offering much more than sun and sea with museums, galleries and a wooden pier. Enjoy these, then end the day swimming with wild bottlenose dolphins. Wish you were here? →



THREE EPIC JOURNEYS

# WHEEL THROUGH THE WEST

Cosmopolitan Perth has plenty to offer, not least its easy-going vibe and direct routes straight from the city. And nothing beats the freedom and excitement of exploring by campervan

3

Stretching over 9,000 miles around the entire circumference of Australia, Highway 1 is the world's longest national road and joins all mainland state capitals



Top: Alfresco dining at sunset in Fremantle. Bottom: Whale sharks congregate along the Ningaloo Reef from April to July



*“The turquoise ocean laps against the dazzling beach, while wild dolphins and whale sharks cruise the coast...”*

Words Lauren Jarvis Photography Alamy, Tim Dolen/ImageBrief.com

Perth is one of the most remote cities in the world. But it's never been easier to travel there, with the first direct link between London and Perth due to take off in March 2018. The city is also the gateway to Western Australia, the largest state in the country and one of its most spectacular. To truly appreciate its diversity, a campervan is the most flexible way to go. Relish the excitement of the open road on a Journey that begins and ends in Perth – where you travel in between is up to you. But be warned: choosing won't be easy.

### Time to play in Perth

This west-coast city is the life and soul of the party, with a packed calendar of events, festivals and concerts taking place almost every day of the week in its parks, public spaces and bars. Start with an afternoon at the beach, or a cruise along the city's scenic Swan River to the historical port of Fremantle: an artsy hub of shops, bars and cafés (known as the Cappuccino Strip), plus eclectic weekend markets and uber-cool microbreweries.

### Take the road north...

Now to decide. Go north and you'll discover the Pinnacles Desert, where a sandy trail leads through a moonscape of limestone spires, sculpted by weather over millions of years. Stay for sunset and prepare for an awe-inspiring sight. Follow the coast, passing white-sand beaches and stopping to snorkel at Jurien Bay, or watch the pros in Australia's windsurfing capital, Geraldton. Beyond lies the turquoise Indian Ocean, which laps against the dazzling white Shell Beach, while wild dolphins swim up close at Monkey Mia and whale sharks cruise the reef of the World Heritage-listed Ningaloo Coast. By Coral Bay, you'll have travelled more than 700 miles, but have memories that will go on forever.

### ...or swing to the south

The opposite point of the compass provides no end of adventure, too. Just three hours' drive from Perth, Margaret River is a wine-lover's dream destination, offering tastings and dining on elegant estates, while untamed beaches tempt surfers to tackle the waves and hikers stamp the stunning Cape to Cape Track.

Heading south-east, ancient karri trees tower in old-growth forests, watching silently as you explore their canopy on the Valley of the Giants Tree Top Walk. And further still lies historic Albany, Western Australia's oldest permanently settled town. A former base for whaling ships, it's now a centre for whale watching. You're just a five-hour drive from Perth, yet it feels like you've travelled to another world... and that's the real beauty of a Journey. ■

Now make it happen →

THERE'S NOTHING  
LIKE AUSTRALIA



## EPIC AUSTRALIA JOURNEYS

Experience the best of Australia by booking one of our tailor-made Journeys – created by our knowledgeable in-house Experts

### Sydney, Rock & Reef

See Australia's most iconic sights, taking in cosmopolitan Sydney, the stark desert surrounds of the Red Centre and the kaleidoscopic wonders of the Great Barrier Reef. Includes: all flights, 12 nights in 4.5-5★ hotels, Bondi Beach and Sydney sights tour, Sounds of Silence dinner at Uluru, Quicksilver Outer Great Barrier Reef day tour, all airport transfers.

**16 days from £2,699pp; Ref. 2806730**

FEATURED



FEATURED



### South Australia in Depth

Lovers of food, wine and wildlife can indulge their passions on this Journey, visiting gourmet Adelaide, the vineyards of the Barossa and Clare Valleys, and the wilds of Kangaroo Island. Includes: international flights, 10 nights in 4-4.5★ hotels, 8 days' car hire, Insider's Adelaide Market tour, Best of Barossa tour, Wilpena Pound scenic flight, Kangaroo Island car ferry, airport transfers.

**14 days from £2,379pp; Ref. 3525196**

### Campervanning near Perth

Discover the delights of Western Australia by campervan. Starting in lively Perth, soak up the city's sights before exploring its islands and beaches or heading further afield to the vineyards, beaches, forests and parks of Australia's south west. This Journey includes: international flights, 8 days' campervan hire, two-berth vehicle with toilet and shower, Swan River scenic cruise.

**10 days from £1,099pp; Ref. 4385804**

FEATURED



### Coral Coast

Watch nature take on a new dimension in Western Australia, where sandy coastlines, desert landscapes, gorges and rainforest combine with some of the most fascinating natural encounters on the planet. Includes: international flights, 15 nights in 4-5★ hotels and hand-picked local gems, 13 days' car hire, Discover Rottnest Island tour, Whale Shark Discovery tour, airport transfers.

**19 days from £2,239pp; Ref. 3119596**

## FLIGHT CENTRE RECOMMENDS



### New Qantas non-stop flight to Perth

Fly the shortest and fastest route from London to Perth – just 17 hours – with Qantas from March 2018. Travelling on the Boeing 787-9 Dreamliner, passengers will enjoy improved comfort on Qantas' long-haul Kangaroo Route. Call our Experts for more details.

### Internal flight package with Qantas Walkabout Pass

DIY travellers can create their own customised Australian experience with a Qantas Walkabout Pass. With more than 30 destinations to choose from, take advantage of the vast Qantas domestic network to discover more of Australia's stunning beauty and unique experiences. When you book domestic flights alongside your international flights, you could save money too.

#### ECONOMY

PRICE PER PERSON	WAS	NOW FROM
<b>Sydney</b>	£983	£699
<b>Perth</b>	£965	£649

#### PREMIUM ECONOMY

<b>Sydney</b>	£2378	£2065
<b>Adelaide</b>	£2306	£1995

#### BUSINESS CLASS

<b>Perth</b>	£4169	£3046
<b>Adelaide</b>	£4173	£3157

Prices are for specific travel dates and are based on return fares per person and subject to availability. Prices are correct as of 30th March 2017 and are subject to change at any time.



THERE'S NOTHING  
LIKE AUSTRALIA







# Qantas Dreamliner. Fly London to Australia non-stop from March 2018.

Ask your Flight Centre consultant for more information.

\*Subject to regulatory approval. Schedule subject to change. ABN 16 009 661 901







Heaven on Earth –  
Tongue Point on  
Whitsunday Island



EXPERIENCE TO THE MAX

# DIVE IN

The roads and the reef; the Outback and the ocean;  
posh nosh and bushtucker fare scoffed under the stars...  
There's so much to enjoy in Queensland, says *Ellie Fazan*,  
we dare you not to get hooked



M

y best-ever month was spent exploring Queensland with a childhood friend. Swimming in the dazzling blue water off the coast; barbecuing seafood so fresh it jumped onto our plates; camping under

starlight. Then losing ourselves in a wet, green world far removed from the Australia you might imagine, and having one or two adventures along the way...

### Castaway to coast and sea

Queensland's sparkling seas are impossible to resist and its pristine beaches dot the coast in abundance, so you never have to go very far to find yourself in idyllic isolation. We camped on the sandy fringes of Noosa, where crystal-clear waters lap at the subtropical rainforest, a world apart from the fashionable resorts of the Sunshine Coast just a short drive away. And we spent several days exploring the giant dunes, freshwater lakes and shimmering creeks of sand- and sea-sculpted Fraser Island. Called K'gari – meaning paradise – by the Indigenous Butchulla people, it's around 76 miles long by 14 miles wide, and the world's largest sand island.

At Bundaberg we flew the 60 miles to Lady Elliot Island in a tiny tippy plane with just a handful of other passengers, taking in the endlessly blue-hued vistas as we went. It's so remote that this is the only access, and the aircraft bumps along a grass runway the island's length. While most people use buzzy Cairns as their stepping-off point to see the Great Barrier Reef – one of the seven wonders of the natural world and an unmissable destination – Lady Elliot Island is its southernmost coral cay, and an altogether more chilled way to experience its majesty.

According to David Attenborough, the reef is the world's "most exciting natural history experience", and the good news is you don't have to head into the deep in a custom-made submersible, as he did, to take in this vibrant rainbow of life. You don't even have to scuba dive, unless you want to. The waters surrounding Lady Elliot Island are crystalline year-round, with an average visibility of more than 20m, so flippers and mask will do the trick. The reef is a sanctuary for over 1,200 species of spectacular marine life, and we saw manta rays, turtles and a reef shark, alongside what seemed to be the entire cast of *Finding Nemo* dancing in and out of the coral reef; a glittering world of neon pinks, electric blues and dazzling coral colours.



Immerse yourself in nature in the crystal-clear, deep blues of Lady Elliot Island



If, after exploring underwater delights, you fancy riding the waves, set your sights on the Gold Coast. Famed for its long, sandy beaches, it's a vibrant sporting destination and home to legendary Surfers Paradise. On the boardwalk you'll see a countdown clock to the Commonwealth Games (which come to the Gold Coast in 2018), embedded in a surfboard, of course.

### Get back to nature

Wherever you wander in Queensland, you're never far from wildlife. Rainbow lorikeets perching on our balcony, kangaroos bouncing down the road, a koala sleeping in the trees. Close-up encounters with creatures like these were everyday, but magical, experiences. On the coast, crabs scuttled across the deserted beaches into their holes. A pod of dolphins brushed past us while we were sea kayaking. During an evening walk along Rainbow Beach, a magnificent whale breached the surface of the water. And that was just the beginning...

In the northeastern corner of Queensland, just two and a half hours from dusty Cairns, is a greener, wilder, wetter Australia than anything you'd ever imagine. Having stood for 135 million years, the tropical Daintree Rainforest

is the oldest surviving rainforest in the world – and unlike anywhere else on the planet. Fringed by wild, blonde beaches, this dense, lush, biodiverse region is rich with unique swamp and mangrove forests, glistening freshwater streams and waterfalls, eucalyptus woodlands and wetland rainforest that together host a chattering of native birds and beasts. Look carefully and you'll spot the ostrich-like blue-necked southern cassowary scrabbling in the undergrowth or see the tiny double-eyed fig parrot. There are even kangaroos living in trees here! In fact, it's the most biodiverse tropical rainforest anywhere in the world, home to 65% of Australia's fern families, and with 700 of the country's plant species endemic to the region.

Venture into the depths of the dripping jungle and across the Daintree River, where the boisterously green rainforest unfurls onto an immaculate white beach, and you'll find an eco-tourist hub. From the cassowary crossings to the rainforest retreats (ranging from budget to ultra-luxe), it's clear that this enchanting land and the creatures that live on it are treated with the greatest respect.

The Daintree Wilderness Lodge, where we stayed, isn't the only accommodation that promises 'minimal impact on the pristine environment'. At Daintree, the goal is to →

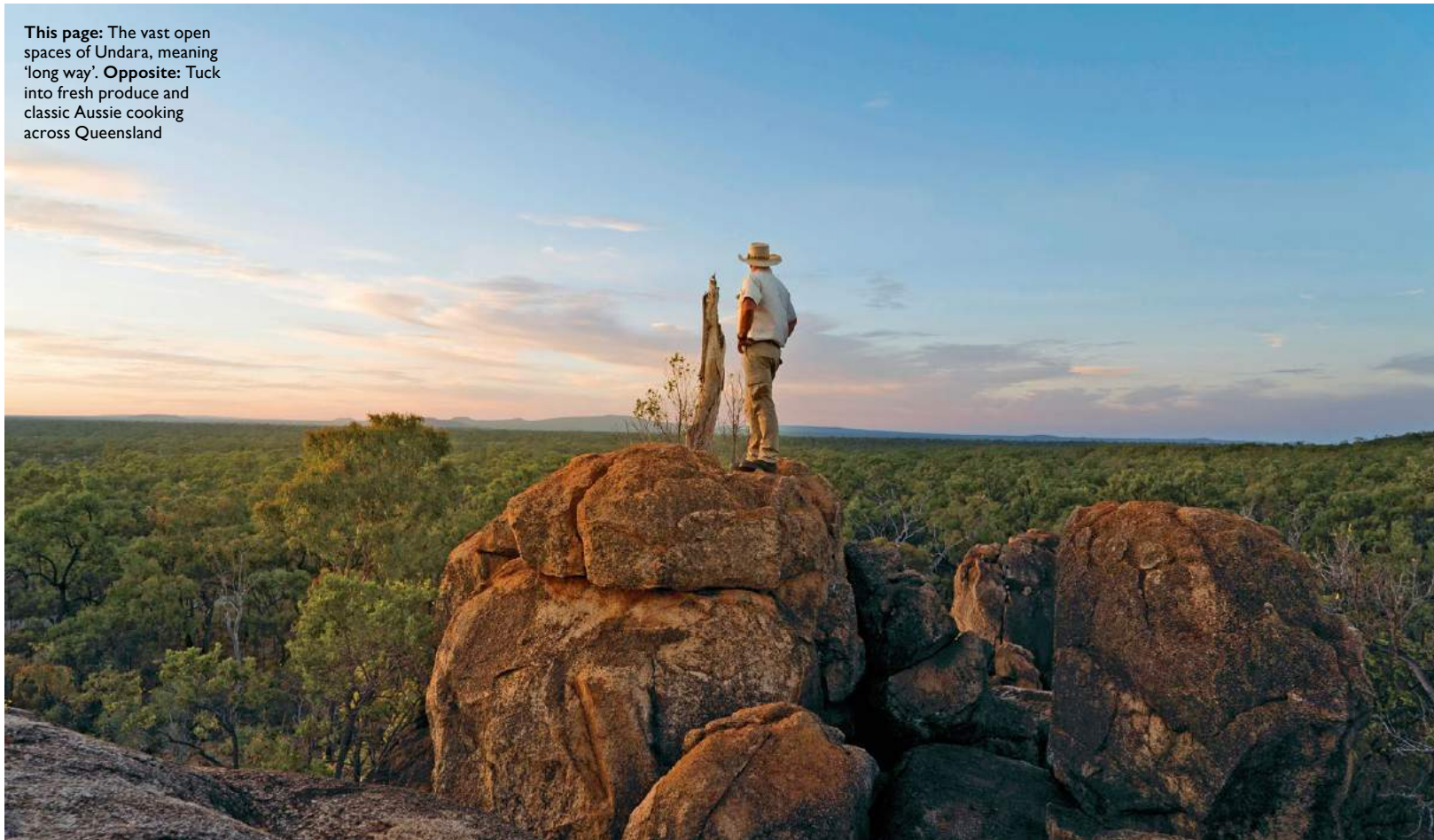
Photography Getty Images, Rob Gregory/ImageBrief.com



Delve into the Daintree Rainforest and find tree kangaroos, blue-necked southern cassowaries and tropical landscapes



**This page:** The vast open spaces of Undara, meaning 'long way'. **Opposite:** Tuck into fresh produce and classic Aussie cooking across Queensland



teach guests about the value of conservation. Immerse yourself in jungle life on a walkabout with an Indigenous guide from the Kuku Yalanji people – whose oral culture dates back 50,000 years – delving into unreachable parts of the rainforest, learning their narrative as you go. Or see the rainforest by jungle surfing on a zip-line 20m above the ground, flying over waves of green on green on green. Either way, experiencing the natural world like this is life-changing.

### Discover new thrills

The air is thick with adventure in Queensland. It keeps you awake at night with its crackling, like unspent electricity. Whether you opt for exploring geologically fascinating landscapes or prefer sifting through the earth in search of ancient treasures, you'll be spoilt for choice.

In the north, in Undara Volcanic National Park, beneath basalt soils and long grasses, lie the lava tubes – one of the longest and most important networks of tubular lava caves in the world, created 190,000 years ago when a volcano erupted. As the magma flowed down a dry riverbed, the top layer cooled and formed a crust, while the molten lava below drained outwards, leaving behind a series of hollow tunnels – perfect for scoping out as part of a guided tour.

Further south along the Capricorn Highway heading towards Rockhampton, dusty historic towns, with names like Emerald and Blackwater, are indicative of the gems and

coal that rushed miners to this area in the 19th century. But here too, the landscape is far more ancient. Looking out at the rolling red, punctuated by standing rock formations at the Isla Gorge National Park, you feel that nothing much has changed since dinosaurs roamed the land 95 million years ago. Indeed, at Lark Quarry the footprints of stampeding animals are scorched into the ground. A few hours' drive away in Winton, farmer David Elliott found a bone that led to the discovery of a new long-necked dinosaur species. It was fully unearthed last year and christened *Savannasaurus elliottorum* – you can even join a dig for a day. The splendid underground chambers and cathedrals of the Capricorn Caves, which formed from the coral seabed 390 million years ago, are another reminder of the ancient nature of this world. Take a multi-sensory tour, or climb and abseil through them on yet another adventure...

### Stay for lunch, and then some

The food scene in Queensland is about so much more than Australia's well-known penchant for brunch. Whether you're in a quirky Outback town, vibrant coastal community or one of the state's refreshingly laid-back cities, there's a coming together of great ingredients, warm hospitality from local people and decades of immigration.

Brisbane has recently reinvented itself as a foodie destination where urbanites will revel in a multitude

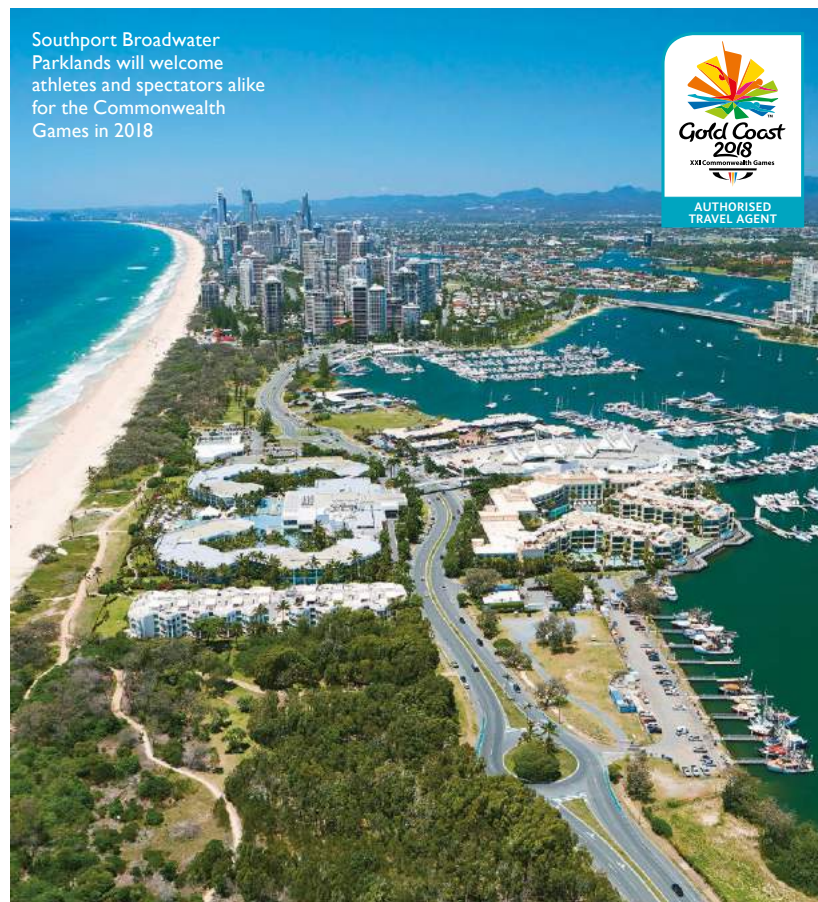




of excellent cafés, bars, galleries and fabulous riverside restaurants. Much of the food here has a decidedly Asian twist. The winners of reality TV show *The Hotplate*, Emi Kamada and Marie Yokoyama, have opened Bird's Nest, arguably the city's best Japanese restaurant. In George Street, modern Australian eatery Public serves fine cuisine in a relaxed but cool warehouse-style restaurant, high above the city's Central Business District. While you're in the area, treat yourself to a sundowner at the Stock Exchange Hotel, a slick rooftop cocktail bar with casual beer garden vibes.

But in the Sunshine State, it's the simple things that are done best. We ate melt-in-the-mouth beef stew under the stars on a ranch in the north; were invited by friendly locals to join them at an Aussie beach barbecue; devoured freshly speared crab cooked in a Thai coconut curry sauce, prepared by our host in the Daintree; bought steaks and prawns and grilled them ourselves roadside; scoffed fish and chips straight from their wrappers; filled our van with fresh fruit and veg from roadside farmers' markets. And everything was washed down with amber-coloured Bulimba Gold Top Pale Ale, cool droplets of condensation glistening on every bottle. Cheers, Queensland. ■

**Now make it happen →**



Southport Broadwater Parklands will welcome athletes and spectators alike for the Commonwealth Games in 2018



AUTHORISED TRAVEL AGENT

## As if you need another reason to visit...

An unmissable experience for any trip to Queensland next year, the **2018 Commonwealth Games** kick off on **4th April**, when some of the most acclaimed athletes and para-athletes in the world – plus their supporters – will be heading to the Gold Coast for 11 days of unforgettable sporting competition.

It will be the fifth time that the Games have been held in Australia, but the first time that they've been hosted in a regional city, and the countdown is on. With more than 6,500 participants from 70 nations battling it out in 18 sports and seven para-sports, this is your chance to get in on the live action.

Athletics, racing, walking and cycling will take place along the white sands of the Currumbin beachfront, while the marathon, road walks and triathlon will weave their way around the Southport

Broadwater Parklands. So whatever sport gets your adrenaline racing, you won't be far from the beach. Even if you haven't got tickets, you can cheer on your sporting idols from the many live zones around the area. Expect giant screens, entertainment and exciting events.

**Plan ahead...** The Gold Coast 2018 Commonwealth Games take place 4th-15th April next year. The sporting schedule was released on 4th April 2017, with the tickets request phase open on 24th April at [gc2018.com/tickets](http://gc2018.com/tickets). To book your Gold Coast trip call our Experts on **0800 258 5773**

**Queensland**  
AUSTRALIA



## Add an experience



### Coral Expeditions cruise

Departing from Cairns, this small ship cruise will see you travel around Tropical North Queensland, taking in Cooktown, Lizard Island and the Great Barrier Reef before returning to Cairns. Highlights of the cruise include a glass-bottom boat tour of the Great Barrier Reef with a marine biologist, guided walking tours to 'Cook's Look' in Cooktown, and guided snorkelling or scuba diving excursions.

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## Queensland



*"There's something for everyone, whatever your age, from areas of outstanding natural beauty to cosmopolitan cities"*

Joshua Purcell has worked at Flight Centre for three years and counts Queensland as his favourite destination in Australia for its diversity of experiences, incredible seafood and year-round warm climate.



The main international airports are Brisbane and Cairns.



If you're travelling as a group or family, hire an SUV so you can cover the miles in comfort and break up your journey when and where you want. For independent travellers, tour companies such as AAT Kings and Top Deck are great options to take the load off driving and to meet people while you're at it.



Serviced apartments, such as the Mantra chain, make a brilliant choice for accommodation if you're travelling as a family or couple. They're like hotels with extra amenities.



Don't miss a visit to Heron Island. To be able to walk down to the beach from your room, put on your flippers and snorkel, then go swimming with rays and turtles is incredible. Plus, there's no phone signal, so you really have no choice but to leave your worries behind and get back to nature.



A tour of the recently renovated Bundaberg Rum Distillery is both really good fun and enlightening. It guides you through the whole process from raw sugar cane to the different types of casks – such as sherry and bourbon – used for ageing.

There's even the chance to blend your own rum.



If you visit during the turtle nesting season (from November to January) or the hatching season (from January to March), you can see sea turtles on a guided night-time experience with a marine biologist. I was lucky enough to see quite a few on Mon Repos beach near

Bundaberg and on Heron Island. You can get quite close to them, as long as you're mindful of the fact they're very sensitive to light and movement, so you don't disturb them. It's a magical experience.



Stay safe in the sun. Remember to use lots of suncream, and wear a good pair of sunglasses.



Fraser Island is a real highlight. You can climb to the top of Indian Head from July to November and watch whales breach just offshore as they migrate along the coast...



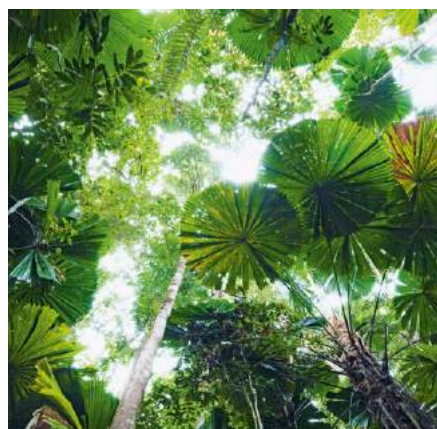


## QUEENSLAND JOURNEYS

Book a tailor-made Journey created by our in-house Experts to experience Queensland's dazzling destinations in the best possible way

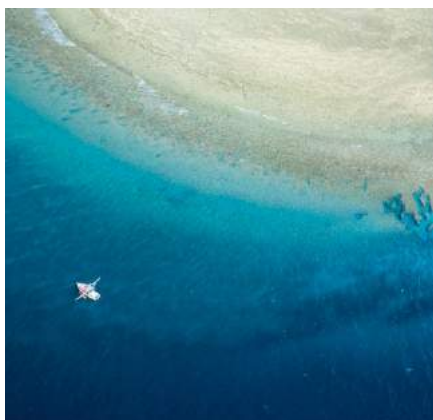
### Queensland by Campervan

Set off on an exhilarating road trip up Queensland's glorious east coast, exploring wide sandy beaches, vibrant surfing towns and stunning natural wonders along the way. What are you waiting for? Hit the road and discover the delights of coastal Queensland. Includes: international flights, 1 night in a 4★ hotel, 17 days' campervan hire, two-berth vehicle with toilet and shower, arrival airport transfer, Fraser Island day tour, Whitehaven Beach & Hamilton Island, hot-air ballooning (Cairns or Port Douglas). **21 days from £2,199pp; Ref. 3861457**



### Tropical North Queensland

Australia's tropical north is strewn with breathtaking landscapes, world-famous natural wonders and idyllic beaches. Explore the ancient rainforest, discover the kaleidoscopic underwater world of the Great Barrier Reef and step back in time at the spectacular Atherton Tablelands. Includes: all international flights, 9 nights in 4-5★ hotels and hand-picked local gems, 9 days' car hire, Kuranda Scenic Railway & Skyrail tour, Quicksilver Outer Great Barrier Reef day tour, all airport transfers. **13 days from £2,195pp; Ref. 3436494**



### Great Barrier Reef Island Stays

Discover the Whitsundays and the Great Barrier Reef on this sun-kissed Journey taking in Queensland's finest natural wonders. You'll stay on four of the best islands, swim in lakes, enjoy perfect beaches, and snorkel or dive to discover magical worlds. Includes: all flights, 15 nights in 4-4.5★ hotels and hand-picked local gems, authentic local experiences, Fraser Island tour, Whitehaven Beach and Daydream Island cruise, snorkelling and kayaking Fitzroy Island, all airport transfers. (Redcliffe to Brisbane transfer not included.) **19 days from £3,265pp; Ref. 3954374**



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ALL ABOARD THE GHAN

# JOURNEY OF THE HEART

The Ghan train voyage cuts through Australia's Red Centre, and offers the chance to forge friendships with passengers and crew along the way, writes *Melissa Spears*



**S**pectacular scenery, comfort and camaraderie are among the many reasons The Ghan train expedition has stood the test of time. Originally dubbed The Afghan Express, The Ghan was named after the pioneering cameleers – once thought to be from Afghanistan, but in fact from Pakistan – who blazed a trail into the Red Centre more than 150 years ago. Following their path, the first Ghan train blew its whistle in 1929 after leaving Adelaide and arrived two days later in Alice Springs. Today, its route stretches across the entire country, all 1,851 miles between Darwin and the South Australian capital. A journey onboard provides a luxurious setting to take in the wonders through the window, as well as stop-off opportunities to explore.

Such is the allure of The Ghan that a friend and I reworked our itinerary to fit in the 969-mile leg southbound from Alice Springs to Adelaide. When we board at Alice Springs, looking forward to two days and one night's stay on this world-renowned train, most of the passengers are on first name terms, having already travelled together from Darwin. But instantly they

***“Some people just want to get to a destination. But for us, on The Ghan, it's all about the journey”***

put us at our ease, and the warm welcome we receive from them and the crew is just a taste of the hospitality to come.

In the cosy Outback Explorer Lounge, we enjoy a pre-dinner drink and listen to guests recounting their highlights so far, such as their first off train excursion on this all-inclusive trip on The Ghan – a cruise through the Katherine Gorge and a walk to see Aboriginal rock art. Later at dinner, Chef Damien Gow-Smith shares his passion for creating a journey of Australian flavours to match the scenery. “We’ve put a lot of thought into the menu, sourcing food locally to give guests an idea of where we are in Australia,” he says. “Travelling from Katherine to Darwin, we serve crocodile. And the buffalo curry, also sourced from the Northern Territory, is a real favourite.”

Making a late-night stop at Manguri, near the opal mining town of Coober Pedy, we

chat under the stars and sip port around a campfire. Sam Isaacson, Manager of the Queen Adelaide Restaurant car, tells us why The Ghan is so special. “Some people just want to get to a destination, but for us, it's all about the journey. We like to show people our country, the vastness of it. Providing first-class service and a relaxed atmosphere is also important. We thrive on looking after people. For many of us crew, it's not just a job, it's a life.”

And once you've chatted, wine and dined to your heart's content, you can return to your spacious en-suite cabin, to find it's been transformed from day use into comfortable beds – inviting you to dream about all you've seen and leaving you refreshed for the next day's adventure. ■

**Book it now...** Travel in style on The Ghan as part of our Northern Territory in Depth Journey, which also takes in Uluru, Kings Canyon and Kakadu. **16 days from £3,399pp; Ref. 3525198**

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## GOURMET GUIDE

# Top nosh

Keeping things simple – and local – is always on the menu at Bistrotte CBD

“You know how Chanel used to say you should get dressed up and then take one item off?” asks Jane Storde. “I think that’s a good way to describe how Jeremy and I deal with food. There’s an understated elegance to it.”

“Never ever more than three or four items on the plate,” adds Jeremy, who hails from the English West Country and opened Bistrotte CBD – “a really nice blend of bistro and restaurant” – in Sydney in 2005, together with wife Jane, an Australian-born pastry chef.

“Sydney is an exciting city, and a wonderful place to be a restaurateur,” he says. “We put an emphasis on local ingredients.”

“There is so much produce available, we source everything as locally as possible,” confirms Jane, her signature honey tart typical of this approach. Made with local organic honey, it’s served with homemade peanut butter ice cream. It’s simple yet sublime.

Dishes like this have seen Bistrotte CBD recognised in *The Sydney Morning Herald’s* Good Food Guide Awards six times in a row. It’s an achievement that’s also testament to Jeremy’s extensive experience – he started out washing dishes in a hotel kitchen at the tender age of 14.

“I trained under some really strong cooks like Michel Roux at The Waterside Inn in Bray, Berkshire. Very French, lots of technique – but lots of flavour in the food. So I approach an ingredient with that in mind.”

Not to mention hard graft and unbridled passion. “I have a strong work ethic,” says Jeremy. “I’m in the kitchen cooking most days. I could do that every day and not get bored.”

And with the likes of wagyu beef, raw wild kingfish and duck leg confit on the Bistrotte CBD menu, it’s unlikely that diners will ever tire of tucking into his creations, either. ■

**Book it now...** Stop off at Bistrotte CBD on our Beyond Sydney Journey covering the city, Jervis Bay, the Blue Mountains, Hunter Valley and Port Stephens.

16 nights from £2,245pp; Ref. 3525194

 **Journeys**  
Tailor-made holidays  
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Jeremy and Jane Storde have been impressing critics and customers at Bistrotte CBD in Sydney



Melbourne's charming laneways are the epicentre of the city and full of alfresco restaurants, bars, shopping and art

TAKE THE SCENIC ROUTE

# TRAILS FROM THE CITY

Venture to compact Victoria and you'll be richly rewarded, says *Rupert Mellor*. Melbourne is a have-it-all city – and the perfect starting point for an open-road adventure





W

hile Sydney boasts Australia's most recognisable cityscape, Melbourne has quietly fostered its most sophisticated cultural scene, with a vibrant lifestyle that has seen it being named 'World's Most Liveable City' by The Economist Group for the past six years.

The best way to experience it is as the locals do. Take in downtown's eclectic mix of historic architecture and modern cutting-edge design, the banks of the Yarra river, and the many public gardens. Then turn your focus to the bustling streets. All the attractions you'd expect from the buzzing metropolis are here – the Melbourne Museum, National Gallery of Victoria, Royal Botanic Gardens and Eureka Skydeck 88 – but to discover its inimitable personality, dig deeper to explore its mosaic of characterful, contrasting laneways, arcades and neighbourhoods.

### Travel the streets with know-how

Getting around is a breeze. Take the free City Circle Tram, which loops around the centre, then master the efficient networks of more trams, buses and bike-hire schemes, which put everything within easy reach. Avid explorers can discover insider trails led by Walk this Way Melbourne, or Hidden Secrets Tours – both are a great way of getting your bearings.

The city's maze of quirky laneways – more than 230 of them – are a delight. Here you'll stumble upon artsy boutiques, cool coffee shops, stylish bars and every kind of eatery, from fine-dining temples to cheap-as-chips chow houses. Go high-end at IGNI, Embla or Flower Drum, or low-key at Middle Eastern diners in Brunswick and Carlton's authentic trattorias. Rooftops

are another place that those in the know retreat to for drinking and dining – Campari House and Spanish bar Bomba serve outstanding cocktails alongside eye-popping views. But don't limit yourself to the city centre. Neighbourhoods like funky Fitzroy, Richmond – for authentic Vietnamese food – and swanky South Yarra each reveal a different side to Melbourne.

### Lose yourself in the local lifestyle

Whenever you visit, you'll find a packed calendar of world-class events. Sport is almost a religion and the Formula 1 Australian Grand Prix, the Ashes Test cricket series and horse-racing's famed Melbourne Cup whip up a heady vibe. Comedy and music are headliners, too – the annual Melbourne International Comedy Festival and International Jazz Festival are big hitters, while the Melbourne Music Week arrives citywide in November.

When it comes to fashion, Melburnians are a sharply dressed bunch, with shopping elevated to an art form. Charming arcades deliver top brands, with more Melbourne-specific finds at local fashion hero Gorman, kitsch-cool Chapel Street Bazaar, lively Queen Victoria Market and Rose St Artists' Market.

Melbourne's climate enjoys four seasons with warm to hot summers and the city has a multitude of relaxing outdoor spaces where you can comfortably enjoy life alfresco. Cook up a barbie at Alexandra Avenue, with the downtown skyline as your backdrop; add fine art into the mix at Banksia Park, part of the Heidelberg School Artists Trail; and soak up a perfect sunset at the chic beach 'burb of St Kilda.

When you've explored the gems of Melbourne's many neighbourhoods, jump in the car, wind down the windows and hit the highway for a road trip that can either loop you back →



**Top, from left:** Melbourne's dramatic skyline as seen from Southbank; night or day, Victoria's restaurants and bars buzz with life; Federation Square – a hub of cultural activity  
**Above, from left:** Street art in the laneways; the Luna Park has been entertaining Melburnians since 1912; the best food and the best views – alfresco dining at Republica, St Kilda Beach



to the city or take you to adventures beyond. Here are just two routes to get you started...

### Weave your way west

Soaring cliffs, sweeping surf beaches, wildlife-rich rainforest and quaint coastal towns are among the treasures you'll discover when you drive out of Melbourne, towards the sunset. The Great Ocean Road is Australia's number-one coastal drive, and with good reason. Offering heart-stopping view after heart-stopping view, it links hippy surfer towns and ancient rainforest with the colossal offshore rock stacks of the 12 Apostles – and is a road trip like no other.

Two hours from Melbourne, Lorne's boho vibe and rugged surf beach make for a stunning lunch stop – its fish and chips fresh from the ocean are legendary. Another essential stop is Kennett River, whose most famous residents are its koalas, with hundreds of colonies living in the dense forests.

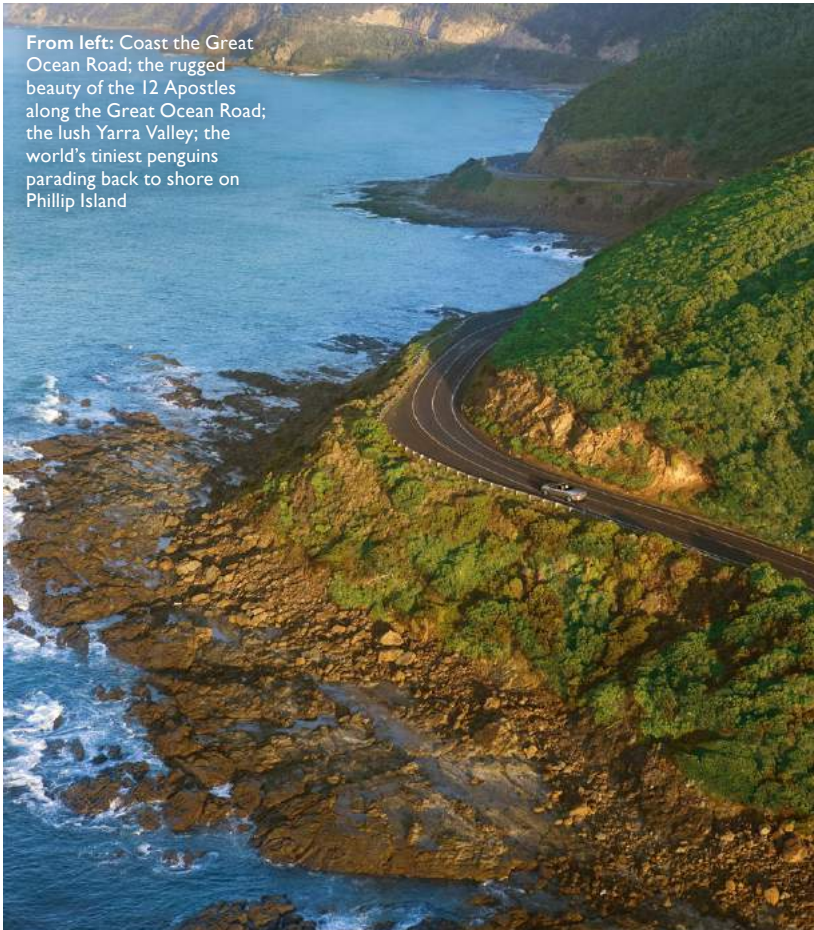
From there, nip off-coast to weave through the towering rainforest trees of Great Otway National Park. Want to ramp up your adrenaline levels? Reach for the sky on the world's longest and tallest steel treetop canopy walkway – or chase thrills on the heart-pumping zip-line.

***“Linking surfer towns and ancient rainforest with offshore rock stacks, the Great Ocean Road is like no other”***

Maxing out your camera's memory card on the coastline's famous and dramatic rock formations, press on to Tower Hill Wildlife Reserve, where koalas, emus and kangaroos roam freely, and then to a series of charming seaside towns. Port Fairy's manicured streets and historic civic buildings ooze post-British character and the Merrijig, Victoria's oldest inn, is its classic dinner destination.

If you can't bear to let go of the Pacific panoramas, turn around and visit different towns on your return. Otherwise, venture inland to complete the Great Southern Touring Route via the majestic mountains of the Grampians National Park. Here, unbothered 'roos lounge, hikers pepper the hills and Aboriginal rock art reveals the country's cultural roots. In the gold-rush boomtown of Ballarat, open-air museum Sovereign Hill traces the town's first decade following the discovery of gold in 1851, and is a must for history buffs.

From left: Coast the Great Ocean Road; the rugged beauty of the 12 Apostles along the Great Ocean Road; the lush Yarra Valley; the world's tiniest penguins parading back to shore on Phillip Island





## Explore eastern promise

Starting at Melbourne again, set your compass east. Drive inland and you'll traverse the scenic Dandenong Ranges with their lush fern glades and inviting villages. The Yarra Valley is a soothing stop, offering rolling subtropical landscapes and world-famous vineyards – a cellar-door tour here is a must. Nearby Healesville Sanctuary is a treat for animal lovers, with platypus, lyrebirds, emus and dingoes all getting the help they need to return to the wild.

At the southernmost tip of mainland Australia, watched over by granite mountains, Wilsons Promontory National Park offers an astonishing range of natural vistas and rewards hikers who've anything from an hour to many days to dedicate to its wilderness. It's also a diver's paradise, with deep reefs full of red velvetfish, perch, leafy seadragons, seastars and anemones. More eccentric attractions include ghost tours and Puffing Billy, Australia's oldest surviving steam railway.

Heading up towards Melbourne, add Phillip Island to your itinerary for wildlife watching – and to get a view of the Australian Motorcycle Grand Prix circuit. Attracting more than half a million visitors each year, this diminutive island is a beautiful spot to come nose-to-nose with koalas,

dolphins, wallabies and *Eudyptula minor* – the smallest penguin species on Earth.

The southern beaches are also alluring, and you can make the most of the island's extraordinary habitat, history and conservation efforts with a 4 Parks Pass. This will give you access to the Penguin Parade – when the penguins return to shore after a day's fishing – Koala Conservation Centre, Churchill Island Heritage Farm and Antarctic Journey.

As you reach the wine-growing region of Mornington Peninsula, the city's in your sights again. Enjoy every last moment by visiting one of the many excellent art galleries or artists' studios, or pausing for a meal and a glass of the superb Chardonnay, Pinot Noir or Pinot Gris for which the area is known. The local produce fuels an outstanding food culture, and Flinders is great for gourmets. Now set your destination as Melbourne, or head to the Bellarine Peninsula via the spectacularly scenic Searoad Ferry from Sorrento to Queenscliff, before journeying on to the Great Ocean Road... ■

**Now make it happen →**

Photography Robert Blackburn/ImageBrief.com



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Prices include a complimentary stop in Singapore, are for specific travel dates and are based on return fares per person and subject to availability. Prices are correct as of 30th March 2017 and are subject to change at any time.

SINGAPORE AIRLINES 



BREAK UP YOUR JOURNEY

# SINGAPORE STAY

Small but perfectly formed, Singapore is the ultimate melting pot, blending cuisines, architecture and art in astonishing style. Stay for a day or longer. You won't regret it, says *Lee Cobaj*



From traditional teahouses to cool lifestyle stores, Chinatown is a bustling mix of old and new

## Get off to a flying start

With multi-award-winning national carrier Singapore Airlines operating direct flights four times a day from Heathrow Airport, as well as a new direct route flying five times a week from Manchester, you're all set for a stopover to remember. Once you arrive in the 'Little Red Dot', it's a breeze to get around, thanks to the city-state's diminutive size at just 277 square miles and its efficient transport system. Save time – and money – by picking up a Singapore Tourist Pass and rack up unlimited rides on the bus and MRT/LRT trains.

## Take in the colonial heritage

Start where it all began, on the banks of the Singapore River, where in 1819 Sir Stamford Raffles set Singapore on course to become one of the world's great trading nations. The area brims with old architecture, from the neoclassical Victoria Theatre to the neo-Palladian Arts House, the fountains and cupolas of Fort Canning Park and the Raffles Hotel Singapore. Get an overview from rooftop bar Smoke & Mirrors, atop the National Gallery Singapore, as well as an eyeful of the green expanse of The Padang, the Central Business District and the Marina Bay Sands hotel.

## Get in on the cultural mix

What has always made this 'Lion City' roar is its rich and colourful immigrant history, so

don't miss a trip to one of its vibrant ethnic enclaves. Head to lantern-lined Chinatown for market stalls, goldsmiths and pungent medicine halls, stopping for juicy barbecued meats along the way. Or aim for the candy-coloured shophouses, sari sellers and curry restaurants of Little India. Look out, too, for the dramatic towers and dioramas of Sri Veeramakaliamman Hindu temple.

## Tantalise your taste buds

Mashing up Indian banana-leaf curries with cheap Chinatown dumplings, traditional Peranakan dishes and modern haute cuisine, Singapore's reputation as a sizzling foodie destination was cemented last year when Michelin arrived in the city and promptly handed out stars to 29 eateries. Splash the cash on langoustines and chateaubriand at Joël Robuchon Restaurant on Sentosa Island, with three stars, or try the world's cheapest Michelin-star meal at Hong Kong Soya Sauce Chicken Rice & Noodle, where a bowl of the hawker stall's sought-after chicken rice comes in at just a couple of pounds. Singapore has also emerged as the bar capital of Asia; hard to find and even

harder to leave are the clandestine 28 Hongkong Street, the Deco-fabulous Manhattan at the Regent Singapore hotel and classy basement hangout Operation Dagger – all taking top 10 spots in the list of Asia's 50 Best Bars in 2016, with 28 Hongkong Street at number one.

## Shop, Singapore-style

This city boasts top shopping. Go full throttle along Orchard Road for the mega-malls and designer stores that line



Shopping mecca Orchard Road began life as a small lane lined with fruit orchards and farms

this former spice plantation way. Or go bargain hunting at Bugis, an indoor–outdoor market where you'll find funky nail bars, cheap-as-chips fashion buys and souvenirs galore. Haji Lane in the oud-scented Arab Quarter is the place to stock up on all your hipster accoutrements – try Mujosh for retro-sexy eyewear and Dulcetfig for vintage clutch bags. ■

**Book it now...** To add a stopover or a longer stay in Singapore, call our Experts on **0800 258 5773**



The Marina Bay Sands hotel is home to the world's largest rooftop infinity pool



### BREAK UP YOUR JOURNEY

# DISCOVER DUBAI

Soaring skyscrapers, sensational shopping and seven-star hotels – Dubai is evolving at breathtaking speed. But, as *Gavin Thomas* reveals, there's more to this city than meets the eye...

### Souks and skyscrapers

Dubai is a city of two halves. It boasts a fascinating old centre dotted with traditional coral-stone souks and picturesque minarets, best appreciated during a ride across the Dubai Creek. Board a traditional ferry (abra) and take in the view as it weaves between hundreds of old wooden dhows that still ply the Gulf. But the modern city has plenty of showstoppers too. Standout attractions include the sail-shaped Burj Al Arab Jumeirah seven-star hotel (admire its dazzling interior over tea in the atrium) and the cloud-capped Burj Khalifa – the world's tallest building at more than 828m high – with jaw-dropping views from its observation decks.

### Culinary delights

Dubai's foodie scene runs the gamut from modest, inexpensive Arabian cafés and no-frills curry houses through to opulent fine-dining venues complete with extravagant decor. In the old city, Aroos Damascus provides lively streetside dining and great Lebanese food at bargain prices. More upscale venues include the incurably romantic

Pai Thai at the heart of the Arabian-themed Madinat Jumeirah Resort and cutting-edge contemporary Indian dining at Indego by Michelin-starred chef Vineet Bhatia.

### Bazaar buys and mega-malls

Haggle your way through the traditional souks of the old city centre, including the glittering Gold Souk, with jewellery galore, and the aromatic Spice Souk, stacked high with piles of frankincense, rose petals and other fragrant exotica. Or head to one of the modern city's mega-malls, such as the gargantuan Dubai Mall, the upmarket Mall of the Emirates (complete with an indoor ski slope) or the surreal Ibn Battuta Mall, where quirky themed decor pays homage to the travels of the legendary Moroccan adventurer after whom the mall is named.

### Life's a beach

Many of Dubai's great beaches are accessible only to guests at upmarket hotels, although there's a superb stretch of free beach in Dubai Marina, boasting a huge swathe of gorgeous white sand to relax on along with

Catch a ride on a camel at Dubai Marina



plenty of water sports, myriad cafés and sweeping views of southern Dubai's dramatic skyscrapers.

### Desert escapes

Get away from the city on one of the popular sunset safaris, offering the chance to ride across vast dunes as dusk envelops the desert, followed by an evening under the stars at a Bedouin-style encampment with traditional food, belly dancing, henna painting and the occasional camel.

### Stay in splendour

Situated on the western crescent of Dubai's iconic Palm Jumeirah, the five-star Jumeirah Zabeel Saray hotel makes a sumptuous choice of accommodation in the 'City of Gold', with Arabian Renaissance-style interiors throughout. Go for a dip in the magnificent 59m infinity pool overlooking the Arabian Gulf, or in the warm waters off the pristine private beach, and relax at the award-winning Talise Ottoman Spa, which offers hammam and treatment packages in abundance. ■

The tallest building in the world, the Burj Khalifa also has the highest outdoor observation deck at 555m



A Deluxe Family room at the Jumeirah Zabeel Saray



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Stir-fries are served with a generous dash of drama at Faiekaow Yaowarat



### BREAK UP YOUR JOURNEY

# BIG IN BANGKOK

From colonial architecture to rooftop bars and foodie delights, this Southeast Asia stopover destination – with its head-whirling mix of old and new – has it all, says *Dave Stamboulis*

### See the sights

While the Grand Palace, Wat Phra Kaew (Temple of the Emerald Buddha) and Wat Arun (Temple of Dawn) should be on everyone's Bangkok sightseeing list, there are plenty more treasures to discover in a day or two. Explore the canals of Thonburi, where you can still see traditional Thai puppetry at Baan Silapin, or check out Bangkok's Portuguese legacy at the Church of Santa Cruz. Ferry up the Chao Phraya River to car-free Koh Kret island, famed for its pottery, or head to the Museum of Siam, a good introduction to everything Thai.

### Gourmet ground

Prepare to feast in one of the world's best food cities. Gaggan, the Indian molecular masala eatery, and Nahm, master chef David Thompson's five-star ode to authentic Thai fare, are both world-class restaurants. Don't miss out on the superb – and excellent value – street food though. Stroll down Charoenkrung Road and

sample from vendors who have been in business for generations. Prachak has been serving roast duck since 1897 and nearby Jok Prince doles out century egg (preserved egg) congee each evening. Chinatown's Yaowarat Road is also food hawker central, and at Faiekaow Yaowarat the chef takes wok cooking to new levels with his sizzling performances. The stalls at Or Tor Kor Market will satisfy just about any Thai food yearning.

### Cocktail revolution

It's not just the culinary scene that has become the city's pulse – Thai bartenders regularly win worldwide mixology competitions. Drink guru and 'mixsultant' Joseph Boroski has opened his own speakeasy, J. Boroski, and he's not the only one. Creative homemade infusions and tiny hideaway bars such as Rabbit Hole and Backstage Bar are just two reasons to head to trendy Thonglor, Bangkok's hippest drinking and dining neighbourhood.

Alfresco dining at the Banyan Tree hotel's Vertigo and Moon Bar



### Admire the view

Escape the traffic and heat and head up to the heavens, where 360° panoramas await. Vertigo and Moon Bar in the Banyan Tree hotel offer jaw-dropping views of the city lights, while Distil and Sirocco in the Lebua at State Tower overlook the entire Chao Phraya River. To see Bangkok from its highest vantage point, pay a visit to the revolving, 304m-high observation deck of the Baiyoke Tower II.

### Shop 'til you drop

For first timers, a visit to the mother of all outdoor markets, Chatuchak, known affectionately as JJ Market by the locals, is a must. You'll find everything under the sun here, plus people-watching at its best. Talad Rot Fai I and II offer something different. Known as the 'retro hipster' markets, this is where VW cocktail buses sit next to crates of old LPs and vintage bikes. Bangkok's famous malls, such as Siam Paragon and the glitzy EmQuartier, are home to just about every designer shop you can think of. If you crave something more local than Louis Vuitton and Gucci, head to Thai design maverick Senada Theory or do some silk shopping at Jim Thompson. ■



200,000 visitors descend on Chatuchak weekend market's 27 acres each day

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TRAVEL JOURNAL

# SACRED SIGHTS

Flight Centre's Editor-in-Chief *Phil Murray* journeys to the spiritual landmarks of Kata Tjuta and Uluru with an Intrepid Guide

**W**irru is the local Anangu people's word for 'beautiful'. I'd expected the landscape surrounding the imposing monolith we've come to see to

be stark and unforgiving. Instead, the red soil is punctuated by pretty flowers, lush plants and hardy trees. While life in Australia's Red Centre may be challenging, everywhere is surprisingly, well, wiru.

Our first stop here in the Northern Territory is Kata Tjuta, meaning 'many heads' – a fitting name for Uluru's irregular-shaped neighbour, also known as 'The Olgas'. At the Ayers Rock Resort we are met by Joe, our Intrepid Guide, who instructs us to purchase a litre bottle of water to stay hydrated on our upcoming hike.

It's late November. Luckily, the summer sun is yet to make itself fully felt, which makes for a pleasant, hour-long round trip into the Walpa Gorge. Above us, the looming domes of Kata Tjuta feature enormous pockmarks, which leave little doubt as to the origins of the boulders that litter the gorge floor. There's nothing to fear, however, as the last boulder parted company with the cliff face thousands of years ago.

Like Uluru, this place is a sacred part of the Dreamtime creation story. While the great snake king Wanambi is said to live on the summit, much of the mythology is kept secret by the Anangu people, who have lived here for more than 22,000 years.

***"Uluru is both place of worship and holy text, its scripture written across its majestic face"***

As we make our way to Uluru, Joe starts to explain the parts of local mythology that have been shared. We learn how the shapes, caves and crevices on its surface convey great spiritual meaning for the indigenous people. Uluru is both place of worship and

holy text, its scripture written across its majestic face. The more Joe tells us, the more we understand why the Anangu ask that people don't climb Uluru. He saves the clincher until last: "Would you climb on the altar at the Vatican?"

A retired detective from Brisbane, Joe loves his second career as an Intrepid Guide and is both knowledgeable and entertaining. As the day draws in, he is keen to get us to his favourite place to view Uluru at sunset. It's not completely isolated, but neither is it as busy as the nearby designated viewing spot. After opening the bubbly, we turn our attention to the star attraction. With about a hundred lenses trained on it, Uluru is under pressure to put on a show and, obliging, it slowly changes to a deeper red.

Back at the resort we dig into a bushtucker dinner including kangaroo cooked in chilli sauce, which tastes





## Take the tour

### Uluru camping trip with Intrepid

Journey into Australia's dusty Red Centre and experience for yourself two of the most amazing landmarks in the world. Explore the immense rock domes of Kata Tjuta, take in a magical Uluru sunset and dine on delicious local produce beneath a starlit sky. Uluru, the biggest rock on Earth, is a breathtaking sight close up. You will walk around its base, learn of the indigenous mythologies woven into it and admire Aboriginal arts and crafts on display in the Uluru Cultural Centre. Short though this two-day trip may be in time, it's mighty large in attractions. You will:

- Join an indigenous Guide on a Mala walk around the base of Uluru, an experience exclusive to Intrepid Travel
- Learn about the ancient formations of Kata Tjuta and the monumental Uluru
- Dine on local food and wine under the stars and camp on the vast red earth of the Outback, well away from civilisation
- Have guided walks at Kata Tjuta and around Uluru, which provide insight into indigenous Australian history and spirituality



**Top:** Every crevice, every crack, every cave on Uluru has great meaning. **Above:** Far from being arid, the landscape is alive with plants and flowers

not dissimilar to beef. We also move into our tents, which prove very comfortable with proper beds and a fan. With an early start to catch the sunrise, we forgo a drink under the stars and retire early.

The next morning, as we arrive at the start of the Uluru base walk in semi-darkness, we are very glad we did. We start the 6.2-mile trek and, as the sun rises, it not only catches Uluru, but also bathes the furry-looking flowers lining the pathway in a warm glow.

It takes a few hours to explore the caves, watering holes and undulating parts of the Rock that become waterfalls if you're lucky enough to be here when it rains. After circumnavigating Uluru, I take a seat to appreciate its sheer scale and once again that local word springs to mind. Wiru. Simply, wiru. ■



The Olgas, a landscape of ever-changing moods and colours



Joe Hildred, a former policeman, has found a new passion as an Intrepid Guide

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SPOTLIGHT ON CULTURE

# ISLAND ON THE RISE

Thanks to the Museum of Old and New Art, Tasmania has become a go-to destination for discerning travellers



A

n island off an island, a land of wilderness, a place at the edge of the world. Tasmania is all these things. But since unorthodox gallerist

David Walsh opened his irreverent Museum of Old and New Art (MONA) in Hobart in 2011, the island-state has been placed firmly back on the tourist map.

In 2013 capital city Hobart was named one of the top 10 cities to visit in the world by Lonely Planet. Tasmania's fertile soil, pure air and clean water guarantee top-class food and wine, from freshly shucked oysters to rich cheeses, Pinot Noir to sparkling wines. Almost a fifth of the island is a designated World Heritage site. And every season, exciting cultural

events fill the calendar, ensuring that you will be well entertained, no matter what time of year you visit.

## Enter the wonderful world of MONA...

Just over seven miles north of Hobart, and chiselled into an escarpment on the banks of the Derwent River, is MONA, a masterpiece of modern architecture. Described by Walsh as "a subversive adult Disneyland", it is a must on anyone's itinerary. Showcasing a mix of treasured antiquities and controversial contemporary pieces on three underground levels, its exhibitions are always thought-provoking.

Come for the art and stay for a Moorilla wine and Moo Brew tasting, or a delicious meal made from local ingredients at The

Source Restaurant, with a side serving of beautiful views over the museum grounds.

In summer months, concerts on the lawn, the vibrant, artsy MONA Market and the MONA FOMA music and arts festival in and around Hobart complement the groundbreaking museum's year-round offerings. Want to savour the MONA experience for even longer? You can book an uber-sophisticated den for the night at the MONA Pavilions.

## Then head to Hobart and the wilds beyond

The quirky city of Hobart offers much to explore, including a pretty harbour and a good selection of museums and galleries. Battery Point, one of the capital's oldest and most historic areas, is an





Mona's camouflaged catamaran will take you from Brooke Street Pier to the museum in 25 minutes

architectural gem – wander around on foot so that you can enjoy the splendour of its colonial buildings close up.

Hobart is a captivating city that's hard to leave, but beyond it lies a magnificent wild world that's waiting for you, and no visit to Tasmania is complete without venturing to those untouched, mysterious landscapes.

Head inland to the Cradle Mountain-Lake St Clair National Park, which is part of the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage area and an ancient wonderland of icy peaks, glacier-sculpted river gorges and moorland. The lake itself, carved out by ice during several glaciations over the past two millennia, is Australia's deepest. Or follow the coastline towards the pristine sands and turquoise waters of Wineglass Bay, where you'll find views to lose yourself in. ■

Photography: Mona/Rémi Chauvin



Dark Mofo's dazzling events stimulate mind, body and spirit

## Up next from Mona: Dark Mofo



Leigh Carmichael, new member of the Board of the Australia Council for the Arts, head of Mona's creative subsidiary

**DarkLab and founder of the winter solstice festival Dark Mofo, talks to us about his career, Tassie and why the event is a feast for the senses.**

"Working with Mona has challenged me to be relentless, brave, and to fail honourably," says Leigh. "I joined as a designer, and have grabbed every opportunity ever since. Now I'm in way over my head, creating festivals like Dark Mofo... but I'm still hanging on."

Now in its fifth year, Dark Mofo's programme of film, music, exhibitions, installations, fires and feasts delves into centuries-old winter solstice rituals, and attracts 280,000 visitors annually. "The idea behind Dark Mofo is that we are continually inspired by darkness," he says. "Hobart has the longest night of any capital city in Australia, so we decided to exploit it. It's a festival that could only happen in Tasmania because we have the most dramatic landscapes, the best red wine, open fires, and those long nights in which to enjoy them.

Winter is a beautiful and special time to visit Tasmania. Our clear night skies and crisp foggy mornings are life affirming."

Despite themes of darkness and death, the festival also celebrates renewal and re-birth. And it is much loved in Tasmania, appealing to families with young children and international visitors as well as alternative crowds.

"What's nice is that the experience is different for everyone," continues Leigh. "Its essence is rooted in exploring Hobart, wandering into places you don't normally go and being open to new experiences. Art isn't always something you understand, but what we programme is an opportunity to walk to the edge of the cliff, and jump. Our signature events are the Winter Feast, large-scale outdoor art at Dark Park and the burning of the Ogoh-ogoh [Balinese papier-mâché monsters]. The Ogoh-ogoh ceremony symbolically burns the community's fears in one huge fire. It's a magical moment, standing with 10,000 people, watching all the things that are holding us back go up in flames. But the most iconic event is the Nude Solstice Swim, which happens at sunrise on the final day of the festival, when the air temperature's around 1°C. It's cold, very, very cold..."

**Dark Mofo 2017 runs from 8th to 21st June across Hobart, Tasmania.**

**[darkmofo.net.au](http://darkmofo.net.au)**





SEE THE SIGHTS

# BY AIR, LAND & WATER

From soaring above the world's largest coral reef to hiking mountain passes and paddling down majestic rivers, there are as many ways to explore Australia as there are wonders to behold

## AIR: Take your breath away

While the Great Barrier Reef offers myriad options for exploring this natural wonder from the water, the best way to appreciate its awe-inspiring scale is from a bird's-eye view. Take a seaplane or helicopter over the UNESCO World Heritage site, keeping an eye out for dolphins, sharks and rays below. Thrill-seekers should jump at the chance to leap out of a plane in a tandem skydive in Cairns; the spectacular views over the reef and the verdant Daintree Rainforest will be matched by your soaring adrenaline levels as you plummet through the air at speeds of up to 136mph.

For a different perspective on some of Australia's most stunning landscapes, hang out

while you take in the view. A zip-line through the canopy of the Daintree Rainforest is a real thrill, while abseiling down the gorges of Kalbarri National Park or even off the Gordon Dam in Tasmania offers unforgettable vistas for those with a head for heights.

If you're in Sydney or Melbourne, take a break from city life and reach for the skies, gliding peacefully in a hot-air balloon over the Hunter or Yarra Valleys – two boutique wine-growing regions. Have your camera at the ready as you drink in the panoramic views of lush vineyards and the surrounding mountains before returning to earth and swapping your balloon for a glass of bubbly.

**Book it now...** To add an unforgettable experience to your trip, call our Experts on **0800 258 5773**

Take to the skies  
in a seaplane for  
breathtaking views

Photography Getty Images





The Scenic Rim Trail covers three summits and is a paradise for trekkers



### LAND: Linger over the view

Those who prefer being on two legs can don their hiking boots and trek the Scenic Rim Trail with Spicers, covering three summits in Queensland's high country in just four days. Or for a true taste of the wilderness, seasoned walkers can brave the six-day, 100-mile Overland Track through alpine country from Cradle Mountain to Lake St Clair in Tasmania.

Romantics should hop aboard The Ghan or Indian Pacific trains for an unmissable opportunity to watch the Outback roll by beyond the window. For a slower pace, try a camel tour around Alice Springs and Uluru, or along Cable Beach in Broome at sunset.

If driving is your thing, a road trip along the coast from Sydney to Melbourne takes you via charming seaside towns, national parks and pristine beaches. If you're after a more rugged experience, set out in a 4X4 loaded with camping gear and supplies for a true adventure.

### WATER: Get close to nature

Weaving through diverse scenery, Australia's waterways are rich in wildlife and invite exploration. Paddle past jagged cliffs and emerald forests on a leisurely canoe trip down Western Australia's Margaret River, or up your speed on an airboat tour of Mary River's floodplain wetlands in the Northern Territory, keeping a lookout for crocs and birds galore.

To get face-to-face with an array of marine animals, there's no better way than taking the plunge. From taking a dip with playful sea lions in the waters off Port Lincoln to swimming with whale sharks and humpback whales in Ningaloo – under the guidance of an eco-certified guide – or even braving a cage-dive with saltwater crocs in Darwin,

there's something for all nature enthusiasts.

Let the breeze fill your sails and take to the ocean. A catamaran day tour from Port Douglas to the coral cay of the Low Isles will provide a taste of life at sea, as well as the chance to snorkel around the beautiful coral gardens of the Great Barrier Reef. In Sydney, charter your own sail boat in the harbour to admire the city from the water.

Queensland's Noosa is the paddleboard capital of the world, but if staying upright isn't enough of a challenge, how about a spot of yoga as you float? Classes by Luxe Escapes are held in secluded mangrove channels, a short paddle from the resort town's lively centre – and yet a million miles away. Namaste. ■



One of the best ways of exploring the Margaret River is in a canoe



MAY 2017

### A flavour of coastal Queensland

Celebrate the greatness of the grape and Australia's culinary culture by visiting Queensland's Noosa Food and Wine Festival (18th-21st May) for a little indulgence. A few hours' drive down the coast, Blues on Broadbeach – one of the country's largest free music festivals – is happening over the same weekend. International songstress Bonnie Tyler leads the line-up, alongside blues and jazz artists from across the globe. Cheers to that.



JUNE

### Haunting Hobart

Venture into Hobart, Tasmania, in June and you might think Halloween has come early thanks to the annual winter arts festival that is Dark Mofo (8th-21st June). Expect dancing demon puppets, fire wielding and drum-pounding processions, all in celebration of the longest night of the year. Run by Mona, the Museum of Old and New Art, it features live performances, public art and plenty of noise. We talk to the festival's creative director, Leigh Carmichael, on p43.

DATES DOWN UNDER

# A memory for every month

There's enough to see and do in Australia to keep you coming back at any time of the year. Start filling your diary with untold adventures...

JULY

### Christmas comes early in the Blue Mountains

If you're dreaming of a white Christmas but can't wait another five months for the day itself, head to the Blue Mountains in New South Wales for some early holiday cheer – and the occasional flurry of snow. There'll be open fires, festive feasts and merriment as part of the region's annual Yulefest revelry, which begins in June and continues into August. It's a tradition that's been running for more than 30 years, after a group of nostalgic Irishmen decided to recreate a cold Christmas from back home.

AUGUST

### Rock on in the Red Centre

Thanks to the cooler winter temperatures, this is the best time to visit the magnificent Uluru (Ayers Rock) in the Northern Territory. Venture out at sunrise or sunset to appreciate its reds and oranges in full splendour. And seize the chance to see Bruce Munro's hypnotic Field of Light before it's dimmed in March 2018. At the vibrant Garma Festival (4th-7th August) in East Arnhem, you can learn about indigenous cultures. A celebration of Yolngu culture, the programme features traditional music, art and workshops.



SEPTEMBER

### Melbourne rules

Don your scarf and get in among the crowds at an Aussie Rules football match. Kicking around for more than 150 years, Australian Football is now the most highly attended spectator sport in the country. Visit the game's symbolic home, the Melbourne Cricket Ground, on 30th September to witness the season's Grand Final and to see who claims the coveted cup. Whether you're supporting the Lions, Eagles, Giants or Crows, prepare for animal instinct on the pitch.



## OCTOBER

### Natural wonders in Queensland

Spring is a breathtakingly beautiful time to visit Queensland. There's a high chance of seeing humpback whales in Hervey Bay, where calm, shallow waters provide the perfect resting spot for migrating whales to prepare their calves for their epic 3,000-mile journey to Antarctica. In the state capital Brisbane, temperatures hover comfortably in the low-to-mid 20s and the ground is carpeted with a violet veil, as flowers fall like purple rain from the Jacaranda trees.



## NOVEMBER

### Whet your appetite in the west

Renowned for producing some of Australia's finest tipplables, Margaret River should be at the top of any wine buff's itinerary, with more than 120 wineries to sniff out. Time your trip right and you'll be able to pair your tastings with the Margaret River Gourmet Escape Festival (17th-19th November). Here you can pick up tips from some of the world's best chefs, sample top-quality produce and wash it all down with a touch more wine.



## DECEMBER

### Ring the changes in Sydney

Swap your chestnuts for prawns and an open fire for a barbie and head to the beach this Christmas. You'll be spoilt for choice in Sydney, with everything from world-famous surfing hotspots like Bondi Beach to hidden gems such as Milk Beach. Wake up on Boxing Day and wave off the boats taking part in the Sydney to Hobart Yacht Race as they set sail from the harbour. For New Year's Eve, bag a spot at Mrs Macquaries Point, overlooking the iconic Sydney Harbour Bridge and Opera House. You'll get spectacular views of the fireworks and be among the first in Australia to see in 2018.

## JANUARY 2018

### An ace time in Victoria

There's double fun to be had in Victoria's capital, Melbourne, in January as the new year kicks off with two of the country's biggest events: the Australian Open Tennis Championships (15th-28th January) and Australia Day (26th January).

## FEBRUARY

### Devilish fun in Tasmania

Tasmania has wildlife in abundance, and it's the only place where you might catch a glimpse of the elusive Tasmanian devil in its natural habitat. Head to Cradle Mountain for an organised night tour using infrared cameras.

## MARCH

### Festival frenzy in Adelaide

If you only visit Adelaide once, it has to be in Mad March, as the locals call it. Packing the cultural calendar are the Adelaide Fringe (16th February-18th March), Adelaide Festival (2nd-18th March), WOMAdelaide (9th-12th March) and the Clipsal 500 V8 Supercar races (dates TBC), as well as the Adelaide Biennial of Australian Art. No wonder car number plates in South Australia proudly announce they're from 'The Festival State'.

## APRIL

### Sporting spectacular on the Gold Coast

The Gold Coast Commonwealth Games in 2018 (4th-15th April) are set to be the largest sporting event in Australia this decade. There'll be people, parties and plenty of atmosphere. More than 6,500 of the world's top athletes, from some 70 nations and territories, will be competing in 18 sports and seven para-sports at venues across the Gold Coast, as well as in Brisbane, Townsville and Cairns. ■







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- East Sheen, 367 Upper Richmond Rd West, SW14 7NX
- Euston, Unit 5, Clifton House, 93-99 Euston Rd, NW1 2RA
- Farringdon, 88-89 Cowcross Street, EC1M 6BP
- Fenchurch Street, 50a Fenchurch Street, EC3M 3JY
- Fulham, 405 North End Road, SW6 1NS
- Goodge Street, 64 Goodge Street, W1T 4NF
- Hammersmith, 108 King Street, W6 0QP
- Hampstead, 70 Hampstead High Street, NW3 1QP
- Holborn, 75/80 High Holborn, WC1V 6LS
- ✠ Kensington, 198-200 Kensington High Street, W8 7RG
- London Bridge, Unit 7, Hays Galleria, SE1 3HD
- ✠ Monument, 2-4 Eastcheap, EC3M 1AE
- ✠ Oxford Street, 159 Oxford Street, W1D 2JL
- Paddington, 4B Praed Street, W2 1JX
- Putney, 135 Putney High Street, SW15 1SU
- Regent Street, 5 Regent Street, SW1Y 4LR
- Soho, 54 Brewer Street, W1F 9TH
- South Kensington, 9 Old Brompton Road, SW7 3HZ
- Thayer Street, 8 Thayer Street, W1U 3JJ
- Trafalgar Square, Unit B, William IV Street, WC2N 4JN
- ✠ Wimbledon, 13 The Broadway, SW19 1PS

#### SCOTLAND

- ✠ Aberdeen, 172 Union Street, AB10 1QTP
- EDINBURGH**
- Forrest Road, 51/53 Forrest Road, EH1 2QP
- Northbridge, Royal Mile, 40 Northbridge, EH1 1QN
- Queensferry Street, 13 Queensferry Street, EH2 4PG
- GLASGOW**
- Buchanan Galleries, Level 3, 220 Buchanan Street, G1 2FF
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- Sauchiehall Street, 280 Sauchiehall Street, G2 3EH

#### SOUTH & THE WEST

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- West Street, 39 West Street, BN1 2RE
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- Clifton Down Station, Whiteladies Road, BS8 2NN
- High Street, 6 High Street, BS1 2AZ
- Queens Road, 37 Queens Road, BS8 1QE
- Bromley, 19 High Street, Kent, BR1 1LG
- Cambridge, 50 Sidney Street, CB2 3HX
- Canterbury, 8-9 The Parade, Unit 1, CT1 2SG
- Chelmsford, Dukesmead House, 39 High Street, Essex, CM1 1DE
- Chichester, 1 West Street, West Sussex, PO19 1QD
- Croydon, 102 North End, Surrey, CR0 1UD
- Gloucester, 20 Northgate Street, GL1 1SE
- Guildford, 23 Swan Lane, Surrey, GU1 4EQ
- Hemel Hempstead, Unit 53, The Marlowes Centre, Herts, HP1 1DX
- Horsham, 24 West Street, West Sussex, RH12 1PB

- Hove, 29 George Street, East Sussex, BN3 3YA
- Kingston, 51 Fife Road, Surrey, KT1 1SF
- ✠ Oxford, 9-10 Queen Street, Oxfordshire, OX1 1EJ
- Reading, 27 Queen Victoria Street, Berkshire, RG1 1SY
- Richmond, 38/39 The Quadrant, TW9 1DN
- Romford, Unit 5, Laurie Walk, Liberty Shopping Centre, Essex, RM1 3RT
- St Albans, Unit 6, 32 Chequer Street, Herts, AL1 3YD
- Surbiton, 74 Victoria Road, Surrey, KT6 4NR
- Sutton, Unit K3, St Nicholas Shopping Centre, Surrey, SM1 1AY
- Tunbridge Wells, 10a Camden Road, Kent, TN1 2PT
- Uxbridge, The Chimes Shopping Centre, 182 High Street, UB8 1LA
- Watford, 116 High Street, Herts, WD17 2BJ
- Windsor, 39 Peascod Street, Berkshire, SL4 1AA
- Woking, 21B, Middle Concourse, Peacocks Shopping Centre, Surrey, GU21 6GB

#### MIDLANDS

- BIRMINGHAM**
- Colmore Row, 16B Colmore Row, B3 2QD
- New Street, 51 New Street, B2 4EG

#### NORTH

- ✠ Chester, 48 Bridge Street, CH1 1NQ
- Durham, 26 Prince Bishop Shopping Centre, High Street, DH1 3UJ
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