

January 2018

ENDEAVOUR

THE MAGAZINE FROM AUSTRAVEL, EXPERTS IN AUSTRALIA, NEW ZEALAND & SOUTH PACIFIC



Great Australasian Journeys

Including road trips, rail and cruises

What's hot
for 2018

Extraordinary
stopovers



AUSTRAVEL

Welcome to ENDEAVOUR

the magazine by Austravel



G'day and Happy New Year!

With Christmas done and dusted for another year, your mind might be thinking about the year ahead and what you can tick off your bucket list in 2018.

Whether it's your first, second or fifth visit (or any in between), Australia, New Zealand and the South Pacific have something new and exciting to offer every time. We've showcased some of our most inspiring journeys from (see page 11) including the iconic Ghan rail journey through Australia's Red Centre, an escorted tour of New Zealand and a luxury cruise around the Islands of Tahiti.

Looking to break up your journey on your next trip? Check out our alternative stopover destinations (see page 38) and explore more than just a city. Go on safari in South Africa or relax on the beaches of Mauritius.

I hope the latest edition of Endeavour leaves you feeling inspired to explore more of Australasia. Call our specialist Travel Designers and let's start planning your next adventure.

Best wishes,
Karen Joyce
General Manager



Our magazine is named after HMS Endeavour, the first seagoing vessel to reach the east coast of Australia in 1770, when Captain Cook went ashore at what is now known as Botany Bay.



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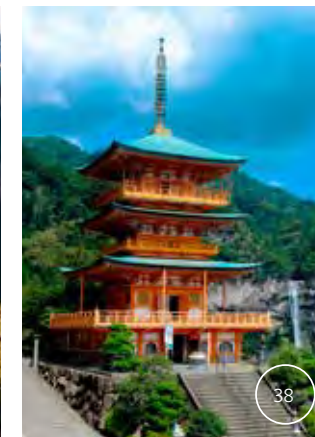
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Visit Austravel.com for full T&C's. Prices are subject to change & availability. All prices are based on twin share and exclude flights unless otherwise stated. Prices are correct at time of going to print, for selected travel periods and may be withdrawn at any time. All the flights and flight-inclusive holidays in this magazine are financially protected by the ATOL scheme. When you pay you will be supplied with an ATOL Certificate. Please ask for it and check to ensure that everything you booked (flights, hotels and other services) is listed on it. Please see our booking conditions for further information or for more information about financial protection and the ATOL Certificate go to: www.atol.org.uk/ATOLCertificate. Feefo service rating correct as of December 2017. WRS-7332





What's hot for 2018

A round-up of the new and exciting experiences you can have across Australasia for the year ahead.



Qantas re-launches route to Singapore

Qantas, Australia's flagship carrier, has announced it will change its re-fuelling stop from London Heathrow to Sydney and back. From 25 March 2018, the new stopover hub will switch from Dubai, back to Singapore, as it was five years ago. As a more direct route, the new London-Singapore-Sydney trip will be slightly shorter. The airline also plans to increase its number of Singapore-Melbourne A380 flights next year. Following the announcement, Qantas' CEO, Alan Joyce, said the new routes via Singapore will offer "a greater choice of services, aircraft and cabins, with first and premium economy available on the A380".

Fly from London Heathrow to Sydney, via Singapore, with Qantas from £769 per person. Based on selected travel May-June 2018.



qualia resort

Hamilton Island's qualia refurbishment

qualia in the Whitsundays has undergone a soft refurbishment and upgraded its guest suites and facilities. Now back to full capacity and with a fresh, contemporary look, Hamilton Island's premier resort is serenity and elegance epitomised. qualia continues to be voted one of Australia's top luxury resorts, even scooping Australia Luxury Travel Media's number one spot for the 'Best Australian luxury romantic property 2017'. Planning a special getaway? qualia is open for business.

3 nights from £1,195 per person
Based on selected travel April-June 2018.

Uluru's Field of Light - extended

Due to sell-out success, the award-winning Field of Light exhibition at Uluru, by internationally-acclaimed artist Bruce Munro, has now been extended until 31 December 2020. If you plan to visit Australia's iconic rock, make sure you don't miss this moving and spectacular phenomenon. A truly once-in-a-lifetime experience.

A Night at the Field of Light experience from £156 per person.



Uluru's Field of Light

Ikurangi Eco Retreat, Rarotonga

At the foot of Mount Ikurangi, amidst Rarotonga's hinterland, you'll find the Cook Islands' first and only purpose-built eco-accommodation. Ikurangi offers studio accommodation and four luxury safari tents, plus the exclusive Ariki Safari Tent which features a private claw-foot bath and complimentary bubbles on arrival – perfect for honeymooners. Think baths under the stars, nightcaps on your private deck and breakfast in bed, delivered to you every morning. Pure bliss. What's more, five per cent of Ikurangi's profits go to local conservation projects. **7 nights from £399 per person.**

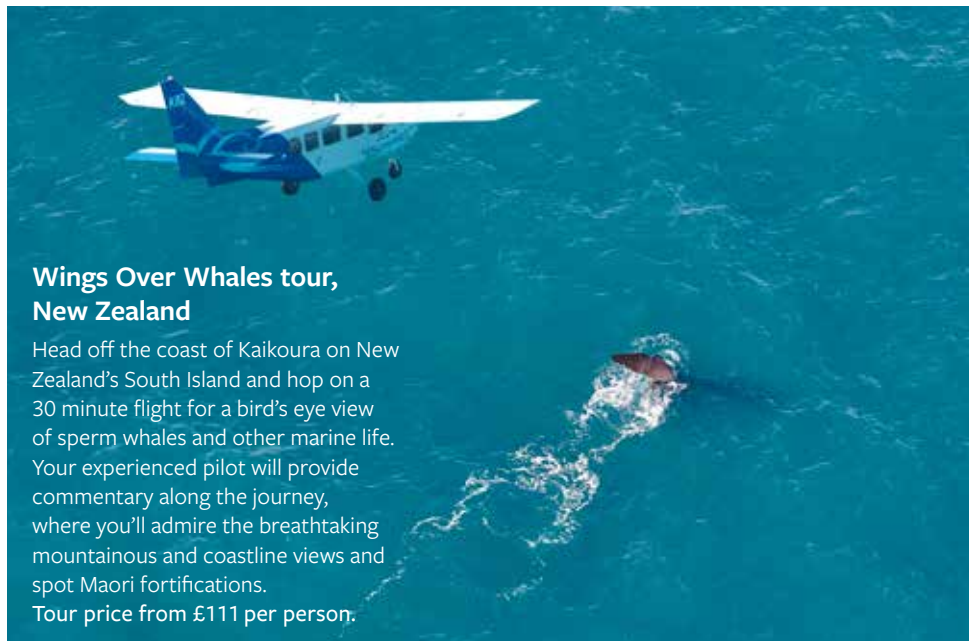


Ikurangi Eco Retreat



Malamala Beach Club, Fiji

Fiji brings you the world's first island beach club. Just 25 minutes from Port Denarau, Malamala Beach Club is located in the exquisite Mamanuca Islands. With a day pass you can enjoy white-sand beaches, exceptional snorkelling, and relax in one of the many beachside cabanas dotted around the island. Too relaxed to move? For an additional £40 a personal butler will bring your pina coladas to you. **Beach Club day visit from £99 per person.**




Wings Over Whales tour, New Zealand

Head off the coast of Kaikoura on New Zealand's South Island and hop on a 30 minute flight for a bird's eye view of sperm whales and other marine life. Your experienced pilot will provide commentary along the journey, where you'll admire the breathtaking mountainous and coastline views and spot Maori fortifications. **Tour price from £111 per person.**



Murray River Walk, South Australia

Introducing the newest member of the Great Walks of Australia's Signature Collection, the Murray River Walk. This four-day walk is a journey through the magnificent Riverland Ramsar Wetland, renowned for its waterbirds, red gum forests and spectacular cliffs home to ancient Aboriginal art. By day, enjoy gentle guided walks and in the evenings, dine and relax in your modern houseboat accommodation complete with hot showers and a top deck spa overlooking the river.

4 day tour from £1,411 per person. 

What's on

When planning your holiday to Australasia, take a look at our hand-picked events and festivals. Whether you want to watch the Australian Open in Melbourne, tick New Year's Eve in Sydney off your bucket list, or join the celebrations of Queenstown Winter Festival, there's an abundance of activities year-round to keep you entertained.



Australian Open, Melbourne

15th-28th January

This major tennis tournament is the first Grand Slam of the year, with the finals fought out on court at the Rod Laver Arena.



Commonwealth Games, Gold Coast

4th-25th April

The sporting spotlight will be on Australia's Gold Coast, as 70 nations and territories compete in 26 sports, including athletics, diving, swimming and cycling.



Vivid Sydney

25th May-16th June

The annual light and music festival immerses the city of Sydney in vibrant colours. Enjoy an array of music performances and witness the Opera House transform with vibrant projections covering the sails each evening.



Queenstown Winter Festival, New Zealand

21st-24th June

New Zealand's adventure capital enjoys a four-day

celebration to mark the beginning of winter, with live music, fireworks, comedy, sporting action and après ski activities.



Camel Cup, Alice Springs

14th July

One of the most unusual races you will ever encounter, this annual race at Blatherskite Park is an hour from Alice Springs.

Hamilton Island Race Week, Queensland

18th-25th August

Australia's favourite yachting event sees scores of spectators and sailors head to the stunning Whitsunday Islands to see exciting racing through the azure Queensland waters.



Melbourne Fringe Festival

13th-30th September

This art festival showcase the city's metropolitan culture and creativity, with shows ranging from comedy and visual arts, to cabaret and dance.

Margaret River Gourmet Escape, Western Australia

16th-19th November

Set in the scenic, rolling countryside of this famous wine region, the weekend is a culinary spectacle for food, wine and music lovers.



Adelaide Fringe Festival

16th February-18th March

The largest Fringe festival outside of Edinburgh, Adelaide and its surrounding suburbs are transformed for this exciting arts festival, with performances in theatre, comedy, dance, cabaret and more.

Ten Days – Tasmanian International Arts Festival

17th-26th March

This biennial event features international artists and events from island locations, including stately homes, museums and theatres.



Opera in the Vineyards, Hunter Valley

20th October

Enjoy a spectacular evening of fine wine, gourmet food and fantastic music, surrounded by stunning vineyard views.

New Year's Eve

31st December

Celebrate in Sydney watching the fireworks from a rooftop bar, or splurge and see the celebrations from the famous harbour on a gourmet cruise. Done Sydney and fancy something different? Head to the Cook Islands and ring in the New Year at the luxury Nautilus Resort Rarotonga.



DISCOVER VIRGIN AUSTRALIA'S PLUSPASS

Offering simple flexibility, discounted airfares and award-winning service, Virgin Australia's PlusPass leaves little for you to worry about. With flights to over 55 destinations within Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific Islands, you can visit the vast landscape of Uluru, relax on the pristine beaches of Fiji and immerse yourself in New Zealand's Maori culture, all with Virgin Australia's brilliant PlusPass.

Essential benefits:

- Additional baggage: Receive two 23kg checked baggage allowance per person on Virgin Australia flights
- Excellent airfares: Enjoy a discount on a range of Economy booking classes
- Extensive network: Explore a wide range of destinations within Australasia
- Multiple sectors: Add up to 16 different Australasian destinations on your Virgin Australia PlusPass ticket



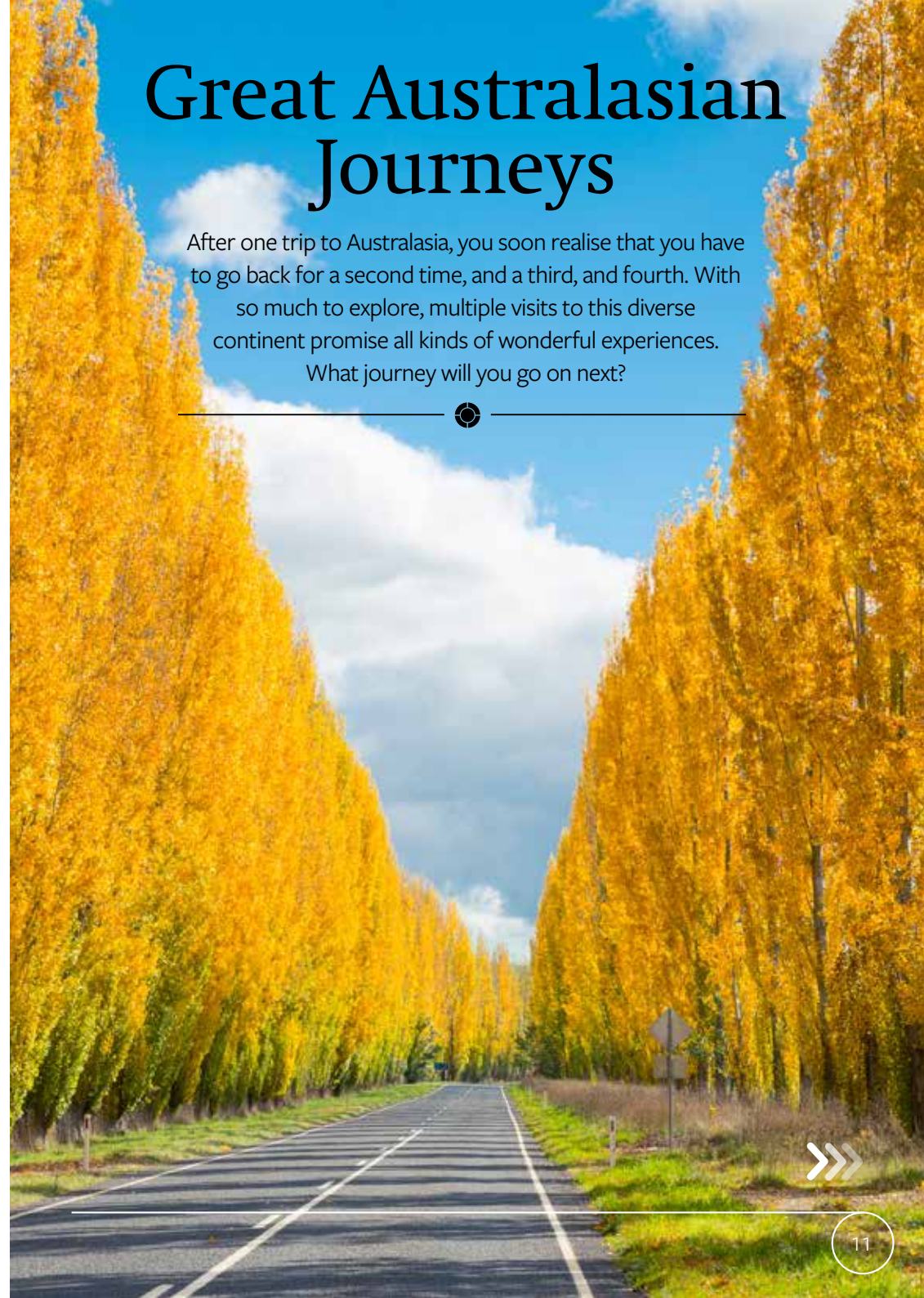
Receive discounted internal fares within Australasia when booking the PlusPass with your international flights*.

AUSTRAVEL Experts in Australia, New Zealand & South Pacific

*Excludes Qantas, Emirates and Jetstar. Terms & Conditions apply.

Great Australasian Journeys

After one trip to Australasia, you soon realise that you have to go back for a second time, and a third, and fourth. With so much to explore, multiple visits to this diverse continent promise all kinds of wonderful experiences. What journey will you go on next?



Rail



The Ghan Expedition

Darwin – Katherine – Alice Springs – Coober Pedy – Adelaide
4 days, 3 nights

An epic rail journey through the heart of Australia, from the wetlands of the Tropical North to the Red Centre's ochre outback and on to the bountiful vineyards of South Australia.

Day 1: Darwin to Katherine

Your journey begins in Darwin, the Northern Territory's cosmopolitan capital. Once on-board, take your time to settle in and watch as the view outside starts to transform. It's not long before you arrive in Katherine for your first off-train experience. Carved out by the magnificent Katherine River, you'll discover the spectacular Nitmiluk (Katherine) Gorge with its vast sandstone escarpments and glassy waters. Visit a working cattle station for a taste of the real Aussie outback.

Day 2: Alice Springs

Wake up to another day of exploration in the

outback town of Alice Springs. You also have the option to upgrade your off-train experience with a scenic flight over Uluru (Ayers Rock) and Kata Tjuta; nothing quite compares to the aerial views of Australia's most sacred icons. To finish your time in the Northern Territory, enjoy an authentic outback BBQ under the stars with live Australian music followed by an informative astronomical talk.

Day 3: Coober Pedy

A fascinating place of underground dwellings and moon-like desert landscapes. After breakfast, venture off on a tour to explore the tunnels and caves of this unique opal mining town. With over half of the residents still living underground, you'll explore churches, art galleries and of course, their homes. Sample life below for yourself with a gourmet lunch before setting off to see the spectacular sun-scorched scenery of the Breakaways.

Day 4: Adelaide

This morning the lush green pastures of South Australia appear outside your window. Your incredible journey ends in Adelaide. With its

famous Central Market, golden beaches and booming arts scene, there's plenty to fill a few days in this cultured Australian city. From here, you can continue your adventure with trips to the Barossa or the wildlife-laden Kangaroo Island, the choice is yours.

About Great Southern Rail

Great Southern Rail's Ghan Expedition is one of the world's greatest rail adventures. Offering



all-inclusive travel with the choice of Gold Service or the premium Platinum Service in spacious and stylish cabins, The Ghan guarantees one of the most comfortable and relaxing journeys of your life.

TAKE ME THERE

Darwin, The Ghan Expedition & Adelaide

15 days from £5,149 per person

Based on selected travel September 2018 – includes flights. The Ghan Expedition will operate April to October 2018 and from March 2019.



Katherine Gorge



The Ghan Interior

Self-drive

Melbourne, Wine & Wildlife

Melbourne – Yarra Valley – Wilsons Promontory – Phillip Island – Mornington Peninsula
6 days, 5 nights

Begin and finish this sensational self-drive in Victoria's chic capital, Melbourne. Stopping off to take in wineries, wildlife, national parks and beautiful beaches all at your own pace.

Day 1: Melbourne to the Yarra Valley

Once you've had your fill of Melbourne's charming laneway cafés, shopping, sport and more, it's time to escape to the nearby Yarra Valley. Join a tour to taste the region's cool-climate wines, then continue the indulgence with a meal at one of the many vineyard restaurants. For an extra treat, book yourself an early morning hot air balloon flight to watch the sunrise over this picturesque landscape.

Day 2 & 3: Wilsons Promontory

One of Victoria's best kept secrets, 'The Prom' is a narrow-necked peninsula given over entirely to national park. As the state's largest coastal wilderness area, it's a visual feast of granite mountaintops, forested valleys and pristine beaches such as the aptly-named Squeaky Beach. The sand actually squeaks when you walk on it! Spend a couple of days here exploring the countless walking trails and soaking up the area's natural beauty.

Day 4 & 5: Phillip Island

Today you're off to the wildlife haven of Phillip Island. Connected to the mainland by a bridge, it's easy to access this small, yet abundant island with plenty

to occupy you for a few days. Discover epic surf beaches, take a nature walk, visit the Koala Conservation Centre, see Australia's largest fur seal colony and watch the famous Penguin Parade, where hordes of Little Penguins waddle ashore at dusk.

Day 6: Mornington Peninsula to Melbourne

On the final day of your road trip, enjoy the relaxed alfresco lifestyle of the Mornington Peninsula. Explore the boutique galleries, have lunch in a breezy seaside café, and spend the rest of the day on the beach – there's plenty to choose from – before heading back to the city. Of course, there's always time to stop off and load up the boot with delicious local produce from roadside market stalls en route.

About Avis Australia



Whether you need a small compact or a 4WD to explore, Avis Australia has a car for you. To make your journey even easier, we have teamed up with Avis to tailor-make your perfect self-drive itinerary. You choose the route and we'll ensure all your overnight accommodation is pre-booked before you get on the road.

TAKE ME THERE

Melbourne, Wine & Wildlife self-drive & St Kilda

13 days from £2,489 per person

Based on selected travel October 2018 – includes flights.



Wilson Promontory



Yarra Valley



Self-drive



Penguin Parade on Phillip Island

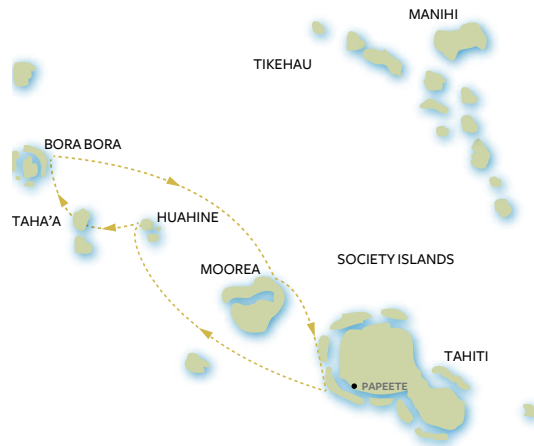
Cruise



The Gauvin cruise ship



Bora Bora



Bora Bora

The Islands of Tahiti

Tahiti and Society Islands
8 days, 7 nights

Experience paradise on this week-long Tahiti and Society Islands cruise – the ideal introduction to the South Pacific. Sail to picture-perfect atolls, swim in emerald waters and discover a plethora of marine life on this memorable over-water journey.

Day 1: Tahiti

Your cruise begins in Tahiti, the largest of the Polynesian islands. Take time to sample the vibrant cuisine and lively markets in the capital city of Papeete before boarding *The Gauvin*.

Day 2: Huahine

Known as ‘The Garden Island’, Huahine’s lush rainforests and dramatic terrain surround sacred sites and legendary landmarks that are among the best-preserved in the Society Islands. Venture inland, or be tempted by Huahine’s beautiful blue lagoon.

Day 3: Taha’a (Motu Mahana)

Today it’s your choice of exciting shore excursion. Alternatively, spend the whole day relaxing on the

private island of Motu Mahana where you can swim, snorkel and kayak, or simply lounge on the beach with a chilled beverage from the floating bar.

Day 4 & 5: Bora Bora

So stunning that it deserves a full two days. Bora Bora welcomes you with its lush peaks, white-sand beaches, colourful reefs and romantic lagoons. Experience the island’s natural beauty on a snorkelling trip, sunset jet boat ride, or a helicopter flight over Bora Bora’s iconic Mount Otemanu.

Day 6 & 7: Moorea

Spend another two leisurely days in Moorea where you can discover everything from fresh fruits and flowers to multi-hued lagoons with palm-fringed beaches. Shop for local handicrafts, embark on an optional dolphin watching cruise with a marine biologist, and sample Polynesia’s most delicious pineapples.

Day 8: Moorea to Tahiti

Welcome back to Papeete. If you’re not ready for your South Pacific getaway to end, spend a few more days here enjoying the city’s relaxing resorts and array of restaurants.

About Paul Gauvin Cruises



Paul Gauvin Cruises’ award-winning luxury cruise ship provides an exceptional all-inclusive cruise experience. Designed specifically to sail the waters of Tahiti, Fiji and the South Pacific, *The Gauvin* can access smaller intimate ports that larger cruise ships cannot reach. Spacious suites and staterooms (more than 70% with private balconies), an on-board watersports marina, three gourmet dining venues and an extensive spa are among her other five-star attributes.

TAKE ME THERE
 Tahiti stay & The Islands of Tahiti cruise
15 days from £5,049 per person
 Based on selected travel June 2018 – includes flights.

Escorted touring



Milford Sound



Bay of Islands

New Zealand Wonderland

Auckland – Bay of Islands – Rotorua – Wellington – Christchurch – Queenstown – Te Anau
17 days, 16 nights

A remarkable journey showcasing the highlights of New Zealand's North and South Island. Begin in Auckland and travel via pristine beaches, lush rainforests, snow-capped mountains and tranquil fiords, before finishing in Christchurch.

Day 1: Arrive in Auckland

Arrive in the City of Sails where you will be met at the airport and transferred to your hotel. The remainder of the day is at leisure.

Day 2: Auckland

Today select your preferred Freedom of Choice sightseeing excursion from a range of included options, such as a cruise of Waitemata Harbour, a Waiheke Island wine tour or visit to the Auckland Museum.

Day 3: Auckland to Bay of Islands

Cross Auckland's Harbour Bridge and up the Hibiscus Coast to the historical Waitangi Treaty Grounds.

Day 4: Bay of Islands

Explore more of these subtropical islands on your choice of included sightseeing tour.

Day 5: Bay of Islands to Auckland

Set off on a dolphin watching cruise to Cape Brett and the famous Hole in the Rock.

Day 6: Auckland, Waitomo Caves and Rotorua

Visit the glow worm caves of Waitomo and enjoy a Maori Hangi feast in Rotorua.

Day 7: Rotorua

Experience the spurting geysers and bubbling mud pools of Te Puia.

Day 8: Rotorua, Lake Taupo and Wellington

See Australasia's largest freshwater lake and travel via Tongariro National Park on your way to Wellington.

Day 9: Wellington

Discover the city highlights and national landmarks of New Zealand's capital.

Day 10: Wellington, Kaikoura and Christchurch

Enjoy the Interislander ferry crossing to the South Island and visit Kaikoura, the whale watching capital of the world.

Day 11: Christchurch, TransAlpine train and Franz Josef

Board the TransAlpine train for one of the world's greatest rail adventures. Arrive at the majestic Franz Josef Glacier for a degustation dinner.

Day 12: Franz Josef to Queenstown

Enjoy a day of truly breathtaking scenery as you travel to Queenstown.

Day 13: Queenstown

Embark on your choice of activity such as a wine tour or a jet boat ride on the Dart River.

Day 14: Queenstown, Milford Sound and Te Anau

Cruise through the heart of Fiordland National Park before a picturesque drive to Te Anau.

Day 15: Te Anau to Dunedin

Journey through Southland countryside to Dunedin, a city known as the Edinburgh of the south.

Day 16: Dunedin to Mount Cook

Visit World Heritage-listed Mount Cook National Park to see Australasia's highest peak.

Day 17: Mount Cook, Lake Tekapo and Christchurch

Travel to Lake Tekapo and visit the Church of the Good Shepherd, followed by a farewell dinner in Christchurch.

Day 18: Depart from Christchurch

Spend your final morning at leisure before your return flight.

About APT

APT is a family-owned escorted touring company offering a range of five-star luxury and four-star premium experiences to incredible destinations across Australasia. This luxury escorted tour features iconic hand-picked accommodation, gourmet dining and comfortable transport. Enjoy included sightseeing in each location plus APT's unique Freedom of Choice touring and dining in select locations - allowing you to customise your holiday at no extra cost. APT's experienced drivers, expert tour directors and local guides will ensure you see all those famous sights - and some hidden gems too!



Maori warrior, Rotorua

TAKE ME THERE

APT New Zealand Wonderland luxury tour

18 days from £6,219 per person

Based on selected travel October 2018

-September 2019 - includes flights. Book by 28 February 2018 and save £500 per couple.

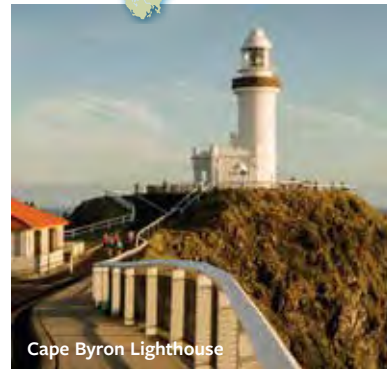
Motorhome



Whitsunday Islands



Fraser Island



Cape Byron Lighthouse



Lamington National Park



Apollo Euro Star

East Coast Adventure

Cairns – Sydney, 19 days, 18 nights

Embark on a motorhome self-drive holiday along one of the most popular routes in Australia. Visit some of the best-known Aussie cities and beaches on this unforgettable coastal road trip.

Day 1: Cairns to Port Douglas

Take the amazing coastal route up to the tropical town of Port Douglas.

Day 2: Port Douglas

Today take an optional cruise to see the bucket list-worthy Great Barrier Reef (pre-booking essential).

Day 3: Port Douglas to Atherton

Travel inland to the waterfalls and lush pastures of the Atherton Tablelands.

Day 4: Atherton to Mission Beach

Continue down the coast to Mission Beach's palm-fringed stretch of secluded inlets and empty beaches.

Day 5: Mission Beach

Choose from an array of activities today including sea kayaking, white-water rafting on the Tully River, or even another reef trip.

Day 6: Mission Beach to Townsville

Arrive in sunny Townsville, home to excellent museums, a huge aquarium and a stunning waterfront esplanade.

Day 7: Townsville

Enjoy an optional day trip to nearby Magnetic Island for some koala spotting and scenic bushwalking.

Day 8: Townsville to Airlie Beach

Welcome to Airlie; the gateway to the exquisite Whitsunday Islands.

Day 9: Whitsundays (Airlie Beach)

Explore the Whitsundays on a catamaran cruise, snorkel in their crystal-clear waters and visit the famous Whitehaven Beach.

Day 10: Airlie Beach to Rockhampton

Next stop is the 'beef capital' of Australia where you're guaranteed a great steak dinner.

Day 11: Rockhampton to Fraser Island

It's an early start to make the lunchtime ferry crossing to the world's largest sand island.

Day 12: Fraser Island to Noosa

After your fill of island rainforests, sand dunes and shipwrecks, head south to the stylish resort town of Noosa.

Day 13: Noosa to Lamington

Enjoy a morning relaxing on Noosa's Main Beach before venturing into the Gold Coast hinterland.

Day 14: Lamington

Spend the day exploring the World Heritage-listed Lamington National Park with its beautiful gorges, waterfalls and subtropical rainforests.

Day 15: Lamington to Byron Bay

Onwards to the laid-back shores and surfable coastline of Byron Bay.

Day 16: Byron Bay

Soak up Byron's chilled beach vibes and enjoy an easy afternoon walk up to Cape Byron Lighthouse.

Day 17: Byron Bay to Port Macquarie

Explore Port Macquarie's fantastic coastal walks and go dolphin spotting on Hastings River.

Day 18: Port Macquarie to Sydney


The final leg of your trip brings you to Australia's largest and most diverse city; sensational Sydney.

Day 19: Sydney

Finish your journey discovering the iconic sights of this sun-kissed harbour city. We recommend adding a couple of extra days to explore the best of the city.

About Apollo Australia

Combine your transport and accommodation with Apollo's modern suite of motorhomes.

Choose from two-bed campers to six-bed motorhomes, upgrade to the Euro Star motorhome with its innovative bed lift or opt for the extra spacious Euro Deluxe. With unlimited kilometres and 24-hour roadside assistance, Apollo offer an independent and affordable way to travel around Australia. 

TAKE ME THERE

Cairns, East Coast motorhome & Sydney

21 days from £1,949 per person

Based on selected travel June 2018 – includes flights.



Lakes Entrance

Dear Austravel...

What better way to celebrate a special birthday than with a fabulous trip Down Under. That's exactly what Austraveller Susan did with her husband Chris. Here, Susan tells us about all the highlights from her travels...

We both love Australia, it's a fantastic country. This was our third visit and hopefully not the last. This time round, we were visiting for a number of reasons. I had recently retired from work and wanted to book a holiday for my 60th birthday. We were also visiting my brother John, my nephew and his girlfriend, and seeing some friends who live in Australia. So lots of people to catch up with!

We started our adventure with a stopover in Dubai to celebrate my birthday. Our stay at the Ramada Plaza on Jumeirah Beach was superb, the staff were lovely and even made me a birthday cake.

To start off our travels, we spent two weeks in Melbourne, sightseeing and meeting up with family and friends. We explored the city and went on trips to the Mornington Peninsula, the Great Ocean Road, Puffing Billy Railway, Williamstown,

Altona, St Kilda and Port Melbourne. We also had an overnight visit by train to meet a friend at Lakes Entrance, which is a really beautiful coastal town.

We then spent a week in the Brisbane area and one of the highlights was our two-night stay at Tangalooma Island Resort, where we hand fed wild dolphins. We also visited the Lone Pine Koala Sanctuary and took a trip up to the Mount Coot-tha Lookout – the views across Brisbane were stunning.

Next, we flew to Darwin where it was lovely and warm all week. The AAT Kings Top End tour was an excellent way to see the nearby Kakadu and Litchfield National Parks. We also caught the local bus from Darwin to Mindil Beach Sunset Market, did a city tour and I had a swim in the lagoon at Darwin Waterfront.

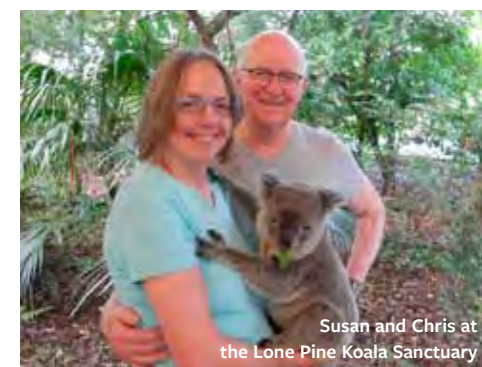
We then spent a week in Perth. A visit to Kings



Jewellery souvenirs in Mindil Beach Sunset Market, Darwin



Quokkas, Rottnest Island



Susan and Chris at the Lone Pine Koala Sanctuary

Park is a must, with fantastic views over the city and Swan River. We really enjoyed our day trip to Rottnest Island too. It included a bus tour around the island, plus lunch, and we also had free time to explore and look for quokkas, which are very cute little animals.

Back on the mainland, I had booked a dolphin swim cruise but unfortunately this was cancelled due to the weather, so we went on a wine tour instead, which was a great alternative. For our final few days, we caught the train to Fremantle and the ferry to South Perth, where we visited Perth Zoo. We also did tours of the Bell Tower at Elizabeth Quay and Perth Mint – Australia's official bullion mint.

After five wonderful weeks in Australia, we had another stopover in Dubai, this time staying in the city. We had a city tour, a dhow cruise and I finally

had my dolphin swim. Dubai Mall is a must visit with loads of shops, restaurants, an aquarium, ice rink, waterfall and dancing fountains. We didn't have time to visit the Burj Khalifa – but there's always next time.

We've booked with Austravel twice before and it's safe to say they are the experts in all things Australia. I simply said where we wanted to go and for how long, and the Austravel staff did the rest. Thank you Austravel for another amazing trip!

If you'd like to share your Austravel travel stories and photos with us, please email us at share@austravel.com. We'd love to hear from you!



A VIEW WITH A ROOM

Kahutara PurePod
New Zealand's
South Island

Get away from it all and enjoy total privacy and tranquillity in the heart of the New Zealand wilderness, just 20 minutes inland from Kaikoura. Kahutara PurePod, perched high above the Kahutara River, is made of heavy duty glass offering 360° views across to the mighty Seward Kaikoura Mountain Range. Wake to the choir of birds in the nearby Kanuka trees, pack a picnic and wander the trails then spend the evening stargazing at the clear night skies from your private deck. Bliss!

ADD TO MY TRIP
3 nights from £759 per person

Saying 'I do' Down Under

Think planning a wedding overseas or finding somewhere special to renew your vows is tough? In Australasia, it's actually easier than you think.

Choosing a venue

Once you've settled on a destination, it's time to find a venue. And unless you already have somewhere special in mind, the choices are endless. In Australia, you can marry on most beaches and parklands. Maybe a mountain top in New Zealand suits you both, or for those eloping, perhaps an exotic beach wedding in Fiji? Of course, there are lots of lovely chapels to choose from too. Looking for something stress-free? Then an all-inclusive package, tailored to you, could be the ideal option.

Plan around the weather

Have your heart set on a tropical wedding? Just be aware that the weather can be unpredictable. Our Travel Designers can provide information about the best time to visit certain destinations, to ensure you have the best chance to enjoy the Australasian weather.

Don't forget the legalities

Anyone can get married in most Australasian countries, and they are internationally recognised and legally binding. However, you'll have to fill out the appropriate documentation. Refer to your chosen country's Embassy or High Commission, or speak to our Travel Designers to find out more.



Combine your wedding and honeymoon

Either continue your travels through beautiful Australasia, or stopover somewhere relaxing like Bali or Hawaii on the way home.

Our top venues:

1. The Sydney Opera House

Choose one of Australia's most iconic and treasured locations to tie the knot or renew your vows. Elegant and unique, the Sydney Opera House offers an unforgettable harbour-front setting for your special day. Prepare to wow your guests.

2. A New Zealand vineyard

Toast your future at one of New Zealand's many picturesque vineyards such as sunny Hawke's Bay or the country's largest

wine region, Marlborough. This is what wedding photographers' dreams are made of.

3. A South Pacific island

There's no shortage of romantic island retreats in the South Pacific. Choose to celebrate your union in an idyllic lagoon setting such as beautiful Bora Bora or Moorea. Tokoriki Island Resort in Fiji's Mamanuca Islands offers another truly memorable wedding experience. A barefoot beach wedding, a traditional chapel ceremony or sharing your vows on the deck of your sunset pool villa, the choice is yours.

Find out more at austravel.com/weddings or call our Travel Designers on 0808 278 2299* to book your dream wedding in Australasia. 📞

Travellers' tales

Exploring Australia's Red Centre

Home to Australia's natural icon, Uluru, the Red Centre offers an outback experience like no other. Here, Travel Designer Mike, shares his highlights of his recent visit, including stargazing, cycling around Uluru, and spotting wild 'roos in the Aussie bush.



Uluru, Red Centre





A Night at the Field of Light

Q. What were your first impressions of the Red Centre?

The landscape is stunning, especially when you first lock eyes on Uluru. It's a moment I'll never forget.

Q. What was your favourite thing to do there?

I really enjoyed a bike ride round the base of Uluru. The route was about 12km and was pretty flat so you don't need to be an experienced cyclist to enjoy it. There were lots of places to stop and explore caves and lagoons, as well as to view Aboriginal paintings. You realise just how huge the rock is when you're standing at its base. Our guide met us at various locations, telling ancient Uluru stories (Tjukurpa) of the local Anangu people. It was fascinating.

Q. Any other must-do experiences?

Plenty! We were lucky enough to combine the amazing Field of Light installation (now extended until 31 December 2020) with the Sounds of Silence dinner. We dined under the stars before finishing the night with a mug of hot chocolate, stargazing and learning about the star constellations from a local expert. One morning we were out by 5am for the Kata


Tjuta Sunrise & Valley of the Winds tour. The 36 domes of Kata Tjuta (aptly translated 'heads many') change colour with the rising sun – it's a spectacular time to see this wonder, and well worth the early start!

Finally, an early morning hot air balloon flight from Alice Springs. As the sun rose we just sat in awe as we watched kangaroos jump through the bush beneath us – that was probably my favourite memory from the entire trip!

Q. Any top tips for travellers visiting the Red Centre?

I'd recommend including a night at Kings Canyon Resort. That way you can get up early to conquer Kings Canyon on a Rim Walk. The resort also has a signature outback dining experience, where you can enjoy a five course dinner in a secret location under a canopy of stars.

Q. Who would you recommend this destination to?

I think the Red Centre should be on everyone's travel wish-list. It's great for all ages and offers a real outback experience. BBQs, sleeping under the stars and Uluru... you can't get more Aussie than that! 



Kings Canyon



Mike at MacDonnell Ranges



WHAT OUR EXPERTS SAY...

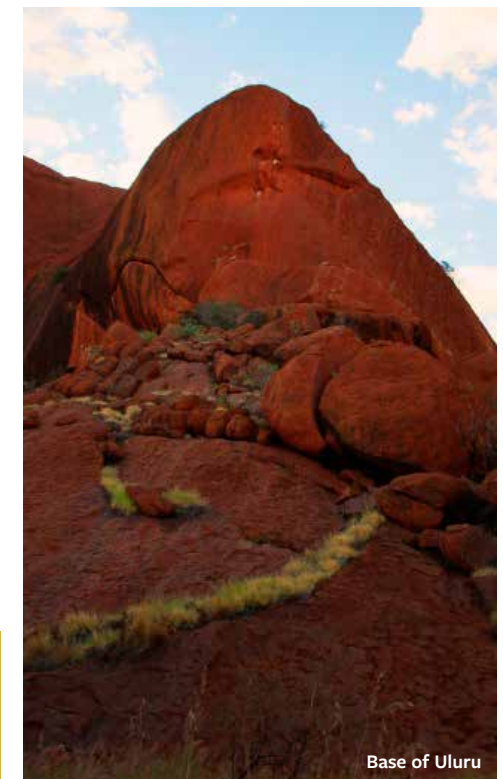


“Get up early and do the ridge walk around Kings Canyon before it gets too hot. It'll take a few hours and you'll be treated to incredible views of the surrounding area.”

MIKE, TRAVEL DESIGNER

ADD TO MY TRIP

Red Centre self-drive
6 days from £789 per person
 Includes: A Night at the Field of Light.



Base of Uluru

Island hopping in the South Pacific

The bluest lagoons, yet-to-be-trodden sand and swaying palms, there's no definitive way to describe how idyllic a South Pacific island-hopping holiday truly is. You simply have to see for yourself.



Escape to paradise

Fiji

Experience the best of Fiji's magnificent Yasawa Islands, the Mamanucas and the lesser-known Sacred Islands on a week-long island-hopping cruise. Mingle with locals, meet tropical underwater residents and fully embrace 'Fiji Time' on some of the most alluring islands in the world.

Mamanuca Islands

Remember the film 'Cast Away'? You may think that Tom Hanks was the film's lead star but in fact it was Modriki Island in the outer Mamanucas that really stole the show. With its impossibly white sand and crystal-clear lagoons, it's easy to see why.

Yasawa Islands

Immerse yourself in the Yasawan way of life. Take part in a traditional kava ceremony, explore the village of Soso and enjoy a Fijian cooking class. You'll also have the chance to attend a village church service – a very moving experience.

Sacred Islands

Remote and breathtakingly beautiful, these four uninhabited islands are the perfect place to switch off from the rest of the world. Swim in aquamarine lagoons, stroll along empty beaches or go for an afternoon bushwalk where the only sound you'll hear is the tropical bird song.



Blue Lagoon Cruise, Fiji



Snorkelling the lagoons of the Mamanucas



White sand shores of Fiji



Fijian warriors

ADD TO MY TRIP

Blue Lagoon Cruise

8 days from £1,419 per person

Based on selected travel September 2018.

A warm welcome

Cook Islands

It's not just the vivid volcanic scenery and coral atolls that attract visitors to the Cook Islands. The Polynesian hospitality and fascinating heritage is what really sets the Cooks apart from their neighbours. Yes, you'll be blown away by the islands' good looks, but it's the beauty of the islanders that will really make your eyes water.

Rarotonga

It all begins with Papa Jake serenading you at the airport on arrival; a taste of things to come. Explore the island's lagoon with Captain Tama, head in land on a scenic 4WD tour or ride the local bus to Punanga Nui Cultural Market to pick up some souvenirs. Te Vara Nui is another absolute must – an unforgettable night of music, dance and storytelling.

Aitutaki

The flight to Aitutaki is an incredible experience in itself so make sure you've got a window seat! Once on land, the pinch-yourself moments just keep coming. Aitutaki's lagoon certainly lives up to its reputation; powdery white sand alongside the teals and turquoises of its calm lagoon waters. Island perfection.

One Foot Island

No trip to Aitutaki is complete without visiting nearby One Foot Island. A tiny islet with uninterrupted 360-degree views, this is the full desert island cliché. Make sure to get your passport stamped by the customs officers (who look suspiciously like your friendly boat crew), then spend the rest of your time idly wandering or snorkelling off its shores.



Te Vara Nui



Little Polynesian, Rarotonga



Aitutaki

ADD TO MY TRIP

Aitutaki & Rarotonga island hop

11 days from £2,775 per person

Based on selected travel September 2018.



Pacific dreaming

The Islands of Tahiti

Picturing your perfect island getaway, does your mind drift off to azure lagoons dotted with thatched-roof overwater bungalows? Then these islands deserve your attention, or they'll certainly capture it regardless. The Islands of Tahiti are made up of 118 islands and atolls. Your hardest decision, which to visit? Here's our suggestion...

Tahiti

Tahiti is the largest of the islands. Fly into the capital of Papeete, but before you jet off to another island, take time to explore its bustling waterfront including the famous food trucks of Place Vaiete. The Marché de Papeete is another exciting place to shop for all things Tahiti including vanilla beans, black pearls and colourful pareos.

Moorea

A 10 minute flight from Tahiti or 30 minutes by ferry, and the dramatic silhouette of Moorea comes into view. Settle in, then head out to discover the rugged peaks, mountain villages and abundant pineapple plantations of this geographical masterpiece.

Bora Bora

The supermodel of the South Pacific, Bora Bora is gorgeous, well-groomed and utterly beguiling. The overwater bungalow is her trademark. Combined with the iconic Mount Otemanu, its translucent lagoon and tranquil sunsets, this island is the ultimate romantic retreat.

ADD TO MY TRIP

Tahiti, Moorea & Bora Bora island hop
10 days from £1,699 per person
Based on selected travel October 2018.



A DAY IN THE LIFE

Taronga Zoo's Nat Holdsworth shares the joys of zoo keeping





Nat Holdsworth

Occupation:
Zookeeper, Australian Mammals
Location:
Taronga Zoo, Sydney



We think Nat Holdsworth has one of the best jobs in the world, looking after the animals of Taronga Zoo in one of the most iconic cities in the world, Sydney. Here, she shares the highlights of her job.

Q. What steered you towards your profession?

I first went to Taronga Zoo as a visitor to draw the animals with a sketch group. I'd watch the keepers and think 'what an absolutely amazing job'. I have always been very passionate about conservation, which led me into my change of career – from computer programming to zoo keeping!

Q. What does a typical day as a zookeeper involve?

Early morning starts, with lots of cleaning and raking. Checking on the animals, providing enrichment activities, preparing food and feeding the animals. Then, I'd spend the rest of the day conducting tours and chatting to visitors.

Q. What's your favourite part of living and working in Sydney?

I love the views of Sydney Harbour, particularly from the zoo.

Q. What's the most enjoyable aspect of being a zookeeper?

Forming a real connection with the animals, getting them to trust you and sharing these

amazing experiences with visitors. At Taronga we do a lot of work and research to support the conservation of threatened species and it's fantastic to help visitors understand how important it is to protect our native wildlife. It's even better when they want to get involved themselves through generous donations, volunteering or even adopting an animal and becoming a Zoo Parent!

Q. What do you find most challenging about being a zookeeper?

Zoo keeping can be really physically demanding, there is lots of walking, lifting and shovelling that needs to be done come rain or shine. We have over 350 species and a total of 4,000 animals so as you can imagine, us keepers are kept very busy.

Q. Why would you recommend people visit your zoo?

To discover more about the world's remarkable wildlife including native animals to Australia, to form a connection and learn what we can do to contribute to conservation. We want to inspire people to support species and their habitats

across the world. Even through simple actions and choices in your everyday life, you can make a difference for the wildlife around you. While caring for our animals is a big part of our job at the zoo, educating visitors is almost as important.

Q. If you could work anywhere else in the world, where would you choose and why?

I've always wanted to visit Papua New Guinea to see some of their unique species, such as birds of paradise and long-beaked echidnas. That's definitely on my bucket list!

Q. Who is the most interesting person you've met on the job and why?

I am forever inspired by some of the other keepers who have worked at the zoo for over 20 years and are still truly passionate and enthusiastic about their job.

Q. What is the most memorable experience you've had at the zoo?

It was so exciting being involved with a royal visit from the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge. I assisted with training our bilby George – a small endangered Australian marsupial – in preparation for him to meet Prince George. It was a special day for the whole zoo.



Q. If you could take anyone around on your tour – who would you choose and why?

Dr. Jane Goodall, renowned primatologist, ethologist and anthropologist. She is an incredible inspiration and has worked non-stop throughout her life to encourage people to make a difference for animals in the wild. It would be a privilege to meet her in person.

Q. When you're not at the zoo, what do you do on your days off?

I currently study part-time, undertaking a Bachelor of Biodiversity and Conservation degree, so that takes up a chunk of my time. I also enjoy travelling around Australia and seeing animals in the wild. Nothing beats seeing healthy populations of our native wildlife in their natural habitat.

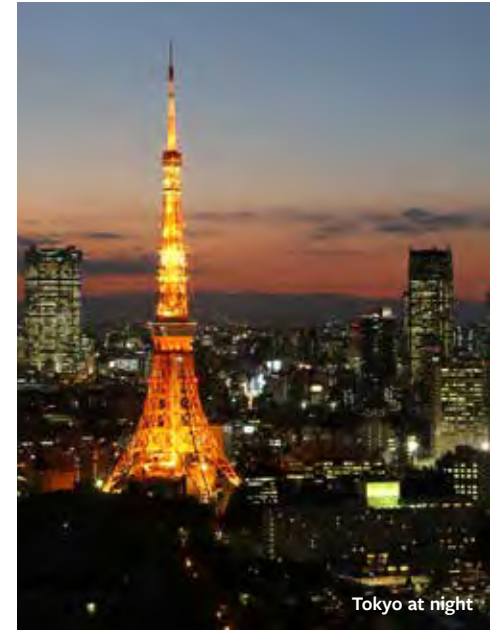
ADD TO MY TRIP

Behind the Scenes day tour from £60 per person.

Roar & Snore overnight stay from £219 person.

Extraordinary stopovers

Looking for a new and exciting stopover destination? Here are four out-of-the-ordinary places that are well worth a slight detour.



Tokyo at night

Tokyo, Japan

Why visit: cuisine, temples, shopping

Crispy tempura, sweet teriyaki chicken and fresh-off-the-roll-mat sushi – Tokyo knows how to treat your taste buds. With over 160,000 restaurants and more Michelin stars than any other capital city, it's a foodie's heaven. Of course, there are plenty of other reasons to visit too. For such an urbanised city, Tokyo has an incredible number of temples and gardens including the serene Shinjuku Gyoen National Garden. Time your visit for Japan's beloved, yet fleeting, sakura season and see the city blush with cherry blossom. For the more adventurous, a day trip to the famous Mount Fuji is a must, with climbing season running from July to September.

TAKE ME THERE

Japan, Sydney & Australia's Pacific Coast

15 days from £2,829 per person

Includes: 3nts Japan stopover

Based on selected travel May 2018 – includes flights.



Sushi



Cherry blossom



Vancouver

Photo credit: Albert Normandin & Tourism Vancouver

Vancouver, Canada

Why visit: nature, hiking, skiing

Visually, Vancouver wins the beauty contest, hands down. Wherever you look, you see mountains, water and verdant forest. The city itself offers everything from stylish restaurants, extensive shopping to art galleries. However, it's the easily-accessed adventure and breathtaking scenery that makes Vancouver the ideal stopover for lovers of the great outdoors. In summertime, explore British Columbia's beautiful Sunshine Coast (yes, they have one too!), see orcas in the wild on a whale watching tour and hike the alpine trails of Lynn Canyon. In the winter months, avid skiers can head to the nearby ski resorts such as Cypress, Grouse and Seymour, all within a mere half hour of the city.



Bear, Grouse Mountain

TAKE ME THERE

Vancouver, Melbourne, Great Ocean Road & Kangaroo Island

Prices from £4,269 per person

Includes: 3nts Vancouver stopover
Based on selected travel May 2018 – includes flights.

South Africa

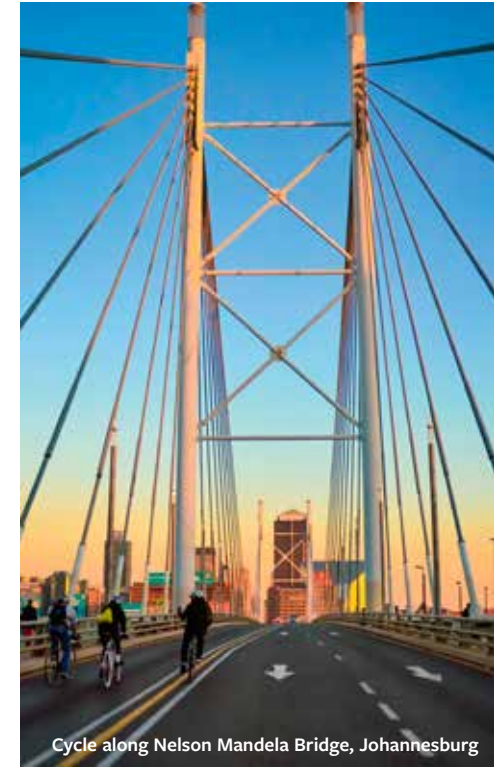
Why visit: history, safari, the Big Five

Johannesburg – or 'Joburg' as the locals fondly call it – is an energetic city in the midst of a renaissance. Progressive cultural attractions such as the Gold Reef City theme park stand alongside reflective tributes to South Africa's oppressive past. Experience inspiring stories at the Apartheid Museum and learn about Nelson Mandela's legacy at Mandela House, once the family home. Make sure you also have enough time to visit the world's best safari destination: Kruger National Park. Choose from a guided tour or self-drive excursion, but at the top of everyone's list is the famous 'Big Five' – the lion, elephant, buffalo, rhino and leopard. Encounter these incredible animals, and many others.

TAKE ME THERE

South Africa safari, Sydney & Reef
18 days from £4,719 per person

Includes: 3nts safari and 1nt in Johannesburg
Based on selected travel September 2018 – includes flights.



Cycle along Nelson Mandela Bridge, Johannesburg



Leopard in Kruger National Park



Mauritian market



Mauritius

Why visit: beaches, luxury hotels, relaxation

If swimming in sapphire-blue lagoons, snorkelling with rainbow-coloured fish and sipping on an island rum cocktail is the perfect end to your Australasia adventure, then Mauritius ticks all those boxes, and more. Home to surprisingly affordable luxury hotels, white-sand beaches and volcanic mountain backdrops, this island is a popular pick for honeymooners. Nonetheless, there's more to Mauritius than just the 'tropical paradise' label it wears so well. The island has an interesting fusion of cultural heritage from French architecture to Chinese pagodas alongside its native Hindu temples. What's more, bustling markets, wonderful wildlife and watersports galore means non beach bums have plenty to keep them occupied too.

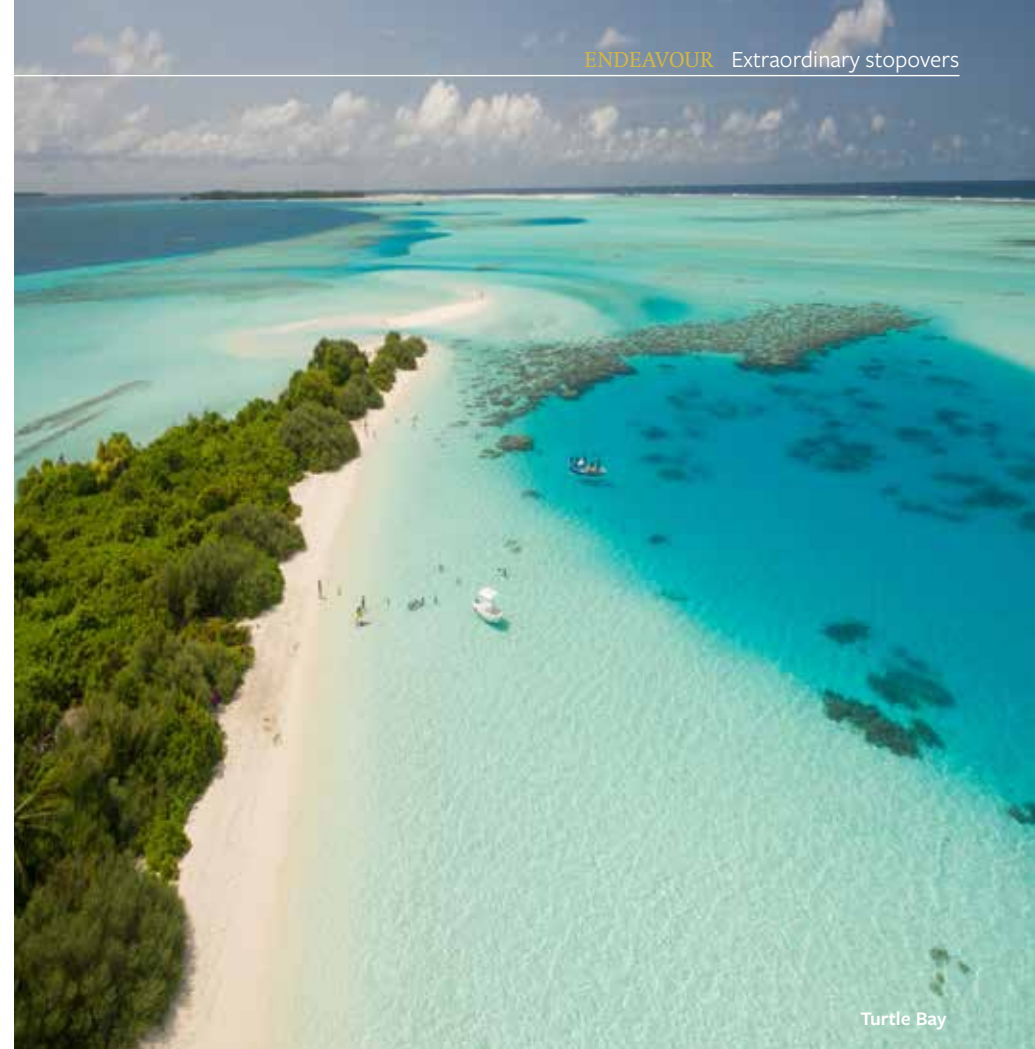
TAKE ME THERE

Mauritius, Perth & Australia's Coral Coast

19 days from £3,749 per person

Includes: 3nts stopover in Mauritius and 1nt on return

Based on selected travel May 2018 – includes flights.



Turtle Bay



Cap Malheureux Church

72 HOURS

in the Blue Mountains & Hunter Valley

Experience some of New South Wales' best sights on a journey that will delight and astound the senses. Here's how to make the most of three days in the Blue Mountains and beyond.



Blue Mountains

DAY 1

Morning

Set off early into Sydney's wild backyard. After driving an hour inland, you'll enter the lush, green expanse that is the World Heritage-listed Blue Mountains. Follow the winding roads for another half hour and arrive at Fairmont Resort; home for the next two nights. Located in the charming mountain village of Leura, Fairmont boasts 222 charming boutique-style rooms and suites some with panoramic views of Jamison Valley. Once settled in, it's time for lunch. Take a short stroll into Leura's centre and you'll find an array of food experiences, from resident chocolatiers to tiny tearooms. We recommend the Leura Gourmet Café & Deli – your mouth will start watering the moment you walk in.

Afternoon

Walk off lunch perusing Leura's boutique shops or drive up the road to Katoomba where there's no shortage of spectacular lookouts and world-class walks to fill your afternoon. One we recommend is the 1.3-kilometre Minni Ha Ha Track in north Katoomba. The track takes you along Yosemite Creek and down into a valley where you'll find the serene Minnehaha Falls, cradled by sandstone cliffs. If it's a warm day, bring a towel; the swimming hole at the base is perfect for cooling off. Alternatively, hire a mountain bike for the afternoon and pedal at your own pace along one of Katoomba's many cycle-friendly trails. Remember to look out for native birds and wildlife along the way too.

Where to stay

Fairmont Resort Blue Mountains

DAY 2

Morning

Wake up and enjoy your Fairmont breakfast accompanied by the spectacular views of the valley blanketed in morning mist. Today it's back to Katoomba for another dose of nature and striking landscapes, and there's nowhere better for this than Scenic World. We advise that you arrive early before the day-trippers to avoid the queues. Once there, choose from the Scenic Railway which carries you through the spectacular fern-filled Jamison Valley and features the steepest railway incline in the world. Or why not take to the skies on the Scenic Skyway with its 360-degree views and glass-bottomed floor offering some of the best views of Katoomba Falls, Jamison Valley and the famous Three Sisters. Needless to say, the views are breathtaking.

Afternoon

After a swift lunch, it's time for a slightly different perspective of the iconic Three Sisters. Perched on the edge of an escarpment, Echo Point lookout offers panoramic views of Jamison Valley and its stunning Three Sisters. No words or photos can do justice to this vast expanse of mountains and forest; it's a view you must see for yourself. Echo Point is also the gateway to many fantastic walks, from the easy pathway leading to the Three Sisters, to the more challenging Giant Stairway which descends over 800 steps to the valley floor below – suitable for the energetic only. For your final meal in the Blue Mountains, we recommend Silk's Brasserie in Leura. With its soaring ceiling, grand bar and chequerboard floor, it certainly has the 'special occasion' factor.

Where to stay

Fairmont Resort Blue Mountains



Fairmont Resort Blue Mountains





DAY 3

Morning

It's another early start as you head north to the Hunter Valley wine country. A scenic four-hour drive up New South Wales' Central Coast brings you to Australia's oldest wine growing region and its 150 world-class wineries. After the drive, check in to the family-run Hunter Resort, nestled within its own shiraz vineyards on 70 secluded acres. Find a local farmers' market for lunch or visit the Hunter Valley Gardens for a wander around its 10 themed and perfectly-manicured gardens.

Afternoon

Of course, you can't visit the Hunter Valley, one of the finest wine regions in the country, without booking yourself a vineyard and wine tasting tour. Sample local wines – and cheese – with the award-winning Hunter Valley wine tasting tours (pre-booking essential). In a small group, you'll visit three different cellar doors where you'll get the chance to taste and buy some of the best red and white varieties produced in the region. Finish the tour at one of the many Hunter Valley chocolate shops where you'll be tempted by their indulgent chocolate selection. You're sure to be feeling full and relaxed, if a little sleepy, after your fabulous afternoon in the Hunter!

Where to stay

Hunter Resort



Horse riding at Hunter Resort



WHAT OUR EXPERTS SAY...



"When visiting the Blue Mountains, make sure you take the glass-bottomed Scenic Skyway for amazing 360-degree views of the Three Sisters, Orphan Rock and Katoomba Falls."

SHARRON, TRAVEL DESIGNER

ADD TO MY TRIP

**Blue Mountains & Hunter Valley self-drive
4 days from £360 per person**

Includes: 2nts at Fairmont Resort Blue Mountains and 1nt at Hunter Resort
Based on selected travel October 2018.



ESCAPE TO HAMILTON ISLAND

Fringed by untouched coral reefs, stunning shores and turquoise oceans, Hamilton Island is a slice of paradise perched on the edge of the Great Barrier Reef. With easy access from Australia's major cities and a range of accommodation options, escape and enjoy some 'me' time.

Great Barrier Reef

Surrounded by the largest coral reef on earth, Hamilton Island is the perfect base to explore the spectacular Great Barrier Reef. Spend days on end discovering the striking coral and diverse marine-life that thrive in these waters, or perhaps admire it from above on a scenic helicopter experience.

When?

If the weather is a priority, then you'll be pleased to know that Hamilton Island's temperature ranges from a warm 23°C to 30°C year-round. As well as enjoying the wonderful sunshine, whale watching can be viewed between June-September for a truly unforgettable encounter.

Where?

There is a fantastic selection of hotels to choose from, including the perfectly located Beach Club and the luxury retreat, qualia.

How?

With a wide choice of flight options, it's quick and easy to reach this island retreat. Fly directly from Melbourne, Sydney, Brisbane and Cairns, or alternatively, make your way to Airlie Beach and enjoy a 45 minute cruise by ferry, before reaching this beautiful island.

ADD TO MY TRIP

Stay four nights and enjoy a fifth night free
Offer applies 1st May-31st Aug, 1st-21st Dec 2018
& 1st Feb-31st Mar 2019. Excludes qualia.



AUSTRAVEL.COM

Cover image: Hill Inlet, Whitsundays