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Monday 18 June 2012

Issue 2395

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Who Will Compete In Great Race Bali?

Air New Zealand has named the three brands who will be sending agents to Bali for a four-day competition billed as *Survivor* meets *Fear Factor* meets *Amazing Race*.

Stella Travel achieved the highest incremental sales growth of Seats to Suit fares between 09 May-09 Jun to come out on top in the Battle of the Brands incentive, says NZ. Flight Centre was second in the

ranks, followed by House of Travel. All three brands will now choose four consultants (two male, two female) to compete in the Great Race Bali on 25 Aug.

The teams will try to accumulate the most points by completing challenges and being the first team to reach key race checkpoints.

As an added incentive to cheer on your team, they are competing for a grand prize of two AD100 self famil tickets to any Seats to Suit destination for each eligible store within the winning brand. Companion tickets are also available, meaning there are over 200 tickets up for grabs, says NZ.

Competitors will be joined in Bali by an Air NZ Race Crew made up of Mark Freeman, Andrew Harrison, Angela Simpson and Joseph Chambers, all of whom are looking forward to the big event.

"The excitement is certainly building. Congratulations to Stella Group brands on winning the first battle. The competition really heats up now with the brands relying on four consultants to bring home the bacon," says Freeman.

"We're pretty excited to be going to Bali, to run the race, and we're looking forward to meeting the racers," adds Harrison.

Racers will meet each other in Auckland on 05 Jul for an inaugural Great Race dinner.

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TABS ON TRAVEL TODAY

Instant Poll

Inflight calling:
Annoying or convenient?

CLICK HERE TO VOTE

ATE 2012 Kicks Off

One of the world's biggest travel trade shows, the Australian Tourism Exchange (ATE), opened in Perth on Fri, and this week *Travel Today* will be bringing you the latest Aussie news and updates. More than 2000 delegates are expected at the show, being held at the Perth Convention and Exhibition Centre 15-21 Jun.

Domestic Travel Not Up

Despite reports that domestic travel is on the increase and money woes are causing more Kiwis to holiday at home, *Travel Today* readers don't agree.

We asked agents if they were selling more or less domestic travel, and only around a third said the amount was up while the majority said they are actually selling less.

The Ministry of Economic Development recently announced the highest ever spend by domestic travellers—\$9.5 billion in the year to Mar.

JTG Redundancies

Jetset Travelworld Limited has today announced approximately 110 redundancies, mainly across the Travel Management segment of the business, which is experiencing 'ongoing losses'. Most of the other roles will be in wholesale, says the company, as Qantas Holidays and Viva! businesses merge with Stella Travel Services. "It has been necessary to adjust a number of areas within the company to respond to market realities," says JTG chief executive Peter Lacaze. Subject to Jun trading conditions, the group expects to report an underlying profit before tax of AUD30-35 million, adjusted to exclude the impact of one-off restructuring and impairment charges.

NZD Expected To Rise

The NZD reached USD0.7907 today and is expected to continue to rise after Greece's New Democracy party won the second round of elections.

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*Christchurch/Sydney flights operated by Jetstar

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QF Ups East-West Flights

Qantas will increase Perth-Melbourne capacity with additional A330 services from 15 Oct as demand on the route increases. The A330 flights will operate 68-times-weekly, replacing Boeing 767 flights, and services operated by internationally configured A330s will increase from 12 to 37 per week. From 09 Jul, QF will reintroduce the Boeing 747 on Sydney-Perth services. Both economy class and lie-flat Skybed business class seats will be available.



Fiji Tourism Safety

Fiji's Ministry of Tourism last Thu signed a memorandum of understanding with the Fiji Police Force which it says will promote safety and security for tourists. It is the first time the MoT has had an in-depth consultation with the police on safety in tourism, the ministry said. Meanwhile Outrigger on the Lagoon said it has partnered with police in Sigatoka to make sure tourists feel comfortable in the town.

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NZ 'Evaluating' New US Services

Air New Zealand is investigating the possibility of increasing US services, and potentially introducing another hub city, following United Airlines' backtracking on planned Houston-Auckland services.

NZ chief executive Rob Fyfe says now that UA is out of the picture, NZ is evaluating new options for increasing its US penetration, including adding services in San Francisco or Los Angeles, or even serving destinations deeper into the US.

"That doesn't mean that we will necessarily go to Houston, but we are looking at the North American market and saying, is there capacity for another three, five, seven services a week?" says Fyfe.

Fyfe adds that NZ is looking at

where growth from the US is coming from, where its customers are coming from at the moment and what other US routes it could fly that would be better hubs to attract more passengers.

... South America

Until newly merged South American carrier LATAM makes a decision on which alliance it will side with, continued Fyfe, NZ's plans for South American expansion are 'hamstrung'. It is expected LATAM will side with LAN's alliance oneworld, which would leave NZ without a Star Alliance partner airline that could provide feeder services to a South America hub.

QF UK/Europe

Qantas has tactical economy UK/Europe fares for sales to 03 Jul. Inclusive return levels ex Auckland to Frankfurt are from \$2470, Rome from \$2541, Paris from \$2528 and London from \$2599. Low season lead-in fares are valid for travel commenced 15 Jul-30 Nov, and shoulder and high-season levels are also available. A max. 12-month stay applies. See qantas.co.nz/agents

EK Revises Tasman Fares

Emirates has revised economy booking classes on its long-term Tasman fare package effective for sales/travel from today. The lead-in booking class for economy Saver fares is now U class, and economy Flex fares are W class. There have been no changes to business or first class levels. The GDS has further details.

Perth Tactical Fares

Air New Zealand has short-life Perth fares for sales to 22 Jun. Inclusive ow Seat + Bag fares ex Auckland/Wellington/Christchurch are from \$469 and ex Queenstown from \$619. Valid for travel 01 Aug-12 Dec and 28 Jan-31 Mar 2013. Details see airnzagent.co.nz

Thl Takes On KEA

Tourism Holdings Limited (thl) has acquired the KEA rentals and sales motorhome brands in Australia from KEA New Zealand. The previous KEA Australia agents have ceased trading and the business has been placed in liquidation, says thl. The tourism company is promising a seamless transition and 'minimal disruption to customers'.

RJ To Europe

Royal Jordanian offers connections to more than 19 European destinations and over 20 in the Middle East via its Amman hub, says World Aviation. Auckland to Athens starts at \$2642, for travel to 30 Jun and 16 Aug-30 Nov, sales are open.

EY's Record Day

Etihad Airways saw the highest number of bookings ever made in a single day on 11 Jun with more than 65,500—13% more than the previous highest day, on 09 Jan. Bookings 14-17 Jun are the highest of any four days and advance bookings for premium cabins are set to beat records too, says EY.

SB Winter Warmer

Aircalin has Winter Warmer New Caledonia airfares on sale until 29 Jun, with flights ex-Auckland starting at \$564 economy or \$1014 business. Fares ex-Wellington are from \$725 and Christchurch from \$755. Travel dates vary, see GDS for details.

Mary Poppins On Sale

Tickets for the Mary Poppins Supercalifragilistic Musical, coming to Auckland's Civic Theatre 19 Oct-30 Dec, are now on sale says Showbiz. Packages start at \$139pp for a Jolly Holiday package with premium or A reserve ticket, Spoonful of Sugar lollipop and a copy of the 75th anniversary edition of the Mary Poppins novel.

GO Fiji Deals

GO Holidays has Fiji packages with Air Pacific fares priced from \$799pp s/t for sales to 29 Jun. The lead-in deal includes accommodation at Anchorage Beach Resort, with upgrades to the Sofitel Fiji Resort & Spa priced from \$1269pp s/t ex Auckland. GO also has seven-night packages staying at Plantation Island Resort from \$1349pp s/t ex AKL and 'untouched Fiji' seven-night deals staying at Koro Sun Resort & Rainforest Spa in Savusavu from \$2569pp s/t. Business class upgrades are available, adds the wholesaler.

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Hello Tomorrow



GO Incentive

GO Holidays is giving away a \$40 Visa Prezzy Card with any booking of a Runaway to Rotorua or Adventures in Queenstown school holiday package of two nights or more (while stocks last). Two nights for two adults and two children starts from \$189 per room per night in Rotorua, \$217pn in Queenstown, for sales to 30 Sep and travel 22 Jun-16 Jul, 21 Sep-15 Oct.

New China Tour

Tauck has a new 11-day Best of China tour that takes in four cities, priced from \$5860pp s/t, reports Adventure World. The tour visits Beijing, Xian, Chengdu and Shanghai, with highlights including the Forbidden City, the Great Wall, giant pandas, paper-making experiences and China's unique cuisine. Details ph: 0508 496 753.

QF To Go Daily DFW

Qantas will offer daily Sydney-Dallas Fort Worth flights from 01 Jul, reflecting strong demand for the services, says the carrier. Outbound SYD flights operate direct to DFW, while return services stopover in Brisbane. QF describes DFW as a 'perfectly located hub airport' less than four hours from every major US city. QF codeshares with American Airlines on flights to 60 US destinations.



Ieremia In South America

Well-known personality April Ieremia has just returned from South America where she was hosting her second small group journey for World Journeys. Ieremia's favourite highlights included the sunsets of Atacama Desert, discovering giant roses in Ecuador and Machu Picchu. "Oh my God, this place is unbelievable. Walked up to the Sun Gate on the Inca trail and nearly died but proud I did it! Make it a box you have to tick," she said. World Journeys' 2013 Wonders of South America departs 06 May.

CX Traffic Up In May, Yield Declining

Cathay Pacific says growth in its regional China operations is boosting passenger traffic across the group, however a decline in yields in economy class has spread to the front end of the plane in May.

Overall, the group saw growth in traffic of 6.8% in May compared to 2011, to 2,358,171 passengers carried. Capacity was up 4.2%, and loads averaged 78.5%, up 0.2 points. CX general manager revenue management James Tong says demand in May

was robust, boosted mainly by the addition of capacity on both CX and Dragonair regional routes.

"We continued to see a decline in yield in the economy class cabin on most routes. Business in the premium cabins is now being affected by a fall in yield and a lack of growth in volumes," he says.

Fiji Resort Is Wireless

InterContinental Fiji has installed Wi-Fi throughout the resort, allowing guests to connect in their rooms, the restaurants or by the pool.

PNG Tourism Boost

Papua New Guinea is investing PGK10 million (around \$6m) a year in global tourism campaigns for the next five years, the Prime Minister has announced—and New Zealand is one of the countries which will see the results.

PM Peter O'Neill is hoping to boost tourist numbers by 20% over the next two years. "Tourism is currently a minor industry in Papua New Guinea but with this new investment and all funds focused on marketing our country, it is part of my plan over the next five years to improve and invest in international tourism marketing and tourism infrastructure to entice people from all over the globe to come and see our great country," he says.

EY Relationship Mgr

Etihad Airways has appointed David Ranger as partner relationship manager for Asia Pacific South, responsible for relationships with airlines including Air New Zealand, Virgin Australia and Malaysia Airlines. Ranger has more than 30 year's aviation experience including senior management positions with British Airways. He will commence the Brisbane-based role on 16 Jul.

Stamford's Four Awards

Stamford Hotels and Resorts says it has received four TripAdvisor Certificate of Excellence awards—one each for its Auckland, Circular Quay, Melbourne and Brisbane properties. To qualify for the certificate properties must maintain an overall rating of four or higher.



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BNE Hotels renamed

The Rendezvous Hotel Brisbane has been renamed the Rendezvous Hotel Brisbane Anzac Square, and from 02 Jul The Marque Hotel Brisbane will become Rendezvous Studio Hotel Brisbane On George, following an initiative to unite Rendezvous and Marque into one Rendezvous brand. The hotels also have new logos, signage and brochures, and are the first properties to undergo the transformation in Australia.

Industry Diary

JUNE

Avalon Waterways

2013 Area Launch Nights

Blenheim: Tue 26, Heartland Hotel, 0730, breakfast and presentation.

Nelson: Wed 27, Rutherford Hotel, 0730, breakfast and presentation.

Peregrine and Gecko's Big Breakfast Roadshow

Tauranga: Wed 27, Tauranga on the Waterfront, 0715 for 0730-0830.

Asia Travel Marketing Assn 2012 Roadshow

Auckland, Nth Shore: Tue 19, Harbour Function Centre, Nth Harbour Stadium, Albany, 1730.

Auckland, Central: Wed 20, Ellerslie Event Centre, Ellerslie Racecourse, 1730.

Wellington: Thu 21, James Cook Grand Chancellor Hotel, Chancellor 1 Room, 1730.

A Team Update

Christchurch: Thu 28, The George Hotel, 1730-1800.

JULY

Peregrine and Gecko's Big Breakfast Roadshow

Christchurch: Wed 25, CHC Netball Centre, 0715 for 0730-0830.

AUGUST

Peregrine and Gecko's Big Breakfast Roadshow

Wellington: Wed 01, Wellesley, 0715 for 0730-0830.

SEPTEMBER

New Zealand Travel Industry Awards Gala Dinner

Auckland: Sat 01, venue TBA.

TAANZ AGM and 50th Anniversary Gala Dinner

Auckland: Wed 12. Times & venues tba.

MEETINGS 2012 Deemed A Success

MEETINGS has closed with a swathe of firm bookings for conferences for New Zealand and some 'significant new business leads', say organisers.

Conference and Incentives New Zealand chief executive Alan Trotter says while it's too early to put a dollar value on new business, anecdotal feedback suggests the buyers have been impressed with what they saw and are keen to do business. "Some have already booked and many others have indicated they will seriously

consider bringing their business here in the future. Our challenge now is to translate that intent into firm bookings," he says. Auckland's Sky City Convention Centre has already been confirmed as the venue for MEETINGS 2013, 26-27 Jun.

Norfolk Island Spa

A new spa has recently opened on Norfolk Island, says local Norfolk Island Tourism rep Hogan and Associates. The Barefoot Princess Boutique Spa is central in the village—just off Taylor's Rd—and uses its own unique massage oil.

AAT Kings Aids Penguins

AAT Kings has joined forces with the Phillip Islands Nature Park in Victoria, donating AUD95,000 over two years to its conservation efforts. The donation will help the park provide care for its 32,000-strong colony of Little Penguins, and AAT Kings will also be rolling out initiatives for staff and travel agents to experience and be part of the work that happens on Phillip Island.

"AAT Kings will work closely with PINP to help educate staff, travel agents and visitors about the importance of conservation," says AAT Kings md Tammy Marshall. The company offers three different day tours to Phillip Island including sunset on PINP's Penguin Parade, priced from \$149pp.

Magic Re-adds CHC

Christchurch and Canterbury Tourism is thrilled the city has been reintroduced to the national itineraries of tour bus company Magic. CCT says the move shows how far the city has progressed since the quakes last year.

Niue Bike Race A Hit

Competitors in this month's Rally of the Rock on Niue are keen to return in 2013 and one travel agent has already accumulated a waitlist for next year, says Niue Tourism. Riders found the event well run, not too competitive, very social and suitable for all riders, says the NTO. There were also plenty of extra activities on to keep everyone entertained throughout the week. For those who can't wait for next year, in Nov the island will host Rockman Adventure Races, a series of events including a 1km ocean swim, 10km run and 40km bike ride. Places are limited, e-mail info@niueisland.com

Hawaii Car Charging

Outrigger Enterprises Group is installing electric vehicle charging stations at 10 of its Waikiki and Oahu properties in an effort to support the state's ongoing efforts for a cleaner, more sustainable future. At least two spaces with the chargers are now available at the 10 resorts.

Muri's New Restaurant

Muri Beach Club Hotel has re-launched its new restaurant Silver Sands with a revamped Polynesian menu featuring traditional dishes from the region. The new dishes have been trialled over the last six weeks, and feature organic, unprocessed ingredients. The restaurant will also hold three special themed nights—Big Beach Barbecue night on Sun, Pig and Prawn Night on Fri and Polynesian Seafood Buffet on Wed.

Business Development Manager Auckland, New Zealand

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Special Interest Database

NOTE: While we endeavour to ensure the information contained in this database is correct, verification should be sought from appropriate sources before making bookings. Further information may be obtained from the applicable National Tourist Office, airlines servicing the destination, your friendly supplier, or the internet.

CODES:

b=Business

e=Events (various)

m=Medical Conferences etc

t=Theatre

C=Cultural Events

h=National Holidays

s=Sporting

Event	Location	Country	Start	Finish	Code
Football: Premier League	England	England	13Aug11	13Aug12	s
The Queen: 60 Photos for 60 Years	Windsor	UK-England	04Feb12	31Jan13	e
Picasso and Modern British Art	London	UK-England	15Feb12	15Jul12	e
Adelaide Fringe Festival	Adelaide	Aust-SA	22Feb12	17Mar13	e
Nascar 2012	USA	USA	25Feb12	07Jul12	s
Animal Inside Out	London	UK-England	06Apr12	16Sep12	e
Olympic Torch Relay	Worldwide	Global	18May12	27Jul12	e
The Great Singapore Sale	Singapore	Singapore	25May12	22Jul12	e
Exhibition: Napoleon, Revolution to Empire	Melbourne	Aust-VIC	02Jun12	07Oct12	e
UEFA European Football Championship	Poland, Ukraine	Polan, Ukraine	08Jun12	01Jul12	s
1Malaysia Mega Sale Carnival	Malaysia	Malaysia	15Jun12	02Sep12	e
Cultural Performances: Heiva I Moorea	Moorea	French Polynesia	16Jun12	14Jul12	e
Volvo Ocean Race	Lorient	France	18Jun12	01Jul12	s
London 2012 Festival	London	UK-England	21Jun12	09Sep12	e
Queenstown Winter Festival	Queenstown	New Zealand	22Jun12	01Jul12	e
Cultural Performances: Heiva "Rima'i"	Tahiti	French Polynesia	22Jun12	22Jul12	e
Cultural Competition: Heiva I Bora Bora	Bora Bora	French Polynesia	22Jun12	29Jul12	e
Tennis: Wimbledon	London	UK-England	25Jun12	08Jul12	s
Rowing: Royal Henley Regatta	Henley on Thames	UK-England	27Jun12	01Jul12	e
Henley Royal Regatta	Oxford	UK-England	27Jun12	01Jul12	s
Montreal Jazz Festival	Montreal	Canada	28Jun12	07Jul12	e
Cultural Performances: 130th Heiva I Tahiti	Tahiti	French Polynesia	28Jun12	21Jul12	e
Gaming: Games Masters	Melbourne	Aust-VIC	28Jun12	28Oct12	s
Cycling: Tour de France	France	France	30Jun12	22Jul12	s
Kuala Lumpur Festival	Kuala Lumpur	Malaysia	01Jul12	31Jul12	e
The Palio Horse Race	Siena	Italy	02Jul12	16Aug12	s
Volvo Ocean Race	Galway	Ireland	03Jul12	08Jul12	s
Cardiff International Food and Drink Festival	Cardiff	UK-Wales	06Jul12	08Jul12	e
Formula 1: Santander British Grand Prix	Silverstone	UK-England	06Jul12	08Jul12	s
San Fermin Festival: Running of the Bulls	Pampola	Spain	06Jul12	14Jul12	s
100th Annual Calgary Stampede	Calgary	Canada	06Jul12	15Jul12	s
Singapore Garden Festival	Singapore	Singapore	07Jul12	15Jul12	e
Baseball: All Star Game	Kansas City	USA	10Jul12	10Jul12	s
Dubrovnik Summer Festival	Dubrovnik	Croatia	10Jul12	25Aug12	e
Rainforest World Music Festival	Kuching	Malaysia	13Jul12	15Jul12	e
Airshow: Farnborough Int'l Airshow	Farnborough	UK-England	14Jul12	15Jul12	e
Tewkesbury Medieval Festival	Tewkesbury	England	14Jul12	15Jul12	s
Golf: British Open	Lancashire	UK-England	19Jul12	22Jul12	s
Formula 1: Grosser Preis Von Deutschland	Hockenheim	Germany	20Jul12	22Jul12	s
Triathlon: Port Dickson Int'l	Port Dickson	Malaysia	20Jul12	22Jul12	s
Yachting: Borneo Int'l Yachting Challenge	Sarawak	Malaysia	21Jul12	27Jul12	s
Oshkosh Air Show	Winnebago	USA	23Jul12	29Jul12	s
Formula 1: Eni Magyar Nagydij	Budapest	Hungary	27Jul12	29Jul12	s
2012 Olympic Games	London	UK-England	27Jul12	12Aug12	s
Marathon: New Caledonia Marathon	Noumea	New Caledonia	29Jul12	29Jul12	e
The Food Show Auckland	Auckland	New Zealand	02Aug12	05Aug12	e
Royal Edinburgh Military Tattoo	Edinburgh	UK-Scotland	03Aug12	25Aug12	e
Anaconda Adventure Race: Noosa	Noosa	Aust-QLD	11Aug12	12Aug12	s
Surfing: TN Von Zipper Trials	Teahupoo	French Polynesia	11Aug12	13Aug12	s
Surfing: Billabong Pro Surfing	Teahupoo	French Polynesia	16Aug12	27Aug12	s
Cairns Indigenous Art Fair	Cairns	Aust-NT	17Aug12	19Aug12	e
Formula 1: Shell Belgian Grand Prix	Spa-Francorchamps	Belgium	21Aug12	02Sep12	s
Tall Ships Race	Dublin	Ireland	23Aug12	26Aug12	s






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Australia's Coastal Delights



Tasmania At Its Best With Saffire

With the Hazard Mountains forming a stunning background for 20 luxurious villas, Saffire resort near Tasmania's Freycinet National Park can offer high-end clients a bespoke experience with a focus on the park's surrounds and produce. General manager Matthew Casey says the area's rich history creates a

'real sense of place'. "Our goal is to create a life-long memory," he says. A client's experience starts at Hobart Airport, where a private lounge is available for refreshments and a shower, and luggage is transferred to their chauffeur-driven car or rental vehicle. The resort also offers a range of exclusive experiences for clients, from a Great Oyster Bay Blast on its private vessel or a half-day Schouten Island trip with a cultural and wildlife focus and cruising to the park's famous Wineglass Bay. The resort has a stay four, pay three deal valid for bookings to 30 Jun and stays on select dates to 30 Sep. See saffire-freycinet.com.au



Lizard Island's Fresh Appeal

With its reputation as a fishing and diving haven and a fresh soft refurbishment of its Anchor Bay rooms, bar and restaurant, it's no surprise that Queensland's Lizard Island resort has been named the best resort in Australia by readers of *Australian Gourmet Traveller* magazine. With a relaxed atmosphere and a range of luxurious amenities, the resort offers a range of options for passing the days, from deep-sea game fishing to self-guided nature walks and romantic private picnics on one of the island's 24 beaches. The resort currently has a 'fly free' from Cairns deal valued at AUD1156 per couple staying at least five nights, for travel to 20 Dec, and now including Aug. See lizardisland.com.au

'Must See' Whitehaven



A Whitsundays must-see destination is Whitehaven Beach, and there are a raft of travel options for Kiwis heading to the Queensland jewel. Many companies offer day trips by ferry, power boat or luxury lodge, while bare boating clients can anchor in Tongue Bay and tender ashore to take in the views of the beach from a lookout up the hill. Famous for its pristine silica sand and clear aqua waters, as the tide changes sand is shifted creating changing combinations of aqua, turquoise and white. See queenslandholidays.com.au

Enhanced Luxury



Set among 16 hectares of newly landscaped botanical garden, Hayman on the Great Barrier Reef now offers new dining concepts and treats for clients looking for a top-end Australian coastal getaway. The resort-wide makeover, completed last year, is evident from the moment guests are picked up for their transfer from Great Barrier Reef Airport in a luxury launch, and continues with the Fontaine contemporary restaurant. Guests on day trips to neighbouring beaches and islands can even place special orders including pizzas delivered by helicopter. Another memorable dining event includes The Chef's Table being taken out of its traditional Main Kitchen setting to an inti-



The Top 5 amazing Australian Coastal experiences in each category as voted by Kiwis are:

1. Sailing in the Whitsundays, QLD
2. The Big Dive, Great Barrier Reef, QLD
3. Great Ocean Walk, VIC
4. Ningaloo Reef's whale sharks, WA
5. Swimming with Dolphins, Kangaroo Island, SA

The 100 amazing Australian experiences can be viewed on Australia.com

mate rainforest location under the stars for a 6-course degustation menu with paired wines. Upgraded Hayman facilities also include the activities hub with new floodlit tennis courts and a personal training room for yoga, pilates and cardio workouts. See hayman.com.au



High End Coastal Camping At Sal Salis

Sal Salis offers a luxurious camping experience in the heart of the recently formed Ningaloo World Heritage Area, with unrivalled access to the Ningaloo Reef, its surrounding dunes and a plethora of wildlife sighting opportunities. While the accommodation is designed to expose guests to the sights and sounds outside, its nine tents offer full-sized beds with premium linens, an ensuite bathroom and 'delicious food and wine'. Clients looking to tick swimming with whale sharks off their bucket list should visit from Apr-Jun, with humpback whales and Manta rays frequenting Ningaloo's waters from Jul-Dec. The resort has a stay three, pay two offer available for stays 01 Aug-16 Jan. See salsalis.com.au

Muscat: History In Oman's Heart

Must-dos In Muscat

- Wander through Muscat's Old Town, flanked by the twin Portuguese forts of Mirani and Jalali. Here much of the city's history and heritage has been preserved, including the original clay wall and three access gates which for centuries fortified the capital.
- Walk up to the golden gates of the magnificent Al Alam Palace (the ceremonial palace of Sultan Qaboos).
- Get a sense of history with a visit to the Bait Al Zubair Museum or Bait Al Baranda Museum, which has a fine exhibit of Omani history and culture.
- Join the locals for a stroll along the Muttrah Corniche, the city's verdant waterfront and a great place to watch fishermen roll their nets at dusk.
- Get lost in the Muttrah Souk, a labyrinth of narrow lanes which sell pure Arabian exotica—gold, silver, textiles, pottery and dates, incense, spices, frankincense and sandalwood.
- Take a trip on a classic dhow or venture further to view dolphins, whales and other sea life that frequent the Gulf of Oman.

Getting Around

Muscat is quite spread out due to its geography, at the foot of brown pleated mountains and built around a number of rugged coves. Muscat airport is at the western fringe of the city with a drive of about 30 minutes to the city centre. Most itineraries and packages include hotel transfers and a guided tour, but there is also a large number of taxis available.

Oman Tourism is campaigning to encourage Kiwis to explore the sultanate on the Sidetrip of a Lifetime, and what better place to start than the heart of the sultanate, Muscat.

The beautiful city alone warrants several days to explore, says local Oman Tourism rep Darragh Walshe. It was recently ranked as one of the top 10 cities to visit in 2012 by Lonely Planet's 'Best in Travel', and is renowned as one of the cleanest Arab capitals. "Muscat has played a prominent role in world history due to its strategic location and this 'step-back-in-time' feel has truly been preserved. There are no high-rises in Muscat, and the white washed Arabian style architecture is present in both the ancient and the modern, including the several luxury



Where To Stay

Muscat's accommodation range is developing quickly, says Walshe—but for a perfect blend of luxury and Oman's unique culture, he suggests the Chedi Muscat, Shangri-La's Barr Al Jissah Resort & Spa and Al Bustan Palace, A Ritz-Carlton Hotel.



resorts located along Muscat's coves." Walshe has put together his top picks for a trip to the capital, one of six sidetrips he will share with *Travel Today* readers over the next three weeks.

Become A Specialist

Agents who have been to Oman can complete three on-line training modules to become Oman specialists. As well as gaining a wealth of information about the destination, benefits also include selection on upcoming famils and listing on Oman Tourism's website in the 'Find an Agent' section. To register, [CLICK HERE](#).



Sultan Qaboos Mosque

A jewel in Muscat's crown is the Sultan Qaboos Grand Mosque, a gift from his Majesty to the people of Oman. The mosque features a massive white marble courtyard, imposing wooden doorway with carved verses from the Koran, five towering minarets and a prayer hall lit by 35 Swarovski crystal chandeliers. The hall also houses a single piece Persian carpet made of 1,700 million knots which took over 27 months to make, covers 4200m² and weighs 21 tonnes. Non-Muslims can visit every day except Fri (0830-1100), and are asked to dress modestly. Women need to cover their hair.



Pain-Free Souk Shopping

Shopping in the souks of Muscat is a nice introduction to the world of bartering as it doesn't have quite the same level of madness of markets in parts of Asia and Africa, says GO Holidays' Emma Robertson. "It's much easier than other local markets I've been shopping in, it's much more laid back and it's quite a nice way to do it. You can haggle but there's not so much pressure," she says.

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Australia on screen

There's nothing like Australia 

Saturday night saw the premiere episode of Judy Bailey's Australia go to air on TV One. The five part series showcases the journey of one of New Zealand's most loved celebrities as she travels from Perth to Darwin the long way around taking in the sights, experiences and the people that make Australia such an exceptional holiday destination.

Best of all, the places that Judy visited and the unique activities she experienced are all easily accessible to New Zealand holiday makers. Each week, these Australia on

Screen features will provide information about the product highlights from each episode, so you can help send your client on their own epic Australian adventure.

Saturday's episode saw Judy arrive in Perth before driving south to the naturally beautiful Margaret River region. Judy then flew to Adelaide where she discovered the tranquil Adelaide Hills.

For more information about the show and featured destinations go to Australia.com/judybaileysaustralia and tune in this Saturday at 8.30pm to see Judy on the next leg of her journey – South Australia's Eyre Peninsula and the Goldfields region of Victoria.

Margaret River

Margaret River has evolved from a spectacular surfing hot spot into a gastronomic paradise complete with rolling vineyards, high end accommodation and a fantastic cafe and dining scene.

However, it is the region's natural beauty that really makes the Margaret River unforgettable – towering forests, pristine and uncrowded beaches and a tranquil river all within a compact area. Sophistication meets hippy culture... everybody loves the Margaret River.



The Margaret River Discovery Company

The Margaret River Discovery Company provides personalised and private touring of the Margaret River encompassing the wine, adventure and history of the region. Judy opted for the company's signature experience – The Margaret River Discovery Tour which provides a fantastic overview of the region and its highlights. The tour begins with a relaxing canoe down the Margaret River as operator Sean Blocksidge

provides an insight into the region and its Aboriginal history. The group then moves on to a gourmet lunch and wine tasting in the cellar at one of Margaret Rivers boutique wineries – Fraser Gallop. After lunch, the tour continues with a drive in the luxury 4WD to some of the region's most spectacular locations before concluding with a breathtaking coastal walk along the Cape to Cape track.



Cape Lodge

For the ultimate in understated luxury, the best place to stay in the Margaret River region is undoubtedly **Cape Lodge**. The lodge features plush rooms and ample grounds surrounded by a lake, vineyard and forest and is located just minutes from some of the Margaret River's finest beaches and vineyards. Cape Lodge is one of the finest boutique hotels in Australia and its exquisite restaurant was named one of the Top Ten in the world for food by travel bible Conde Nast magazine. For a unique foodie experience, guests can even partake in a cooking class with Executive Chef Tony Howell.



Busselton Jetty and Underwater Observatory

Stretching two kilometres across Geographe Bay, Busselton Jetty is the longest timber-plied jetty in the Southern Hemisphere and a Western Australian icon. Visitors can take a leisurely stroll out to the end of the jetty, or enjoy a ride out on a small train.

At the end of the jetty, an incredible underwater observatory gives visitors a remarkable insight into the marine life of the bay. The observatory features windows at different depths, winding from the surface right down to the ocean floor for a beautiful perspective of the 'underwater garden'. The observatory is completely natural and exposed to the open ocean so you never know what might swim past!



Australia on screen

There's nothing like Australia 

Adelaide Hills

After enjoying the delights of Adelaide city, Judy took a short drive to the Adelaide Hills. Popular with both tourists and Adelaide locals on an indulgent weekend, the Adelaide Hills region boasts fantastic wineries and quaint towns. While in the region, Judy based herself in the German settlement town of Hahndorf and where she savoured the food and wine for which this destination is famed.

Monarto Zoo

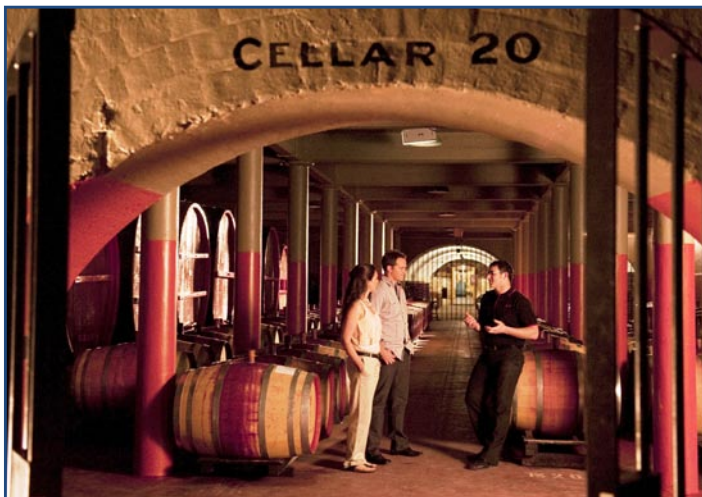
Monarto Zoo is the largest open plan zoo in the Southern Hemisphere offering a slice of Africa in South Australia. Visitors can experience the park 'safari style' by bus or roam the extensive walking tracks on foot. Throughout the park there is a huge range of animals including rhinos, meerkats, giraffes, buffalo, cheetah, lions and more. There are even up-close encounters available where guests can hand feed the giraffes, pat a rhino or even enter the cheetah enclosure!



The Cedars - Hans Heysen's House

Sir Hans Heysen is one of Australia's most well regarded artists for his quintessentially Australian works depicting gum trees and the outback. Visitors to the Adelaide Hills can take a step back in time at

The Cedars, featuring Sir Hans Heysen's studio, house and the beautiful grounds that inspired many of his works. Throughout the property there are dozens of Heysen's paintings and drawings to admire.



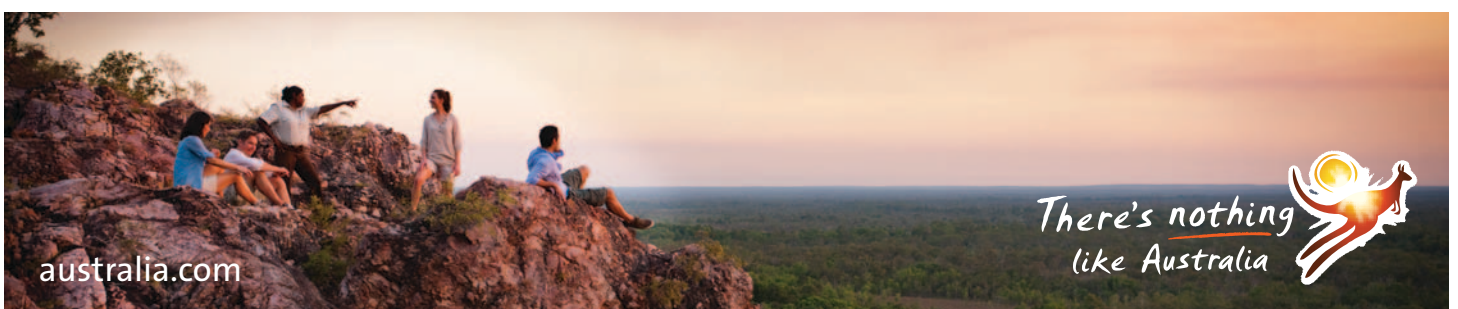
Penfold's Magill Estate Cellar Door

Home to the world famous Penfold's Grange Wine, **Penfold's Magill Estate** is a beautiful winery and an absolute must-do for the serious wine lover while in Adelaide. Here, visitors can enjoy the scenic grounds or try and buy

a selection of wines at the Cellar Door. Guided tours are available including the Great Grange Tour in which lucky guests are guided through the history and making of Grange before enjoying a taste selection of Penfold's luxury wines including the legendary Grange.

Hahndorf Walking Tours

Hahndorf resident Sharon Pippas provides a fascinating insight into the town, its history and its characters on her **guided walks** through the streets of Hahndorf. The tour is a fantastic way for history buffs, shopaholics and foodies alike to gain that elusive local knowledge that makes a destination even more special.



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