



INTREPID FOODIES won't want to miss the Margaret River Gourmet Escape – a three-day festival celebrating Western Australia's sumptuous produce and rugged natural beauty. Using the outdoors as pantry and playground, events will take place in forest, beach and vineyard settings, and feature chefs including Heston Blumenthal and Rick Stein. The action takes place from 21-23 November, see www.gourmetescape.com.au.



ON THE LIST

Queenstown's Shotover Jet has been named one of the world's best travel experiences by news agency CNN, the only Kiwi attraction to make it onto the list. Beating us to the top spots were swimming with blue whales in Sri Lanka, ranked number one, followed by cruising the Similan Islands in Thailand. Third place went to touring the secretive state of North Korea.



If you have kids with student loans who are travelling overseas, urge them to check out the new repayment rules at www.ird.govt.nz. Missed payments can lead to hefty fines, and a mountain of debt doesn't make for a warm welcome home!

Travel news

Sara Bunny reveals the ultimate travel gadget, looks at the bliss factor of eco-resorts and chats to Ingrid Hipkiss.

TV3 WEATHER GURU INGRID HIPKISS TALKS ABOUT AFRICAN ADVENTURES, LOST PASSPORTS AND WHY WHANGAMATA IS UNBEATABLE FOR A FAMILY HOLIDAY.

● **Favourite overseas holiday spot?** Australia is the current favourite. It's close, the time difference isn't too big, there's no language barrier, it's warm and there's plenty for my two young children to do. Sans kids, I'd love to be kicking back in Thailand, Bali or Spain.

● **Most memorable holiday?** I did a seven-week tour through Africa from Kenya to Zimbabwe, which was amazing. I can't imagine being quite so intrepid again. Sleeping in tents on the side of the road, we took shifts to stay up at night guarding the campsite, from goodness knows what! To see giraffes loping along the side of the road and all those amazing animals in their natural environment was quite something.

● **Biggest travel disaster?** When I was living in London we did a bus trip to Amsterdam. On our return we got to the ferry in France, only to discover my partner had left our passports on a shop counter in Belgium. Many stressful hours later, the border officials let us back into England on photocopies of our passports faxed from the shop.

● **What is your best travel tip?** Travel light; everything is better when you don't have so much stuff to lug around with you.

● **What are your travel bag essentials?** I hate to say it, but technology – my iPhone and Kindle – plus lip balm and a spray tan.



Ingrid and her family love a beach holiday.

● **Favourite Kiwi destination?** I'm a warm-weather girl so the key ingredient is a beach. Whangamata has been a favourite since I was a teenager, and now you can finally get a good coffee there.

Swiss innovation

First there was the iconic army knife, now the innovative Swiss have unleashed their newest travel must-have, the RoomBox. The size of a suitcase, it transforms your car into a sleepout, unfolding to create bed, tables, dinnerware and cooker... and believe it or not, the designers claim set-up should take only five minutes. See it at www.swissroombox.com.



REJUVENATING RETREATS

If the countdown to the silly season has you dreaming of the ultimate escape, check out our guide to the top eco-friendly wellness retreats at home and abroad.



Como Shambhala Estate, Ubud, Bali

Why we love it: Situated in a rainforest on the edge of a mountain, this retreat has a natural spring that is said to have healing powers. Alongside the spa treatments, you can take part in wellness courses, including stress management, rejuvenation and Oriental medicine.

How to book: www.comohotels.com/comoshambhalaestate



Aro Hā Retreat, Glenorchy, Otago

Why we love it: Completely surrounded by the rugged Southern Alps, without a cellphone tower or motorway off-ramp in sight, this is an ideal setting to ease away the stresses of modern life. The exclusively vegetarian menu, yoga programmes and range of outdoor pursuits are sure to blow away any cobwebs.

How to book: www.aro-ha.com or phone (03) 442 7011.



Gwinganna Lifestyle Retreat, Gold Coast, Australia

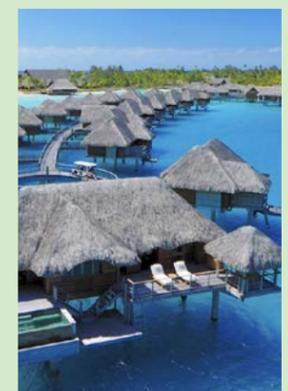
Why we love it: Despite being high on a hilly plateau in the sparsely populated Tallebudgera Valley, Gwinganna is only a 30-minute drive from Gold Coast Airport. The range of programmes and activities reflects the resort's philosophy of lifestyle balance, and the seven essential movements needed for health and vitality.

How to book: www.gwinganna.com

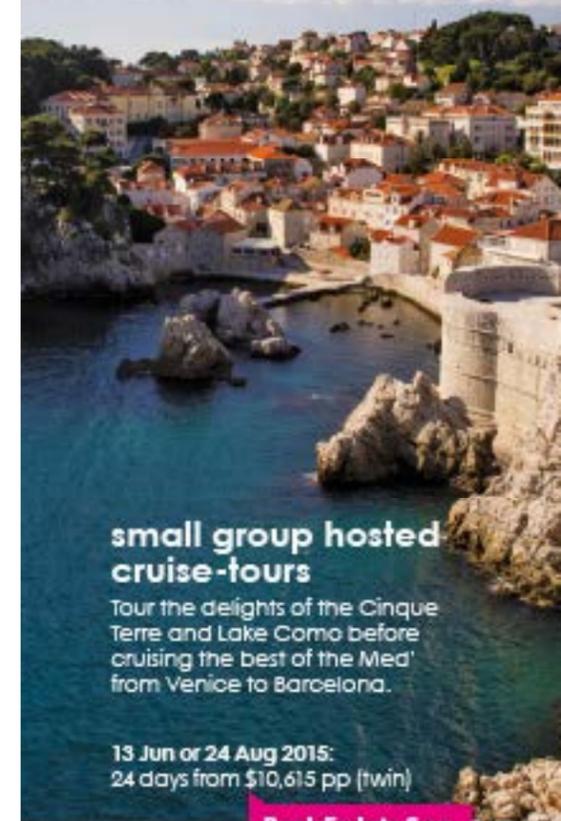
Four Seasons Resort, Bora Bora, French Polynesia

Why we love it: This award-winning hideaway is pure, unadulterated luxury. Treat yourself to a decadent spa treatment at the holistic healing centre, stretch the muscles on the sunrise yoga platform, or snorkel at the Lagoon Sanctuary.

How to book: www.fourseasons.com/borabora



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