Embrace the glamour of train travel from Paris to Istanbul aboard the Venice Simplon-Orient-Express
From the CEO

THE KANGAROO ROUTE between Australia and England has been at the heart of Qantas’s identity since the service began in 1947.

A Lockheed Constellation made the trip with 11 crew and 29 passengers, who paid the equivalent of 130 weeks’ average salary. It also carried 2000 pounds (about 900 kilograms) of food parcels, a gift from Qantas employees to their British Overseas Airways Corporation colleagues in postwar Britain.

This was a very different era of travel. The 12,000-mile (roughly 19,000-kilometre) route was plotted by sextant. There were seven refuelling stops and the Charles Kingsford Smith arrived in London almost four days after leaving Sydney.

Since then, as aircraft have become larger and more efficient, air travel has become more accessible and our world smaller. An airfare to England now costs less than two weeks’ average wage. And from this month – a little over 70 years since the first service on the Kangaroo Route – we will make the long journey between Australia and Europe in one giant, nonstop bound. This is the first time the two continents will be directly linked by air.

It’s a historic moment for the Flying Kangaroo and one that was a dream of the Qantas founders from the time they began operations in outback Queensland in 1920. We knew that to make the dream a reality, we had to put our customers at the centre. Let’s face it, it’s a long way to travel.

We’ve partnered with Boeing to ensure our Dreamliners are a comfortable place to spend a long stretch of time. We’ve collaborated with sleep and nutrition experts from the Charles Perkins Centre at The University of Sydney to help reduce the impact of jet lag. And our team from Rockpool has created food and drink options – in our lounges and inflight – to support your wellbeing.

Our new lounges at Heathrow and Perth airports are another part of our more holistic approach to air travel, with the journey beginning before our customers even set foot on the aircraft.

And the lessons we have learnt and are still learning from the Perth-to-London flight are being applied to Project Sunrise, which sees us working with Boeing and Airbus to develop an aircraft that can fly direct from the east coast of Australia to London or New York. This is the final aviation frontier for Qantas.

Ultimately, it’s part of our mission to give our customers options. Some people like a stopover, some prefer to take advantage of the vast network of destinations that our partner airlines offer, while others simply want to get to where they’re going as quickly as possible.

Whatever your preference, Qantas is always here to help you explore the world and bring you back home again.

#AboutToTrend

Masurian Lake District, Poland

Emerald mountains, cerulean lakes and island-hopping are not the first things that spring to mind when you think of Poland. But that’s the promise of the country’s Masurian Lake District. Located about three hours’ drive north of Warsaw and comprising more than 2000 lakes, the region has somehow escaped the attention of foreign travellers.

But it’s only a matter of time before the “land of a thousand lakes”, as it’s lovingly referred to by locals, begins to trend on social media. Base yourself in the historic town of Giżycko to explore the area’s bounty or charter a boat if, like us, you prefer drifting from one island to another. Whatever you choose, get there before the hordes do.

LEAH GREENGARTEN
Cheat sheet

Northcote

Gentrification without growing pains? This inner Melbourne suburb has stayed true to its roots while boosting its cool cachet. By Larissa Dubecki.

Eat

ALL ARE WELCOME
A former Christian Science Reading Room has turned into a bakery and coffee shop par excellence. All Are Welcome (all-are-welcome.com) takes its name from the previous incarnation's gold window lettering, deemed too lovely to vanquish. Pull up a pew for dulce de leche tarts, croissants, poppyseed ensaimada pastries and excellent coffee.

MERAH
Coolly minimalist by design and fiery by nature, Merah (merah.com.au) nails new-school Malaysian cooking. From the super-spicy sambal to the chilli oil dumplings and kerabu pipis that are ideal for tucking into fried bao pockets, it's a take-no-prisoners approach to the food of the Malay peninsula.

WESLEY ANNE
This 19th-century stone church has been transformed into a bar and live-music venue (wesleyanne.com.au) without sacrificing its moody charm. Soaring ceilings and a Gothic chandelier are excellent backdrops for tap ale or cocktails with a soundtrack of bluegrass, jazz or folk, while the confessional-style booths are perfect for sharing secrets.

ESP
When Scott Pickett opened ESP, many asked whether Northcote was ready for a glamorous fine-diner (estellebysp.com). Turns out it was. Settle in for a modern Australian tasting menu (including supreme snacks such as smoked wallaby or nasturtium-wrapped pickled quail egg) under a statement Christopher Boots light. Want something more casual? Eat next door at Pickett’s bistro, Estelle (estellebistro.com).

BAR NONNO
Sit by the window at this brick-walled salon (barnonno.com.au) with a glass of soave and watch Northcote’s colourful residents pass by. As the name hints, the wine list finds its sweet spot in Italy, with an emphasis on low-intervention styles. Add platters of charcuterie or head out back to the restaurant proper, where it’s Italian all the way.

CATCH A Flick
Palace Westgarth cinema (palacecinemas.com.au) is an icon of Art Deco grandeur with the very 21st-century addition of a courtyard deckchair cinema.

Do

SHOP THEN DROP
Northcote is bursting with proudly parochial retail experiences. Take a twirl down High Street for eclectic treasures at The Aquarium Vintage (theaquariumvintage.com) or locally designed women’s fashion at Obus (obus.com.au) and Leonard St. (leonardstreet.com.au). Hunt down homewares at Pop & Scott (popandscott.com) and Danish Modern specialist Grandfather’s Axe (grandfathersaxe.com.au).

Head to High Street (above) for cocktails at Wesley Anne (left) or the dégustation at ESP (below)

QT MELBOURNE
Northcote options are decidedly lo-fi so we recommend staying in the CBD (just seven kilometres away) and heading to the 'hood on the No. 86 tram. The elegant quirkiness of QT Melbourne (hotel.qantas.com.au/qtmelbourne) is just the ticket to channel Northcote’s boho vibe. Be sure to check out the 11th-floor bar, Rooftop at QT, for tongue-in-cheek glam at its best.

But first, caffeine...
Visit Penny Farthing Espresso (pennyfarthingespresso.com) for a morning heart-starter or an afternoon Espresso Martini.
The Caribbean city is renowned for its colonial architecture and vintage cars.

Port of call

Havana

Holland America Line’s MS Veendam docks in Cuba’s capital this month. The ship’s concierge, Francisco Larumbe, reveals the best of the port city to Samantha O’Brien.

Where should we go to stretch our legs?
The Malecón offers more than eight kilometres of coastal walk. Evening is best, when the sun sets and locals head there to fish, play or chill out. From there, you can get an almendrón, a classic American car, to drive you across the bay to Morro Castle – another great area for strolling or watching the sun set while sipping a Mojito.

Where can we get a decent coffee?
Siá Kará Café (Calle Industria 502, Esquina Calle Barcelona; +53 7 867 4084). Located right behind the National Capitol Building, this exotic bar-café is perfect for morning snacks, coffee and light meals. In the evening, it has live music and high-quality cocktails.

What’s a great place for lunch?
El Chanchullero (el-chanchullero.com) is delightful and a favourite restaurant of mine. Climb the wooden stairs to the top balcony and embrace the mysterious yet inviting vibe of the place. The tapas are delicious.

And where should we go for drinks?
Fábrica de Arte Cubano (fac.cu), which means “Cuban art factory”, is the most unique nightclub I’ve ever seen. It’s a multidisciplinary centre where artists aim to bring you the freshest Cuban ideas in painting, sculpture, theatre, fashion, food and, of course, music. Get lost in the venues and gardens in this immersive experience but make sure you arrive before 10pm, as it gets packed.

Where will we find good shopping?
Calle Obispo is the main – yet narrow – artery of Old Havana. It goes all the way from Plaza de Armas, which is full of bookstands and has the public library, to Parque Central, where all the fancy hotels and cars are. Submerge yourself in this river of colour, music and overall delirium in your quest to discover the best boutiques in town.

Do the twist

Bulgari’s new “B.Zero1 Labyrinth” ring ($9500) is appropriately named – you could lose yourself for hours just looking at this sparkling stunner.

The latest addition to the almost two-decades-old B.Zero1 jewellery collection, which was modelled after the curves of the Colosseum, features four bold bands stacked in alternating white and rose gold, capped at either end with a ring studded with pave diamonds and engraved with a double logo. Like a labyrinth, the ring changes: look from one end and it’s all rose gold, while from the other end you’ll see only white. Visit bulgari.com.

Comfort zone

An outdoor patio and alfresco dining don’t tend to be regular features at airports but the new International Transit Lounge at Perth airport is no ordinary layover lair. It’s a collaboration between architectural firm Sumu Design and leading industrial designer David Caon and has a menu by Neil Perry and more than a dozen shower suites. The lounge is located within a new airport wing that integrates domestic and international travel for Qantas passengers so you can switch between flights without changing terminals.
Kids’ corner

Singapore swing

This activity-packed island city-state is the perfect place for family fun. Karla Courtney finds the top places to entertain the kids.

Play outside
Singapore has many parks that offer a range of experiences. You can hike the hills of Fort Canning Park, play in the interactive Jacob Ballas Children’s Garden at the Singapore Botanic Gardens, marvel at the beauty of Gardens by the Bay (gardensbythebay.com.sg) or hang out with the locals at Pasir Ris Town Park. Cool down at Jurong Bird Park’s Birdz of Play water play area (birdpark.com.sg) or Singapore Zoo’s Kidzworld wet play area (zoo.com.sg). Don’t miss the zoo’s Night Safari (nightsafari.com.sg), which allows you to enjoy the wildlife with a guided tram tour.

Play inside
The Science Centre Singapore (science.edu.sg) tackles a range of topics – from space and climate change to genetics and kinetics – in engaging interactive exhibits. KidZania (kidzania.com.sg) is a realistic indoor mini-city where children can “work” in a range of roles, including bank manager, firefighter or – the ultimate dream job – candy design trainee.

Play at an amusement park
Resorts World Sentosa (rwsentosa.com) is where it all happens. It’s home to Universal Studios, the S.E.A. Aquarium and Adventure Cove Waterpark with its Wet Maze obstacle course. If you’re not staying on Sentosa Island, you can catch the Singapore Cable Car over for a fun ride with amazing views of the city. There’s a range of discount packages that include the cable car ride as well as combinations of Resorts World parks (onefabergroup.com). Another major kid-pleaser is Legoland (legoland.com.my), just across the border in Johor Bahru, Malaysia, and a little less than an hour by bus from central Singapore.

Play with your food
Singapore is world-renowned for its hawker food scene, which offers a casual dining experience the whole family can enjoy. There are many hawker centres to choose from but the Tekka Centre in Little India and Newton Food Centre (also called Newton Circus) are among the best.

Play at sleep
The Resorts World Sentosa precinct (rwsentosa.com) has a lively, laid-back atmosphere, a range of hotels and loads of activities for kids. At the Festive Hotel, you can book a Deluxe Family Room that comes with a loft bed for the kids, while the Hard Rock Hotel Singapore has super-spacious rooms and a great pool. In the city, check in to one of the themed Whimsical loft rooms at Wanderlust hotel (hotel.qantas.com.au/wanderlust singapole) – the Tree and Space options are fabulous.
The right track
Discover the world’s most romantic rail journeys, from the Andes to the Canadian Rockies. By Alex Greig.

CANADIAN SOJOURN
Bears may stop honey-seeking (or whatever it is bears do in their downtime) to idly watch the Rocky Mountaineer (rockymountaineer.com) as it carves through the Canadian Rockies on its journey from Vancouver to Banff. This is the only rail service taking passengers on the First Passage to the West, a historic route connecting the east and west of Canada.

RUSSIAN ESCAPE
The seven-day trip from Moscow to Vladivostok – aboard the timelessly glamorous Trans-Siberian Railway (transsiberian.com.au) – is one of the longest rail journeys but we guarantee time will fly as you zip from one exotic Russian town to another.

ANDEAN EXPLORER
South America’s first luxury sleeper train traverses the varied terrain of the Andes, across jagged mountains dotted with alpacas and through traditional villages, with a connection to Peru’s pinnacle, Machu Picchu. On one of the highest rail routes in the world, the Belmond Andean Explorer (belmond.com) plots a vertiginous course from Arequipa to Cuzco (both World Heritage-listed cities) on one- and two-night itineraries.

JAPANESE STORY
Japan is known for its super-fast trains but Shiki-shima (jreast.co.jp) is an entirely different beast, encouraging you to savour the journey rather than speedily arrive at your destination. Eschewing olde-worlde looks and going futuristic, the boutique sleeper train undertakes two- to four-day trips, including one from Tokyo to the island of Hokkaido in the north.

ISTANBUL EXPRESS
Murder mysteries, fur stoles and flapper types clutching overflowing coupes of champagne – the Orient-Express is synonymous with intrigue and glamour. The original Orient-Express ceased operations in 2009; now Belmond (belmond.com) runs several high-end services along the line, including the original Paris-to-Istanbul route. The five-night trip departs just once a year and is as opulent as it was in its 1930s heyday.

For the 14 greatest rail journeys in the world, go to travelinsider.qantas.com.au.

Pass it on
Here at Qantas magazine, we’re full of advice about where you should eat, drink and sleep. We also know that you, our well-travelled readers, could tell us a thing or two about places you’ve uncovered or experiences you’ll never forget – that tiny dumpling den tucked away in a Beijing hutong or the beautiful Aussie beach you can have to yourself any time of the year. And what about that rooftop bar in New York City that only the cool cats of Williamsburg know about? If you’ve found a gem, we’d love to share your insights in a soon-to-be-launched column. Email your best travel tales to passiton@mediumrarecontent.com or share them on our Instagram or Twitter (@qftravelinsider) with #qfpassiton. We’ll do our best to (ahem) pass them on.
### First bite

**New in town**

Akash Arora serves up Australia’s hottest new restaurants.

Mango parfait with blueberries, yoghurt and makrut lime leaf sorbet at Brisbane’s E’cco Bistro

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Restaurant</th>
<th>Details</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brisbane, Qld</td>
<td><strong>E’CCO BISTRO</strong></td>
<td>After 22 years, one of Brisbane’s most beloved bistros on Boundary Street closed its doors late last year – only to re-emerge three months later at a new location in Newstead. Simon Palmer’s menu is full of remarkable dishes, such as confit salmon with black lime.</td>
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<td>Brisbane, Qld</td>
<td><strong>STAVROS THE GREEK</strong></td>
<td>Expect chef Josh Inglis to dish up some hearty, flavourosome Greek food. Share a serve of slow-cooked lamb shoulder – spiked with salsa verde – with friends or have the lemon-infused pork belly all to yourself.</td>
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<td>Sydney, NSW</td>
<td><strong>THE COLLAROY</strong></td>
<td>Bar tsar Justin Hemmes’s latest project comprises two restaurants and three bars over two levels. Jordan Toft – executive chef at Coogee Pavilion and The Newport – is also here with a beach-kiosk-inspired menu downstairs and long-lunch offerings upstairs.</td>
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<td>Woodend, Vic</td>
<td><strong>KUZU</strong></td>
<td>Wagyu beef tataki, chicken karaage and miso-cream scallops are just a few dishes on the menu at this new izakaya-style establishment – a collaboration between restaurateur Gareth Rowlands and chef Eriko Pannam.</td>
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<td>The wine list showcases the best of the Macedon Ranges region and there’s a selection of Japanese beers on tap.</td>
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<td>Relaxed interiors with exposed-brick walls, jarrah floors and bold bursts of colour.</td>
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<td>Just off High Street in Woodend, an hour’s drive north-west of Melbourne.</td>
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<td>Open Wednesday-Saturday for lunch and dinner, and Sunday for dinner</td>
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<td>Brisbane, Qld</td>
<td><strong>STAVROS THE GREEK</strong></td>
<td>There are a dozen wines by the glass and 19 more by the bottle, plus a menu of craft gins and beers, as well as classic cocktails with a modern twist.</td>
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<td>Blue splashes bring to mind the shades of the Mediterranean, while silver accents mimic its sparkling waters.</td>
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<td>About 30 minutes’ drive south-west of Brisbane’s CBD.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Brisbane, Qld</td>
<td><strong>E’CCO BISTRO</strong></td>
<td>Sommelier Mia McIntyre’s wine list includes boutique Australian wines and well-regarded international labels and varietals.</td>
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<td>Curved leather seating and travertine floors give the dining area an air of elegance.</td>
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<td>The riverside neighbourhood of Newstead, right next to Fortitude Valley.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sydney, NSW</td>
<td><strong>THE COLLAROY</strong></td>
<td>An accessible wine list with a focus on Australian drops, plus a menu of craft beers and cocktails.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>This place is laid-back and convivial. Wander in straight from the sand.</td>
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<td>Right on Collaroy Beach on Sydney’s Northern Beaches.</td>
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**E’cco Bistro**

- Mango parfait with blueberries, yoghurt and makrut lime leaf sorbet at Brisbane’s E’cco Bistro
**Tribute time**

The sunray-finished silver dial with contrasting subdials distinguishes this TAG Heuer “Autavia Jack Heuer” model ($7500), which is named after the man who designed the original back in 1962 and is limited to 1932 pieces to mark his birth year. The watch has a contemporary self-winding movement that offers an impressive 80 hours of power reserve. A non-limited version with the dial treatment reversed (black dial, silver subdials) is also available. Visit tagheuer.com.

**Watch this space**

**Aisle or window seat?**

What’s better: uninterrupted access to the bathrooms or a window you can lean against to (hopefully) sleep? Two jetsetters reveal their preferences to Kate Phillips.

**Mary Poulakis**
Director, Harrolds

“I travel for business all the time and being near the aisle means I can get out faster and get going. I do miss looking out the window sometimes and, yes, there’s often that odd trolley in the elbow but I still prefer the aisle seat. I love the ease of access – I like to get up and stretch my legs on both domestic and international flights. It’s so convenient and, more importantly, it’s not inconvenient for anyone else. I’m not a digital dinosaur but I like to pack up my desk and take it with me – I often have lots of files and paper with me. I feel the aisle seat offers a little more real estate.”

**David McAllister**
Artistic director, The Australian Ballet

“I’ve been known to doze off on flights between Melbourne and Sydney – even before take-off – so that makes me a dedicated window-seat person. Being near the aisle means you’re always affected by people walking up and down, whereas by the window, you’re solidly in your own world. And it’s exciting to be near the window when you’re flying into epic cities like Dubai, Shanghai or Hong Kong. I don’t get up a lot so I usually wait for the person on the aisle or in the middle to get up and then I do. I’m also pretty good at climbing over [people] so it’s not a problem – as long as you’re not up and down every half-hour.”
Check in

Capella Shanghai

Spread over 22 lanes in the historic Xuhui District, this newly opened hotel promises timeless elegance without compromising on modern luxuries, writes Alex Greig.

The hotel

In a city of more than 24 million people, silence is a rare and covetable commodity—and you'll find it at Capella Shanghai (hotel.qantas.com.au/capellashanghai) in the chichi former French Concession. Plane-tree-lined boulevards, where the mid-1800s French settlement once flourished, are now home to boutiques, cafés, restaurants and bars, while Capella Shanghai itself occupies a 1930s shikumen laneway block comprising 22 lanes lined with narrow houses transformed into opulent villas.

The room

Each elegant Shikumen Villa King once housed several families but now all three floors belong to the suite’s occupant. Up a flight of stairs from the ground-floor living-dining area is a media room with a TV and coffee machine. A few more steps lead to a bedroom with a king bed and walk-in wardrobe, while the top floor is dedicated to a marble bathroom with a rain shower and tub. Staying faithful to the bones of the building, further stairs lead to a terrace with views of Shanghai's skyscrapers.

The lowdown

Location Shanghai’s historic Xuhui District.
Number of villas 55.
Check in/out Flexible.
Food and drink Le Comptoir de Pierre Gagnaire restaurant, the French chef’s first Chinese outpost, serves sophisticated Gallic fare for breakfast, lunch and dinner; there’s excellent crusty bread, snails and topnotch steaks. Breakfast is a French-style buffet, while à la carte options include congee and eggs Benedict. Le Bar, a 40-seat bar-lounge, and La Boulangerie et Patisserie, a café and bakery, are also on site. The Lab, an eight-seat private chef experience, is on the way.

Wellness A rudimentary gym exists but a full gym and day spa are in the works.
Business facilities A number of meeting rooms and event spaces are available.
Minibar Complimentary chocolate bars, chips, Perrier water, soft drinks and Tsingtao beer are available. Wine and spirits incur a charge.
Water in room Free bottled water is provided.
Pillow menu No, but a maternity pillow was waiting for this pregnant guest.
Bath Yes, standalone with a shower nozzle, loofah and bath salts.
Bathrobe Your choice of light cotton or cozy terry towelling.
The housekeeping test A requested toothbrush was delivered in less than five minutes.
The concierge test We were given precise directions to the nearest HSBC location after enquiring about an ATM that allowed for international deposits and withdrawals.
Amenities Acqua di Parma shampoo, conditioner, body wash and lotion.
Room service An order of cheeseburgers and hand-cut fries was promised in 30 minutes. It arrived right on time, along with white napkins, silverware and a selection of sauces.
TV and movies HBO, Star Movies, Discovery, CNN, BBC and CNBC, plus Chinese channels.
Wi-fi Complimentary but its speed will not enable you to bypass the Great Firewall of China.
Price A Shikumen Villa King starts from 4500 yuan (about $880) per night.
Ask for... a villa at the end of a laneway. The location allows you to enjoy the water features and candlelit seating platforms on the way to your suite.
Verdict Timeless elegance with creature comforts.
Places of the Heart

It’s tempting to think the Four Corners presenter has seen it all. But these places stopped her in her tracks – one almost literally.

Sarah Ferguson

On the radar

Now in its 57th year, Four Corners, Australia’s longest-running current affairs television program, airs on ABC TV on Mondays at 8.30pm.

1986 | Italy

MONTERCHI

My friends and I had come to this Tuscan hillside village to see a fresco – the Madonna del Parto by Piero della Francesca – in a little cemetery chapel. The fresco shows a young Madonna in a dazzling blue gown. She is pregnant, which is quite an unusual depiction, with one hand at her hip and the other on her belly. Two angels are holding back a tent to reveal her.

I’d been to galleries but this was my first truly personal experience with a painting – and the first time a work of art made me cry. It felt like Piero had painted the Madonna to talk to you. This young woman with a cool gaze, so serene and exquisite, asking you to consider who she is and the mysteries of her position.

The fresco is now in a small museum but seeing it in the chapel moved me deeply. I can still feel it.

1992 | Italy

VENICE

My now-husband [ABC TV presenter Tony Jones] and I had taken the night train from Paris to Venice. Strangely, we slept soundly, waking only as the train pulled in to Santa Lucia station. I saw that the belt containing my money was missing. Our wallets were also empty of cash and all but one of our credit cards.

We found a guard, who seemed unconcerned, so we pressed on to the stationmaster. He shrugged. “You’ve been gassed.” The guards were in cahoots with the robbers, he told us. They get a key, gas you and take all your stuff. He wasn’t even shocked. And he said the city was in flood and impossible to enter; we should go home.

Instead, we put our cases on our heads and splashed through the water in the limpid winter light to the nearby Hotel Bellini – me in my little Paris skirt, heels and fake-fur-collared coat, trying not to waddle.

I’d just met Tony and I’d never been to Venice. It was a hell of a way to arrive.

2016 | Sri Lanka

MIRISSA

I have a deep tendency when travelling to want to see around the next corner. Sri Lanka is the first place that made me stop.

We stayed on a promontory in the south in a simple, modern pavilion – the last work of the renowned Sri Lankan architect Geoffrey Bawa. So stunning was this place, it made me want to stay still. Eventually, though, I began asking about local temples. The man who ran the house was a bit evasive but finally agreed to take us to Veheragalla Samudragiri Vihara, a temple I hadn’t seen in any tourist guide.

We went in the evening, walking down a densely wooded path, and young monks, skipping around in their robes, joined our procession. In the little temple, lit by just three or four bare globes, were the most exquisite murals depicting the life of the Buddha. And, in the inner room, a large reclining Buddha that you could stare at forever. This little temple, so important to the evolution of Buddhism in southern Sri Lanka, was right there on the edge of the property, just beneath the house. We could so easily have missed it.

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We found a guard, who seemed unconcerned, so we pressed on to the stationmaster. He shrugged. “You’ve been gassed.” The guards were in cahoots with the robbers, he told us. They get a key, gas you and take all your stuff. He wasn’t even shocked. And he said the city was in flood and impossible to enter; we should go home.

Instead, we put our cases on our heads and splashed through the water in the limpid winter light to the nearby Hotel Bellini – me in my little Paris skirt, heels and fake-fur-collared coat, trying not to waddle.

I’d just met Tony and I’d never been to Venice. It was a hell of a way to arrive.

2016 | Sri Lanka

MIRISSA

I have a deep tendency when travelling to want to see around the next corner. Sri Lanka is the first place that made me stop.

We stayed on a promontory in the south in a simple, modern pavilion – the last work of the renowned Sri Lankan architect Geoffrey Bawa. So stunning was this place, it made me want to stay still. Eventually, though, I began asking about local temples. The man who ran the house was a bit evasive but finally agreed to take us to Veheragalla Samudragiri Vihara, a temple I hadn’t seen in any tourist guide.

We went in the evening, walking down a densely wooded path, and young monks, skipping around in their robes, joined our procession. In the little temple, lit by just three or four bare globes, were the most exquisite murals depicting the life of the Buddha. And, in the inner room, a large reclining Buddha that you could stare at forever. This little temple, so important to the evolution of Buddhism in southern Sri Lanka, was right there on the edge of the property, just beneath the house. We could so easily have missed it.

1986 | Italy

MONTERCHI

My friends and I had come to this Tuscan hillside village to see a fresco – the Madonna del Parto by Piero della Francesca – in a little cemetery chapel. The fresco shows a young Madonna in a dazzling blue gown. She is pregnant, which is quite an unusual depiction, with one hand at her hip and the other on her belly. Two angels are holding back a tent to reveal her.

I’d been to galleries but this was my first truly personal experience with a painting – and the first time a work of art made me cry. It felt like Piero had painted the Madonna to talk to you. This young woman with a cool gaze, so serene and exquisite, asking you to consider who she is and the mysteries of her position.

The fresco is now in a small museum but seeing it in the chapel moved me deeply. I can still feel it.

1992 | Italy

VENICE

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Who Knew?

If the supermodel and designer could be anything else for a day, it would be one of her pampered German shepherds.

Heidi Klum

The lowdown
The German-American model and entrepreneur is the creative director of Heidi Klum Intimates and Heidi Klum Swim.

On the radar
Her range of luxe athleisure wear, Play, launches soon.

What’s your greatest strength?
When I started modelling in 1992, I was constantly told I was too curvy and healthy-looking for the “heroin chic” look of that time. It was hard to be turned down by clients and photographers and to hear those comments. But, in the end, having the strength to stick by what I believed in made me search for new doors to open. That helped launch my career.

And your greatest weakness?
Falling asleep early. With four young children and a business to run, there isn’t much time for anything else.

If you could do any other job, what would it be?
Before I won a modelling contest back in Germany, I was supposed to go to fashion design school in Düsseldorf. I never thought I’d be able to follow my dream of being a fashion designer without going to design school but here I am.

What’s one thing about you that would surprise people?
We cook dinner almost every night in my house. I love being able to sit down as a family and talk about our day. We make soup, schnitzel, meatballs... you name it.

What is your idea of absolute happiness?
I’m happiest in my backyard in summer, playing in the pool with my kids, jumping on the trampoline and barbecuing.

What travel experience is on your bucket list?
I’ve always wanted to see the Great Wall of China. Visiting a place with so much interesting history would definitely be a memorable travel experience.

How do you switch off?
I do it the second my feet hit the beach.

What’s your guilty pleasure?
A cheeseburger and French fries.

Who is your personal hero?
Kids always think of their parents as their heroes and that hasn’t changed for me. It’s even truer now that I’m a mother and I understand what my parents went through to raise their children.

What would you say is the most German thing about you?
My type of humour. I’m very black and white and I don’t just laugh because it’s expected.

Where would we find you at a party?
If the music is good, the dance floor.

If you were an animal, what would it be?
My German shepherds! They get lots of cuddles and nap most of the time.

If you were down to your last $20, what would you spend it on?
I would figure out a way to turn that 20 bucks into more.
When you fly, is it mostly for work or with your family?
For work. We do have a lot of family holidays, though. My eight-year-old son was going through his atlas recently and ticking off all the countries he’s been to and it was around a dozen. I didn’t go overseas until I was 27.

Where did you go?
To England to do some stand-up comedy. It was at the end of November so I landed in a very miserable, cold London. Getting off [the plane] was like, “Oh God, where have I come to?”

Now that you’re a regular flyer, do you have any pre-flight routines?
I make a real effort to not check in any luggage. If I’m travelling alone, I pack very late. But if we’re on a family trip, my wife [Holly Ife] puts out the suitcase what feels like a fortnight before we leave.

What makes it into your carry-on?
Hopefully enough underwear to get me through. I also put in exercise gear and feel guilty when I unpack and haven’t used it. And headphones. I have about five or six pairs because I’m constantly losing them or the chargers – I’ve kept a number of airport shops in business.

How else do you entertain yourself in the air?
I’ve gotten into diary writing. Life is full of comic moments but you forget most of them. So to write a diary every day on my laptop helps me remember the funny experiences. Often, I’m writing about the person sitting beside me, hoping they don’t look over my shoulder. There are characters on flights all the time.

So should the person sitting next to you keep an eye on what you’re typing?
Be paranoid but treat it as an honour.

What tips do you have for a good flight?
Don’t start conversations with people next to you until the plane is about to land. If you start when it takes off, it can get awkward pretty quickly. And I try not to eat every single meal they bring me. It’s so easy to overeat; if you go to the Qantas Club lounge beforehand, it’s hard to pass up the buffet.

What appeals to you about travel?
The world is such a bloody interesting place so you never regret seeing something new.

Is there a flight that sticks in your mind as the best?
The first time I had a flat bed. I tell everyone that at some point in your life, you need to try it. Put it on your credit card, just do whatever you have to.
Resembling the rough, protruding foot of a giant, complete with forested heel and tree-capped toes, Sigiriya (also known as Lion Rock) looms above tangled jungle in Sri Lanka, about 165 kilometres north-east of Colombo. This World Heritage-listed site is remarkable not only for its 200-metre granite cliffs but also the industrious architects and labourers who constructed a fortified royal palace, complete with extensive irrigated gardens, atop its lofty summit in the fifth century. Formed from the magma of an extinct volcano, Sigiriya served as an ancient monastery for centuries before King Kashyapa fixed his eye on it (and it resumed that function after his death in 495 CE). Today, the climb to the top of Lion Rock is a daunting one. But if you do tackle the seemingly endless stairs, two enormous clawed paws – all that remains of the imposing statue that once marked the entrance to the final ascent – will greet you halfway up on the northern side.
She was in Canberra. He was in Sydney. The author and *Offspring* creator’s path to eternal happiness was almost stymied by public transport inefficiencies.

Debra Oswald

In 1980, securing reliable transport out of Canberra on a Friday afternoon could be risky. Even more risky was declaring your love for a person who might not love you back.

I’d been navigating an intense but ill-defined friendship with a guy, conducted long-distance. I was in Canberra doing my honours year in English; he was at uni in Sydney. I made it clear I was in love but he wasn’t sure. He had another sort-of girlfriend. He needed time to think.

(Yeah, it sounds feeble and naïve but, come on, I was 20, he was 21, we were all of us floundering then.)

The young man suggested I come to Sydney after I’d submitted my thesis and we’d see where things stood.

In my teens, I was never the girl that boys fell in love with. I was always the confidante, the friend. I figured my best strategy was to present an unquestionably strong on-paper application for the position of “girlfriend” so that I’d at least score the romance equivalent of an interview. (Feel free to judge if that displayed shrewd realism or festering low self-esteem.)

I handed in my thesis and left a message for the young man that I’d be there on Friday evening. In those days, Canberra taxi drivers would amuse themselves by playing chicken with the rail schedule and, of course, I missed the last train. “Take me to the bus station!” I bleated. But then more bad luck: every seat was sold.

At that point, I should have given up and retreated to my student hovel but, for no logical reason, hauling myself to Sydney to discover the fate of my relationship hopes seemed an urgent, last-ditch, once-only chance.

“Get me to the airport!” I instructed the increasingly wealthy taxi driver then I blew my precious student dollars on a stand-by ticket with only a slim chance of a seat on the last flight out of Canberra.

I fed my remaining stack of 20-cent pieces into the airport payphone and left a message on the young man’s answering machine: “I may not get on a plane. If I do, I’ll be at the airport shuttle terminal in Oxford Street at nine.”

In rom-coms, the climax always has the muddled lovers running to each other in a crowded transport hub – the moment punctuated by a bout of pashing – and living an uncomplicated, happy life thereafter. I’m never convinced by that. I don’t believe in “the one”. But I do believe it’s possible to connect with a pretty-much-right-for-you person at the right moment in your lives. That Friday, having spent all my money and squandered most of my dignity to grab that chance, my unguarded heart was thumping as I scanned the bus terminal.

And there he was, waiting for me. We fell back onto the black vinyl chairs for a breathless pash.

It turns out the clunky, flustered trip to Sydney was the beginning of a great piece of luck. I’ve now had several passionate and hilarious decades with that young man. And since that desperate day, I’ve been a big fan of air travel.●

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Debra Oswald and her partner – journalist, author and radio presenter Richard Glover – in the early ’80s
Tripping with...

Jennifer Hawkins

Family camping was all the model and entrepreneur knew about travel. Then the universe opened and she found herself amid the chaos of India.

Where did you go on your last trip?
The Maldives – and I’ve got itchy feet to go again. Jake [Wall, Hawkins’ husband] and I have been many times, always for a holiday and always just for fun. The big lagoons, incredible scenery and the food! You get to switch off, recharge and be in your own world.

What was your typical childhood holiday?
We didn’t go on many holidays, to be honest, but my pop had a boathouse at Lake Macquarie [south of Hawkins’ home town of Newcastle, NSW] and we’d go camping in the Upper Allyn and Barrington Tops near Gloucester [on NSW’s Mid North Coast], staying wherever we could find. We had a ritual where we’d stop at Barrington and have an iceblock as a treat. There’s a photo of me in a tent at six months old; I think Mum washed me in a bucket.

Have you ever taken a road trip?
My dad bought this huge yellow van and, when I was nine, we drove to Queensland to see the Great Barrier Reef. I thought that was the bee’s knees, like we’d gone overseas. I remember my brother and I climbing up a mango tree in a caravan park. We pulled down all the mangoes and ate like crazy until we were sick. That was the best holiday.

What about road trips as an adult?
When I was doing a TV show, I drove a convertible Mustang from Los Angeles to San Francisco. I was pinching myself. Jake and I also did a road trip in Hawaii, past the Pipe [the Banzai Pipeline surf reef break]. It was one of our first trips, eight years ago. To be in a car together, driving up the coast with your hair out and the top down, was really freeing, you know? You’re not taking social media shots. You’re just in the moment and I remember it being special.

Do you prefer to wander the streets or check maps?
I’d like to say I wander the streets – and I do – but Jake and I prefer to have a plan, even if it’s just get up, exercise, have breakfast, go for lunch and plan some spontaneous moments for in between [laughs]. I don’t like to just lie on the beach. In Positano in Italy, we did a massive hill climb – a two-hour walk – and the next day my calf muscles felt like they would fall off the bones. But it was such an adventure. On the way up, a donkey passed us and we saw worksites where they took rocks up the hill on strings, like an inclinator.

Interviewed by Alison Boleyn
Photographed by Michael Dodge

On the radar
Jennifer Hawkins is an ambassador for The Star Sydney (star.com.au). The Star Doncaster Mile will be held on 7 April at Royal Randwick racecourse in Sydney.
When you travel with Jake, who’s a builder, does he talk constantly about the architecture?
Well, yes, but I’m like that, too, looking at the finishes and the materials. You see interiors and steal the ideas. The open-plan living at the One&Only resort in Los Cabos, in Mexico, inspired our own house [in Sydney’s Northern Beaches].
You take information from everywhere you go, right?

Is there a place that you keep returning to?
I’d go back to Positano every year if I could. My dream is to explore it by boat. I love the food and it’s not processed so you can eat as much pasta as you like, if you run.

Do you always make time for exercise when you travel?
Yes, because it’s a luxury [to have time to do it]. Sometimes when I’m working, if my schedule is really busy, I find it hard to fit in exercise. I do, but on holidays we actually enjoy a leisurely walk or riding bicycles in the Maldives. It makes it seem like you’ve done something that day, which is important to me.

Is there a destination that was a real surprise to you?
It’s weird, because now you see a destination before you arrive, via social media, but when I first went to the Maldives, it was a surprise that the water was so blue. It wasn’t like someone had retouched the water; it was legitimately mind-blowing.

Have you ever been lost while travelling?
No, because I’m usually with Jake and he navigates. I would never take control of the map, let’s put it that way.

Is there a place where you’ve experienced culture shock?
Yes, in India. It was probably my first trip as Miss Universe, 14 years ago, and I’d never travelled overseas before [the pageant]. The airport was crazy and manic with people and cigarette smoke and there were so many cows on the streets. The poverty is an eye-opener and you return home feeling grateful for where you live.

Can you recall a memorable dining experience?
In India, I ate a very hot chilli that I thought was a capsicum. I don’t think I’ve ever sweated so much in my life. [To counteract the heat] they gave me cow’s milk – it was still warm. I was at a big corporate dinner so I had to keep it under control.

Have you ever gone completely off the grid?
Social media-wise, I go off the grid once a month. The last time was for five days but I’ve been off it for a week. Even doing that for a weekend or a Sunday is good for the soul.

If you could be anywhere in the world right now, where would you be?
I like where I am right now. But I’ve never been to Croatia. I’d love to explore the coastline by boat, looking at it from a different angle. That’s on my bucket list, definitely.