

travelnews

WHERE TO BE & WHAT TO SEE AROUND THE WORLD

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On two wheels
A Soho Grand
Hotel bicycle and
(inset below) a
Hobart Artbike
and bike rack.

TRAVEL TREND

FANCY FOOTWORK

It's one of the biggest trends in travel this year: pedal power. **VICTORIA** It'll take you less than an hour to pedal the Murray to Mountains Rail Trail from the Victoria Hotel in Rutherglen to the Pickled Sisters Cafe at Cofield Wines in Wahgunyah, but it's still a good way to work up an appetite.

The historic hotel's "Belles, Bikes and Bubbles" women's weekend cycling package taps into one of the biggest trends in travel this year: pedal power. Bikes, it seems, are big, and high-country Victoria is at the front of the peloton.

Just launched are Beechworth's Vineyard Back Road cycling tours, 13km winemaker-led rides along the rail trail and backroads to cellar doors near town. The tours, which include lunch at Indigo Vineyard, will run on 22 September, 20 October, 10 November and 1 December. They join the annual Tour de Rutherglen, a 32km cycling loop through four wineries to be held on 29 September, and the Myrtleford Bike Muster (5-7 October), a weekend package of family-friendly biking fun.

But the regions don't have a monopoly on pedal power.

You'll also find spoked wheels parked out the front of some of the world's coolest hotels, including New York's The Mark. The Upper East Side hotel's new fleet of Republic Bike cycles sport monogrammed bells, and baskets for stuffing with offerings from chef Jean-Georges Vongerichten's picnic menu.

It's picnics and pushies downtown at the Soho and Tribeca Grands, too, where Bowery Lane Bicycles supplies the bikes and the hotels put on the maps and chicken club sarnies. **Over on the west coast in Santa Monica, Shutters on the Beach's fleet of two-wheelers has just been supplemented by robust Elliptigo machines.**

Back at home, Tasmania's Artbikes make light work of the ride out to MONA's new Theatre of the World exhibition, a collaboration with the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery (TMAG) curated by Jean-Hubert Martin.

Jump onboard an Artbike at TMAG and cycle out to MONA at Berriedale. Or park at one of the "human" bike racks – laser-cut silhouettes with names such as Dazza, Bazza and Gazza – and explore downtown Hobart's cultural precinct. victoriahotel.rutherglen.com.au; murraytomountains.com.au; pedaltoproduce.com.au; themarkhotel.com; grandlifelifehotels.com; shuttersonthebeach.com; artbikes.com.au



TRAIL BLAZERS

Food: it's the most important ingredient, alongside service, in a great short break. It's a point not lost on the Peppers hotel group, which is corralling the talents of the chefs from its 27 properties for the Peppers Gourmet Food Trail, a year-long program of food-focused weekends, market visits and wine matching.

Peppers, which recently added its first ski-field location – Rundells Alpine Lodge at Mount Hotham – to its family, asked its chefs to submit menu ideas for the Trail program. On 10 and 11 August, *GT WINE*'s Nick Stock will host In Season in the Tropics at Palm Cove's Peppers Beach Club & Spa. From there it's on to Peppers Manor Lodge and Peppers Craigieburn for In Season in the Southern Highlands. And seafood will surely star on the menu for Eat Love Cook at Peppers Coral Coast Resort, Airlie Beach, on 14 and 15 September. peppers.com.au/food



Stay cosy
Peppers Rundells
Alpine Lodge.



DEEPLY ATTACHÉD Travelling with a laptop needn't be an ugly business. British fashion designer Sophie Hulme's new collaboration with Globe-Trotter puts a stylish spin on the work trip. The limited-edition range, from \$1675, is available to order at globe-trotter.com.

Plane talking
Qatar Airways
is in codeshare
talks with
Qantas.

STOP PRESS

FRIENDS IN DRY PLACES

A new codeshare relationship for Qantas and Doha's Qatar? Has Qantas found itself a new friend in the Gulf? The CEO of Doha-based Qatar Airways, Akbar Al Baker, has hinted that a strategic alliance between the two carriers is almost certain.

While Qantas CEO Alan Joyce refuses to confirm any specific discussions, Al Baker says codesharing talks are well advanced.

Al Baker, who was in Perth for the launch of Qatar Airways' thrice-weekly flights into WA, says there is a good opportunity to exchange passengers on the airlines' respective networks.

"Qantas doesn't go to the number of places we go. We are looking at joint flights, putting their code on our planes and our code on their domestic network. We could take passengers from Singapore into our network or from Melbourne or from Perth."

Al Baker has overseen an era of tremendous growth for Qatar. In 18 months the airline's fleet has almost doubled and its network continues to expand at an impressive rate.

Perth is its 117th port, with new flights bound for Kilimanjaro in Tanzania from 25 July, Mombasa, Kenya, from 15 August and Yangon, Myanmar, from 3 October. The new Doha International Airport, which the airline is also behind, is set to open in December.

Qatar Airways only ever considered aligning with Qantas in Australia, says Al Baker, because "it is the strongest airline here and we see a lot of synergies between Qantas and ourselves".

He also praised Joyce and his decision last year to ground Qantas during a sustained industrial dispute with pilots, engineers and baggage handlers. "What happens when Qantas collapses? Closes the doors? Will the unions be able to provide these thousands of people with jobs?" asks the CEO. "I'm not against the unions – in my country we have no unions, but we have labour laws which are also very solid, which protect both sides. What I am against is when people become so excessive that they destroy the entity that's providing their members their livelihood."

Al Baker says Qatar will join one of the big three alliances "within the next 12 months" but ruled out flying into an "already over-served" Sydney until the city gets a 24-hour airport.



MEDITERRANEAN MAGIC

The Med continues to inspire designers, with everyone from Giorgio Armani to Tom Ford looking to its shores for this summer's scents. Tom Ford's new Private Blend Neroli Portofino Eau Fraiche body splash, \$190 for 236ml, evokes the Italian Riviera with ingredients such as Italian bergamot, Sicilian lemon and rosemary.

Quintessentially Italian brand Acqui di Parma updates its Blu Mediterraneo series with new deco-styled deep-blue bottles for all its fragrances including Bergamotto di Calabria, Fico di Amalfi and Arancia di Capri. They hit stores on 9 September; from \$85 for 75ml.

Meanwhile, it's Giorgio Armani's summer home in Pantelleria, Sicily, that provides the creative starting point for his new men's fragrance, Acqua di Giò Essenza eau de parfum. It arrives in stores this month, just in time for a metaphorical trip to Europe in high summer. *Stockists p193*

NEW PORT OF CALL

Boutique hotels with a youthful spirit but service on the right side of serious are an art Australia is yet to truly master. But QT, the new brand from Amalgamated Holdings Limited (AHL), which also owns Rydges, has hit on what appears to be a winning formula.

The brand burst out of the blocks with QT Gold Coast, adding colour, a dose of irreverence and a dash of nostalgia to what was the Gold Coast International. The food component also hit the mark (sliders and pork-belly tacos instead of the usual emulsions and jus), as does its new SpaQ, with its deconstructed treatment menu.

Chapter two in this story is QT Port Douglas, now open on the edge of town. Genetically blessed staff sport uniforms made from vintage-inspired Hawaiian fabrics. The Estilo lounge is Ibiza-meets-Far North Queensland, and Bazaar restaurant sports a buffet without a bain-marie in sight. The hotel also hosts Moonlight Cinema in its grounds until 7 October, with bean bags for hire and a tempting menu of salty snacks.

Such a fresh attitude and energy bodes well for QT's next trick: QT Sydney opens next month in the former Gowings building and offices reclaimed from the State Theatre (which AHL also owns), and the story will then continue in Canberra. Stay tuned. qthotels.com.au



Fun in the sun
The new QT
Port Douglas.

FREQUENT FLYER

Alex Polizzi, hotelier and TV host

How important is frequent travel to your world? I am always on the road. Rarely a week goes by without having to pack and unpack a bag.

What are three things you must pack on a business trip? A good novel. I have perfected the art of being able to read anywhere, including in the back of a car, and I always read a few pages before sleep. A pair of flat shoes. After a day of looking smart in heels, the joy of putting flatties on! My iPhone, as my daughter loves to FaceTime with me in the mornings so that she can see my hotel room.

Can poor service sully even the most luxurious hotel experience? Yes. I recently stayed in a luxury hotel in Crete where I had to wait 35 minutes to check in, and it came close to ruining the whole holiday.

Favourite city for inspiration? I love Florence. We try to go back once a year for a few days to eat too much and look at wonderful art.

Favourite home away from home? Any hotel with rooms by my mother [hotel designer Olga Polizzi], as everything is always exactly how I like it.

The single most common mistake hotels make?

Over-promising and under-delivering.

Most memorable recent holiday memory? Two weeks at the Jalousie Plantation in St Lucia with our four-year-old, the first time we had taken such a long break for five years, and we loved everything about it. *Alex Polizzi is manager of Hotel Endsleigh in Devon, UK, and hosts The Hotel Inspector, which screens on Foxtel's Lifestyle channel.*



Full bloom
The Flower Dome
at Gardens by the
Bay in Singapore.

HOT DESTINATION

SUPER-SIZE ME

The small city takes big thinking to leafy new heights. **SINGAPORE** What Singapore lacks in size, it more than makes up for in its commitment to thinking big. The triple-towered Marina Bay Sands complex changed the city's axis as much as its skyline, dragging the central business district down with it towards the bay. And the next oversized chapter in Singapore's evolution is the Gardens by the Bay project, the centrepiece in Singapore's bid to rebrand itself as a tropical garden city where skyscrapers and green space co-exist.

Gardens by the Bay covers 101 hectares of coastal land just behind Marina Bay Sands. The park already houses more than 380,000 plants, with the first of its three phases – the Bay South garden – just open. It's in here that you'll find the Supertrees, a grove of 18 futuristic vertical garden towers each up to 16 storeys high, containing more than 200 species of bromeliads, orchids, ferns and tropical climbers.

The Supertrees, which turn on a lightshow each evening, collect rainwater and also ventilate the two giant terrariums: the Flower Dome (a cool, dry Mediterranean climate) and the Cloud Forest (mountainous, with its own lift and the world's tallest indoor waterfall).

It's in the larger Flower Dome that UK chef Jason Atherton has opened his second Singaporean outpost, Pollen. "Pollen is inspired by the notion of a seed dispersing from Pollen Street Social in London, which then travels round the world before pollinating into a flower on this tropical island in Asia," says Atherton. gardensbythebay.com.sg

A BIT ON THE SIDE The Fitbit Ultra next-gen pedometer, \$119.95, is a boon for health-minded travellers. The tiny Ultra tracks steps, yes, but also monitors sleep patterns, automatically uploading the results to your computer.

A great way to balance exercise and jet lag. fitbit.com



AIRLINE BRIEFS

CHICKEN WINGS

Ethihad Airways is embracing ethical eating by purchasing 200 hens and introducing its first entirely organic dish on board. The free-range hens, whose eggs will be served in first class, reside at Abu Dhabi Organic Farms, a 55-hectare site producing fruit, vegetables, poultry and livestock. Ethihad's in-flight menu will also feature honey from beehives at the farm, while its organic Caprese salad comprises ingredients sourced entirely from the UAE. ethihad.com



LOUNGE ACCESS

A new lounge at Sydney's reborn Museum of Contemporary Art is further incentive to aim for the top tier of Qantas's frequent flyer program. Museum ambassadors and Platinum One frequent flyers are the lucky ones with access. The space replicates the style of the airline's First lounges, with the added bonuses of art exhibitions and an outdoor deck serviced by the newly opened MCA restaurant. qantas.com.au

TOUCHDOWN

Emirates has its eye on Adelaide, with the airline launching four flights per week to the SA capital from 1 November. A daily service is planned from February 2013. The UAE airline is also ramping things up in Perth, where services will increase to thrice-daily from March. The latest phase of Emirates's expansion plans includes a direct service to Lyon, France, and the launch of A380 flights to Moscow, both starting in December. emirates.com



Modern art
Blaue Gans Art
Hotel, Salzburg.

COOL STAYS

FESTIVAL FIND

New digs for bedding down at the Salzburg Festival.

AUSTRIA August is the month when the international rich gather in Salzburg to conspicuously consume the world's most expensive music. No cultural event can match this compact city's annual summer festival for quality and glamour. Small wonder, given that it has a budget of \$60 million and a line-up of orchestras, soloists, actors and directors of which other cities can only dream.

For years, discerning patrons stayed at the venerable Goldener Hirsch, or Golden Stag – a short walk from the enfilade of theatres in which most performances take place – but a cheeky rival has established itself right next door.

The Blaue Gans, or Blue Goose, as the name suggests, is a polar opposite. The exterior may be 14th century, but inside it's pure 21st-century chic, pared down to elegant minima and larded with contemporary artworks. Better still, it has a splendid restaurant and bar and an elegant outdoor dining area. While the food in the neighbouring hostelry is determinedly trad with talefspitz and schnitzel, Blaue Gans's menu is more of the moment, with the likes of baked praline of calf's head with artichokes, tomato and quail egg. But if you're hooked on schnitzel, the Goose offers the juiciest, crunchiest version in town. Rooms from \$160. *Blaue Gans Art Hotel, Getreidegasse 41-43, Salzburg, +43 662 84 24 91 50, hotel-blaue-gans-salzburg.at/en. The Salzburg Festival runs until 2 September; salzburgerfestspiele.at/en.* LEO SCHOFIELD

NORDIC NOTE

If dinner at Noma is on the to-do list, Scandinavian specialist tour company 50 Degrees North can sort you out. They've secured a booking in the beautiful staff room (a 15-seat private room on the first floor above the restaurant, with stunning views over Copenhagen harbour) at the World's Best Restaurant on 29 August and are tailoring a luxury long-weekend package around it. The four-night package includes two nights' luxury accommodation in Copenhagen, a pass to tour the city's attractions, dinner at Noma, plus two nights in the Danish countryside at the beautiful castle Dragsholm Slot. It's the perfect opportunity for those who want to see what all the fuss is about for themselves. Priced from \$2500 per person twin share, including breakfast and two additional dinners. 1300 422 821, fiftydegreesnorth.com MICHAEL HARDEN



Best of the best
Noma restaurant
in Copenhagen.

WRAP STAR Arctic in-flight temperatures are no match for Ondene's butter-soft cashmere travel blanket, \$395. It comes with its own matching zip-bag for perfect portability. ondene.com

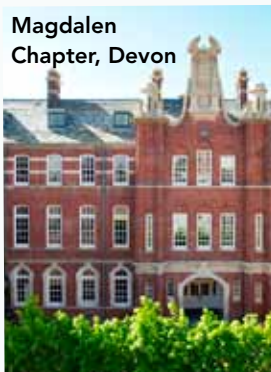


NEWS IN BRIEF

THE NEXT CHAPTER

There's a lot to love about Devon – cream teas, green fields, and now the Magdalen Chapter, a new hotel in the former West England Eye Hospital in Exeter. Chapter Hotels is the offshoot of Hong Kong's Swire Hotels, the team behind the glamorous Upper House in Hong Kong. Where Swire is all about the new, Chapter – which also includes the Montpellier in Cheltenham – offers contemporary comfort in period settings. chapterhotels.com

Magdalen Chapter, Devon



ROCKS STAR

The Rocks landmark The Observatory Hotel is becoming The Langham Sydney. This marks yet another shift for the area, buoyed by not only the reinvigoration of the Park Hyatt Sydney, but the revival of the Harbour Rocks Hotel and the upcoming Baillies Sydney boutique hotel. The new Langham will undergo an upgrade (a Chuan spa will eventually arrive) but won't close during the renovations. langhamhotels.com.au

MARRAKECH MOMENT

Marrakech's mania for new hotels shows no sign of waning. **Hot on the heels of Le Bristol's sister Palais Namaskar opening in the Moroccan hot spot and the imminent arrival of India's Taj group** comes news that hip US hoteliers Morgans Hotel Group also have designs on Africa. Next month Morgans opens Delano Marrakech, a sister to super-cool Delano on South Beach in Miami, with a Mondrian Hotel on the cards for 2013. morganshotelgroup.com