

GROWING DEMAND FOR SHORT ESCAPES SEES MORE PACKAGES HIT THE MARKET

Short breaks continue to be in strong demand, with wholesalers, hotels and tour operators releasing a growing number of packages designed to help agents find the right escape for their clients.

By Lee Mylne

TIME-POOR Australians are increasingly looking for short escapes from daily life, eschewing the big holiday in favour of breaks of between three and seven days to recharge their batteries.

That means either a domestic getaway, somewhere slightly further like NZ, Norfolk Island, the Pacific islands, or – for those looking for close-but-exotic – Papua New Guinea.

Whether it is for a special occasion or just relief from the daily grind, more and more Australians are looking for a quick-fix holiday that's within easy reach of home.

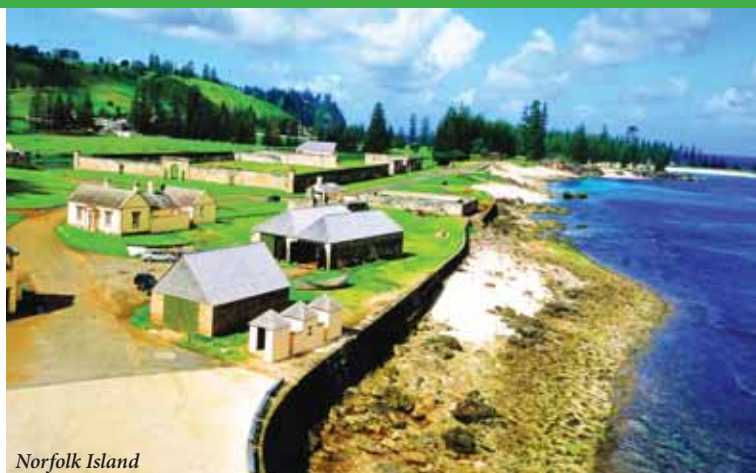
Wholesalers, hotels and tour operators are taking advantage of the trend by offering an increasing number of packages aimed at helping agents find the right short break offers for this market.

“We have had a strong response from the Australian industry to our Short Break Adventures, with almost 60 per cent of sales coming from agents,” says Intrepid Travel’s general manager global sales, James Thornton.

“We’re encouraged by the diversity of destinations as it shows that travellers are embracing the concept of our Short Break Adventures as we intended, as add-ons to longer trips or – as evidenced by the popularity of the four-day ‘Total Top End’ trip – as a long weekend away.”

He said the ‘Total Top End’ trip, which takes in Darwin, Kakadu, Katherine Gorge and Litchfield National Park for \$252 per day, is the most popular domestic short break offered by the company in the Australian market, behind the top-selling five-day trek in Sapa, Vietnam.

“The Short Break Adventures offer great value which is important



Norfolk Island



Aqua Resort, WA



Lord Howe Island (© Grahame McConnell; Destination NSW)



Paddling near Tufi, Papua New Guinea

in the current economic climate of low consumer confidence which is a great selling point for agents,” says Thornton. “They offer an alternative to a more expensive product that budget-conscious travellers’ wallets will like.

“With international airfares going up we expect to see growth from our Australia product next year as travellers start to reconsider the value of a holiday close to home.”

Norfolk Island – just two-and-a-half hours’ flying time from Australia’s east coast – is also appealing to travellers’ hip pockets, hoping to pick up more business following the recent reduction in airfare taxes by the Norfolk Island Administration.

Airfare tax has been reduced from \$120 to \$50 return for each passenger, the \$40 departure tax has been completely axed and the passenger movement charge has been considerably lowered.

“This significant change is intended to increase the rate of travel to Norfolk Island from Australia and capitalise on the increased interest in the

destination,” says the island’s Minister for Tourism, André Nobbs.

“The Norfolk Island government is committed to ensuring that our island is an affordable destination for Australian travellers. It has significant historic connections to Australia and offers a world of experiences to holidaymakers.”

Norfolk Island Tourism general manager Wayne Emery says Australians have shown heightened interest in travelling to Norfolk Island after the recent World Heritage Listing.

He said the island offered “new and improved” experiences for families and baby boomers, and the reduction in taxes would add another element of incentive to travel, helping convert the interested into visitors.

“Most travellers to Norfolk Island are repeat visitors and we hope the reduced airfare brings them back more often.”

Competitive airfares are making it easier for Australians to consider one of their closest – but still relatively undiscovered – neighbours, Papua New Guinea.

“PNG has never been more affordable with airfares starting from \$513 return from Brisbane or you can book an all-inclusive holiday through one of the many wholesalers that specialise in PNG,” says Air Niugini general manager Charles Morley.

Air Niugini operates daily flights from Brisbane and Cairns and twice weekly from Sydney direct to Port Moresby, and to more than 20 ports throughout PNG where air travel is often the only form of transport.

“PNG is an ideal holiday destination for those seeking adventure and unspoilt beauty,” says Morley. “While the Kokoda Track is still the most popular product, there is also an array of other holiday options including village stays, cultural festivals, adventure lodges, cruising, surfing, fishing, diving, bird-watching and the magnificent fjords of Tufi and the wonderful oasis that is the Madang Resort.”

PNG’s accommodation options range from tourist lodges to international standard resorts and business hotels.

Australis makes waves in Cairns and Coolangatta



An apartment balcony at Australis Kirra Surf Apartments

AUSTRALIS Hotels, Resorts and Apartments has welcomed Australis Cairns Beach Resort and Australis Kirra Surf Apartments to its expanding network of hotels, resorts and apartments in popular coastal destinations.

A statement from Australis said the two properties have “strengthened the network in Queensland with these two additions holding great appeal to the domestic holiday market”.

Australis Cairns Beach Resort is the closest beachfront accommodation to Cairns CBD, offering self-contained one bedroom apartments with large balconies overlooking Holloways Beach or the tropical surrounds.

The resort is set on spacious, beautifully landscaped gardens, with an oasis pool setting, beachfront restaurant and bar, and guest BBQ facilities for do-it-yourself meals alfresco-style.

Australis Kirra Surf Apartments are situated at Coolangatta, five minutes from Gold Coast airport

and feature architecturally designed one, two and three bedroom apartments.

“They offer spectacular views over Kirra Beach, with well-appointed European appliances and stylish contemporary furniture,” an Australis statement said.

Designed for couples and families, the complex includes an outdoor heated horizon edge pool, gym and sauna, guest BBQs and secure underground parking.

The Australis Hotels and Resorts collection now has nine properties in total, with other locations including Townsville, Hervey Bay, Noosaville, Surfers Paradise, Margaret River, Wisemans Ferry and NSW Mid-North Coast.

Australis guests are eligible for the benefits offered through “The Escape Club” loyalty program, with dining deals and the ability to earn “Escape Dollars” that can be used like cash at the hotel or other Constellation Hotels across Australia or New Zealand.

AAT Kings Northern Territory program helps clients ‘Escape’

THE AAT Kings 2011/12 Northern Territory Escapes brochure features a great range of holidays for clients on a short time frame, with something to suit all budgets and styles.

With day tours and short breaks, ranging from a few hours to eight days in length, clients have the option to pick the holiday that best suits them as they explore the Northern Territory.

AAT Kings managing director Tammy Marshall says the program has been designed in response to market trends, which show that many travellers are choosing to take shorter, more frequent trips, rather than one long break.

“People are placing more emphasis on taking regular time out as a way to relax and to do something different,” she says.

“With AAT Kings, clients have the chance to explore adventurous destinations like the Red Centre, Kakadu National Park and Darwin, while mixing and matching touring options into customised itineraries,

allowing the freedom and flexibility to do what they want, when they want, all in a short time frame.

“A Northern Territory short break provides a myriad of experiences for travellers seeking adventure, culture and nature and we find that this style of holiday and destination offers a great way to escape the realities of everyday life for adults, couples, small groups, families and children alike.”

The combination of accommodation options, great value sightseeing packages and easily accessible airports in Alice Springs, Ayers Rock and Darwin lures clients by offering great value, proximity to home, and the breathtaking natural landmarks of the Northern Territory, says Marshall.

Among the packages on offer is the three-day “Kakadu and Katherine Gorge” tour, priced from \$884 per person (twin share), land only. Highlights include a guided walk at Nourlangie Rock, a crocodile-spotting cruise on the Yellow Water Billabong, the Warradjan Aboriginal Cultural



Walpa Gorge

Centre, rock art at Ubirr, a cruise along the East Alligator River, a visit to Arnhem Land with an Aboriginal guide, Edith Falls and cruising along Katherine Gorge.

The package includes a choice of

standard, superior or first class accommodation, sightseeing, most meals, touring by air-conditioned coach and experienced driver/guide. Another tour is the three-day “Centre Highlights”, priced from \$1014.



Free night deal at Caloundra resort

CALOUNDRA'S five-star Rumba Beach Resort at Bulcock Beach on the Sunshine Coast has launched a range of “Pay 3, Stay 4” deals.

Aimed at guests looking for self-catering in luxury – whether they are couples, a multi-generation clan or a group of mates - the package ranges from \$585 inclusive for two people for a four night stay in a one-bedroom Resort King Spa Suite, or \$735 for a two-bedroom suite for four nights.

The resort is just across the esplanade to the waters of the Pumicestone Passage and Bulcock Beach with all the eat-street vibe of

the waterfront on the doorstep.

From views of the majestic Glasshouse Mountains, abundant wildlife, scenic boardwalks on the beach, bicycle tracks and an expansive beach, other features of the area include nature-based activities and award-winning food and wine.

The package also includes free bicycle hire for two days to enjoy the new Bulcock Beach boardwalk.

Rumba Beach Resort's Spring Fling Deal is available until November 30, excluding Saturday nights and school holidays.

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*Fares quoted are to Port Moresby and include all taxes and surcharges but are subject to currency fluctuations and are based on lead in prices.
Availability is limited to selected departure periods. Other terms and conditions apply. All flights operate via Port Moresby.

AIR92463_PNG



\$60 airfare sale marks Air Pacific's 60th anniversary

AIR Pacific is turning 60 and is offering special anniversary fares, with round trip tickets to Fiji for children (2-11 years) from \$60 and adult return fares from \$636 including taxes.

Over the past 60 years, Air Pacific has introduced generations of Australians to Fiji. Fiji's national carrier started flying regular domestic flights in 1951. In 1974, it began services between

Nadi and Auckland and the first-ever scheduled service between Nadi and Canberra.

In 1983, services to the US commenced with flights to Honolulu. The network is now serviced by B747, B767 and B737 aircraft, and flies to 15 destinations around the world in 10 different countries.

"This celebration and sale gives us

an opportunity to say vinaka vakalevu to all of our passengers, stakeholders and industry partners for their fantastic support from our very first flight in 1951," said managing director and CEO Dave Pflieger.

"Because of that support, we have enjoyed a 60 year tradition of flying Australians to Fiji and the South Pacific on Air Pacific, Fiji's international

airline, and we're looking forward to another 60 more years of the same."

Anniversary sale fares, on sale until October 15, are price from \$636 ex Sydney, \$638 ex Brisbane and \$736 ex Melbourne.

Children's fares, for travel between February 1 and March 31, 2012, are \$60. All are return fares, including taxes.

Luxury Aqua Resort opens on shores of WA's pristine Geographe Bay

AFTER more than four years in the making, Western Australia's newest addition to the luxury market, Aqua Resort has opened on the shores of Geographe Bay between Dunsborough and Busselton.

The resort is the latest addition to the premium accommodation market in the south-west, and is perfect for a

laundry and powder room round out the accommodation. Other features include an open gas fire, outdoor kitchen and outdoor shower.

Beachfront villas can be booked as either two separate apartments or linked to provide accommodation for up to 12. The first floor has a luxurious master suite with ensuite bathroom overlooking the bay, two double bedrooms, bathroom and spacious oversized living, dining and kitchen area leading out to a large entertaining deck with built-in outdoor kitchen, all with views across Geographe Bay.

Downstairs is another master suite with ensuite bathroom overlooking the villa's private plunge pool, a further bedroom and bathroom and second kitchen, dining and living area which



family holiday and a five-star base from which to experience what is arguably Western Australia's most popular tourism region.

With 34 single-storey Grove Villas and seven two-storey Beachfront Villas, private plunge pools, 25 metre beachside pool, tennis court, gym, spa and steam room, Aqua is set within 3.4 hectares of landscaped grounds which includes mature peppermint trees.

Each four-bedroom Grove Villa has been designed to accommodate two families sleeping up to 10. Matching master suites branch off the large open plan living area, each with ensuite bathroom and freestanding bath. A fully equipped kitchen, separate



again leads on to a large deck with a barbecue, and all with bay views.

Rates at Aqua Resort start from \$320 per night for a one-bedroom Grove Villa to \$1080 per night for a five-bedroom villa. Two night minimum stays apply.



Oaks Shores at Queenstown, New Zealand

Indulge with Oaks romantic escapes

OAKS Hotels and Resorts is offering a range of romantic and indulgent escapes at many of its properties around Australia and New Zealand.

For those who love combining accommodation in a central city location with the best in cuisine, the Oaks Felix has teamed up with Brisbane's Urbane Restaurant to offer the "Ultimate Degustation Indulgence".

Priced at \$299 per night for two people, the package includes a complimentary upgrade to a one bedroom executive apartment, with some of the best views of the city, Story Bridge and Brisbane River from floor-to-ceiling windows in every room.

All of Brisbane's most popular attractions are within easy reach of Oaks Felix, and when it is time to dine, it's only a short walk to the

award-winning Urbane Restaurant for an eight-course degustation menu. Urbane also offers Brisbane's only vegetarian degustation.

The package, valid until December 31, also includes free car parking and a late checkout at midday.

For those who want to take their short break across the Tasman in New Zealand, Oaks Shores at Queenstown has an indulgent "Gourmet Tastes of Queenstown" package. Priced from \$189 per room per night, it includes daily breakfast and a hamper from the Gibbston Valley containing artisan cheeses, a wine matching guide and tasting notes.

The package is for travel between November 1 and May 30, 2012. A two-night minimum stay applies to both packages.

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QH deals encourage travellers to 'Experience More in NSW'



Bouddi National Park, Central Coast (image credit: Central Coast Tourism)

QANTAS Holidays has launched a range of short break packages and add-on deals as part of its new "Experience More in NSW" campaign.

Targeted at a wide range of travellers, the deals are on sale until March 2012.

Packages have been designed to suit families, adventurers, and those looking for luxury or food and wine experiences.

The "More for Families" deals include a two-night stay at the Travelodge Wynyard and an "A" Reserve ticket to *Annie the Musical*, priced from \$339 per adult (twin share) or \$199 per child (3-11 years) for travel from January 6 to March 28, 2012.

"More Discovery" packages, aimed at adventurous travellers, include a two-night stay in a garden view room at All Seasons Port Stephens Salamander Shores, including

breakfast daily, from \$139 per adult (twin share), for travel from October 4 to December 23, and from January 15 to March 31.

Three nights at Harrigan's Hotel in the Hunter Valley is one of the options for "More Food and Wine", with accommodation in a studio room from \$279 per person (twin share), for travel until March 31. Add-ons for packages in this category focus on extras such as dinner, for Sydney stays including the Sydney Tower Restaurant from \$69 per person.

The "More Luxury" packages include three nights in a Deluxe Pyrmont View room at The Star, Sydney, from \$429 per adult (twin share), for travel from October 4 to December 31, with "More to Do" extras such as cruising Sydney Harbour in style with Sea Sydney Cruises from \$285 per person.

Pat Rafter heads \$5m Mantra campaign

WITH Aussie tennis star Pat Rafter at the forefront of its new \$5 million marketing campaign, Mantra Hotels, Resorts and Apartments has launched a "raff" of new package deals for the domestic market.

Rafter has signed a three-year deal for the campaign involving television, radio, print, social media, public relations, posters, notepads, screen slides and even life-size "Pat" cut-outs.

The campaign is part of a brand overhaul which sees the launch of Mantra's new "room for everyone" ideology, catering for both corporate and leisure travellers, offering diverse accommodation styles in Australia and New Zealand's most popular destinations.

The new Pat's Mate's Rates offer great value getaways at holiday locations from Tropical North Queensland to Tasmania, and New South Wales'

Nelson Bay to Western Australia.

In Queensland, the deals include a minimum four-night stay at Mantra Aqueous on Port in Port Douglas from \$176 per night in a hotel room with spa, and at Mantra Hervey Bay from \$140 per night in a hotel room. These offers represent a "stay four, pay for three" deal, and are valid until October 31.

On the Gold Coast, there are two options. At Mantra Circle on Cavill at Surfers Paradise, rates are from \$176 per night, and at Mantra Broadbeach on the Park, Broadbeach, from \$150 per night, valid until March 31, 2012, with a three night minimum stay.

In Sydney, Mantra 2 Bond Street is offering rates from \$250 per night for a minimum two nights in an executive studio, on Thursday and Friday nights and Sunday and Monday nights until March 31, 2012.



Pat Rafter relaxing by the pool at Mantra on Salt Beach, Kingscliff

Canberra's Mantra on Northbourne has rates from \$169 per night in a one-bedroom apartment for Thursday-Sunday stays only, until March 31, 2012. A two night minimum stay applies.

Mantra Erskine Beach Resort, on Victoria's Great Ocean Road has a "stay three, pay for two" offer from \$179 per night in a Heritage Room, until March 31, 2012.

Exclusive Dolphin Island releases 'four for three' package



TO CELEBRATE the re-launch of Dolphin Island, Fiji, following a lengthy period of refurbishment and renovation, The Huka Retreats is offering a "4 for 3" package. Guests who stay on Dolphin Island, on an exclusive-use basis for a three-night stay, will receive a fourth night free.

Dolphin Island is a sister property to New Zealand's Huka Lodge and the heritage Grande Provence Estate in South Africa. The 5.3 hectare private island is the latest project of The Huka Retreats founder Alex van Heeren, who has collaborated with renowned interior designer Virginia Fisher.

With accommodation for a maximum of eight guests, Dolphin Island is exclusive in every sense and designed especially for island living. The thatched main bure pavilion holds centre court with an infinity pool, flanked by two pairs of guest bures and surrounded by fringed palm trees.

The package is valid until December 12. Exclusive use of the island is priced at \$12,000 per night all-inclusive. For four couples the package would cost \$4500 per person for five days. It includes accommodation, all meals, a standard bar, all vehicle transfers by private car to and from Dolphin Island, boat transfers and use of all Dolphin Island facilities.

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AUSTRALIS CAIRNS BEACH RESORT Cairns, QLD

NEW



- Beachfront location, only 10 minutes from central Cairns, metres from restaurants, cafes and shops
- 1 bedroom self contained apartments
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AUSTRALIS MARINERS NORTH Townsville, QLD



- The only absolute oceanfront accommodation, situated on The Strand
- 2 & 3 bedroom self contained apartments
- Restaurants, marina, shops and casino nearby
- Swimming pool, spa and tennis court on site

AUSTRALIS SHELLEY BAY RESORT Hervey Bay, QLD



- Beachfront location, only minutes walk to restaurants, cafes and shops
- 1 & 2 bedroom self contained apartments
- Lagoon style swimming pool, spa, tennis court, restaurant and BBQ facilities on site

AUSTRALIS NOOSA LAKES Noosaville, QLD



- Set on 7 lake front acres opposite Noosa Marina
- 1 & 2 bedroom self contained apartments
- 3 lagoon style swimming pools
- Restaurants, cafes and beach nearby

AUSTRALIS SOVEREIGN HOTEL Surfers Paradise, QLD



- Close to theme parks, and only 5 minutes walk to patrolled beach and shops
- 1 & 2 bedroom self contained apartments
- Swimming pool, spa and sauna
- Flavours Restaurant and BBQ facilities on site

AUSTRALIS DIAMOND BEACH RESORT & SPA Mid-North Coast, NSW



- Beachfront location with beach access
- Easy 3 hour drive north of Sydney
- 1, 2 & 3 bedroom self contained apartments and villas
- 3 Nippers Restaurant and endota spa on site

AUSTRALIS RETREAT AT WISEMANS Wisemans Ferry, NSW



- Nestled on the banks of the Hawkesbury River, just an hour's drive from Sydney
- Double, twin and family accommodation
- Professional 9 hole par 34 golf course on site
- Restaurant and massage therapy on site

AUSTRALIS MARGARET RIVER Margaret River, WA

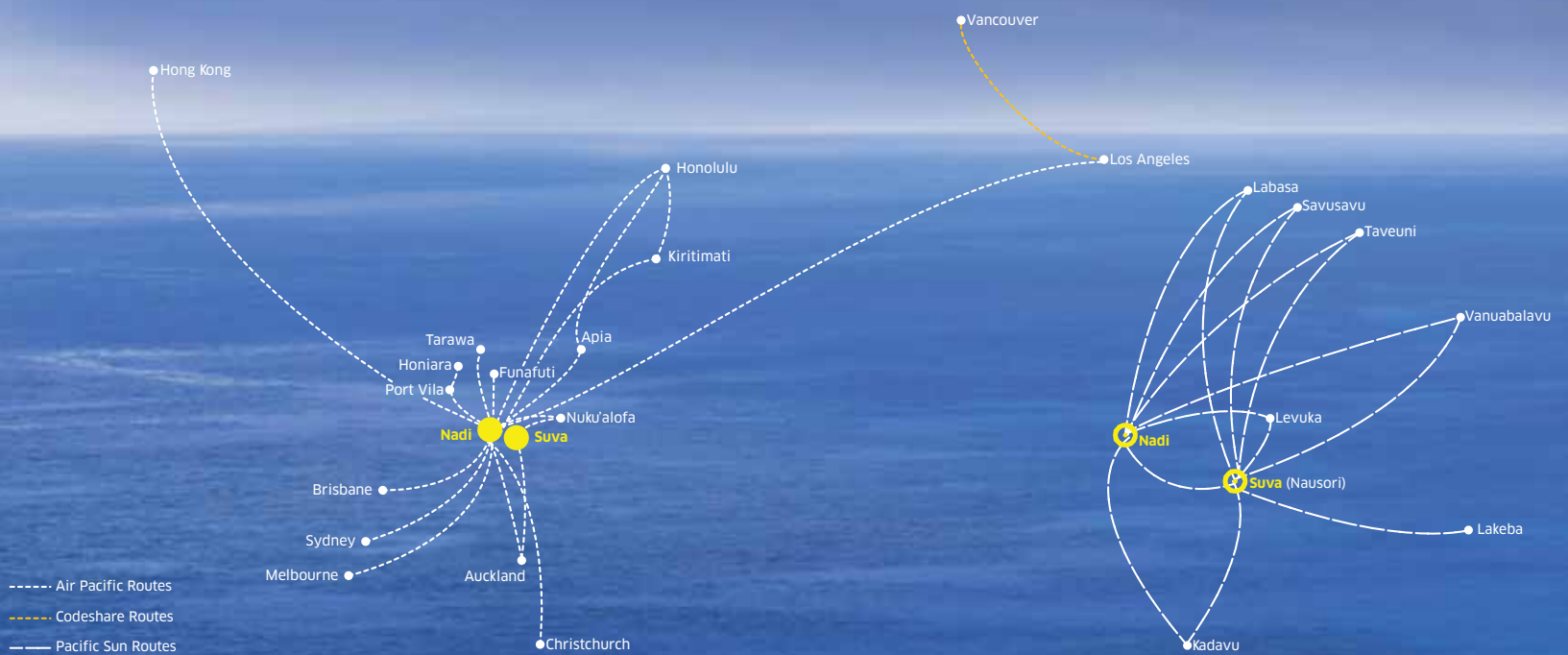


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Indulgent 'Inspiring' extras cater for time-poor short break travellers

THE recently-launched Inspiring Journeys offers a range of Short Break options in Australia, including three to six-day tours in the Northern Territory, Queensland and South Australia.

A new brand from The Travel Corporation, Inspiring Journeys specialises in Australian adventures, providing an "experiential" element to travelling domestically.

"The traveller in our target market is often quite time-poor and our shorter journeys provide the perfect escapism for them from everyday life," says Inspiring Journeys managing director Tammy Marshall.

"The feeling of gazing into the magical outback stars, spotting the fascinating wildlife in Kakadu National Park or reflecting over the stunning sunsets will give travellers a true sense of leaving the pressures of modern life behind, even if it is only for a few days.

"Our target market likes to try new things and take the path less travelled;



they desire the opportunity for rich experiences or interactions. Our product offers these travellers options, even while on a short break," she says.

"Additionally, on a short break, people often like to indulge that bit extra. Therefore we have inclusions and exclusives which will ensure their

journey memories stay with them well after they have returned to work.

"For example, on 'The Long Rainbow' or 'The Mysterious North' journeys in the Top End, travellers will enjoy the exclusivity of Wildman Wilderness Lodge (pictured), a hand-picked retreat in the Mary River Wetlands just

out-side Kakadu, or on 'The Shades of Sand' six-day journey they will enjoy stunning views of the Glasshouse Mountains at Spicers Clovelly Estate on Queensland's Sunshine Coast.

In a group of no more than 20, Inspiring Journeys travellers are led by their journey leaders and navigators in 'luxurious' 4WD Mercedes-Benz vehicles.

The three-day 'Long Rainbow' tour is priced from \$1395 per person, twin share (land only) and includes 4WD transport, accommodation, many meals, extensive sightseeing, travelling from Darwin into Litchfield National Park and Kakadu National Park. Departures are available Wednesdays and Saturdays until October.

The four-day "The Secret South" is priced from \$1485 per person, twin share (land only) and includes transport, accommodation, and sightseeing in Adelaide, the Barossa Valley and Kangaroo Island.



'Spring renewal' with Wolgan Valley offer

WOLGAN Valley Resort and Spa has released a two-night "Spring Renewal" package, valid until December 19.

Priced from \$1450 per person (twin share), the package includes accommodation in a Heritage Suite, gourmet breakfast, lunch and dinner daily, non-alcoholic beverages, a select range of local wines and beer with meals and two on-site nature based activities each day.

Guests also take home a "Taste of Wolgan gourmet pack" or "Timeless Spa Pamper pack", and for those who stay two nights or more from Sunday to Thursday inclusive, a 60-minute spa treatment per person is included, representing additional value of \$330 per couple.

Wolgan Valley Resort and Spa is Australia's first luxury conservation-based resort, located on the Great Dividing Range between two national parks, and borders the Blue Mountains World Heritage

Area, about three hours drive from Sydney.

The Emirates-owned \$125 million resort is fully integrated into its environment and supports wide-ranging conservation practices focusing on endangered species protection.

It is the first hotel in the world to achieve internationally accredited carbon neutral certification. Guests can take part in free nature-based activities including guided walks, four-wheel drive safaris, horse-riding, mountain bike excursions, nocturnal wildlife spotting and stargazing, visits to the Wollemi Pine Grove and guided photographic excursions.

The secluded resort has 40 individual suites surrounded by wide, private verandas, each with its own indoor/outdoor swimming pool, separate living and bedroom areas, separate walk-in wardrobe, luxurious en-suite bathroom and double-sided fireplace.

Explore Adelaide with a weekend package from InterContinental

INTERCONTINENTAL Adelaide's new "Weekend Explorer" package is designed to allow guests to relax and unwind over a leisurely breakfast, linger longer with a late checkout, and enjoy the flexibility of touring the city and regions.

The package is priced from \$219 per night, including luxury overnight accommodation in a King Superior room, breakfast for two, a 2pm check-out and free valet car parking. It is valid for stays until November 30, on a Friday, Saturday or Sunday night.

InterContinental Adelaide is located on the banks of the River Torrens, a short walk from the cultural boulevard of North Terrace's galleries and museums.

"Our concierge team has designed a number of walking and touring itineraries to take advantage of the hotel's central location and can assist local, interstate and international visitors in uncovering and experiencing some hidden gems in Adelaide," says general manager James Allen.

Adelaide exhibitions and events over the coming months include the Saatchi Gallery in Adelaide exhibition of contemporary art from the acclaimed London gallery, at the Art Gallery of South Australia until October 23 and the Adelaide International Guitar Festival from November 25-28.



Leigh Street, Adelaide