

THE INSIDERS | UBUD, BALI

JAN LATTA
WILDLIFE PHOTOGRAPHER/AUTHOR

STAY: Maya Ubud Resort & Spa
This luxury resort, set in 10ha of tropical gardens about an hour's drive from Denpasar international airport, has a fabulous spa. There are 108 thatched private pool villas and beautifully furnished guestrooms, and the double and single spa treatment pavilions are in a glorious location adjacent to the river. Relax with a traditional massage, perhaps, or a body scrub and facial; mayaubud.com.

EAT: Casa Luna
This restaurant is owned by Australian Janet DeNeefe, who runs the Ubud Writers & Readers Festival (celebrating its 10th anniversary this year from Friday until October 15). There's a good mix of Balinese and Mediterranean cuisine, but my favourite is bebek betutu, a Balinese ceremonial dish of smoked duck baked in coconut bark or banana leaves over coal. Finish with a serve of Janet's tangy lime tart; casalunabali.com; ubudwritersfestival.com.

SHOP: Ubud market
You'll need a lot of time to explore this market on the corner of Jalan Raya and Monkey Forest Road. I've had fun bargaining for sarongs, and the wooden masks make great gifts. For serious antiques shopping and a private tour with an expert, contact Yajaira Smyth; smyth.yajaira@gmail.com.

DRINK: Amandari
Set high on an escarpment above the Ayung River gorge in the village of Kedewatan, on the fringes of Ubud, Amandari's bar is a beautiful spot to sip a cocktail or a fresh mango or coconut juice. Amandari means "the place of peaceful spirits" in Sanskrit and the resort has been designed to look like a Balinese village, with walkways and intricately carved stone walls; amanresorts.com.

SOUVENIRS: Murni's
Murni's Warung, which opened in 1974 just near the Campuhan Bridge, a 10-minute walk from the heart of Ubud, is an institution. The four-level restaurant's adjacent antiques, collectibles and gift shop is also well worth a visit. I bought a stone Buddha head for my garden and some silver butterfly table settings; murnis.com.

INSPIRATION: The Green School
A short drive from Ubud, this three-storey structure is made entirely of bamboo; the classrooms have no walls and there is a lush jungle backdrop. Students from across the world are taught about sustainability and their teachers pad about without shoes. You can book a tour to find out more; greenschool.org.

Jan Latta is the author of *Diary of a Wildlife Photographer* (True to Life Books, \$25).



BOOK by October 31 for generous extras on Compagnie du Ponant's Asia sailings aboard Le Soleal. An eight-day Singapore circuit from December 2 starts at \$3841 a person twin-share with €300 (\$430) credit per stateroom. More: 1300 857 437.



THOUSANDS of sea turtles migrate annually from the shores of the Arabian Gulf, the Red Sea and Somalia to lay their eggs in Oman, home to five of the world's seven species of sea turtles; peak season is July to October. More: tourismoman.com.au.



LEARN to be a better holiday snapper with expert instruction on 40 camera-related topics via the newly revised PhotoPRO app developed by Rhonda Shelley of Candid Capers Photography in Queensland. \$2.99 at iTunes or Google Play.



AUSTRALIAN operator David Anderson has launched Villalet.com for travellers seeking luxury villa lodgings in popular destinations. He has more than 800 properties listed across Sri Lanka, Fiji, Bali and Thailand. More: villalet.com.

HOME AND AWAY



NO 84 must be one of Sydney's best short-stay apartment rentals. On Queen Street, Woollahra (access from Smith Street), it is tucked upstairs behind a swish boutique, with secure courtyard parking. The airy master chamber has a four-poster dressed in best-quality cotton and covers, and tumbling floral curtains with properly thick linings; a smaller sunroom opens to a deck with a barbecue and can be configured as a second bedroom. There are steps (from the downstairs entry vestibule and a few more from the kitchen to the lounge and master bedroom) so it's not an option for wheelchairs or even, perhaps, for scampering children. It feels slightly Parisian in the kitchen with its atelier-style skylight and glass-fronted armoire, but completely contemporary when it comes to inclusions and fixtures, from Nespresso machine and Smeg appliances to supplied breakfast provisions, WiFi, Foxtel and coffee-table books. Self-catering? You are minutes away from a bakery, fine-foods purveyor Simon Johnson, and Victor Churchill, Sydney's top butchery. Mention T&I when booking with Alluxia by October 12 and receive an Aesop Jet Set Kit (\$41); \$295 a night (minimum two nights). More: alluxia.com. **SUSAN KUROSAWA**

ACCESSORY

Etrusco Classic Gladstone Leather Duffel, \$389

THIS stylish and vintage-inspired Gladstone duffel is made in Italy of quality leather and is a world removed from the current crop of streamlined cabin luggage. Reminiscent of a traditional doctor's bag, there's a spacious main compartment with internal and external zip pockets, contrast stitching, a brass closure and rigid leather handle. A complimentary dust cover is included. More: hardtofind.com.au.

SHARON FOWLER



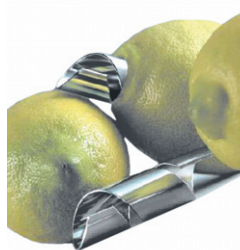
T&I LOVES



NO visitor to Queenstown, the outdoor sports and adventure hub of New Zealand's South Island, should pass up the chance to get airborne and savour all those snow-topped peaks and pristine *Lord of the Rings* scenery from on high. Glacier Southern Lakes Helicopters has a delectable-sounding Northburn Decadence "heli-wine-and-food" package that's perfect for a family or group of friends. Passengers are whisked off from Queenstown to Northburn Station winery, in an idyllic rural setting at Cromwell, for a private wine tasting and gourmet lunch at The Shed cellar-door restaurant overlooking Lake Dunstan and the Pisa Mountains; then it's off for another tasting at one of Central Otago's award-winning wineries. The four-hour experience starts at \$NZ575 (\$507) a person, including hotel transfers, for a minimum of four persons. If you prefer the idea of a Middle-earth hop, the company's pilot, Alfie Speight, was involved with most of the aerial filming for the Peter Jackson big-screen epics. More: glaciersouthernlakes.co.nz. **SUSAN KUROSAWA**

ON THE BENCH

Tools Design lemon squeezer, \$39



JUST when you thought you'd seen it all, the Danes invent a designer lemon squeezer. Twist the stainless steel gadget into the lemon, give the fruit a squeeze and the juice flows out. Leave the funnel in place, keep the fruit in the fridge and it's ready for the next time you need a splash of citrus. More: danishmodern.com.au.

MICHELLE ROWE

ON THE ROAD

Kosmea Skin Clinic Rescue Balm, \$29.95



I AM a big fan of Kosmea and use its rose-scented Eighth Natural Wonder Revitalising Facial Serum (50ml, \$69.95) daily. Latest in the line-up from this Australian company, which is celebrating its 20th birthday this year, is a healing ointment that looks just the trick for sunburn, skin breakouts, even cuts, grazes and minor travel mishaps. Skin Clinic Rescue Balm is a clear salve that includes certified organic oils and rose hip butter and is easily absorbed into the skin or on to chapped lips. Kosmea also recommends the balm to treat nappy rash or cradle cap. More: kosmea.com.au. **SUSAN KUROSAWA**

Confessions of a multi-tasking tour leader

THE INCIDENTAL TOURIST

ANNIE WADDINGTON-FEATHER

IT was when I was persuaded to wear a belly dancer's costume and perform for my tour group in Turkey that I seriously questioned my job description.

As tour leader for an adventure travel company, I added many skills to my CV over several years. As well as the basics — getting the group to where they were supposed to be on time, fed

and watered, and briefed on local customs, history and politics — I've coped with natural disasters ("taking the initiative"), injured and unwell clients ("first aid"), serving meals in understaffed restaurants ("waitress"), listened to people's personal problems ("therapist") and managed difficult clients ("psychologist").

Oh, and donned belly dancing costumes ("entertainer").

Tour leaders must rely on their wits and experience to take them through adverse situations. For example, after surviving a landslide during a trek through a remote gorge in rural China, we retraced our steps to the road and the daily bus appeared within an hour. I persuaded the driver to abandon his route for a two-hour detour to the town

in the opposite direction ("negotiator").

When group travellers are having a welcome shower at the end of a day's touring, the leader (when not patiently listening to negative feedback about the accommodation or inefficiencies of the destination) still has to ensure everything is in place for the following day's itinerary, such as checking guides and transport, writing reports and tallying the expenditure in the books ("accountant").

The refusal of many travellers to take responsibility for their actions and an increase in litigation in the travel industry has made a tour leader's job harder. One case I know of concerned a tour escort who hadn't warned the client a log was slippery.

They slipped and broke their leg; the

walk, by the way, was in a rainforest.

To all tour clients, I suggest adhering to these guidelines to keep your leader happy.

Do tell him or her when you've had a good time. Do respect local customs without complaining about, say, covering your head or legs.

Do be punctual. Your popularity will be zero if you're late, particularly if the group has to wait for the next ferry.

Do tip your bus driver and tour leader if you are satisfied with the service. It's a 24/7 job, often with no food and drink allowance.

Do not expect your tour leader to know everything. History of a country, where the nearest toilets (or post office, laundry or bank) are and how much you should pay for a taxi should be gen-

erally known. But do not expect an informed answer to, say, "What is the tiny ruin on that hill on the horizon?"

Do not automatically refer to your tour leader as a guide before checking the protocols. Many countries have strict guiding regulations: I was nearly arrested in Israel and Turkey when a member of my group referred to me as their guide.

Do not leave belongings in a hotel and expect your tour leader to retrieve them five days later when the group is at the other end of the country.

If you are a fussy eater or have allergies, be flexible and understand the realities. For example, in many rural areas soup or stew made with chicken or fish stock will be considered vegetarian.