



# HOT WINTER ESCAPES

SUFFERING FROM A SERIOUS CASE OF THE WINTER BLUES? THERE'S NO BETTER TIME TO MIGRATE NORTH FOR A DOSE OF SOME WINTER SUN. TONI KRASICKI EXPLAINS.

**WITH A STRONG AUSSIE DOLLAR** and great travel deals available, there's no excuse to spend this winter hibernating under the doona.

Whether you're after sun, sand and sea, vibrant cities, 24/7 parties or romance under a midnight sun, there's options to cater for everyone's taste.

Instead of heading to the run-of-the-mill destinations, why not take the plunge and test some new waters, as there are a myriad of wonders to explore. Read on to check out some hot escapes that will keep you warm until the sun makes its way back to us.

## For the romantics

Everybody loves a love shack, but one built on stilts hovering above crystal clear waters brimming with an array of psychedelic tropical fish is the cherry on the cake. There are plenty of over water bungalow resorts found on Tahiti's Bora Bora and in the Maldives. But you'll also find them in Bermuda, Moorea and Fiji.

If you want to stay a little closer to home, then take an intimate luxury cruise along the pristine and rugged Kimberley coastline in north-western Australia. The unique environment of unexplored islands, tidal lagoons, magnificent waterfalls, intriguing history, unusual wildlife and breathtaking scenery make for an unforgettable romantic escape. Some vessels carry as little as twelve passengers and others have their own helicopter for scenic flights. Choose your ship,

depending on how much romance you are after!

And of course we can't talk romance-inspired travel and not mention Paris, right? But how about combining a city visit with a stay in an enchanting chateau in regional France? Stay in authentic guestrooms that have been converted from fairytale turrets and towers in the stunning French countryside. Visit petite country villages and sip café au lait and munch on pain au chocolat next to beret-clad locals. Oh hourra pour l'amour!

## A family affair

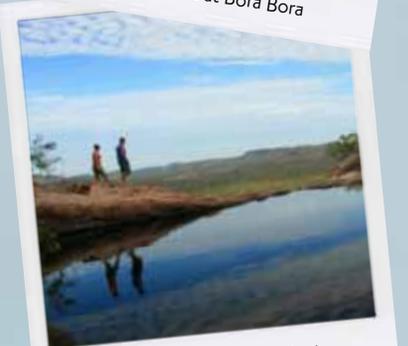
A visit to Australia's tropical Top End has it all. Darwin's tropical breezes are warm, the city's history is interesting, and the area is rich in indigenous culture; something for all the family.

Kids will love 'Aquascene', a natural aquarium where at high tide hundreds of fish approach the shore to be fed by onlookers. The Mindil Beach Markets is the place to be seen on a Thursday and Sunday night, and remember to check out a movie in the open air cinema (just watch out for possums scuttling back and forth under your feet!).

World heritage listed Kakadu National Park honours one of the oldest living societies on earth. Explore amazing rock art sites and learn about Aboriginal culture at the Warradjan Aboriginal Cultural Centre. Take a dawn cruise on the Yellow River to watch for hunting crocs and the prolific birdlife. Then, get down to



Indulge in a hut at Bora Bora

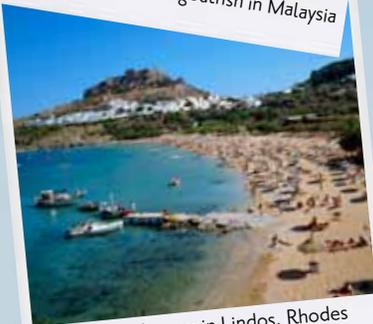


Immerse yourself at Kakadu

**DON'T SETTLE  
FOR THE USUAL.  
EXPLORE NEW  
WATERS AND  
DISCOVER NEW  
WONDERS.**



Snorkel with yellowfin goatfish in Malaysia



Join beachgoers in Lindos, Rhodes in Greece

**WHATEVER YOUR TRAVEL TASTES AND BUDGET, THERE ARE OPTIONS APLENTY TO ENSURE FREDDY FROSTBITE WON'T FIND YOU THIS WINTER.**



The Salus Spa at the Lake House, Daylesford, Victoria

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Katherine for a paddle through Katherine Gorge in Nitmiluk National Park and a soak in the Mataranka Thermal Pools.

And when it all gets too hot, head for Litchfield National Park to discover skyhigh termite nests, cool off under refreshing waterfalls and swim in crystal clear natural pools. Just check that the Rangers have given it the all clear of crocs!

Or, if a little further afield appeals, Sabah in Malaysian Borneo has enough natural wonders and activities to keep the whole family entertained. You'll find colourful markets in the capital of Kota Kinabalu, soak in hot springs in the shadow of the mighty Mt Kinabalu, the highest mountain in Southeast Asia, and snorkel and swim in Tunku Abdul Rahman National Park which comprises coral reefs and five islands. Be sure to make the trip to Sepilok Orangutan Sanctuary at feeding time to watch these cute creatures scoff on baskets of fruit and take a cruise on the Kinabatangan River in search of the unusual looking Proboscis monkey and hornbills.

## Flying solo

Whether you go it alone or with a mate, the world is your oyster. If you're single and it's partying you are after then nothing can beat the Mediterranean in the middle of a European summer. You'll be hard pressed to find a quiet space or a patch of sand on a beach in July and August. Of course, depending on your tastes, budget or how hectic your party plans are, anywhere with some sea and sand is bound to be a winner for adventure-inspired singles.

The main party hotspots in Greece are Ios, Mykonos, Rhodes and Crete. There are beach parties most nights, but the best time to rock up is for the full moon party so you can dance the night away under the mystical moonlight.

And, if music is your thing then why not check out a music festival or two. From Budapest to Denmark, from Ireland to Spain there's a festival in every corner of Europe and a music genre to suit all tastes. What better way to dodge the winter blues back home?

## Adventurer alert

If you're looking for adrenalin-inducing travel options why not head to east Africa, which is brimming with excuses to visit. Try a safari that encompasses a visit with the chimpanzees in Uganda and a precious but unforgettable meeting with the gorillas in Rwanda.

For big game safaris head to the Masai Mara

in Kenya or the Serengeti in Tanzania, the weather is perfect and you're just in time for the massive wildebeest migration.

Or, if you prefer to get your feet wet, then consider temporary migration to the Maldives. This island country of nearly two thousand islets includes only two hundred inhabited islands. The Maldives are often mentioned in the same breath as 'wow', 'expensive' and 'honeymoon'. But don't let that stop you! It's an aquatic adventure lover's playground with quality surfing, world class diving and snorkelling, windsurfing, catamaran sailing, big game fishing, plus every other beach activity you can think of. Check surfari websites where you'll find resorts that focus more on adventure if romance is not on your 'to do' list.

## Relaxo maxo

If you can only escape the cold momentarily, then why not restore some balance to your world and indulge in a spa-based getaway? The Salus Spa at Lake House in Daylesford, Victoria is situated on the stunning lake Daylesford. The Lake House is reminiscent of a Jane Austen novel; romantic, refined and old-worldly. Make the most of the area's abundant natural resources by requesting a Treetop Mineral Spa, and sink into a hot tub of Daylesford mineral water in one of the secluded cabins nestled in the trees.

Follow-up with the luxurious Frangipani and Milk Ritual and an Elemis Deep Tissue Muscle Massage and you'll feel totally revived and refreshed. Be sure to take advantage of the Lake House Restaurant and Cellar. An icon in Australian regional fine dining, this two-hatted restaurant celebrates the best of local seasonal produce and French cuisine, with an award-winning wine list to top it all off.

Alternatively, pamper yourself at the Chuan Spa in The Langham Hotel in Melbourne, Victoria. Located over two levels of this five star hotel in Melbourne's Southbank precinct, it is a tranquil sanctuary of feng shui that instantly calms you upon entering. Drawing on traditional Chinese medicine, the signature therapies at the Chuan Spa – such as the Chinese acupressure scalp massage and reflexology massage – fuses East and West. We recommend you indulge in the Serenity Shen Escape, where over three hours you'll be revitalised by a Chinese tea service, a fragrant Geisha tub experience and a cool marine algae mask – and all in the comfort of your own private spa suite.