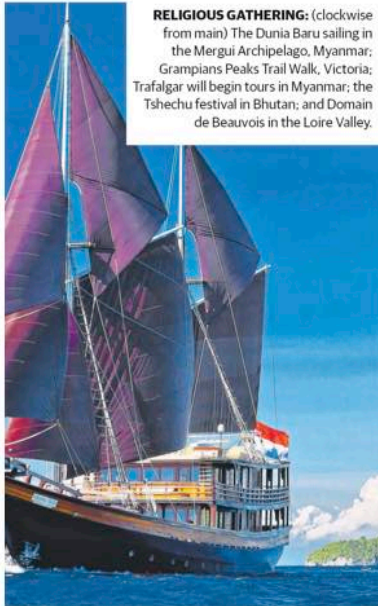


SUNDAY OCTOBER 18 2015

ESCAPE 23

BEST FOR 2016



RELIGIOUS GATHERING: (clockwise from main) The Dunia Baru sailing in the Mergui Archipelago, Myanmar; Grampians Peaks Trail Walk, Victoria; Trafalgar will begin tours in Myanmar; the Tshechu festival in Bhutan; and Domain de Beauvois in the Loire Valley.



eight-nights and include the Chobe National Park, Savuti, Okavango Delta and Nxai Pans National Park. Guests will stay in dome tents with ensuite bathrooms and separate toilets. The tours will run from February. See andbeyond.com

9 CYCLE THE SCENIC RIM IN QUEENSLAND

Ride through the foothills of the Great Dividing Range in Queensland with Spicers Retreats's new Hidden Peaks Trail cycling tour. Cyclists will ride 80km over four days, sleeping in accommodation ranging from the rustic-chic Old Hidden Vale Cabins to luxury tents at Canopy Eco-site and dine on fresh local produce. The season begins in April and cost \$2190 a person, twin share. Ph 1300 101 149 or see spicersretreats.com

10 GREAT RAIL JOURNEYS IN EUROPE

Travelmarvel has a new portfolio of 14 rail journeys through Europe accompanied by an English-speaking tour manager in 2016. They include a trip on the world's slowest express train, the *Glacier Express* in Switzerland, the art-deco *Venice Simplon-Orient-Express* and the West Highland Line in Scotland, whose *Jacobite* steam train starred as the *Hogwarts Express* in the Harry Potter films. Ph 1300 208 712 or see travelmarvel.com.au

11 MEXICO DISCOVERY

See Mayan ruins, pink flamingoes and learn how to cook local dishes on APT's 16-day Mexico Discovery. The tour travels from Mexico City to Rivera Maya and includes a night in the colourful Hacienda Puerta Campeche, a beautifully restored 17th century mansion and a stay at The Fairmont Mayakoba, on the beachfront in Playa del Carmen. The package is priced from \$11,495 a person. Ph 1300 196 420 or see aptouring.com.au

12 RUN A MARATHON IN NORTH KOREA

Take part in the Pyongyang Marathon in North Korea on Intrepid's new expedition in April. International runners have only been allowed to participate for the last two years, and can only do so as part of a tour group. Participants take part in an opening ceremony in the Kim Il-sung Stadium before running through the city and finishing at Pyongyang's Arch of Triumph. The trip starts and ends in Beijing and includes a visit to the Demilitarised Zone, waterfalls, monuments and museums. The trip costs from \$3295 a person. Ph 1300 797 010 or see intrepidtravel.com

13 WESTERN BALKANS UNVEILED

Explore some of Europe's lesser-known countries, including Albania, Macedonia and Kosovo, on this two-week trip with Peregrine Adventures. Starting in Dubrovnik in Croatia, highlights include a cruise on one of Europe's oldest lakes, a visit to Sveti Naum Monastery, the 13th century Castle of Berat in Albania and the colourful buildings and Ottoman-era architecture of Tirana. The tour's first departure is in May, with prices from \$4695 a person. See peregrineadventures.com

14 BRUNY ISLAND WALKING TOUR

Award-winning tour operator Life's An Adventure has a new three-day walking tour on Bruny Island, Tasmania. Guests will hike among the island's eucalypt forests, long beaches and towering dolerite cliffs and dine on locally-made cheese and wine and fresh oysters and stay in boutique, eco-friendly accommodation at 43 Degrees, overlooking Adventure Bay. The tour is priced from \$1399. Ph (02) 9975 4553 or see lifesanadventure.com.au

15 CULINARY JOURNEY IN FRANCE

Former *MasterChef* contestant Andrew Prior, from Queenie's Food Tours, will lead three new culinary tours to Paris, Dijon and Lyon next year. Guests on the tours will visit food markets, specialty gourmet stores, Michelin-starred restaurants, patisseries and charcuteries and take part in cooking classes. The five-night Culinary Treats of Lyon tour, from September 23 to 28, costs \$5980 a person. Ph (03) 9018 7196 or see queeniesfoodtours.com

16 BHUTAN CULTURAL FESTIVAL

Immerse yourself in ancient cultural traditions at a Tshechu festival on a new Bhutan tour with Seven Skies. Locals in traditional dress will tell tales from Buddhist mythology, with monks in colourful robes and ornate masks performing ancient dances. Guests will also stroll through ancient fortresses in Thimphu, trek through the scenic Phobjikha Valley and camp in luxury at an eighth-century monastery. Monthly departures are available for the luxury private journeys priced from \$850 a person a day. Ph (07) 3901 0502 or see sevenskies.com

17 TREKKING IN TURKEY

Specialist touring company Wandering the World has launched a new 15-day holiday Walking the Valleys of Turkey. The trip starts in Istanbul and covers Cappadocia and its nearby valleys as well as hikes on the turquoise coast of the Lycian Peninsula. Graded as moderate, with three to six hours walking on most days, it is priced from \$2975 a person, twin share, with two departures in September. See wanderingtheworld.com.au

18 PRIVATE CENTRAL AMERICA DISCOVERY

Latin American specialist DB Americas is offering Australians the chance to explore the roads less travelled in Central America for the first time. Trips include a 15-day tour of Belize, Guatemala and Nicaragua in which guests can discover the white sand beaches of the Caribbean, explore ancient Mayan civilisations and canoe, cycle or ride through the jungle on horses. It is priced from \$US4080 a person, twin share. See db-americas.com

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