



INSIDE INFORMATION

Luxury travel specialist Abercrombie & Kent has launched a new product aimed at younger, more adventurous travellers. A&K Oyster, which operates out of Melbourne and is poised to go global if it takes off, offers individually tailored itineraries devised by a team of young and well-travelled staff keen to share their personal experiences and adventures. Key destinations include India, South America, Africa, Egypt, Jordan and China. For more information, go to www.ak-oyster.com.au.



NOW THAT'S CLASS

New Zealand unveils possibly its most exclusive super-lodge this month, with the opening of the ultra-luxurious Sanandaloka at Eagles Nest. The five-bedroom villa – the fifth and most prestigious lodge at the award-winning Eagles Nest resort near Russell in the Bay of Islands – sits on the ridge of a private peninsula offering 300-degree views of the bay. Sanandaloka's exterior is made almost completely of glass – the front of the building can slide back to open it up to the elements – and includes a horizon lap pool, spa, private gym, theatre, butler service and a new Porsche for the use of guests. There's even a helipad and interpreters on tap. Visit www.eaglesnest.co.nz or www.hipptraveldezin.com (and go to the HIPPA Collection heading).



EXPANSIVE
Generous appointments at Sea Temple Resort & Spa Port Douglas.

Temple temptation

And you thought luxury had its limits? A lagoon-front 'swim out' apartment at Port Douglas pushes the boat out a bit further.

Eighteen months after the successful launch of Sea Temple Resort & Spa in Palm Cove, a second luxury Sea Temple property is on the way. Sea Temple Resort & Spa Port Douglas, due to open in June, has an absolute beachfront location at the southern end of Four Mile Beach, 5km from the town centre.

There will be a choice of fully self-contained studios, two- and three-bedroom apartments,

three-bedroom villas with exclusive private terraces, lagoon-front 'swim-out' apartments, or penthouses with rooftop spas. A day spa using exclusive Elemis products and treatments, a 4000sq metre lagoon pool, an 18-hole golf course and country club, and a high-end restaurant complete the picture.

If any of these amenities tickle your fancy for sun, surf and optimum service, phone 1800 833 762 for bookings.

PLAYING DIRTY Even the Customs inspectors will be impressed. The Travel Laundry Bag, the latest accessory for frequent flyers, is no shabby tote. It's stylish, durable, compact and light. And did we say cute? Available from designer homewares stores, or visit www.thelaundrybag.com.au.



NULLARBOR ON THE FLY

Travel to Perth from the eastern states – considered prohibitively expensive by many prospective visitors to the Western Australia capital – may soon become easier on the pocket. Jetstar this month launches its first services to Perth: daily flights from Melbourne's Avalon Airport, with a late-afternoon return flight from WA. The budget carrier plans to look at further scheduled services into Perth following the launch of the Melbourne-to-Perth route on 28 March; www.jetstar.com.au.

FADE TO BLUE

Sydney's iconic W hotel is no more. Recently bought by the parent company of Taj Hotels Resorts and Palaces for \$36 million, the 100-room, five-year-old boutique hotel at Woolloomooloo's Finger Wharf has been rebranded Blue, to reflect its prime position on Sydney Harbour. It's the luxury hotel group's first foray into the Australian market. Last July it took over the legendary Pierre hotel in New York; www.tajhotels.com.



PERSONAL TOUCHES
Every room at Tonic is individualised.

Like it? Buy it

Tonic marries the inspiration of an art gallery with the virtues of a boutique hotel. You can even take the experience home.

Ever loved a hotel room so much you wished you could take it home with you? Well now you can, if you visit the Hunter Valley region's latest hot spot, Tonic Hotel in Lovedale. This cool new boutique hotel with just six private rooms and a two-bedroom apartment is offering most things in its rooms for sale to guests, from the artwork to the ornaments – and even the slippers. Tonic's owners, Nici and Tom Stanford, designated their luxury bolthole a definite 'no chintz zone', incorporating polished concrete floors teamed with cowhides and soft, fluffy rugs into their interior design. Each

room is styled differently and a large lounge area allows guests to entertain up to 20 people in privacy.

If you wish to see more of the burgeoning Lovedale area, Tonic also offers a concierge service that can organise private tastings at wineries and get you the best tables at local restaurants.

Tonic is adults-only – no children under 15 – and any *Gourmet* reader booking a stay in March or April will receive a complimentary bottle of local wine, chilled to enjoy on their private balcony. Phone (02) 4930 9999, or visit www.tonichotel.com.au.



SHAKE IT WITH THE BEST

Mix it up at the Shangri-La Sydney's Mixology Classes. World champion 'flair' bartender Loy Catada leads the Blu Horizon Bar's team of mixologists who share their cocktail-making secrets before letting participants make their own. Not for cocktail-making novices is the recently launched \$10,000 Martini on the Rock, which comes with a one-carat diamond for the brave soul who's confident that Sydney's most spectacular views will prompt an affirmative response to *that* question. Cocktail-making classes for groups of up to 10, with cocktails and canapés included, cost \$85pp. Phone (02) 9250 6247; www.shangri-la.com.



GONE SHOPPING: BACK (MUCH) LATER

Polish up those credit cards and get the sensible walking shoes on... Shopalot Tours, a new boutique tour company, is taking diehard Aussie shoppers on the ultimate Hong Kong spend-up. Shopalot takes you to all the best places to buy up big – including the Stanley Markets and the Hong Kong Ladies' Markets, among others – in its Hong Kong Shenzhen Shopping Spectacular Tour. But the climax is a visit to China's Shenzhen, where you can lose yourself in nearly 1000 shops. The perfect girls' getaway? We think so. From \$1189pp, twin share (land only). Phone (02) 9818 1912; visit www.shopalottours.com.au.



BACK TO MANDALAY

Dr James Muecke's *Visions of Myanmar* (distributed by Wakefield Press) is an eye-opener... literally. It has been published to help fund a South Australian team's program of ophthalmic care and eye surgery in Myanmar (formerly Burma). And the irony of

a book of visual delights assisting the visually impaired somehow brings the issue into sharper focus. More than 230 photos show us the beauty described in Kipling's 'Mandalay' – places such as the Shwedagon Pagoda, and the temples of Bagan and Mrauk U. The book is self-published; www.visionsofmyanmar.com.au.

