



# Hot holiday trends

What is the latest fashion in international travel? **Rachael Oakes-Ash** tells what, and where, is hot

## ISLAND DESTINATIONS

**HAINAN Island, China:** Grab the suntan oil and head to Hainan Island for boasting rights in 2006. This little-known Chinese province is set in the warm waters of the South China Sea. Dubbed the "Hawaii of the Orient" because they share the same latitude, Hainan Island is 32,000sq km of unspoilt beaches, mountains and hot springs.

The island made global news in 2001 when an American plane collided with a Chinese jet in nearby air space. China refused to release the 24 US crewmen on Hainan Island and caused an international incident.

The only international incident on Hainan now is the annual Miss World Competition at the beachside town of Sanya in December.

Book early because accommodation is scarce this time of year.

The Sheraton and Holiday Inn were the first to mark their territory in this China paradise. Rendezvous hotels opened their Baohong Hotel this year and soon to join the Hainan hotel list is the Hilton and the Shangri-La in 2008.

## HOT ASIAN DESTINATION

**BHUTAN:** This landlocked Himalayan kingdom understands the fragile nature of its beauty, which is why it has a controlled tourism policy - no more than 9000 visitors allowed per year.

Bordered by Tibet and India, Bhutan is a country of mountain monasteries, river valleys and smiling villagers. Most visitors trek the mountains, raft the valleys and enjoy a country where the gross national profit seemingly is measured in happiness, not dollars.

For the cashed-up, Aman Resorts have a range of Amankora lodges in the three regions open to the people visiting Bhutan.

**www.amankora.com**  
Intrepid Travel offer all-inclusive Bhutan treks for small groups over 15 days from \$4070 twin-share.

**www.intrepidtravel.com**  
Note to non-smokers - breathe easy, Bhutan has a strict no-cigarettes-allowed policy.

## HOT EUROPEAN CITY

**DRESDEN:** Soccer fans already know Germany is the place to be seen come June and the World Cup - and those

wanting a slice of the German action minus football trageics can head to Dresden.

The capital of Saxony is known more for its love of music and art than its sporting prowess, and is most famous for the major caning the city took during bombing raids of World War II.

Once hidden behind the Iron Curtain, Dresden's neglected Renaissance and Baroque homes and museums have been restored to pre-war glory. But it's the mix of contemporary building and old-world sculpture that gives this Elbe River town its buzz.

Modernists head to the "transparent factory" of Volkswagen where visitors can view luxury cars being made.

Traditionalists head to the Semper Opera House destroyed by fire in 1869, rebuilt then bombed in 1945. The 1985 reconstruction still stands.

## SPA TOWN

**UBUD:** Thailand and Bali traditionally have fought it out for the role of the spa mecca in Asia. With the recent launch of the Como Shambala Estate spa retreat, Bali's Ubud wins this year by a well-exfoliated nose.

Como Shambala Estate (known as CSE) is a residential health retreat set high in the rainforest hills. Pool villas provide respite for stressed souls and cuisine is pure Shambala Spa menu with personal eating plans designed for each guest.

Activity is encouraged with resident yoga, tai chi and pilates masters and a full adventure activity program. Visiting masters, weekend retreats, spa relaxation and more ensure a truly holistic stay. Bliss.

**www.comohotels.co.uk**  
But there's more than CSE in Ubud. The Lembah Spa at the Viceroy in Ubud has a helicopter pad so you can chopper in for a scrub.

**www.theviceroybali.com**  
The nearby Waka Di Ume has opened a rice paddy spa, a three-level retreat in the middle of a rice terrace using special Indonesian herb-style spa treatments.

**www.wakaexperience.com**  
The consistent Four Seasons Sayan Spa with its outdoor water treatments overlooking the Agung River is always a must.

## THE NEXT FRONTIER

**INTREPID** travellers are fast running out of locations in which to tread. Everest Base Camp has become the high street of mountaineering and Antarctica already is overrun with cruise ships.

Enter Kamchatka, Russia's most remote province in the far east of the country. Stretching from Alaska in the east and to Japan in the south, the province is home to 29 active volcanic craters, the largest population of brown bears in Eurasia, a geyser valley of 150 springs and the rare grey whale. The Kronotsky National Park with



**HOT travel choices . . . clockwise from top, China's Hainan beach, see lions on safari, seals on Kangaroo Island, visit Dresden for music and art, Boeing Dreamliner, monks in Bhutan, snowy wilderness of Kamchatka, Russia.**



its Uzon Valley and Maly Semyachik blue crater-lake is a United Nations World Heritage site where skiers can take a helicopter to virgin volcano snow.

Those who prefer watersports can raft the Kamatchka river while others can dog-sled with indigenous reindeer herders.

With a population density of one person per square kilometre, travellers won't be crowded.

## CRUISING'S NEXT BIG THING

**WITH** cruising, Europe is the new Caribbean and while the Mediterranean traditionally has been a cruise haven, the waters of northern Europe are where the real action is taking place.

Celebrity Cruises have rescheduled one of their Caribbean cruise liners, the *Century*, to meet the demand for cruising in Europe.

Luxury Silver Sea cruises offer Scandinavia and the Baltic Sea, Conde Nast favourite, Celebrity Cruises visit most of Europe including the Balearic Islands and the Norwegian Fiordland, while both Crystal Cruises and P&O have scheduled cruises to similar destinations.

By far the hottest cruise spot within Europe is the Danube. Board a riverboat and cruise Strauss's favoured river from Central Europe to the Black Sea.

## DOWN UNDER DESTINATION

**KANGAROO** Island is a long-favoured locale for overseas visitors to Australia. But if James Baillie has his way, this quiet island soon will make its mark within the domestic market.

The owner of Lord Howe's lush Capella Lodge plans to open an eco-lodge within Kangaroo Island's nat-

ional park if he can get the locals to pass the plans.

Until his doors open, guests with \$600 a night to spare can dine within a giant fig tree at the Hannaford's beachfront Life Time retreat. Accommodation is in three holiday houses, one on a cliff, one on a hill and one behind the sand dunes.

**www.life-time.com.au**  
One link road of bitumen joins most of the island villages, but the remaining back roads are red dust and home to the island's namesake - kangaroos. There's a gourmet tour for foodies, seal bay for nature lovers, Little Sahara dunes, Remarkable Rocks in Flinders National Park and rugged coastline guaranteed to keep everyone well entertained.

**www.tourkangarooisland.com.au**

## THRILL-SEEKING

**WHAT** to get the traveller who has done it all? Send them to space. Space Adventures are the pioneers in commercial space travel offering a five-day training program at Moscow's Star City with flights in MIG-25s and L-39 Albatross to the edge of space.

From 24,000m passengers can view Earth's curvature. All for \$US23,695. A little less (\$US3750) will get you a zero gravity experience at Fort Lauderdale in the US. A half-day program is led by veteran astronauts who take space groupies for a weightless experience in the "vomit comet". Far out.

**www.spaceadventures.com**

## AIR TRAVEL

**THE Boeing Dreamliner:** The Airbus A380 is so very five minutes ago. Flying fashionistas already are thinking the Boeing Dreamliner. The mid-sized aircraft with a big jet range will change long-haul travel of the future.

Come 2008 and the three Dreamliner models (787-8, 787-9, 787-3) will carry between 210 and 330 passengers from 6500km to 16,300km non-stop. For the traveller this means more scheduled flights to suit passengers' time needs and non-stop travel.

Passenger comfort is a trend most airlines are following with the introduction of Premium Economy class. The Dreamliner cabin features higher humidity to reduce jet lag, mood lighting, bigger windows, wider aisles and more comfortable seats.

Air New Zealand, All Nippon, Air Canada and Japan Airlines all have placed orders with more airlines bound to sign when production starts within months.

## RESORT FOUNDATIONS

"GIVING back" is the buzz travel phrase of the moment. Hotels are setting up charity foundations funded by guest dollars to help those in need.

The Nihiwatu resort sits atop a surf break cliff on Indonesia's Sumba Island. Recent winner of the Best Hotel Award for Responsible Tourism, the hotel's Sumba Foundation helps with health care and education for the local poverty-stricken villages.

**www.selecthotels.com/nihiwatu**  
Christine Ong's Como Foundation has helped the development, education and health of women and girls since 2003. The foundation contributes to non-profit grassroots organisations in Bhutan, Nepal, India, Indonesia, the Philippines and Australia.

**www.comohotels.co.uk**  
African Safari operator, Conservation Corporation Africa, set up the Africa Foundation to empower people living in or adjacent to protected areas of Africa where CC Africa's luxury lodges are located.

**www.africafoundation.org**



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