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# Travel Talk

Compiled by Ingrid Wood

BEAUTIFUL ESCAPES AND EXPERIENCES FOR THE DISCERNING TRAVELLER



## LUXURY REDEFINED

It seems there's an insatiable demand for ultra-luxury private holiday experiences as the One&Only brand forges ahead into new markets.

Construction has begun on **One&Only Sanya on Haitang Bay** on Hainan, the first One&Only resort in **CHINA**. It will feature 192 luxurious guest rooms, suites and villas, including five low-rise mansions and a Presidential suite, 380m of private coastline with views of the South China Sea and over 11ha of coconut palms set in water gardens. In addition, the Hayman, Great Barrier Reef has just relaunched as **One&Only Hayman Island**, providing unique culinary, accommodation and marine sporting experiences – and, of course, the One&Only Health Spa, offering the latest in health and beauty. **AUSTRALIA's** Great Barrier Reef is one of the most complex natural ecosystems in the world, with over 33 000 species found off the coastline.

[www.oneandonlyresorts.com](http://www.oneandonlyresorts.com)





# A purr-fect cuppa

By Cindy-Lou Dale

What to look for when selecting a vegan café in London: good tea or imported coffee, creamy cakes, fresh pastries – and, of course, cats



London's first cat café (yes, you read that correctly) recently opened in the trendy art district of Shoreditch. The idea is to give stressed-out Londoners who can't own pets a bit of cat therapy. Over and above paying for their snacks and drinks, patrons pay a small cover fee (£5 for two hours) – akin to a supervised indoor pet rental scheme.

**Lady Dinah's Cat Emporium** is modelled on the cat cafés which are hugely popular in Taipei and Tokyo, where animal cafés are relatively common. Soon more cities joined the party: Vienna, Budapest, Munich and Paris, followed by California, Canada, Korea, Spain, Malaysia and Lithuania.

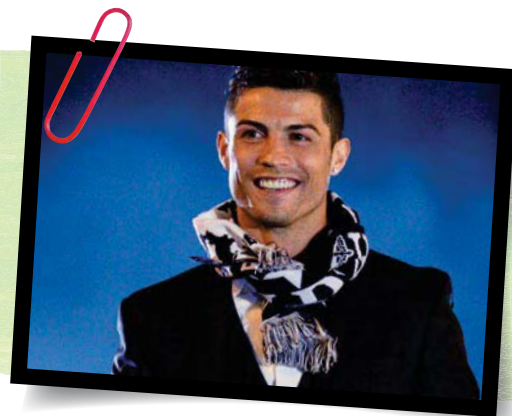
Lady Dinah's Cat Emporium is an old English tearoom that opened its doors in March. Here, animal-lovers can enjoy a beverage in the company of 11 moggies.

While the space is dominated by a café setting, there's also a lot of room used purely for people to play with cats and for the tabbies themselves to play with their toys. It's about the whole experience: coming in from the cold to a place where you can forget about the day and unwind in a comfortable Victorian wingback chair with a cup of tea, a wedge of cake, a book... and a cat. Purr-fect therapy. Be sure to book in advance. 152-154 Bethnal Green Rd, Shoreditch. ☎ 207 729 0953 🌐 [www.ladydinahs.com](http://www.ladydinahs.com)



## BOOTING UP

Expect to see a lot more of Cristiano Ronaldo (sans football kit) on the pages of glossies around the world as the legendary player joins the TAG Heuer team of ambassadors. The current illustrious list includes actors Cameron Diaz and Leonardo DiCaprio and sports stars Maria Sharapova and Jenson Button.



## UNDER A TUSCAN SKY...

Not only is Tuscany gearing up for the perfect Italian summer, but the wines are ready – as are cooking courses at Castiglio del Bosco near Siena. We catch up with General Manager Emanuela Setterberg:


**Most romantic destination?** There are many. They could all be, if you travel with the right person.

**Carry-on or check-in luggage?** Carry-on.

**Favourite travelling companions?** That depends on the purpose of the journey. Generally – because of our lack of family time – my husband and daughter.

**What's your travel must-have?** Italian espresso.

**What does luxury travel mean today?** It needs to be highly personalised and emotional. We have little time to travel, so when we do, we want to live it in full with our loved ones.



## HEALTHY HOTELS

The focus in the hospitality industry is on healthy hotels. With more and more people feeling burnt out, rejuvenation is where it's at for holidaymakers and business travellers alike. According to the Spafinder 2014 *Trends Report*, the healthy hotel has now shifted into a more meaningful megatrend: "In 2014, look for hotels to move from healthy as a marketing differentiator to deeper, more multi-faceted programming that stretches well beyond the 'free stretch band'. The healthy hotel will ultimately become more inspired and comprehensive, moving from virtuous exception to part of the hospitality vernacular."

## Treats and eats

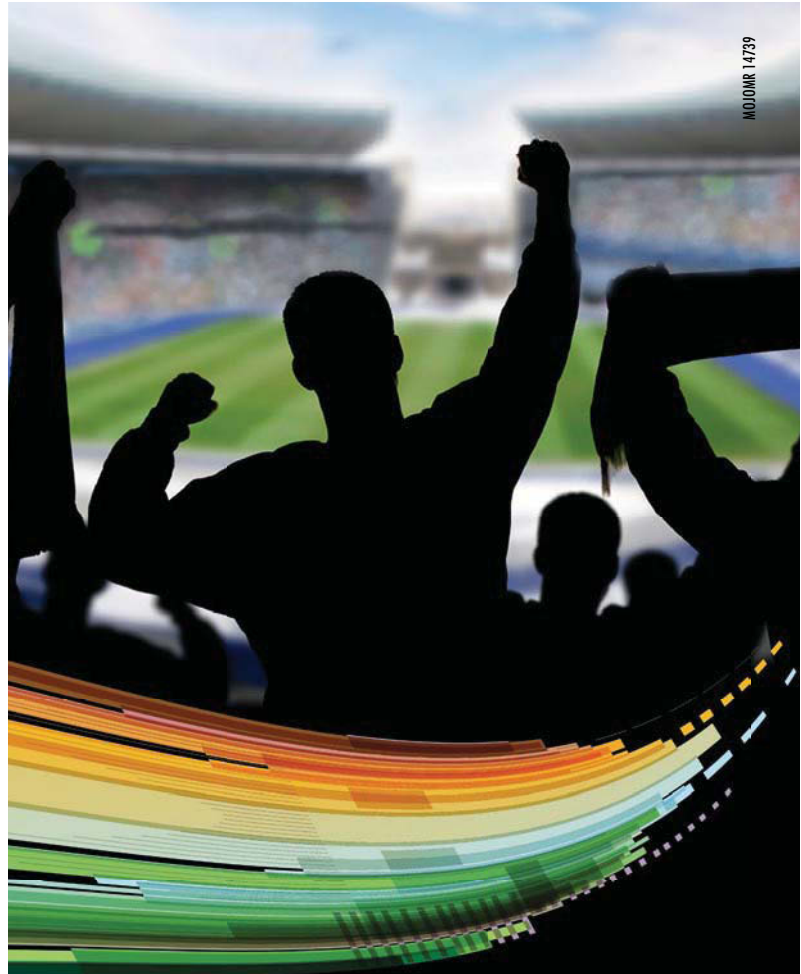


**COLORADO, USA** With new GPS hikes, restorative hot springs and a chef series, Dunton River Camp offers a cellphone-free escape into the Rockies. Other adventures include horse-riding and hiking – perfect for outdoor enthusiasts. [www.duntonhotsprings.com/cabins/dunton-river-camp.html](http://www.duntonhotsprings.com/cabins/dunton-river-camp.html)

**LUANG PRABANG, LAOS** Part of the prestigious and luxurious Aman resort group, Amantaka is where to find natural Asian beauty and mystique. Its special projects, like Ock Pop Tok textile design, is where locals practise their ancient craft and sell it to fashion houses abroad for Fair Trade prices. [www.amanresorts.com/amantaka/home.aspx](http://www.amanresorts.com/amantaka/home.aspx)



**MONTEVIDEO, URUGUAY** The only producer of caviar in the Southern Hemisphere, Black River Caviar, is now available in fine establishments around the globe. The Alcade family, with sons in tow, have given caviar a whole new calibre. [www.blackrivercaviar.com.uy](http://www.blackrivercaviar.com.uy)



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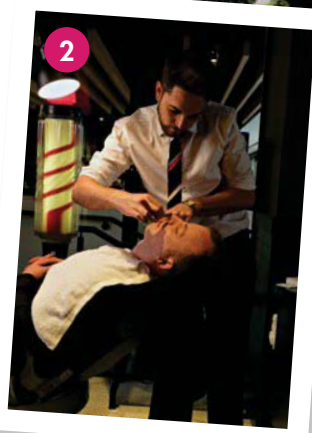
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# Global eye

By Daniel Scheffler

## Things to do, buy, see and try

**1. BAGAN, MYANMAR** Fancy visiting temples and pagodas by bike or horse and cart? Jacada Travel now offers creative journeys across Myanmar (formerly Burma). Boat trips along the Irrawaddy River and visits to monasteries on Mount Popa are among the attractions. [www.jacadatravel.com/luxury-tours/Myanmar](http://www.jacadatravel.com/luxury-tours/Myanmar)

**2. CANBERRA, AUSTRALIA** In the capital city, the QT Canberra is the perfect "handshake deal" and long-lunch venue. You can also pop into the on-site barber for a shave, a haircut and a catnap upstairs. [www.qtcannberra.com.au/barber-shop](http://www.qtcannberra.com.au/barber-shop)

**3. MAYO, IRELAND** Ashford Castle not only houses Ireland's oldest school of falconry, but also offers a hawk walk, where you can release your raptor into the nearby woodlands for a while. Then enjoy a whisky in the castle's drawing room. [www.ashfordcastle.com](http://www.ashfordcastle.com)

**4. NEW YORK, USA** With two Michelin stars



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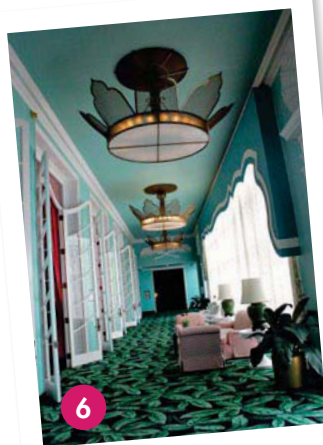
already in the bag, Chef Shaun Hergatt now runs Juni at the Hotel Chandler in midtown Manhattan. Celebrating all things seasonal, the 50-seat restaurant offers exceptional treats like frogs' legs with fava beans and white balsamic gelée.

www.juninyc.com

**5. TEL AVIV, ISRAEL** The burgeoning food scene of the city is seeing a plethora of new restaurants, bars and chefs, including Rima Olivera of Oasis, Herbert Samuel, Jonathan Roshfeld and Meir Adoni. A series of wineries, breweries and whisky distilleries are also popping up all over. However, for R&R, little can beat the Dan Hotel on the seashore.

www.danhotels.com

**6. WHITE SULPHUR SPRINGS, USA** If you're interested in the Greenbrier Classic, the PGA Golf Tour event played over the 4 July weekend, the Greenbrier Hotel is where to stay. The resort, a fabulous classic hotel designed by elegance-loving Dorothy Draper, has hosted guests from around the world since 1778. www.greenbrier.com



**7. BAHAMAS** Experiencing Grand Bahama Island in total seclusion is easy at the Nandana Villa. A palatial, Asian-style mansion, it's accessible by private plane and now boasts a brand-new spa. You might never leave! www.nandanavilla.com

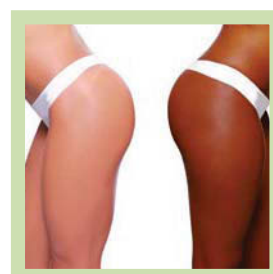


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# COLD

WINTER LENDS ITSELF TO COMFORT FOOD AND KEEPING WARM  
MOUNTAIN PEAKS IS THE CHANCE TO BRING OUT THE SKIS AND





snow

# RUSH

AROUND A FIREPLACE, BUT FOR THRILL-SEEKERS, SNOW ON  
BOARDS. SUIT UP AND EXPLORE A CHOICE OF SLOPES





**AUSTRIA** Cute, affordable and charming, the town of Westendorf in Austria is the perfect family destination

## Snowfalls

**O**n my first ski trip, I dislocated my shoulder – twice: once while coming down a gentle blue slope, the second time holding onto a rafter in a heaving bar. It was a minor setback and nothing that couldn't be eased away with a schnapps or two. The next day I was back on the slopes – albeit a little more cautiously. The thrill of the white powder outweighed the fear of falling.

There's something to be said for the silence you experience at the top of a run, the "whoosh" as other skiers whizz by, the crisp air in your lungs as you slowly climb the mountains in the cable car, a winter wonderland spread out beneath you. In Austria, you can add another element to this – a very festive *après-ski*,



which swings into action from 4pm each day. Here the mountain bars and village pubs come alive as skiers and snowboarders party, boots and all. Beers flow, schnapps is knocked back and cheesy music gets the crowd moving. It's loud, a little smelly and often messy – but always fun.

Many resorts offer good snow and great parties, but there's something special about Westendorf. Located in the Brixen Valley away from the main roads, it's a picture-perfect village surrounded by mountains. Alpine aesthetics aside, it's also ideal for families due to the small size of the town, the slightly quieter slopes and the more chilled nightlife.

Westendorf used to be pretty isolated in

terms of skiing, but since the construction of the Ki-West gondola and another one spanning the Brixen Valley, it's now part of the Skiwelt, Austria's largest interconnected ski area – which means easy access to over 350km of runs for all levels, from beginners to advanced. Just keep an eye on your watch and allow yourself time to ski back to the base, or you'll be in for an expensive taxi ride home.

With packages cheaper than the A-list French and Italian resorts, it's one of the best options for South Africans right now.

### BOOKINGS

Due to the lower-than-average altitude, the best snow is usually between December and March. Ten-night Christmas packages are available from €1 255 and a seven-night New Year package from €1 020.

[www.skiwithgail.com](http://www.skiwithgail.com)

### WAY TO GO

SAA flies direct to Munich, Germany, seven days a week. A 90-minute coach transfer will see you in Westendorf. – **Ingrid Wood**



**LESOTHO** An easy weekend skiing getaway for locals? You bet!

## Ski Africa

**I**f your budget's a little tight, but you're keen on a skiing experience, Afriski – in Lesotho's Maluti Mountains – is only a five-hour drive from Johannesburg. Once you cross the Caledonspoort borderpost in Fouriesburg in the Free State, it's 80km inland.

With a modest 1km main ski run serviced by a T-bar lift, you can't compare it with the international resorts in terms of the ski experience, but it does offer a ski school, qualified instructors, passes, ski hire, food and accommodation on site. Ideal for family fun, it has good areas for beginners to find

their ski legs. It's also a great mid-year snow fix for more advanced skiers and snowboarders. (The Afriski Race Club hosts a series of alpine ski competitions as part of its Ski Grand Prix series.)

At 3 222m above sea level, you're pretty much guaranteed snow over June and July, but due to the team of snowmakers, you can experience groomed, prepared slopes throughout winter. The temperatures can drop very low, so be prepared. The accommodation at Afriski is basic, but good and limited, so book early. It's better to stay on site as it can be quite a drive to the next-best option and the roads are tricky – a 4x4 is advised.

**TIP:** We found the kids' ski instructor rather impatient, which unsettled the little ones, so ensure you select the right one for your needs.

[www.afriski.net](http://www.afriski.net) – **Ingrid Wood**











**JAPAN** Hokkaido offers a super-organised and convenient holiday

## Making the most of it

Although a long way from SA, Niseko Village in Hokkaido, on the northernmost island of Japan, receives up to 18m of the most powdery, lightest and fluffiest snow in the world each year, as well as supremely well-organised resorts which combine the Japanese aesthetic of hospitality and painstaking attention to detail. The village is the centre of the area's nightlife, attracting fun-seekers from around the globe.

### WHERE TO STAY

**Green Leaf Resort:** A boutique-type resort offering access to gondolas and a ski-in, ski-out facility that gets you up the slopes easily. With a fantastic spa and hot inside and outside *onsen* options, the after-snow relaxation is celebrated.

[www.thegreenleafhotel.com/en](http://www.thegreenleafhotel.com/en)

**Hilton:** With a ski-in, ski-out facility and easy access to gondolas and lifts, this familiar hotel has everything you need for a perfect snowboarding holiday, including bars, restaurants, spas and a fitness centre. There are also tasty, buffet-style dining options and rooms with panoramic views.

[www.hilton.com/en/hotels/japan/hilton-niseko-village-CTSNVHI/index.html](http://www.hilton.com/en/hotels/japan/hilton-niseko-village-CTSNVHI/index.html)

**CANADA** Expect a thrill a minute – without the crowds

## Boards and lodging



### SEEING IT FROM THE SKIES

Helicopters were added to the sport in western Canada by Canadian Mountain Holidays around 50 years ago. Today it runs 11 lodges around the Columbia Mountains north of Calgary. The boon of heli-boarding lies in the access it offers to pristine snow and private slopes. Then, of course, there's the thrill of steep, deep tree-boarding, open alpine runs and glacier terrain.

### WHERE TO STAY

**Valemount Lodge:** A private, exclusive-use lodge for 10 people which comes complete with a Bell 212 helicopter, two guides, a full spa (with in-room massages) and a chef cooking family-style fare. The rooms include private baths and balconies offering views of Canada's finest slopes.

**Gothics Lodge:** Recently revamped, this casual mountain lodge is best for snow-hungry groups of friends. It facilitates yoga and has a well-stocked wine cellar too.

[www.canadianmountainholidays.com](http://www.canadianmountainholidays.com)

Although only becoming an official sport in the Winter Olympic Games in 1988, snowboarding dates back to Turkey some 500 years ago, where the boards were basic wooden planks and bindings were absent. Today, thanks to Tom Sims, founder of Sims Snowboards and Mike Olsen, founder of Gnu Snowboards, as well as materials such as fibreglass and polyethylene, the sport's faster and fiercer than ever before.

**INDIA** In addition to beautiful views of the Himalayas, Gulmarg offers laid-back skiing

## Avoiding the crowds

The secret's out about the globe's most transcendental destination for snowboarding: Gulmarg in north-western India. Discovered by outstationed British soldiers in 1927, the area's known for its heavy snowfall and provides a staggering 1 500m of vertical boarding. The fact that there are very few

queues and wide-open slopes means it could even be just you on them, enjoying a perfect opportunity to contemplate your surroundings in solitary wonder.



### WHERE TO STAY

**Khyber Hotel:** A traditional Indian lodge with all the modern amenities expected of a luxury hotel, including an array of speciality restaurants, a cigar lounge, spa facilities and a kids' zone. [www.khyberhotels.com](http://www.khyberhotels.com)

**Hotel Highlands Park:** A colonial hotel with just 30 rooms situated ideally close to the gondola station. With personalised service and numerous fireplaces, the hotel's old-world charm makes it a perfect retreat after a day on the slopes. [www.kashmirnetwork.com/highlands](http://www.kashmirnetwork.com/highlands)

– Daniel Scheffler