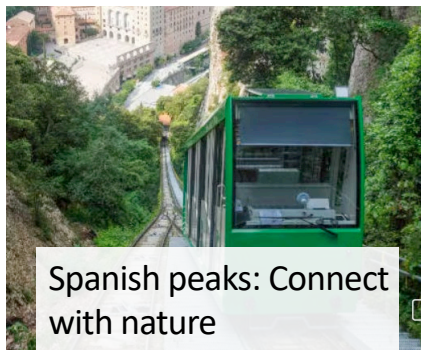




## Norwegian Cruise Line returns to Asia



## Centara's citation for spectacular reef



## Spanish peaks: Connect with nature



## Pandaw sets new sailing dates



# VIETNAM

 PANDAW

## Tourism New Zealand recruits Taika Waititi

Celebrated New Zealand actor and director Taika Waititi, has teamed up with Tourism New Zealand to deliver a new promotional film.

With Taika busy on set filming Our Flag Means Death Season 2 – for which Aotearoa New Zealand is the official shoot...

## Hilton expands in Sri Lanka

Hilton has opened the Hilton Yala Resort, marking Hilton's third flagship-branded property in Sri Lanka.

Located just outside Sri Lanka's Yala National Park, the resort provides an elevated escape for guests seeking adventure and relaxation, with a vast view that overlooks the Indian Ocean. ...

## Bhutan tourism back on track

Bhutan welcomed 9,559 visitors in September, representing a 34% increase over its forecasted 6,788 monthly arrivals.

Visits from 23 September 2022 to 1 October 2023 totalled 89,326, while visits to Bhutan from January to September 2023 reached 67,673...

## Bali prepares to launch tourism tax

Bali's new tourism tax comes closer with authorities confirming a 4 February 2023 launch date for all international visitors to pay USD10 (IDR150,00), according to Bali.com, an official channel linked to the Indonesian government.

Bali Tourism Department chief executive Tjok Bagus Pemayun officially disclosed this development to the media earlier this week...

## Royal Princess debuts in Australia

Princess Cruises' Royal Princess sailed into Sydney Harbour on Monday for its inaugural cruising season featuring sailings from Australia.

The 3560-guest ship will be based in Sydney until April next year, offering 14 roundtrip cruises from the city during its six-month deployment...

## Vietjet launches five new routes

Vietjet has scheduled a new daily service from Hanoi to Hong Kong (China) starting 22 December 2023 as part of a recently announced schedule that adds flights to five international destinations.

The additional international routes will connect Hanoi to Hong Kong (China), Phu Quoc to Taipei (Taiwan, China) and Busan (South Korea)...

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# Centara's citation for spectacular reef



Centara Hotels & Resorts, Thailand's leading hotel operator, is proud to announce that Centara Grand Island Resort & Spa Maldives has received second place in the 'Best House Reef in the Maldives' category at the Travel + Leisure Luxury Awards Asia Pacific 2023.

This prestigious recognition reaffirms the resort's commitment to providing guests with exceptional marine and hospitality experiences, making it an ideal destination for nature enthusiasts, adventure seekers and holidaymakers worldwide.

Nestled within the captivating South Ari Atoll, declared a Marine Protected Area (SAMPa) by the Maldivian government in 2009, Centara Grand Island

Resort & Spa Maldives is a tropical haven that promises awe-inspiring underwater excursions and breathtaking views of the surrounding turquoise waters.

At the heart of this aquatic sanctuary lies the award-winning house reef, teeming with an amazing array of marine life. Divers and snorkellers alike have the unique opportunity to witness diverse schools of small and large pelagic fish species thriving amidst coral-rich depths, including one of the area's magnificent gentle giants, 'Fernando'.

For those seeking exhilarating experiences below the waves, Centara Grand Island Resort & Spa offers accredited



Maldivian dive masters who lead explorations to renowned dive sites, including a historic shipwreck just minutes away. The resort's PADI Dive & Experience Course Centre caters to divers of all levels with comprehensive learning programmes and certification opportunities.

Beyond the captivating marine life, Centara Grand Island Resort & Spa is a paradise for water sports and activities, from windsurfing and parasailing to water skiing and wakeboarding. Guests will never forget an adrenaline-pumping turn on an inflatable banana boat, or taking leisurely pedalos and kayak rides in the stunning lagoon.

This award-winning resort is also home to serene accommodations seamlessly blending in with the surrounding natural beauty. From Duplex Beach Villas to Premier Overwater Villas, each design complements the stunning environment, making every stay a true immersion. Relaxation continues with rejuvenating wellness experiences at Spa Cenvaree, including soothing massage treatments and beachfront yoga.

For more information, visit [www.centarahotelsresorts.com/centragrand/cirm](http://www.centarahotelsresorts.com/centragrand/cirm)



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# Spanish peaks: Connect with nature

Holidays as a family, couple or with friends. If your plan for your trip to Spain is to breathe the pure mountain air with the best company, here are some suggestions.

In the rural areas of Catalonia, you can enjoy a trip rich in tranquility and connection with nature. You will discover the best views of some of the best-known mountains in the area to explore its forests.



## **Montserrat**

To discover this unusual mountain, you can take the rack railway (mountain railway) from Montserrat in Monistrol. It takes you to the top, to the tourist centre. From there, you can choose from several options to continue with your visit: take the Sant Joan funicular that takes you to the Shrine of Sant Joan and the natural viewing point or stay around the Monastery and Montserrat Museum.

You will be amazed by its history and its surroundings but, best of all, you can delve into nature. Many excursions start from the same place, and you will be able to travel unique paths.

## **Montseny Nature Reserve**

The Montseny massif lies between the counties of Vallès Oriental, La Selva and Osona. In this Biosphere Reserve, you will find different peaks with various activities on offer. The main options are hiking and ATBs (All Terrain Bikes), while always enjoying a full day surrounded by nature.

You can climb to the tops of Matagalls, Turó de l'Home, Les Agudes or Llano de la Calma to get incredible views.

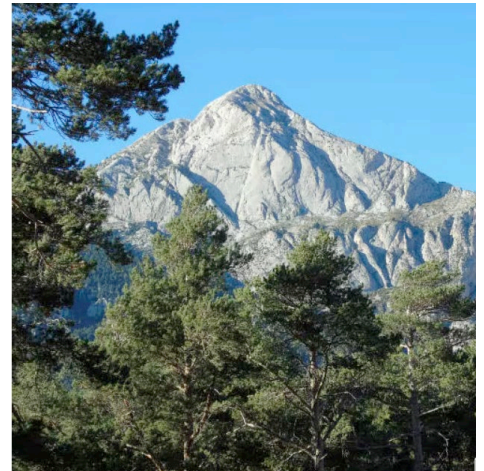
And here, where there is green, there is culture. You can see the megalithic constructions of the Sierra del Arca, the Roman villa of Can Terrers and medieval castles, for example. It is very nice to visit it in autumn, with the tree leaves dyed in different colours.

Montseny Nature Reserve between the counties of Vallès Oriental, La Selva and Osona, Catalonia. Montseny Nature Reserve between the counties of Vallès Oriental, La Selva and Osona, Catalonia.

## **Pedraforca**

This iconic mountain is located between the municipalities of Gósol and Saldes (Berguedà, Barcelona). It is part of the Sierra del Cadí, within the Cadí-Moixeró Nature Reserve. Its surprising shape means it's one of the most recognisable in all of Catalonia.

It is a perfect destination for walking. You can take several marked routes. Some of them are at the foot of the mountain



and will give you the opportunity to discover the towns in the area. If you like rock climbing, you can climb different routes on the north face and south face (the south face is the most popular).

Near Pedraforca, you can go to the source of the Llobregat River and then to Castellar de n'Hug (its views will leave you speechless), or find out about the influence of the textile industry in Catalonia at Colonia Vidal.

## **Pica d'Estats**

In the heart of the Pyrenees, Pica d'Estats is the highest mountain in Catalonia. The most common route starts from Sotillo, in the province of Lleida. Climbing this mountain requires a level of expertise, but it is also irresistible for anyone who wants to mark peaks in their mountaineering passport.

The best time to climb a peak is always from May to September, but you can plan a getaway for any time of the year. When are you booking your holiday to Spain?



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# Norwegian Cruise Line returns to Asia



Norwegian Cruise Line (NCL) celebrated its long-awaited return to Asia on 20 October as Norwegian Jewel set sail from Tokyo and commenced its extensive six-month season of voyages in the region.

As the first ship in the NCL fleet to return to Asia in over three years, Norwegian Jewel will offer 16 immersive, port-rich itineraries, visiting 11 countries and sailing from nine different departure ports, including Bangkok (Laem Chabang) Thailand; Kuala Lumpur (Port Klang) Malaysia; Singapore; Taipei (Keelung), Taiwan; Bali (Benoa), Indonesia; Tokyo and Yokohama, Japan; and for the first time in NCL history Seoul (Incheon), South Korea.

Cruises range in length from 10 to 14 days with an average of less than two sea days per sailing, inviting guests to enjoy up to 13.5 hours in iconic destinations like Singapore and Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, as well as extended overnight stays in places that come alive at night, such as Phuket, Thailand; Osaka, Japan; and Bali (Benoa), Indonesia. The brand will also make its first calls to Manila, Boracay, Palawan and Salomague, Philippines; Bintan Island, Indonesia; and Hualien, Taiwan.

“Yesterday was a celebratory moment, as we returned to Asia with Norwegian Jewel’s arrival to Tokyo,” said Norwegian Cruise Line president David Herrera. “We pride ourselves in delivering the best vacation experience and providing endless opportunities for our





After an incredibly successful maiden season, Norwegian Spirit will return to Australian and New Zealand waters for its second consecutive season from December 2023 through March 2024 for a series of popular open-jaw sailings between Sydney and Auckland. It will then sail several repositioning cruises in the South Pacific before returning to the region for a series of 14 Asia voyages during an eight-month season



guests to explore the world... including Asia! This region delivers some of the most intriguing history, cuisine, and culture for travellers to discover, and we are thrilled to deliver a diverse selection of port-rich voyages. This market is important to us, and we are committed to servicing it long-term."

Firmly underlying the brand's commitment to Asia, both as a source market and destination, NCL will have a record four ships deployed in the region during the 2024/25 season, providing travellers with unrivalled choice. In addition to Norwegian Jewel, Norwegian Spirit, Sun and Sky will also visit the area's most diverse ports, allowing guests to explore iconic and less-discovered destinations, including Japan, Korea, Thailand, Taiwan, Vietnam, Philippines and Malaysia.

### ***Norwegian Sun Debuts in Australia, New Zealand, South Pacific and Asia***

Making its premiere, Norwegian Sun will offer a six-month Asia Pacific season, including 13 exotic itineraries from October 2024 to April 2025, four of which have never been offered before, including three departures from Melbourne, Australia and an Auckland, New Zealand – Bali, Indonesia, sailing in March 2025. Departure ports include Melbourne and Sydney, Australia; Auckland, New Zealand; Honolulu; and Papeete, French Polynesia, with itineraries showcasing the sublime scenery of each bucket-list-worthy destination.

### ***Norwegian Spirit Returns to Australia, New Zealand, South Pacific and Asia***

from September 2024 to April 2025, departing from Manila, Singapore, Taipei, Tokyo and Seoul.

### ***Norwegian Sky Sails a Series of Exotic Itineraries in Asia, Asia Pacific and Africa***

Norwegian Sky's four-month Asian season features seven sailings departing from Manila, Philippines; Singapore; Taipei, Taiwan; Tokyo; and Port Louis, Mauritius between December 2024 and March 2025. Sailings range from 10 to 17 days and include several country-immersive voyages to discover fascinating destinations such as the Philippines and Japan.

For guests looking to immerse themselves in the destination fully, [NCL's Cruise Tours](#)

# Pandaw sets new sailing dates



Asia's riverboat cruise specialist, Pandaw, has released new dates for its popular Halong Bay, Red River & Laos Mekong 21-night combo cruise.

With inclusive flights, hotel and transfers between two 10-night expeditions in Vietnam and Laos, the cruise appeals to travellers who seek an in-depth exploration of this beautiful region.

New combo cruise dates are open for bookings through to the end of March 2025, but demand for the combination cruise is expected to be high.

Book online and reserve a stateroom with Pandaw by visiting [pandaw.com](http://pandaw.com) or

contacting the Pandaw team at [information@pandaw.com](mailto:information@pandaw.com)

The 21-night trip explores the key sites of northern Vietnam by river ship traversing the Red River delta and its main tributaries, connecting the wonders of Halong Bay with the thrill of exploring downtown Hanoi, and then on into the interior, well off the beaten track. It delivers scenic beauty, lively and interesting (sometimes industrial) life of the river and exploring rivers where no other tourist craft operates.

In addition to the Red River cruise in Vietnam, the combination cruise adds a three-country expedition.

Travellers will traverse Laos to touch Thailand and Myanmar at the once-notorious Golden Triangle. From there, the cruise sails downstream to Pak Beng and then to Luang Prabang, a UNESCO World Heritage town on the banks of the Mekong River. After a break to explore the former royal town of Luang Prabang, the cruise continues to Vientiane.

This trip included flights between Hanoi and Vientiane with a one-night hotel stay.

## ***Halong Bay, Red River & Laos Mekong***

HALONG BAY – VIENTIANE

21 nights

FROM USD10,008

[For full details and itinerary](#)  
[Click here for sailing dates and book online](#)





# Sarawak hosts opera extravaganza



Get ready to immerse yourself in the grand theatrical world of opera in the heart of Sarawak, Borneo.

The Borneo Opera Festival 2023, from 12 to 15 October, will bring world-class talents to Kuching, Sarawak, promising to mesmerise audiences with its grandeur, artistic brilliance and bel canto of this cultural extravaganza.

Borneo Opera Festival will feature a Gala Opera Concert and opera orchestra performances

spanning three days in the heart of Kuching city.

The festival will be a first of its kind for the region, which already hosts the world-renowned Rainforest World Music Festival and Borneo Jazz Festival.

This extraordinary musical odyssey celebrates the art and culture of world-class opera with Maestro Alfio Grasso, the Italian baritone set to headline the Borneo Opera Festival 2023, along with Sarawak's own opera singing prodigy Jeanne-Marie

Druce.

The festival's line-up includes Romanian artiste Ioan Vrasmas, award-winning opera director from Egypt Abdallah Saad, Spanish soprano Beatriz Sylvan and violinist Bogdan Alexandru Costache, a shining virtuoso in the world of classical music.

Other world-renowned performers include Italian conductor Silvano Frontalini, Italian tenor Domenico Menini and Hungarian pianist Gabriella Gyoker.

Festival goers will indulge in opera's grandeur and beauty as Teatro d'Opera Italiana (Vox Orchestra) takes centre stage.

"Borneo Opera Festival is a daring step towards putting Sarawak on the map as a hub for opera music in the Southeast Asian region. "This serves as a springboard for singers in the region, offering them invaluable experience, exposure, and international recognition within the opera scene," said Sarawak Minister of Tourism, Creative Industry and Performing Arts Sarawak, Dato Sri Haji Abdul Kairm Rahman Hamzah at the launch of the inaugural Borneo Opera Festival.

Borneo Season Opera II Palcoscenico PLT will be fully dedicated to providing an unforgettable experience for all audience members to inspire a new generation of vocalists and music enthusiasts, thereby contributing to the growth and development of the music industry in Sarawak, Borneo, Southeast Asia, and beyond.

# Dusit Thani Kyoto redefines Thai dining

Dusit Thani Kyoto, a new luxury hotel managed by Dusit International, one of Thailand's leading hotel and property development companies, officially celebrated its grand

culinary journey integrates all of these senses to deliver dining experiences that excite and delight on multiple levels – delivering a symphony of sensations from start to finish.

Northeastern Thai speciality.

Guests are then seated and the story of Ayatana further unfolds with the serving of five amuse-bouches that reference Shojin Ryori, the traditional dining style of Buddhist monks in Japan, which focuses on seasonal vegetables and wild mountain

plants, believed to bring balance and alignment to the body, mind, and spirit.

The amuse-bouches also pay homage to the five elements of nature – Water, Fire, Air, and

Ether (Space) – through five cooking techniques (grilled, smoked, steamed, boiled, raw), five distinct flavours (sweet, salty, bitter, sour, umami), and five colours (green, red, black, yellow, white). Ayatana's talented chefs curate various combinations based on the season and the availability of fresh produce, ensuring a dynamic and ever-evolving sensory experience.

The dining journey then continues with a fine-dining homage to the typical Thai-style family dinner, with six flavoursome Thai dishes arriving at the table, comprising organic rice, salad, traditional curry, a stir-fry, a steamed dish, a soup, and assorted relishes. In the spirit of authenticity, the spice level of dishes cannot be altered. However, a non-spicy selection of dishes is available for those seeking minimal heat.

[Read more...](#)



opening on 1 September unveiling Dusit's unique brand of Thai-inspired gracious hospitality and a range of exciting dining and wellness experiences – including the hotel's signature fine-dining restaurant, Ayatana.

Conceived exclusively for the hotel by acclaimed Thai chefs Duangporn 'Bo' Songvisava and Dylan Jones, who earned global recognition, including a Michelin Star, at their former Bangkok restaurant, Bo.lan, Ayatana offers a sensory journey unlike any other.

Taking inspiration from the rich cultures of both Thailand and Japan, every element of the restaurant has a story to tell, starting with the name – Ayatana – a Sanskrit word, which, in Buddhist philosophy, refers to the six senses: sight, sound, scent, taste, touch, and mind.

Ayatana's unique multisensory

The journey begins the moment a guest arrives at the hotel. Upon entering the property, each diner is warmly greeted and presented with a traditional Japanese fan infused with essential oils (representing scent). They are then gracefully guided through the hotel's peaceful courtyard garden (body, mind), before taking part in a traditional handwashing ritual with water infused with offcuts of organic Thai herbs that will be featured in the dining experience to come (*touch, scent, sound, mind*).

The gastronomic journey then begins in the restaurant's open kitchen with a first bite that pays respect to the amazing bounty of Kyoto – specifically kyo-yasai (the prefecture's famous vegetables) – with a tasty morsel of vibrant kyo-yasai aubergines and a pepper relish inspired by a





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