

TRAVEL  
UPDATES



Kangaroo Island, past and present

Two perspectives on Kangaroo Island culture, history and wildlife are the focus of a new small-group tour launching this month.

Ngarrindjeri elder and Kool Tours owner Mark Koolmatrie will accompany guests on the SeaLink Kangaroo Island Indigenous Day Tour, sharing stories of his people and their relationship to the land after a Welcome to Country. A bushwalk in Penneshaw is an opportunity to hear about native medicine and

bushfoods while spiritual connections to landmarks will be revealed at Seal Bay, Admirals Arch and Remarkable Rocks.

The tour, in development for almost two years, will also cover the island's more recent history, and explore how land, animal life and community is rebounding from the bushfires of 2019-20.

The tour, at \$383 per person, will operate on select dates from December 14 to March. Ferry transfers, lunch and light dinner are included. [sealink.com.au](https://sealink.com.au)

# The pros of planning a break

The science is in. Getting away is good for you, even before you leave, says Tara Wells

In a delirium of chronic undersleeping and nappy-changing eight years ago, I announced to my husband that in 2024 we'd go on a major holiday. None of the kids – including the as-yet-unborn third one – would be in their first or last years of primary school, I argued, so it was then or never. “Umm... okay?” was the answer.

I took that as the greenest of lights and reframed every life decision towards the big adventure. We sold our location-bound business, changed careers, and never took a short holiday while saving for the big one. How could any trip live up to that level of expectation?

Psychology backs up that “positive anticipation” can sustain you through difficult times. Dr Helena Popovic is a GP with an interest in brain health. The way she explains it sounds like I planned the holiday following a doctor's script for primary-carer malaise: looking forward to something good helps reduce inflammation, strengthens the immune system and increases the capacity to manage stress.

“In functional MRI brain scans just thinking about positive future events activates a region of the brain called the medial prefrontal cortex. It correlates with higher levels of wellbeing and lifts our mood. So life becomes more enjoyable even before we go on holiday,” says Dr Popovic.

Yesss, Doctor. Holiday booked. Benefits really kick in when there's an optimum time between booking and departure. It's different for everyone and my eight years may be a tad excessive.

The criteria? “It needs to feel within reach, with enough time to plan, but not so far away that who knows what might happen between now and then,” Dr Popovic says.

Planning time doubles the dopamine release (hello optimism, goodbye irritability) that anticipation has already triggered. The satisfaction of finding flights on sale, learning new things like where to eat or stay, and fuelling the imagination with gorgeous imagery (or, in my case, making a playlist of destination songs) all set dopamine firing.

“People think dopamine is the chemical of pleasure, but it's also the neurotransmitter of motivation,” Dr Popovic says.

“It makes us more enthusiastic and likely to stick at things.” Things like saving money



through Covid-induced curveballs, or getting fit to hike far-flung national parks, for instance.

If friends swear you'll have the best trip ever, don't listen. “It sets you up for disappointment. You have to be the one generating the anticipation, not someone else doing it for you,” Dr Popovic says.

But what about pegging every hope and dream on one single trip? Our holiday could be as anticlimactic as a high-school formal.

The good news? “Things are more likely to turn out well if we anticipate that they will,”

says Dr Popovic. And if it doesn't, it's not what happens but how you frame the story that determines ultimate happiness. Wide-awake nights in a mouldy cabin too small to swing one of many resident feral cats is now my family's groan/laugh memory of our trip.

Swapping sleepless nights with babies for plane insomnia with kids was everything I had longed for. In another eight years, two-thirds of our children will have finished high school. I'm pulling out this scientific argument to plan our next epic adventure.

## TAKE TWO...

### TV TALENT TOURS



#### 1 QUEENSLAND WELLNESS

Intrepid has teamed with *Married at First Sight* standout (and former tour guide) Lucinda Light to explore Far North Queensland next year. The Find Your Light: Daintree & Cape Tribulation Adventure is a group tour for 16 from May 30 to June 5 designed to connect with local culture. On sale now at \$4995.



#### 2 MALAYSIAN ON THE MENU

Five-star hotels and Michelin-starred dishes are on the itinerary of *Luxury Escapes'* latest signature food tour, hosted by 2017 *MasterChef Australia* winner Diana Chan. With a night in Singapore before heading to Malaysia, the eight-day trip next November is priced from \$6499, including flights.



#### Pyramid-side luxury

A new Sofitel hotel by the Great Pyramids of Giza and Grand Egyptian Museum in Cairo has been announced. Slated to open in late 2027, Sofitel Legend Pyramids Giza will have 303 luxury rooms and suites – drawing on Egyptian and French designs – a spa, fitness centre, restaurants and more, all overlooking the only Great Wonder still standing. [sofitelLaccor.com](https://sofitelLaccor.com)

#### Reef in luxury

Adventure company Reef Unlimited has launched a new luxurious way to see the Great Barrier Reef, leaving from Cairns. The six-hour package includes a 25-minute scenic helicopter flight, sailing on a \$7 million pontoon and a private snorkelling exploration, led by a marine biologist. Reef Indulgence starts at \$1499 per person. [reefmagic.com.au](https://reefmagic.com.au)

#### Wicked high tea

To celebrate the release of *Wicked*, select Novotel hotels in Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane are hosting witchy high teas. Guests will find yellow brick roads in lobbies leading to pink Glinda-inspired cocktails, Elphaba matcha tiramisù and more. The spellbinding experience runs until December 21; tickets are \$30 for adults and \$17 for children. [accor.com](https://accor.com)

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