

DEALS OF THE WEEK

COMPILED BY PENNY HUNTER AND SUSAN KUROSAWA



Norway and more

SCANDINAVIA

Flight Centre has savings of 12 per cent on a 14-day Scenic Scandinavia and its Fjords tour. The trip, offered by group-tour operator Trafalgar, starts in Copenhagen in Denmark and ends in Stockholm, Sweden, with guests travelling by train and coach. Highlights en route include a visit to Odense, birthplace of Hans Christian Andersen, riding Norway's scenic Flam Railway, exploring the stunning Geirangerfjord and a stay in the historic port of Stavanger. The Hanseatic heritage of Bergen and the Olympic city of Lillehammer are also on the agenda, along with the cultural capital of Oslo. Travellers have two nights in Stockholm. The tour provides a balance of guided outings and free time, and most meals are included.

Fine print: From \$7546 a person, twin-share, a saving of \$1029 a person. Departs May 4 and June 1, 2025; other departures available.

tours.flightcentre.com.au

City escape

BRISBANE

Stay three nights or more at the W hotel in the Queensland capital and save 15 per cent. The five-star property, which overlooks the Brisbane River a couple of blocks from City Hall, has 312 guestrooms and 32 suites. Facilities include the Wet Deck with its heated 20m swimming pool, and the AWAY Spa, which has sauna and steam rooms, relaxation pods and mineral-rich vitality pools, and fully equipped gym. Dining options include New York-style grill house The Lex and the more casual Living Room Bar, where cocktails, high tea and share plates are the order of the day. W Brisbane displays the quirky modern interiors for which the brand is known, with eye-popping visual art and furnishings.

Fine print: From \$350 a night, three-night minimum. Book by April 30.

marriott.com



What lies beneath

THE MALDIVES

Expedition Cruise Specialists is offering seven free nights on sailings in The Maldives departing between November 10 and December 22 this year or March 30 to April 20, 2026, aboard the 56-passenger Yasawa Princess. The vessel is re-entering service following a months-long upgrade. Cruises depart Male, capital of the archipelago, for the 14-night itinerary, which explores a range of coral wonderlands, including South Male, Vaavu and Ari atolls. Designed for underwater adventurers, itinerary standouts cover night snorkelling to spy nurse sharks, sting rays and giant trevally, plus a whale shark experience and manta ray-viewing excursions.

Fine print: From \$US1995 (\$3180) a person, twin-share, on a seven-night cruise, inclusive of meals, house wine, beers and spirits. The bonus offer of seven free nights is available on a limited number of cabins on each departure when booked direct by September 30, 2025.

expeditioncruisespecialists.com



Continental drift

CANADA AND THE US

Scenic has super earlybird savings on its collection of land journeys to Canada, Alaska and US in 2026. Couples can save up to \$4000 on the 30-day Majestic Rockies and Eastern Canada itinerary, which takes guests from Calgary to New York City. The journey includes visits to Banff and Lake Louise plus two days on the Rocky Mountaineer train from Jasper to Vancouver, followed by a seven-night Alaskan cruise as far north as Glacier Bay on Holland America Line's Koningsdam ship. Guests then fly to Ottawa, Quebec City, Montreal and Toronto, from where they take in the majesty of Niagara Falls (pictured). Culture, politics and history combine on an exploration of Washington DC before the tour concludes in the Big Apple.

Fine print: From \$30,795 a person for departures from May 8-June 6, 2026. Book by June 16, 2025.

scenic.com.au

FOLLOW THE READER

Memories to live forever

PETER J. SIMMONDS
MUDGEERABA, QLD

At 5.28am, I had held my wife's hand as she slipped away, her five-year battle with cancer at an end. We had agreed I'd walk the Camino Frances in Spain, a journey we had cherished seven years earlier. The pilgrimage, a tradition dating back 1000 years, once saw wealthy patrons pay pilgrims to carry their sins to Santiago de Compostela for them when seeking inner absolution. This time I would walk to honour her memory and seek donations for absolution, while raising funds for cancer research.

Setting out from Saint-Jean Pied de Port in France, I climbed over the Pyrenees, reaching Pamplona within days. The Basque country's charm and gastronomy captivated me. From there, I traced memories of our first walk, passing through Burgos and marvelling at its cathedral, rich with history and personal meaning.

As Father's Day approached, I treated myself to a luxury parador in Santo Domingo, a nod to my wife's insistence on comfort over dormitories. Next came Meseta Central, a vast, hot plain where my grief weighed heavily. Under the blistering sun, I grappled with questions that consumed me. Could I have done better? Why her and not me? But the rhythm of walking, kindness of fellow pilgrims and the timeless scenery grounded me in the present. The city of Leon's stunning parador, a converted monastery, offered respite as my journey neared its end.

The final stretch into Galicia brought four days of rain, soaking my resolve but not my purpose. At

last, I reached Santiago de Compostela, the cathedral towering before me as a symbol of my promise fulfilled. More than 800km and countless emotions later, I stood at my destination having walked not only for my sins but the sins and pain of others. This journey was more than a pilgrimage; it was a tribute to love, loss and the enduring human spirit. I walked for her, for me, for us, and for the hope that even in grief, there is purpose.



WRITE IN TO WIN

Email your 350-word contribution to: travel@theaustralian.com.au
Published columnists will receive a Lonely Planet guidebook trio of 100 Weekends in Europe, Epic Road Trips of Europe and Epic Van Trips Europe, valued at a total of \$145.
shop.lonelyplanet.com