

# Life & Leisure

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## CHRISTMAS SPECIAL EDITION

### GET INSPIRED

*56 pages of gifts to treasure*

### SEASON'S HIGHLIGHTS

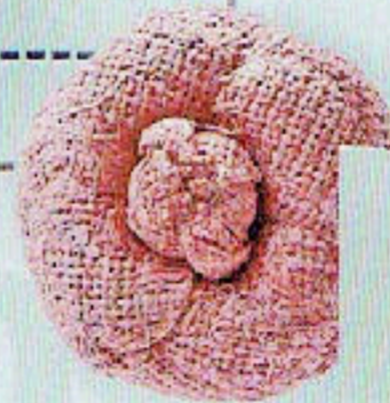
*five productions of a much-loved classic plus art, ballet and more*

### TRADITIONS TO CHERISH

*at home and abroad*

### FESTIVE MENUS

*family lunch with four of our favourite chefs*



TRAVEL GIFT PICKS

# Adventures to share

Fiona Carruthers selects five fun indulgences, from breaks close to home to splurges overseas.



When it comes to travel, 2022 has delivered several lessons: Namely, that many people 55 and older are still cautious about travelling too far afield; that trips which soothe and inspire are more important than ever; and that splurging on upgrades is the way to go.

For this list, I've suggested options that caught my eye this year, mostly close to home, and that dial up the adventure factor. The gifts are arranged by price point, pending how much bandwidth your credit card has left at this time of year.

Shared experiences with family and friends are the elixir of life, so put travel under the tree this Christmas.

## Dinner with a view from \$295

Not content with plating up at sea level, Sydney-based chef Luke Mangan has gone upscale, literally. Since mid-November, he's been fronting a new dining experience: Luke's Table at the Pylon Lookout, 87 metres above sea level atop the Sydney Harbour Bridge's south-east pylon lookout (on the Opera House side). Just 20 guests are seated at a time, in a fully enclosed room – at a long, communal table.

Known for combining his classic French culinary training with Asian and other influences, Mangan's specialities include steamed jewfish with orange, feta, date and mint couscous, and liquorice parfait with lime syrup.

If your gift recipient is calorie conscious, note the pylon dining treat involves climbing more than 200 stairs to reach the lookout level. Comfortable shoes are recommended.

Luke's Table at the Pylon Lookout is on Thursday, Friday and Saturdays from 6pm to 9pm until December 22, then from January 19 to March 4. The bad news is those dates are booked out. The good news is more dates will be announced soon. Sit tight – and put a bow on it, promising your loved one a waitlist spot.

**To book** The Penfolds dinner (on Thursday nights), including a Bin 311 Chardonnay and Bin 389 Cabernet Sauvignon, is \$295 a person. The Grange Dinner (Friday and Saturday nights), including Bin A Chardonnay and Penfolds' signature Grange, is \$345. Go to [lukemangan.com](http://lukemangan.com) to register interest for the new dates.

## Watch the beautiful game, from \$525

For those who love to mix sport with travel, the biggest FIFA Women's World Cup since the event began in 1991 is definitely one for the diary, running from July 20 to August 20 next year.

The 32 teams will compete in games being held in a number of cities in Australia and New Zealand – the first time the FIFA Women's World Cup has been co-hosted by two nations, and the first time it has been held in the southern hemisphere.

The world's largest women's sporting event brings together the best female football nations every four years. Australian host cities include Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, Perth and Adelaide; in New Zealand, games will be played in Auckland, Dunedin, Hamilton and Wellington.

If you want to combine your gift of tickets



with a Sydney stay, consider the just-opened heritage-rich MGallery Porter House Hotel on Castlereagh Street, or the fully refreshed InterContinental Sydney, overlooking Circular Quay, with rooms from around \$495 a night. Roll in a \$30 ticket (see pricing below for the games), and you have the perfect gift from \$525.

In March, Melbourne welcomes the 257-room Ritz-Carlton, located atop the \$1 billion West Side Place Tower on Spencer Street. (Rates yet to be announced). In Brisbane, it's still hard to go past The Calile (from \$436 a night).

And of course Auckland now boasts a Park Hyatt by the harbour's edge. Go all out and book the \$NZ12,000 (\$10,884) a night Presidential Suite.

Main: Yoga with horses at NIHI Sumba; Luke Mangan welcomes you to dinner on high, above; see the Matildas at the Women's World Cup. PHOTOS: OSCAR COLMAN, AP

Below left: The Ritz-Carlton Melbourne will open in March; indulge in the Presidential Suite at Auckland's Park Hyatt, below.



**To book** Tickets for early World Cup games start from \$30 an adult for Category 1 seats, rising to \$120 for the final at Australia Stadium in Sydney on August 20. For more information, go to [fifa.com](http://fifa.com).

## Equine therapy at Sumba, from \$5000

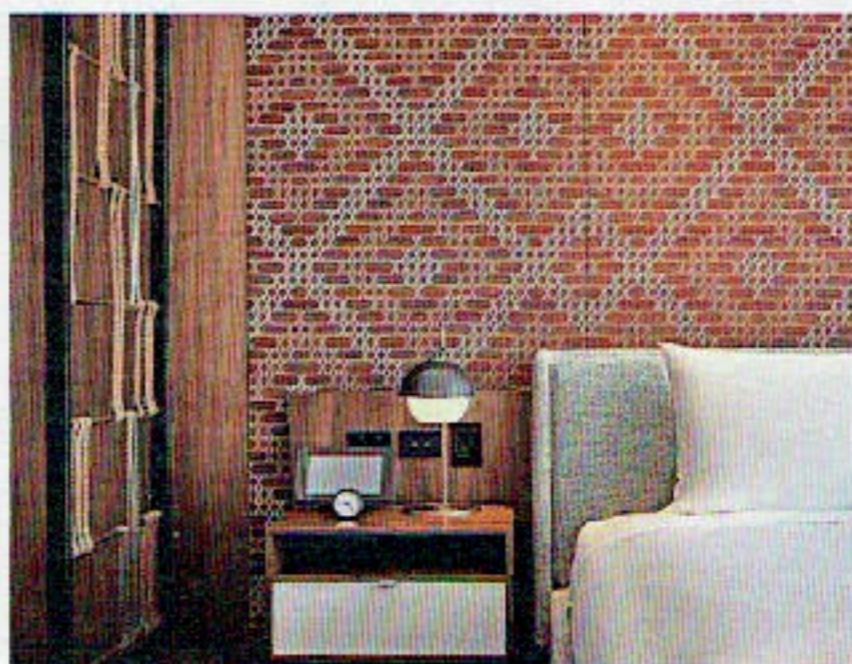
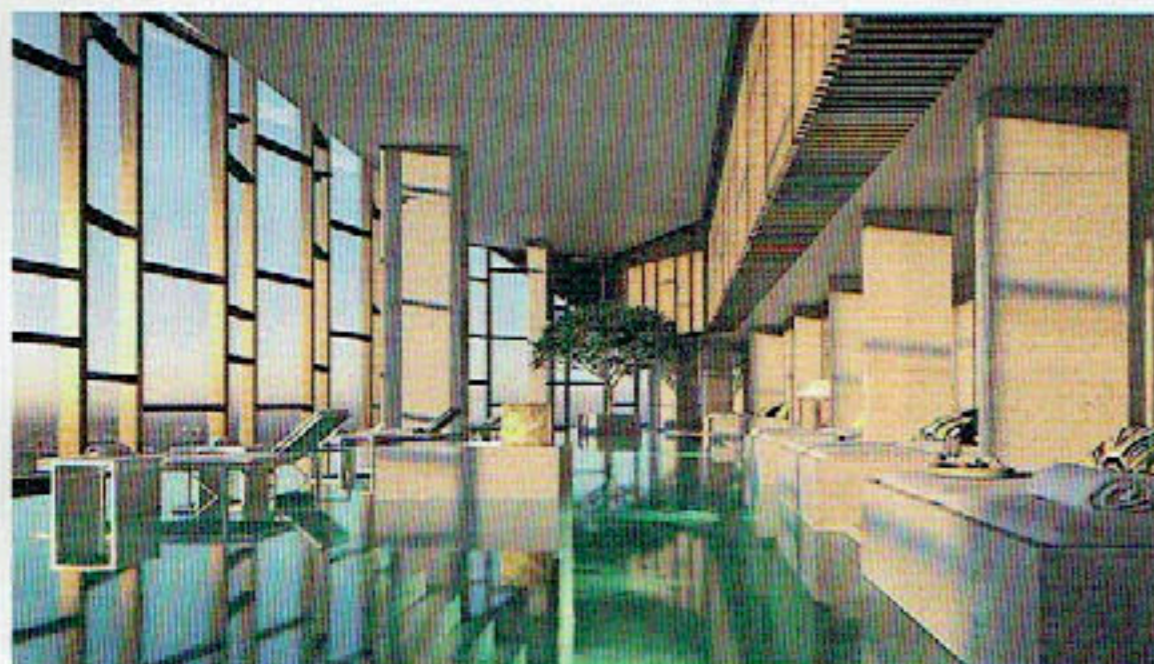
Yoga with horses? What better way to kick off 2023? You can also ride, swim with and take classes in equine meditation and therapy with said noddies.

Since American entrepreneur Chris Burch built the luxury NIHI Sumba resort almost a decade ago on Sumba Island in eastern Indonesia – a 50-minute flight from Bali – the property has gone from strength to strength, adding new activities and expanding its world-class day spa.

Burch's children are surf and horse mad: Thus, he played to the family's strengths and put former polo circuit regular James McBride in charge as general manager. McBride is now chief executive and a partner in NIHI Hotels.

Another long-term employee of this magical slice of wilderness is horse trainer and former Sydneysider Carol Sharpe, who got involved with the locally bred ponies after her husband took over building the resort about a decade ago.

Under Sharpe's direction, Sandalwood Stables at NIHI Sumba was born, ensuring horse lovers from around the world can live the dream: cantering on the beach and jumping the waves. The people of Sumba believe their souls are connected to horses, the most feted animal on the island.





Treat yourselves: Fly business class to the Eternal City and unwind at the new Six Senses Rome, opening in March.

## Business class to London or Rome is guaranteed to earn you brownie points.

The Sumba ponies (also known as sandalwood ponies, given the trees are the island's main export) have Arabian blood, but are on the short side at 12 to 13 hands (122 cm to 132 cm).

Sharpe has adopted horses from the local racetrack and integrated them into the resort's equestrian program.

**To book** NIHI Sumba has 27 villas of one to four bedrooms, plus the sumptuous Owner's Estate. Room rates from \$15895 (\$1380 a night for a one-bedroom villa (plus 21 per cent tax), including all meals, based on twin share.

Three nights for two costs \$5061 (including tax). Add on a series of equestrian activities for the horse lover in your life, including: Swim with horses (30 minutes for \$109 pp); a beach ride at sunrise or sunset (\$148) or private yoga on a horse (an hour from \$195). For more information, go to [nihi.com](http://nihi.com).

## Fly the pointy end to London or Rome return, from \$9800

Qantas has been coping it on a number of fronts this year around on-time performance (or lack thereof), lost luggage and cancelled flights.

But Project Sunrise – linking Australia to key northern hemisphere cities like London and Rome in one hop – is truly a case of aviation innovation. Having flown both these routes, I highly rate the extra time it gives you to work or rest in the air without the disruption of a stopover.

If you're going all out to spoil someone at Christmas, business class to London or Rome is a gift guaranteed to earn you brownie points. You can also combine the routes and fly Perth-Rome-London-Perth, or vice versa.

Given both London and Rome are about to open an unprecedented swathe of new luxury stays (including London's first

Raffles and Peninsula hotels, and Rome's first Six Senses), there has never been a better time to visit.

**To book** Business-class return fares from Sydney to Perth-Rome, returning home from London start at \$9754. (note this does not include the fare from Rome to London).

Premium economy seats from \$4561. Flying from Melbourne costs around \$200 more. For more information, see [qantas.com](http://qantas.com).

## Wind-powered cruising, from \$20,300

You might have read in *Life & Leisure's* recent travel special that superyachts and expedition ships are the new black when it comes to cruising.

From April 2023, three-masted Le Ponant arrives in Western Australia with itineraries that cover both the northern and southern Kimberley regions.

Powered (mostly) by wind, the three-masted yacht takes just 32 guests, with a 1:1 passenger to crew ratio.

Built in 1991, the yacht has been fully refurbished, with the refined layout designed by Studio Jean-Philippe Nuel and Stirling Design International, and there are plenty of private nooks to create the sense of sailing aboard your own private yacht.

The four passenger decks house 16 spacious staterooms, including a 60 square-metre Owner's Suite on the upper deck.

Le Ponant's first Kimberley sailing (from Darwin to Kuri Bay) leaves on April 6; the yacht's last available voyage, Kuri Bay to Darwin, sets sail on September 30 and disembarks on October 9, at which point the vessel leaves Australian waters.

Ponant's Australian expedition manager, Mick Fogg, explains the northern Kimberley itinerary features many "waterfalls and gorges of the region, and the rock art of the First Nations people.

"The southern itineraries will focus more on the unique tidal phenomenon here, the pristine river systems and island landscapes."

**To book** Prices from \$15,130 a person for an eight-night journey to the Rowley Shoals, from September 16. Ten-night sailings also available. For more, go to [au.ponant.com](http://au.ponant.com).

LSL



Explore the northern Kimberley in style aboard Le Ponant's three-masted yacht.

## CHRISTMAS SUSTAINABILITY

# It's easy to love the season and take care of the planet

There is no need for excess, writes Nina Karnikowski.

Three years ago, my husband and I decided to change the course of our combined family history and host a more intentional, less wasteful Christmas.

For too many Christmases prior, we'd end up collapsing on the couch, looking around at the sea of wrapping paper and plastic packaging and uneaten food – and despair. Not only about the monstrous environmental cost of all the waste, but also about why so much focus was placed on the gifts, food and drinking, while those precious chances for true connection and gratitude slipped quietly out the door.

So, we decided to tailor Christmas, editing out all the elements we didn't love. We avoided the tree palaver, and dressed an indoor palm with Mum's treasured collection of decorative birds instead.

In place of gifts, we gave and requested experiences – yoga passes, restaurant vouchers and the like – or suggested no gifts so both sides could spend more on better-quality food and champagne. We'd recently gone vegetarian, so did our best to wow with dishes including that Ottolenghi mushroom lasagne, and asked everyone to contribute a simple dish they actually liked, rather than the obligatory turkey or Christmas cake.

It wasn't an entirely smooth ride. We still ended up with some camping chairs from my husband's sister, and Mum couldn't fathom a Christmas without her famous chicken schnitzel. But it certainly shifted things, and last year was our best yet.

Without the haze of excessive food and booze and gifts (a recent Gumtree survey showed Australians receive more than 20 million unwanted gifts at Christmas), we were able to focus on what the occasion is really all about. Connection. Togetherness. Celebrating life and having helped each other pull through a horrendous year.

We even managed to get a gratitude circle going before we started eating, with everyone saying what they were most thankful for that year (all three mothers sobbed). Afterwards we danced for two hours straight.

We all agreed it was a highlight of the year.

And so, some tips for earth-friendly festive cheer, and for making this Christmas one that is more elegant and connected, and as good for us as it is for the planet.

**Tree alternatives** | At a time when we need to capture as much carbon as possible, it seems absurd that we cut down millions of trees that do that so well, just to decorate our homes for a couple of weeks. Especially when we have great alternatives. Mum inspired us by using a living potted pine tree for years (bonus points for the indoor air purification), and our fabulous aunt would collect driftwood from the beach that she'd arrange in a big vase and decorate. Much better than an artificial, unrecyclable plastic tree from China.

**Wrapping options** | Vintage stores are full of barely worn silk scarves that are a fantastic gift-wrapping option. They become part of the gift.



Scarves from Maggie Marilyn: so versatile they can double as a top.

they're waste-free, and you can do away with plastic sticky tape. Hermès makes gorgeous printed silk scarves, while B-Corp New Zealand label Maggie Marilyn do beautiful striped versions that can be worn as tops and headscarves. See [maggiemarilyn.com](http://maggiemarilyn.com).

**Meat-free festivities** | Last year, we visited our local farmers' market the day before Christmas and bought whatever was fresh, then made most of our simple, delicious Christmas feast from that. Of course, Uncle Malcolm might still want his prawns, and there's always someone who insists on a roast. But there are some great alternatives: Suzy Spoon's Vegetarian Butcher, for example, do a tasty vegetarian roulade 'roast' with tofu, nuts, cranberries, mushrooms and herbs. See [ssvb.com.au](http://ssvb.com.au).

**Limiting decorative waste** | The bonbons, the paper napkins, the wreath, the festive tablecloths – Christmas tables can be hugely wasteful. Last year, we minimised by borrowing decorations from friends and family. One family brought the wreath, another the tablecloth, and we invested in some beautiful linen napkins from sustainable Australian-made brand Andéol Moiré that would last for decades.

Everyone liked seeing their touch at the table, and it meant less packing up and storing away for all of us. See [andeolmoire.com](http://andeolmoire.com).

**Communal giving** | Giving back at Christmas feels good. So does assuaging guilt about the more carbon-heavy activities we might partake in through the year, including flying to lovely places and driving lovely cars.

This year my mum, sister and I are pitching in for a yearly (tax-deductible) membership of Groundswell, which puts 100 per cent of donations directly towards climate action grants.

There are lots of donation platforms with a positive impact. [groundswellgiving.org/membership](http://groundswellgiving.org/membership).



A Christmas tree made with driftwood and homemade decorations.