

09 FEB, 2025
L2 island-hopping ADVENTURES



Sunday Territorian, Darwin

Sunday Mail
Sunday, February 9, 2025

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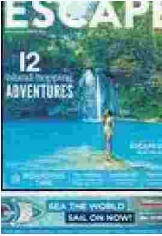
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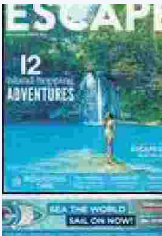
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If there's one thing better than an island stay, it's a multi-island holiday. Beaches? Culture? Nature? Adventure? Island-hopping delivers all that and more. Navigating the transport planning can be daunting on your own, but a growing range of cruises and tours are making the process a breeze. Whether you're an adrenaline-seeker or luxury lover, there's an island-hopping trip to suit. Grab your atlas and consider these intriguing itineraries.

1 The diver's dream
Raja Ampat, Indonesia
Given its name means "Four Kings", it's fitting that Raja Ampat's pristine reefs rank as royalty among dive sites. And while we're on the subject of nobility, it's possible to island-hop around the remote Raja Ampat in truly regal style – thanks to *Aqua Blu*, a luxury liveaboard yacht formerly owned by an aristocratic European family. The vessel features in Abercrombie & Kent's upcoming Raja Ampat expedition. The 14-day dream trip visits dive destinations such as Cape Kri, home to a world-record 374 fish species counted on a single dive. abercrombiekent.com; aquaexpeditions.com

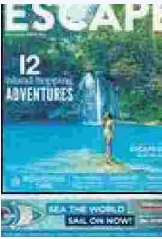
2 The quick trip
Greece
From the romance of Santorini to the nightlife of Mykonos, Greece is the classic European island-hopping destination – and the ideal choice for travellers with limited time or funds. Celestyal Cruises' three-night round-trips from Athens pack in sightseeing stops at Mykonos, Patmos and Santorini, as well as the ancient city of Ephesus, Turkey, starting from under \$600. Guests can spend their days and evenings exploring the islands, overnighting aboard the freshly renovated *Celestyal Discovery*. celestyal.com

Continued next page

3 The trending destination
Philippines
A surge of interest when Contiki launched its first Philippines island tour last year led to "an unprecedentedly high number of bookings", so this year the youth-focused tour company has added new Philippines itineraries to its line-up. The 22-day Ultimate Philippines Island Hopping trip combines visits to Cebu, Boracay, Bohol, Palawan and Panglao (think picturesque waterfalls and palm-lined beaches) with a three-day boat trip stopping by remote islands, stunning reefs and rustic beach camps. contiki.com

4 The food trail
Hebrides, Scotland
Like your dramatic coastal scenery served with a side of mouth-watering local produce? In Scotland's Hebridean islands, cruisers can taste handmade cheeses, dine on fresh seafood, sip Champagne in a castle, and drink at Britain's most remote pub. The seven-night Flavours of the Hebrides itinerary with Hebridean Island Cruises also includes a gin and whisky distillery visit and a meal on a private island. The gastronomic voyage stops at six islands, pairing food-focused activities with scenic cruising. cruisetraveller.com.au

5 The DIY itinerary
Yasawa Islands, Fiji
With 333 Fijian islands to explore, it's impossible to choose just one. The Yasawa Islands are some of Fiji's most appealing, with untouched beaches and superb snorkelling – and the ultimate location to choose your own adventure. The Awesome Pass on the Yasawa Flyer ferry gives you hop-on, hop-off access to the islands for five to 15 days. Live out your castaway dreams as you choose accommodation as you go, or book ahead across three resort categories, from budget dorms to beachfront bures. awesomefiji.com



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6 The wildlife bucket-lister Galápagos, Ecuador

The Galápagos Islands beckon as a *once-in-a-lifetime* experience for nature lovers, so you might as well do it in style. A cruise with ultra-luxury line Silversea is the ultimate way to flit between exotic experiences like spotting giant tortoises, blue-footed boobies and marine iguanas. And nature tourism doesn't get more immersive than snorkelling with sea lions at Isla Lobos, a new addition to Silverseas' Galápagos cruises this year, and one of 27 stops on the cruise line's 14-day Galápagos itineraries. silversea.com

7 The new world wonder Marquesas Islands, French Polynesia

The secret's out – the breathtaking but rarely visited Marquesas Islands have finally hit the spotlight, with the archipelago named among the newest additions to Unesco's World Heritage List last year. The islands earned recognition as one of the world's last marine wilderness areas, a biodiversity hotspot and home to significant archaeological sites. What better way to visit than on one of the world's most unique island-hopping vessels? *Aranui 5* is part cargo freighter, part luxury cruise ship. Its 12-day Discovering the Marquesas itinerary visits all six inhabited islands. aranui.com

8 The watersports wonderland Thailand

There's good reason Thailand's west coast islands are so popular – they're gorgeous, affordable and easily accessible. For maximum on-water time, and minimum crowds, look to Intrepid's Phuket Sailing Adventure. With only 14 passengers, the seven-day yacht itinerary checks off the most scenic small islands, from famous Koh Phi Phi to hidden gems. By day, you'll swim, snorkel, paddleboard and kayak the calm Andaman Sea waters. By night, you'll relax on deck at sunset and enjoy meals by a private chef. intrepidtravel.com

9 The hiker's paradise Azores, Portugal

Hiking boots might not be on your typical island holiday packing list, but then no other destination offers the jaw-dropping trails you'll find in the Azores. The Atlantic archipelago's lush, volcanic landscapes are best admired on foot.

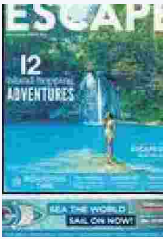
G Adventures' six-day Hiking the Azores itinerary takes in many of the highlights, including trekking to the islands' highest lake, exploring ancient lava caves, visiting a secret beach and taking the plunge in natural hot springs. gadventures.com

10 The self-guided tour Okinawa, Japan

Home to Japan's best beaches, beautiful natural attractions and fascinating culture, Okinawa's islands are a world away from the urban bustle of Tokyo. If you want the convenience of someone else to take care of your every travel need, but you're not keen on joining a group tour, Inside Japan's self-guided Okinawa Island Hopping itinerary gives you the best of both worlds. The 10-night trip takes in snorkelling the reef of Ishigaki, kayaking the mangroves of Iriomote, and time to relax on the islands' dazzling white sand beaches. insidejapantours.com

11 The cyclist's delight Dalmatian Islands, Croatia

One ship, two wheels, six spectacular islands, countless magnificent views. On Sail Croatia's eight-day cycling cruises, a new bike ride awaits each day, exploring quaint villages, picturesque countryside and coastal vistas on the enchanting islands en route from Split to Dubrovnik. BYO bike or hire one (with e-bikes a popular option for relaxed riding). Daily swim stops letting guests dive straight off the small ship and into the azure Adriatic are a highlight. sail-croatia.com



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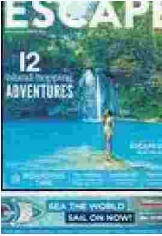
12 The family explorer
Hawaii
Shave ice, Jurassic Park scenery, pineapple plantations and exquisite beaches are just the beginning – there’s much to love about Hawaii for all ages. Interisland airfares and resort accommodation can add up, especially with a family, but a more cost-effective way to visit several Hawaiian islands is on the seven-night *Pride of America* cruise. With five stops on four islands, including two overnight visits, it allows time to explore highlights on Maui, Kauai, the Big Island and Oahu, with departures year round. ncl.com



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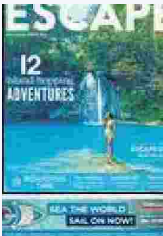
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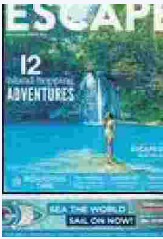


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Philippines

From top: Boracay, Philippines; Hebridean Island Cruises in Scotland; cruise the Hawaiian Islands on *Pride of America*; Maya Bay in Thailand’s Phi Phi Islands.



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