

World

Luxury Travel

Magazine

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**Five Best Places to
Welcome the New Year**

Best Golf Courses in Australia

United Arab Emirates

Luxury on a Plate

Caviar

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W L T
World Luxury Tourism

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FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

The New Year is just around the corner. Preparation to go some place else to welcome the New Year starts much ahead. There are many places in this beautiful planet where the New Year Eve celebrations are not only special but also unforgettable. I went to Sydney, Australia to welcome the year 2012 and it will always remain etched in my memory as one of my most memorable New Year plans. This issue of the e-zine brings you a few such places where spending the New Year Eve and welcoming the New Year will be well worth the effort.

The winter holidays are the ideal time to go on family vacations. To beat the chill, how about spending the holidays in the 'not so chilling' Middle East? We have an extensive coverage of the United Arab Emirates, one of the most vibrant and cosmopolitan countries in Asia. A visit to the island paradise Bali on the other hand would soothe your soul. Don't forget to read about it here before going; and remember to take a few extra days, as you may well feel like extending your stay there!

Some foods are just sinfully luxurious and rare. But how can it be special if not rare. Read about the most famous luxury food of all time – Caviar. Yes, there is more to it than meets the eye. Don't forget to browse through our regular section on happenings around the world. January holds some breath-taking festivals around the globe. Choose the one that meets your fancy.

Let us start the New Year on the go. Let's travel!

Manashree Prakash
Editor-in-Chief

Happy New Year

Cover
Story

Five Best Places to Welcome the New Year

New Year is the perfect time for ringing in the new, ringing out the old and making fresh and hopeful beginnings in all spheres of life. The promise of things to come is tantalizing and puts new zest into life. We believe that the beginning of a New Year must be celebrated with full enthusiasm. So, what is the best way to celebrate the New Year? By having a great time of course! And the easiest way to do it would be to head to some of the best places in the world for singing - auld lang syne! Here are the five best places in the world known for their iconic celebrations to welcome the New Year:


Sydney Harbour

New Year's Eve at Sydney is a never-to-be-forgotten affair! Sydney is the first city in the world to ring in the New Year. Sydney Harbour is the epicentre of the action with people pouring in from as early as 6 am to find the prime spots for viewing the shows of the evening.

What is it all about

It's mainly about fireworks, synchronized to music, as grand and scintillating as it gets. There are two stunning pyrotechnic displays. There is one at 9 pm for families, especially children. A fantastic 'Harbour of Light Parade' follows,





consisting of around 60 beautifully illuminated and decorated vessels. This is followed by the magnificent midnight show, fireworks from barges on the harbour, rooftops of skyscrapers. The Sydney Harbour Bridge simultaneously light up the sky in one of the most dazzling and breath-taking spectacles in the sky devised by man. It is a must do for any travel enthusiast.

Vantage Points:

- Book a cruise and watch the display from the boat
- Orbit bar at Summit Restaurant
- Mrs. Macquaries Point, East Circular Quay, Circular Quay
 - Cockatoo Island
 - Opera House

Travellers' Tips:

- Book well in advance. Do book hotels at least six months in advance. Remember, over 1.5 million people watch the fireworks every year!
- Use public transport
- Pack for warm weather, though you may require a light jacket.
- Alcohol is banned in many venues, so check beforehand.



Times Square, New York

Around a million people assemble at Times Square in New York on the eve of New Year to join one of the greatest New Year celebrations on earth. The pulsating countdown begins and there is outburst of joy, a massive shower of confetti from rooftops and a 'kiss-a-thon' as the clock



strikes twelve! The moment is marked by the dropping of the iconic New Year's Ball from a flagpole on top of One Times Square. The Ball, covered with 3000 Waterford crystal triangles, weighs 11,875 pounds, has a diameter of 3.7m and is illuminated by 32,256 LEDs.

What is it all about

Celebrations begin from the evening itself with crowds pouring in and live shows by famous artistes (like Lady Gaga, Justin Bieber etc.). At 6 pm, the

Ball is lighted and raised to the top of One Times Square. The frenzy mounts as the hourly countdown turns into the sixty-second countdown. At 11:59 pm the Ball is lowered and fireworks explode at midnight as the Ball completes its 70 feet descent. Music, dancing and drinking continues till the wee hours of the morning.

Travellers' Tips:

- Come early for the best viewing spots and come prepared for a long wait
- Dress up for cold weather
- Bags, backpacks, alcohols are not allowed
- Take the public transport



Koh Phangan, Thailand

For the world's craziest, zestiest and biggest beach party on New Year, head straight to Koh Phangan in Thailand. The excitement builds up with Christmas Party leading up to the climactic party on New Year's Eve. Events like beach football, volleyball and a bikini contest are all part of the pre-event line-up.

What is it all about

The island of Koh Phangan in Thailand celebrates the moon in almost all its phases, all year round. On New Year, there is a no holds barred party with hard-core party animals assembling at the lovely, crescent shaped Haad Rin Beach. Bodies painted they dance, drink and party like there is no tomorrow. Drugs are also prevalent though there are



strict drug laws existing. Party goers drink 'moonshine' from buckets. Music of every kind - trance, drum and bass or reggae is played and the air is electric with energy. People dance till sunrise and even later.



are expensive and noisy

- Do not carry too much money or any valuables, theft is common

- Drugs are illegal in Thailand; punishments are harsh

- Avoid

special shakes (date rape drugs are common)

- Stay safe; deaths due to drowning, drunken driving, spiked drinks are all real hazards

Travellers' Tips:

- Book hotels really early; New Year is peak time; hotels near Sunrise Beach





Rio de Janeiro

When it comes to partying, few places can beat Brazil; after all, it hosts the queen of carnivals. New Year's Eve is no exception and up to two million people head towards the main party point - Copacabana Beach for the celebrations.

What is it all about

Revellers gather at the beach to ring in the New Year with a stunningly beautiful display of fireworks. Everyone wears only white clothes, symbolic of good luck. They bring flowers or small gifts to throw in the waters for thanking the sea-deity Yemanjá. Another popular custom is to bring a champagne bottle (or cider) to pop at midnight. The air is festive with strains of samba and music from live bands. Exactly at midnight there is a burst of cheers, champagne and fireworks! Fireworks are placed on various barges in the ocean and they converge into the night sky forming one magnificent spectacle of colours, sound and dazzling beauty.

Vantage Points

- Copacabana Palace Hotel for the view. The lavish New Year menu (562 pounds) and New Year's Party (702 pounds) are considered the best in Rio
- Sofitel Hotel Rio
- Mama Ruissa hotel
- Book cruise ships
- Beachfront restaurants (with special New Year buffets)
- Favelas on the hill behind Copacabana Beach

Travellers' Tips

- Make bookings well in advance
- Wear white to the party but nothing you do not want spoilt by the shower of fizzes
- Stay within walking distance of the beach (transport very difficult to find)
- Pack for hot weather and wear comfortable shoes (broken glass injury is common)

- Do not carry any valuables; pickpockets are common

New Year Celebrations in Tokyo

New Year in Tokyo is an interesting mix of tradition and fun. There are innumerable parties and firework displays to ring in the New Year. But what make Tokyo unique are the traditions that are part of the celebrations. Renouncing the old and making a fresh start is the main spirit underlying all New Year rituals. If you are tired of the typical New Year revelry and seeking to add a little spirituality quotient to your celebrations, Tokyo is the right place to be in.




What is it all about

It is a time for family get-togethers and especially the traditional Hatsumode or the New Year visit to the temple. Temple bells peal in unison, 108 times, ushering in the New Year! Over a million people seek blessings at the famous Meiji Shrine, Sensoji, Fushimi Inari Taisha or any local temple. It is customary to throw coins as offerings in the shrine.

There is, however, no lack of partying during New Year. Various events and firework displays are organized all over the city. Some of the most famous parties include the ones in Disneyland, Universal Studios, Huis Ten Bosch and the famous Tokyo Tower (impressive firework displays here). A lucky eighty people can catch the first sunrise from the observatory of the tower. Mt Takao is another popular spot for watching the first sunrise.

Roppongi, Shibuya and Shinjuku are popular tourist destinations with





many clubs and bars.

Travellers' Tips

- Japan shuts down the week after New Year so many tourist spots and shops will be closed
- Have cash in hand as banks and ATM's will be closed
- Make bookings in advance; use the Japan Rail pass

Happy New Year!

If you want to welcome the New Year in style, you can head to any of the above destinations. Of course there are other interesting options too. You can watch fireworks around the London Eye, eat a grape for every chime in Mexico, dance in the streets of Vienna, enjoy the glitter of Paris and Germany or even head to Kiribati - the first place on the planet to greet the New Year! The world is yours to explore and new horizons are waiting to open up. After all, a New Year is on its way! Have a fabulous New Year!

United Arab Emirates



Tilt the hourglass of your tight schedule to make way for your merry boat of winter vacations and set sail for the mystical land of the United Arab Emirates (UAE). While a desperate chill is knocking at the door around the world, the warm sunrise across the turquoise Persian Gulf is more than welcome to sooth your senses. Sitting as the jewel on the coastlines of the Arabian Peninsula, UAE is an intoxicating blend of a desert retreat and a seaside escapade. Starting from its prized beaches to the mostly undiscovered eastern desert side near the Oman border - the federation of the seven emirates is where your quench for adventure is relieved as well as rejuvenated.

Climate and what to carry

A climate with pleasant sunshine and an occasional cloudburst to break the clasps of dryness awaits you in UAE from the late October till mid-March making it the ideal time to visit. Pack comfortable clothing. For extreme dry weathers, use full-sleeved or fully covered clothes. If a romantic walk in the moonlight is in your plan, then a warm jacket or a light pullover can be a welcome companion too. Moisturizers are a must carry too.

Language

Speaking of the hospitality of UAE's international resorts, you may be surprised by the affluent British accent of the boy accompanying you to your suite and fortunately enough, you will find this feature abundantly common among most people in this once British protected country. English may seem as the native language, yet it will be good if you know a few important Arabic phrases. It may prove to be quite useful near the capital of Abu Dhabi where the Arabic communities are more in number.

Fast facts:

- Currency: Dirham (AED)
- Non-Muslim travellers are allowed four units of alcohol only ranging from beer to wine and/or scotch.

- For Muslims alcohol is a strict no-no.
- Possession of narcotic substances is illegal in UAE.
- While carrying medicines, carrying the doctor's prescription is highly recommended.

Culture

In spite of these regulations, UAE still remains the most liberal amongst the culturally strict Arab countries. Having an expatriate community from its previous British ruling period, UAE's cultural inclination is also supportive towards the global trends. The technological surge in the capitals of Abu Dhabi and the Emirates of Dubai has



encouraged attracting people from multi-cultured backgrounds. But recently in the consequence of few incidents regarding obscenity in public places, the residents have launched drives for having a

better guideline on clothing. Any type of clothing that covers shoulders and knees are acceptable. Laws against disrespect for women are very stringent as are for rude and offensive gestures. Respect towards the country's culture that you are visiting may get you through many unnecessary hurdles at every point of time.

What to see

Abu Dhabi – The capital of UAE, Abu Dhabi is the economical backbone of the country. Slowly becoming a cultural hub, you cannot miss the huge construction boom taking place in the city. With large



projects like the Louvre Museum and Yas Island coming up in 2013, the city is set to take on centre stage in the international arena. It plays host to one of the most coveted F1 racing tracks around the world.

Ajman—A more centrally located destination among the seven emirates, Ajman has the lowest prices among them. Liquor being free from laws here, it is the ultimate place to relax and enjoy your drink. Choose the Ajman beach or the more historical Ajman Museum to spend a day.

Dubai – Starting from the Europeans to the Americans, Asians to Caribbean – Dubai has something for everyone in its exclusive palate of luxury. Formerly the part of a desert, now the city is one of the most popular tourist destinations around the world. With the Dubai Shopping Festival coming in January, Dubai is the leading name when it comes to winter shopping destination. Award winning projects like Burj Dubai and Burj Al-Arab add new chapters to the success story of rapid growth of Dubai. Places like the Jumeirah, Dubai Marina showcase the infrastructural wonder of the city.

Sharjah –Sharjah has its own share of fame through its shopping districts, museums and art galleries. The capital of the Emirates of Sharjah is the place to appreciate art through the hands of the





goldsmiths there. The big market of the Blue Souq bears evidence to these amazing ornaments.

Cuisine

Your succulent choices start from the relishing Biryani to the widely popular



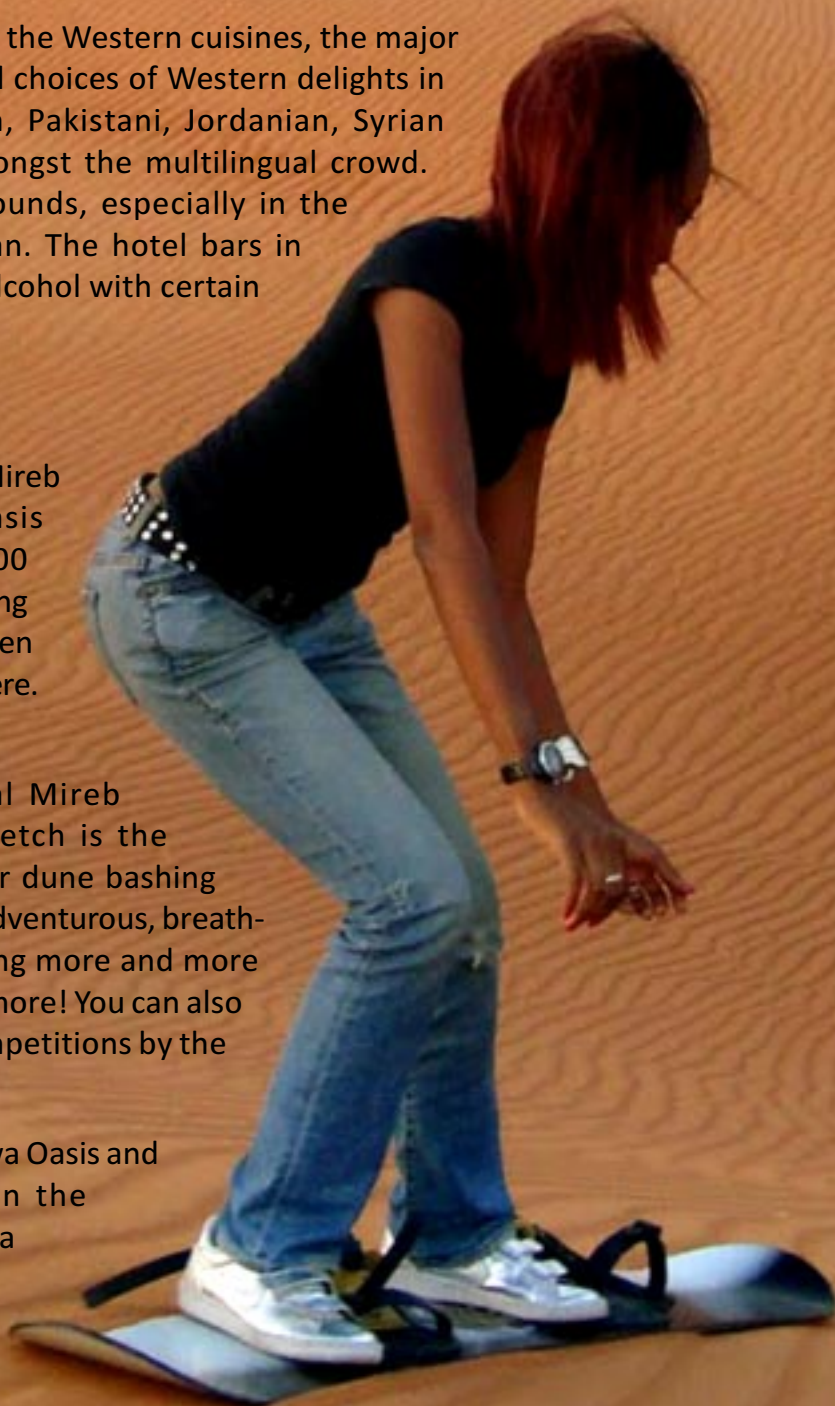
grilled chicken, which you will find in almost every restaurant in UAE. More traditional flavours include Khubz (a type of Arabian bread), Shawarma and Falafel sandwiches, which not only has a homely feel but also save a major pocket crunch. Emirati dishes are not so popular among the expatriate communities in the capital of Abu Dhabi



though. Mainly inspired from the Western cuisines, the major hotel restaurants offer varied choices of Western delights in its multiple cuisines. Indian, Pakistani, Jordanian, Syrian cuisines also score high amongst the multilingual crowd. Drinks are mostly out of bounds, especially in the months of the holy Ramadan. The hotel bars in Dubai and Abu Dhabi serve alcohol with certain regulations.

Breath-taking Activities

- **Sand Boarding**—The Tal Mireb dune near the Liwa Oasis Bedouin settlement is 100 meters high and sand surfing is a very common sport seen among the young tourists here.
- **Dune Bashing** – The Tal Mireb dune's 25 kilometre stretch is the favourite for 4x4 clubs for dune bashing competitions. Terrifying, adventurous, breath-taking – the sport is getting more and more takers every year. What's more! You can also train yourself in these competitions by the help of private 4x4 clubs.
- **Desert Safari** – A trip to Liwa Oasis and other desert hotspots in the Southern parts of UAE is a fun thing, especially when it includes leaving the roads and taking an enthralling ride over the



dunes; a camel ride in the twilight and at the end a pure Arabian meal followed by captivating belly dance.

- **Rock climbing** – The mountainous ranges in the South have challenging rock

on. Snorkelling and diving are few of the sea activities you may indulge in here.

- **Skiing** – Yes, you read that right! UAE has the world's third largest indoor ski slope with a height of 400 meters in its



climbing spots with steep overhanging ledges.

- **Snorkelling and Diving** – The Eastern sea coast facing the Indian Ocean has vast reefs and underwater life to set your eyes

Ski Dubai Resort. Ice seems to be the flavour of the season with Marina Mall launching its own ski slope in Abu Dhabi and another similar ski slope coming up at Ra's al Khaimah.

Getting there

By Air – UAE is one of the prime tourist destinations in the world. Hence, its international airports serve to the needs for travellers globally. The largest airport being in Dubai, flights from London, Paris, New York, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Africa, other Middle Eastern and Asian countries land here every day. Other international airports include the ones in Abu Dhabi and Sharjah. The flights in Sharjah are run generally by the low-cost airliner Air Arabia.

By Road – Highways connect UAE with Saudi Arabia in the South and with Oman in the East. It is better to avoid the traffic between Sharjah and Dubai. Be sure to carry your prepaid ‘Salik Tag’ with you if you are crossing the Salik Toll Gate. The toll tax is a meagre 4 AED.

By Water – The wide network of “dhows” (goods carriers) connect all the ports in UAE (especially Dubai and Abu Dhabi) with India and other Gulf countries. Buying a passage on one of these can be a convenient way to reach UAE. Private cruisers may be availed personally.

Travelling in UAE

Getting around in UAE is fairly easy for its large connections of intercity highways and well-maintained roads. The addresses may seem a bit confusing yet the modern road system is based on European and US standards and provide for efficiently channelling traffic. Getting a driver’s license is also easy for Western people while Asians have to do a



rigorous 40 class training exercise before getting the same. Cheaper rental cars and inexpensive gasoline here is a boon. Fast and rash driving is like a sport in UAE. So keep your eyes firmly on the road to avoid last-second lane changers or overtaking enthusiasts.

Public transport, other than in the main urban areas like in Dubai, is hardly available. The taxi service in the main city areas are cost efficient

and the drivers are friendly (rash driving, again, is normal there). Buses in the city of Abu Dhabi charge only Dh 1 per trip and quite comfortable ignoring the overcrowding by the male passengers. A vast monorail network is soon to be introduced in Dubai. The already existing metro rail provides frequent and low-cost service where among the three available classes one is specially designated for women and children.



The amazing experience of UAE does not lay only on its natural resources, but it is the hard work of the residents here which makes your stay worthwhile. If your calendar still seems to be uncharted for the New Year, then your tickets to UAE can be a surprise to not only you but for your whole family as the biggest shopping festival of the world Dubai Shopping Festival (DSF) is coming up on January 3, 2013. Portraying "Dubai at its best" once again in its 18th edition, DSF is here for an entire 32-day extravaganza for shopping fanatics as well as for people who want to spend quality time with their family. Fireworks, street dancers, fashion shows, prizes... in one phrase, the whole country is being painted red for your arrival. Be there for a whole new beginning to a blessed New Year.



Best Golf Courses *in* Australia

The beautiful climate of Australia, vast open spaces and lovely natural scenery all combine to make it a golfing haven. Australia not only has over 7000 beaches, it also has over 1800 golf courses and 1.3million golf players. It has been estimated that 460,000 Australians are golf club members. It's no wonder that the country's fantastic golf courses are counted among the bests in the world.

Golf, apart from being a sophisticated precision club and ball sport, has always been recognised as a great business networking tool. It is also a great way of spending time in fresh air and verdant surroundings. There are a multitude of golf resorts, public and private golf courses in Australia. Eight of Australia's best golf courses are to be found in the famed Melbourne Sandbelt. Let us take a look at some of the best golf courses in Australia.



Royal Melbourne (West)

Black Rock, Victoria

Par: 72; Holes: 18; Length: 6023m

This legendary course is Australia's best and is ranked among the finest in the world. Belonging to the prestigious Royal Melbourne Golf Club, the oldest golf club of Australia without interruption, this is a private course designed by Dr Alister MacKenzie and implemented by Alex Russell and Michael Morcon. It has hosted many renowned

Royal Melbourne

tournaments including The Presidents Cup and the Australian Open.

Highlights

The course is on undulating land and the superb routing by Mackenzie uses the land in the best possible way. The greens are cut at a perpendicular angle to the bunkers and have earned the title 'lethal'. Wide fairways, huge greens, big sand dunes, the par-three 5th hole, the legendary dogleg 6th hole, the two-shot 10th as well as other notable holes make this course a perfect jewel of golfing architecture.

On Royal Melbourne West, Designer Michael Clayton said, "It is one of only two man-made things in Australia of world-wide significance."

Interesting Facts:

The composite course at Royal Melbourne has 12 holes from the West and 6 holes from the East Courses and can be played only during tournaments.

Mackenzie was paid a thousand pounds for designing the course!

Facilities Available: Driving range, rental carts, trolleys, caddies, clubs, coaching, Clubhouse, dining room, snack bar, locker room.

Friendly tip: Advance booking recommended; must be accompanied by member.

Kingston Heath

Moorabbin, Victoria

Par: 72; Holes: 18; Length: 6352m

Kingston Heath Golf Club is one of the top notch courses in Australia. This private course is built on 50 hectares of comparatively flat terrain and has been designed by Dan Soutar. The club has hosted the Australian Masters as well as the Australian Open (8 times) and is renowned for its excellent conditioning throughout the year.

Highlights

The classic bunkering, short holes, the superb one-shot 15th, 3rd, 5th and the 10th holes, the par five 14th, all beautifully woven in the native grass surroundings makes this course a golfer's dream.

Champion Peter Thomson said, "Holes of this length are not built any more - a pity. This one is a gem. The threes here at Kingston Heath are very much the heart of the course, and this one is the first of three beauties. The original natural bumps and hollows have been preserved blessedly."

Facilities Available: Driving range, putting green, rental carts and clubs, pro shop,



Kingston Heath

teaching pro,
clubhouse,
dining room,
snack bar, bar,
locker rooms.

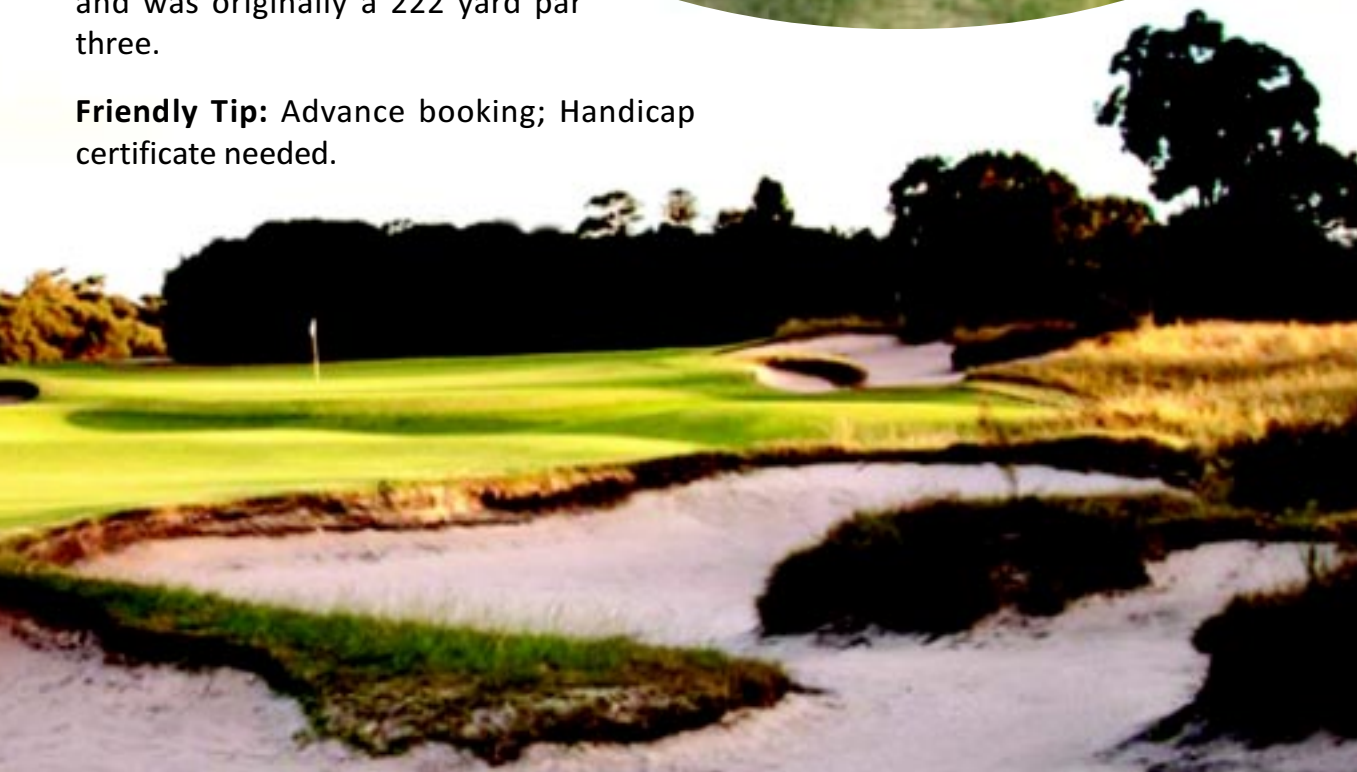
Interesting Facts:

Dan Soutar
was paid 25
guineas and
travelling
expenses for this
project!

The outstanding 15th hole
was designed by Mackenzie
and was originally a 222 yard par
three.

Friendly Tip: Advance booking; Handicap
certificate needed.

Kingston
Heath



Barnbougles Dunes

Bridport, Tasmania

Par: 71; Holes: 18; Length: 6148m

This links-style public golf course in Tasmania is the brainchild of Tom Doak and Michael Clayton. The wind-swept course is constructed along the seacoast and winds its way through huge dunes with views which are simply stunning.

Highlights

This walk-only course blends in the natural contours of the land, sloping, tumbling and going through ridges along with the flow

of the land. Playing conditions depend on the time of the day; afternoons are windier and more challenging than mornings. High dunes, wide fairways, two-loop routing, the windy course and some of the world's best 'short' holes make this justifiably one of the top golf courses of the world.

"Barnbougles is so jaw-droopingly spectacular that it will be



Barnbougles Dunes





Barnbougle Dunes

love at first sight for even the most travelled golfer,” Steve Keipert, Australian Golf Digest.

“One of the things I love about Barnbougle is the relaxed atmosphere of the place...There are none of the restrictions or stratifications that are so much a part of the Australian private club scene – it’s very friendly, and guests feel none of the intimidation that public golfers experience when visiting a

private club” - Michael Clayton

Facilities Available: Driving range, putting green, rental carts, caddies, rental clubs, pro shop, teaching pro, restaurant, bar, dining, clubhouse.

Interesting Facts

The dune-land on which the course was built originally bordered a 13,000-acre potato and cattle farm; 24-year old golfing enthusiast Greg Ramsey persuaded the owner Richard Sattler and obtained permission for building the course.

Barnbougle Dunes is surrounded by various water bodies- Bass Strait, Trent tidal estuary, the Forester River and freshwater tea-tree wetlands.

Friendly Tip: Book in advance.



Barnbougles Lost Farm

Bridport, Tasmania

Par: 78 (20 holes); Holes: 20; Length: 6503m

Designed by Bill Coore, this public course is situated adjacent to Barnbougles Dunes. The course has breath-taking ocean views and is built on sand dunes which encircle a central, flat paddock. It is located in the north-east coast of Tasmania.

Highlights

Coore, who believed in minimalistic designing, created a course with fantastic holes placed along the Forester River coast and towards inland. The routing is more diverse compared to Barnbougles Dunes, and the sweeping fairways roll along the coast as well as inland. Steep, dramatic sand dunes, four spectacular holes on the water and on top of the dunes and usage of natural contours make this

course a perfect blend of beauty and strategy.

Barnbougles Lost Farm

Barnbougles Lost Farm offers an array of diverse holes. Take the opportunity to hit a tee shot down the river and hook it back into the fairway. For an amateur, all the holes offer a different and less intimidating approach. The sublime views over the beach and ocean are the added advantages of this course.

Facilities Available: Driving range, caddies, rental carts, putting green, pro shop, health spa, lodge, clubhouse, sports bar.

Interesting Facts

The course got its name Lost Farm from the central flat land where farmers found their missing cattle sheltering.

It is said that Coore was 'breathless with excitement' when he first saw this land but also had misgivings on how a course would shape up here; of course the result is there for all to see.

Friendly Tip: Book in Advance.

Barnbougle Lost Farm

New South Wales Golf Club

La Perouse, New South Wales

Par: 72; Holes: 18; Length: 6245m

This top notch private, links style course was designed by Dr Alister Mackenzie and Eric Apperly, and it is located in the legendary Botany Bay. It is one of Australia's best courses and among the top 50 of the world. The course has fantastic routing with some holes on hilly areas with water views and some inland with thick vegetation.

Highlights

Gorgeous ocean views, undulating fairways, the world famous par three 6th, 7th and 13th to 16th holes, the routing, rugged land, fast greens and the superb scenic setting make it the iconic course it is today.

"This magnificent golf course always amazes. Every inch of this course is in immaculate condition, especially the greens. They are tricky to read, but very true and consistent.

New South Wales Golf Club

The feature hole of the course is hole 6. It runs parallel to the Pacific Ocean and provides breath-taking views. Don't be deceived by the beauty of the hole, otherwise you will end up scoring well over par." The Caddy Space.

Facilities Available: Driving range, putting green, rental carts & clubs, pro shop, teaching pro, bar, snacks, meals, dining room, conference room.

Interesting Facts:

History has it that Captain Cook and his crew found their first drinking water from a natural spring near the location of the 18th tee today.

The 6th hole is counted one among the '500 Toughest Golf Holes in the World'.

Friendly Tip: Book in advance; limited guest access during weekdays.

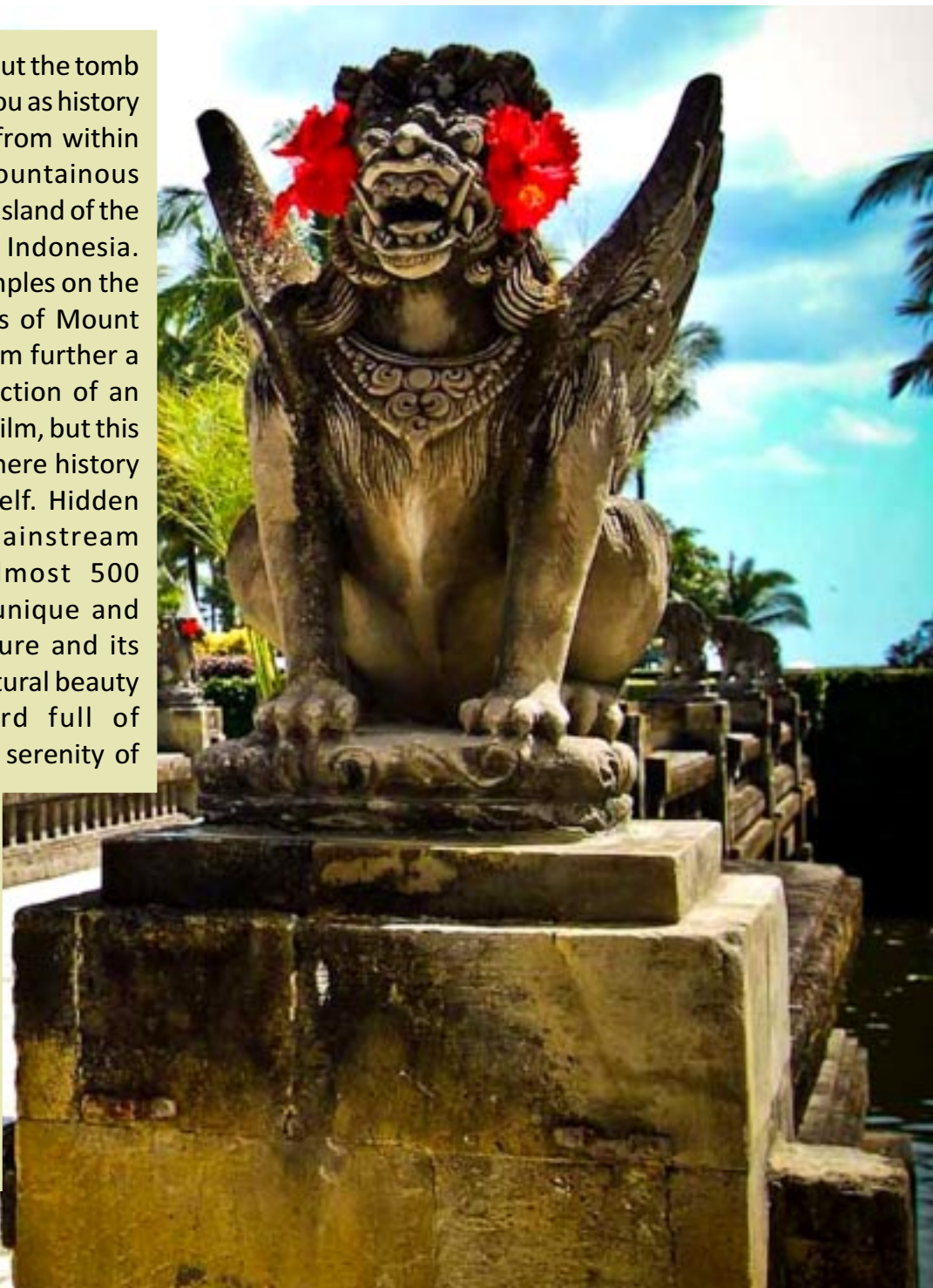


Bali

*More than
the Island
of Gods*

Dream
Destination

Time to bring out the tomb raider within you as history peeks to you from within the dense mountainous forests in the “Island of the Gods” – Bali, Indonesia. The mossy temples on the volcanic ridges of Mount Batur may seem further a dramatic depiction of an Indiana Jones film, but this is the place where history speaks for itself. Hidden from the mainstream world for almost 500 years, Bali’s unique and colourful culture and its unpolluted natural beauty is a cupboard full of surprises. The serenity of its white beaches inspires a quiet evening by the sea shore while the vast underwater life close to it is a diver’s paradise.



What to see

Kuta – Kuta's five-kilometre long arching sandy beach is one of the bests in Bali. Located close to the airport it is a spectacular beach and is quite convenient to reach. Taxis and motorbikes are readily available. The popular beach is frequented by the young ones and surfing enthusiasts. The absence of big rocks and corals

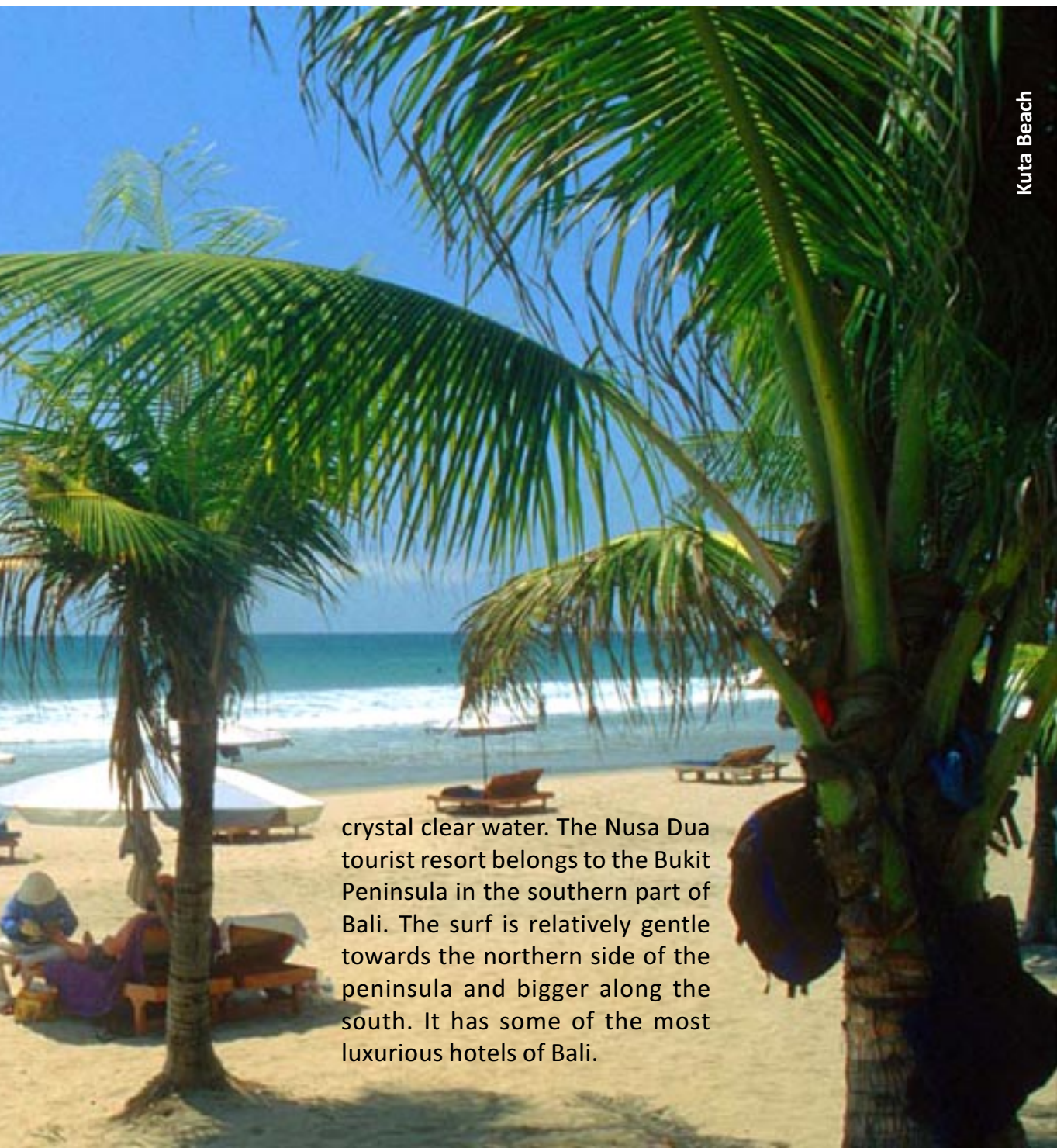
make it an ideal surfing spot especially for beginners. The beach faces west and therefore offers magical views of magnificent sunsets especially in December.

Kuta, Once a lonely village, is now a thriving tourist spot filled with restaurants, shops, discotheques and beachside cafes. There are performances by Balinese singers and dancers almost every night to entertain the tourists.

Legian Beach - The beach starts from Melasti to Werkudara Street and is one of the best tourist spots. It is surrounded by quaint shops, rejuvenating spas and is the perfect for swimming and relaxing. It is a great place to stay if you have a limited budget. The beach has a party ambience with the hippy bars, beach shacks and sprawling lounges with live music and restaurants serving a variety of food. It is less crowded than Kuta and is more laidback in spite of its strategic location. You may also opt for

canoeing, surfing, playing beach volleyball or you may simply lay back and soak up the sun.

Nusa Dua – Nusa Dua is quite popular with tourists for its pristine white beaches and



crystal clear water. The Nusa Dua tourist resort belongs to the Bukit Peninsula in the southern part of Bali. The surf is relatively gentle towards the northern side of the peninsula and bigger along the south. It has some of the most luxurious hotels of Bali.

Pura Besakih – Known as the “mother Temple of Bali”, this biggest and holiest of all Balinese



temples is located on the slopes of Mt. Agung. The courtyard of this ancient temple has three shrines called Trinity which are wrapped in cloth and are decorated with flowers offered by devotees. Around the three main temples of the Trinity are 18 separate sanctuaries of different regencies and caste groups. The temple stands out magnanimously against the backdrop of the mountain and looks even more colourful during festivals when it is decorated with banners.

Tanah Lot – This is a mythical sea temple built atop a massive



rock by a sixteenth century priest from Java. Surrounded by sea, its rituals include paying homage to the guardian spirits of the sea regularly. Poisonous snakes at its base are believed to be its protectors, guarding the temple from evil spirits and trespassers.

Terraced rice fields

– A trip to the lush green rice fields is a treat for eyes when visiting Bali. The picturesque landscape of the terraced rice paddies between Candidasa and Amlapura are worth a visit for its beauty.



Ubud – Ubud is located on a higher altitude and has a wonderful climate. It has a number



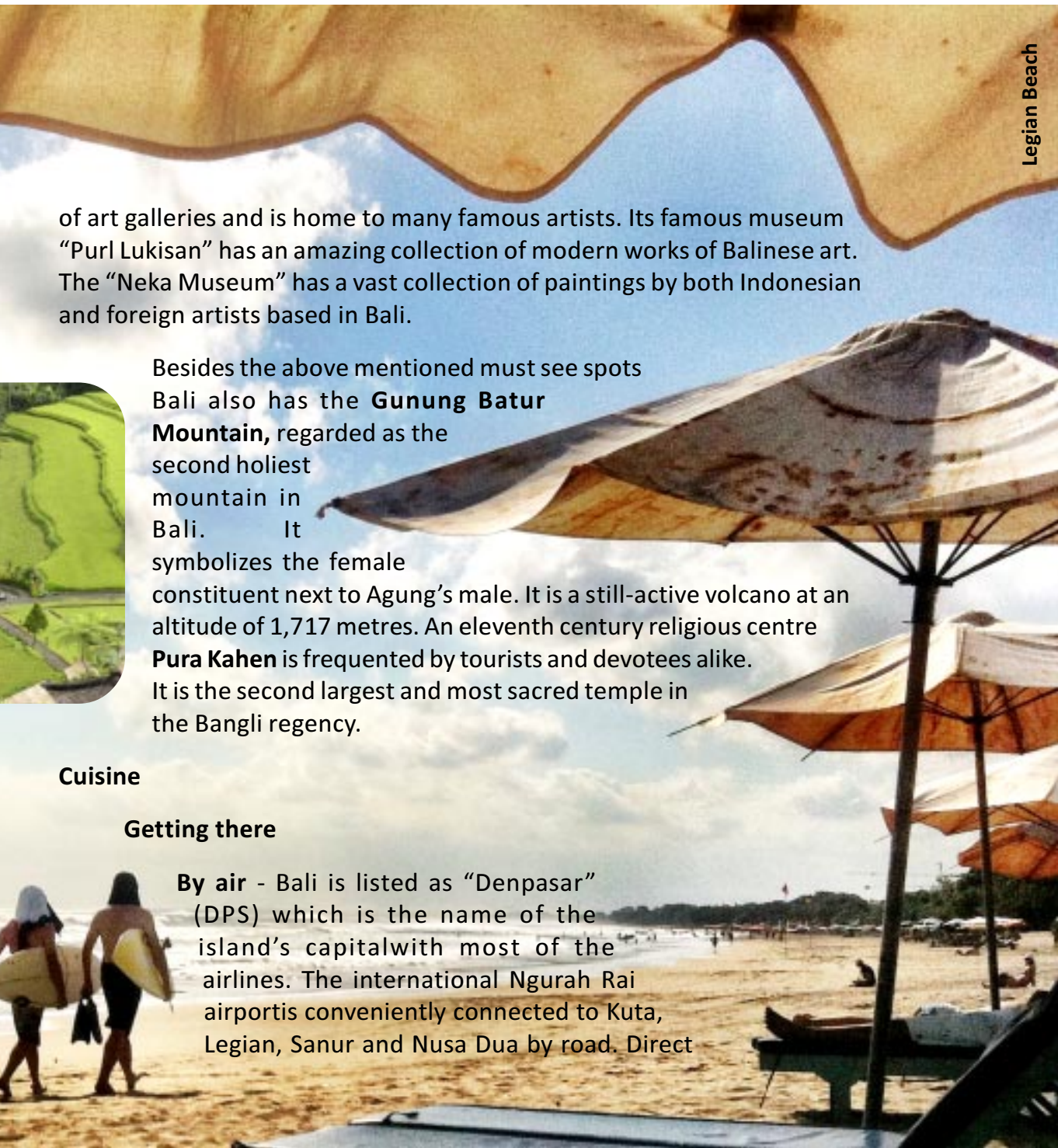
of art galleries and is home to many famous artists. Its famous museum “Puri Lukisan” has an amazing collection of modern works of Balinese art. The “Neka Museum” has a vast collection of paintings by both Indonesian and foreign artists based in Bali.

Besides the above mentioned must see spots Bali also has the **Gunung Batur Mountain**, regarded as the second holiest mountain in Bali. It symbolizes the female constituent next to Agung’s male. It is a still-active volcano at an altitude of 1,717 metres. An eleventh century religious centre **Pura Kahen** is frequented by tourists and devotees alike. It is the second largest and most sacred temple in the Bangli regency.

Cuisine

Getting there

By air - Bali is listed as “Denpasar” (DPS) which is the name of the island’s capital with most of the airlines. The international Ngurah Rai airport is conveniently connected to Kuta, Legian, Sanur and Nusa Dua by road. Direct



flights are available from Adelaide, Amsterdam, Auckland, Bangkok, Brunei, Brisbane, Cairns, Darwin, Frankfurt, Fukuoka, Guam, Honolulu, Kaohsiung, Kuala Lumpur, London, Los Angeles, Melbourne, Munich, Nagoya, Osaka, Paris, Perth, Rome, Seoul, Singapore, Sydney, Taipei, Tokyo, Vienna, and Zurich.

By ferry – Ferry services are regularly available from the nearby islands of Java and Lombok. A ferry shuttles frequently between the western Balinese port of Gilimanuk and Ketapang in eastern Java. Ferries between the eastern Balinese port

of Padangbai and Lembar on the west coast of Lombok depart throughout the day. A few ferries link Bali with other Indonesian islands too.

By bus – Car and bus services are available from Java and Lombok. Bus services are cheap and are regularly available.

Getting around

Bali is well connected to most of Indonesia and has direct domestic flights to and from Java, Lombok and other islands on a daily basis. Private car and taxis are readily



available at a slightly higher rate than buses. Motorbike taxis are there for hire too. Ferry service apart being affordable and convenient is also the fastest and the most popular mode of transportation in Bali for commuting.

From globe trotters to art lovers - Bali is a compact tourism package for all. Adventurers might enjoy the scuba diving sessions near the wreck of the USAT Liberty in Tulamben. The Balinese massages in its spas are also relaxing to say the least or you can just be wrapped up in the sands before hitting the water for white water rafting on a sunny day.

Not too much into water sports? Explore the actual wonders of Bali which are found in the lives and cultures of the people here. Having over 10,000 temples scattered over the island, intricate and ancient art works in each of them are hard to miss. Even harder it is not to marvel at the colourful rituals behind their walls once you understand what they mean. Be it the Ogoh Ogoh procession in the eve of the Bali New Year "Nyepi" or the wedding ceremonies that are now vastly popular across the world, Bali gives religion a new meaning and has become the newest symbol of faith.





Feature

*Luxury on
a Plate*

Caviar

Caviar reigns supreme in the list of luxury gourmet dining. Extremely expensive and found only on the plates of the super-wealthy, however, it is not a taste, which is universally loved.

Caviar lovers will revel
in its rich,

creamy taste and cheer Ludwin Bemelmans for saying “Caviar is to dining what a sable coat is to a girl in evening dress”. Others who cannot understand what all the fuss is about will probably agree with William Drake who opined, “Have caviar if you like, but it tastes like herring to me”. Love it or hate it, there can be no doubt these pearly globules are considered ‘high luxury’ and a connoisseur’s delight.

What is Caviar

Caviar is basically the
salted and
matured
roe



(mass of eggs) of the sturgeon fish. True caviar comes from only the sturgeon fish of which four are considered the best—beluga, osetra, sevruga, and sterlet.

Traditionally the best caviar comes from the

sturgeon in the Caspian Sea; however, overfishing has endangered these species. Caviar is now mostly made from farmed sturgeon. Other varieties of roe, which are often termed as caviar, are obtained from salmon, paddlefish, whitefish etc. They must however be prefixed with the fish name such as 'salmon caviar'.



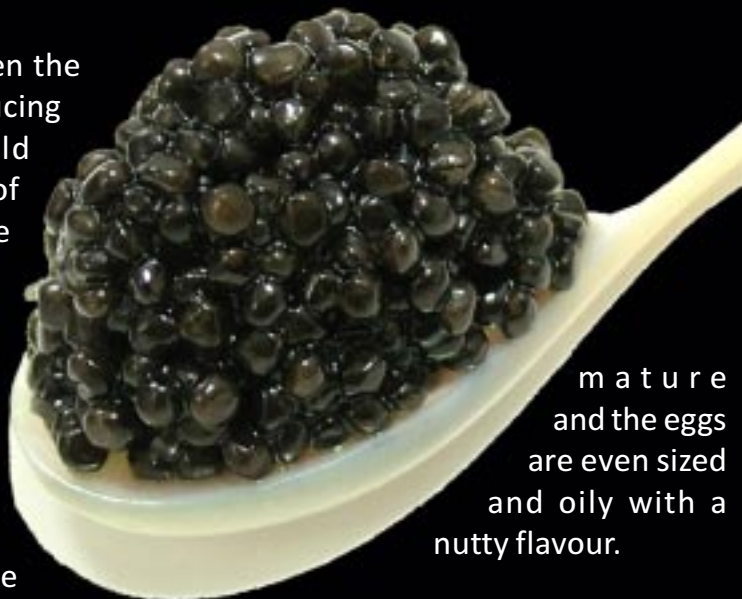
Production of Caviar

Traditionally Russia and Iran have been the largest producers of caviar, still producing 85 per cent of the world's wild caviar. However, with the restriction of Sturgeon fishing, other countries like Italy, United States of America and France are also entering the arena producing good quality caviar with farmed Sturgeon.

Premium Sturgeon Species

Beluga- This is the best and most expensive caviar, taking more than 20 years to mature making it the rarest also. Dark grey in colour, large and fragile, it has a lovely buttery taste and delicate texture.

Osetra - These golden brown eggs are smaller than beluga and very popular too. It takes fifteen years to

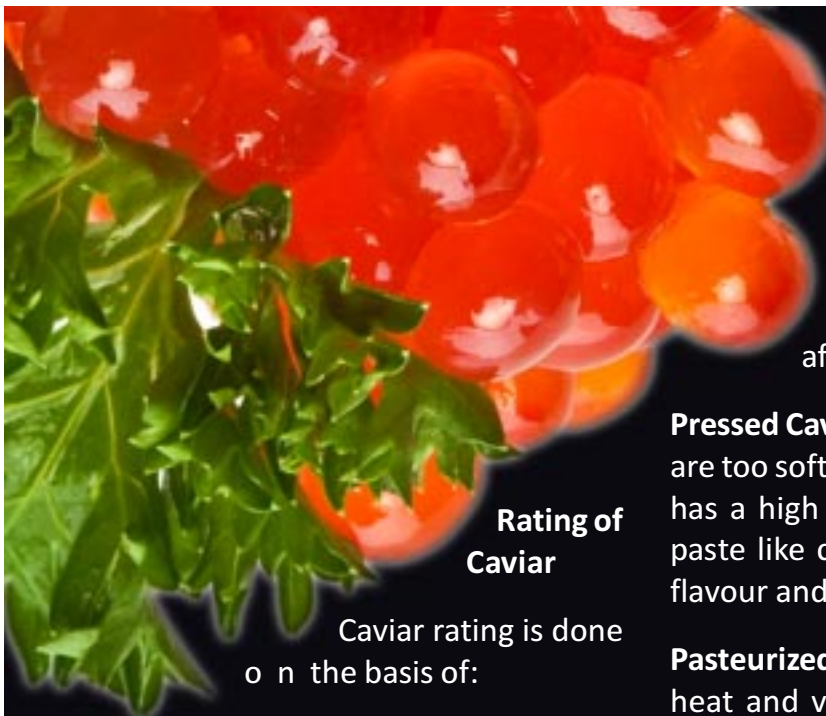


mature and the eggs are even sized and oily with a nutty flavour.

Sevruga- This light grey roe is small and strongly flavoured. The fish takes seven years to mature and is more abundant than the other caviar varieties.



Sterlet - Extremely rare, dark grey in colour and small in size, this caviar has a strong flavour and wonderful taste. This fish takes five to seven years to mature.



Rating of Caviar

Caviar rating is done on the basis of:

Size and colour of the roe – generally the light coloured, large sturgeon roe is considered the best caviar,

000 indicates light caviar,

00 indicates medium colour,

0 indicates dark.

Method of processing:

In decreasing order of quality the four types of processing are:

Malossol caviar: This low salt content caviar (less than 5 per cent) is the favourite pick of connoisseurs. Malossol means lightly salted and is often used synonymously with high quality caviar. Caviar nowadays is made with

even lesser salt content of around 3.5 per cent.

Salted Caviar: Often called 'semi-preserved' this caviar has around 7 per cent salt content. Though this improves the shelf life, it may affect the flavour adversely.

Pressed Caviar: This is made from eggs, which are too soft, over-ripe, damaged or broken. It has a high salt content and is pressed to a paste like consistency. It has a strong, fishy flavour and may not be to the taste of all.

Pasteurized Caviar: The caviar is treated with heat and vacuum packed in glass jars. It is firmer than other types and if not processed properly the taste may be affected. It keeps for up to one year, unopened.



Did You Know

Beluga is always sold in blue colour tins, osetra in yellow and sevruga in red.

The word caviar can be traced to the Persian word 'khagavar' meaning 'eggs'.

Caviar should be removed from fridge fifteen minutes before serving and the box opened just before serving.

Caviar should never be frozen.

Metal or silver spoons should never be used to serve caviar. Pearl-shell, bone or plain plastic spoons can be used.



Caviar is served with blini or toast points and lemon wedges.

Caviar and ice-cold vodka is a classic combination.

Exclusive caviar spoons have been crafted by Faberge and Louis Vitton using gold, lapis lazuli, amber and pearl-shell.

Caviar has come a long way from being plentifully available as wild caviar to becoming a rarity. Today sustainable farming is responsible for putting caviar on our tables. In spite of its rarity and price, this exclusively subtle tasting delicacy will always be highly sought and beloved by all true lovers of fine dining.



January Festivals





Rose Parade

Where: Pasadena, USA

When: January 1, 2013

The Rose Parade is a huge event held in Pasadena every year. The highlight of the parade consists of beautiful floats bedecked with flowers and organic materials. The other features are marching bands, equestrian units and a college football game on New Year's Day. Marching bands from all over the world participate in the parade. First held in 1890, today it is a major attraction with over a million viewers watching it on television every New Year. It is organised by the Tournament of Roses Association.

Trivia: The parade was started by the Valley Hunt Club and was a far simpler affair than the parade today!

Mummer's Parade

Where: Philadelphia, USA

When: January 1, 2013

Believed to be the oldest folk festival of the USA, this popular parade consists of music, fun and fabulously creative and colourful costumes. The parade winds its way along the central street to the City Hall and PA convention centre. The local clubs which participate are divided into 4 groups- Comics, Fancies, String Bands and Fancy Brigades. Intense preparation takes place for the final performances on New Year's Day when they

compete for the cash prize. Fantastic performances by String bands (limited to unamplified strings, reeds and percussion) add to the gaiety. The whole event is marked by floats, breath-taking costumes, dance,



music and revelry.

Trivia: The Mummer's tradition dates back to the 400 B.C Roman festival Saturnalia where people marched in masks the whole day!

Harbin Ice Lantern Festival

Where: China

When: January 5, 2013

At minus 17° C there can hardly be any festival which is fun. If you really thought so, you will be proved totally wrong at the Harbin Ice Festival. Huge, sparkling structures of ice with dazzling laser lights enchant you with their sheer beauty and creativity. Sculptures range

from buildings; world wonders and animals to icy smooth Buddha (the icy cold Siberian winds keep them safe from melting) and so on. That is not all! Alpine skiing, winter



swimming events and an ice lantern exhibition are all part of the event.

Trivia: Some of the lovely sculptures are enormous and it can take two to three hours to see all the exhibits!



Ouray Ice Festival

Where: Colorado, USA

When: January 10 – January 13, 2013

Pioneered by ice climber Jeff Lowe, this event was first held in 1996. It is the largest ice-climbing event in North America attracting thousands of visitors, ice-climbers, gear exhibitors and sponsors from all over the world. It is held in Ouray Ice Park, a man-made ice climbing venue. There is a fascinating range of climbing events suitable for the professional climber as well as a curious visitor. You can cross a gorge, watch professional athletic feats on ice, climb frozen waterfalls or swing ice tools. There are also free clinics, seminars and gear exhibitions. The Park is free and open to the





public; the festival raises funds for covering the high maintenance costs of the park.

Trivia: The Park has over 200 climbs and spray from a water pipeline created for the purpose continues to keep building the ice supply on the rocky gorges!

Timket Festival

Where: Gondar, Ethiopia

When: January 19, 2013

This religious festival is the Ethiopian Orthodox celebration of Christ's baptism in the Jordan River (Epiphany). The sacred Tabot (model of Ark of the Covenant) is carried in a procession on the head of the priest to a river or lake nearby which is blessed and water sprinkled on the

participants. Many people take a dip in the water symbolically renewing their vows at the time of baptism. There is a lot of chanting, music and dancing during the colourful procession. The Tabot is then carried back reverentially to the Church. The quintessential symbol of the festival is the beautifully embroidered, colourful umbrellas which protect the sacred Tabot and the priests.

Trivia: The sistrum played during the processions is a percussion instrument with tinkling metal disks!



Sundance Film Festival

Where: Utah, USA

When: January 17 – 27, 2013

One of the leading showcases for USA and international independent films, this festival is held in January every year. The festival features a wide range of films and events covering documentaries, short films, musical events and students' programs. Established

names, as well as new, creative cinema, path-breaking stories provide entertainment to over 40,000 visitors. The culminating awards night party celebrates the featured movies and is attended by actors, filmmakers and other visitors. The event is supported by the Sundance Institute, a non-profit organisation.

Trivia: The event was originally started in 1978 in Salt Lake City before it moved to Park City!



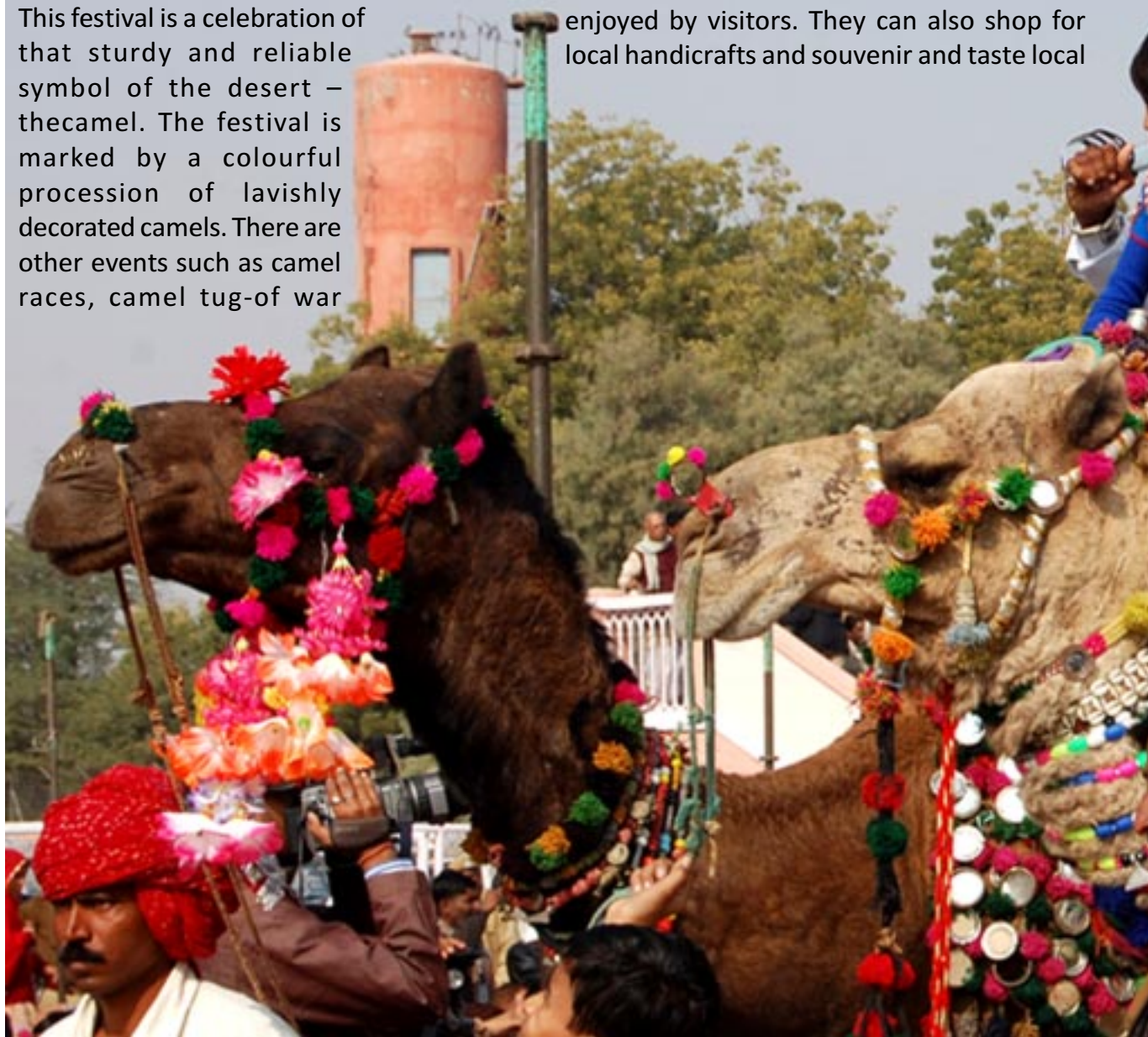
Bikaner Camel Festival

Where: Rajasthan, India

When: January 26 and 27, 2013

This festival is a celebration of that sturdy and reliable symbol of the desert – the camel. The festival is marked by a colourful procession of lavishly decorated camels. There are other events such as camel races, camel tug-of war

contests, dancing camels and even a beauty pageant for the camels. After dusk, there are traditional folk dances, the famous Bikaner fire dances and fireworks. Camel safaris and visits to the camel breeding farm can also be enjoyed by visitors. They can also shop for local handicrafts and souvenir and taste local



delicacies including camel milk tea and camel milk sweets.

Trivia: Do not miss a tour of the Junagadh fort the backdrop of the festival!




Kiruna Snow Festival

Where: Kiruna, Sweden

When: January 27–29, 2013

This winter festival revolves around a snow sculpting competition and is filled with fun and spectacular displays of ice creations. Stunning pieces of art work are created from 3 by 3 metre cube of snow. The exciting events include ice skating competitions, reindeer and dog sled races. There are also

A photograph showing a woman in a bright orange winter jacket and dark pants pushing a wooden sled through a snowy landscape. Two children are seated on the sled; one is wearing a red jacket and a pink hat, and the other is wearing a dark jacket and a grey hat. The background is a snowy forest with bare trees and a small building visible in the distance. A large, light-colored dog is partially visible in the foreground on the right.

parties in huge igloos, held in the dark. One can also see handicrafts and fashion exhibitions and enjoy concerts while munching on reindeer kebabs or bear steaks! All this under the magical northern lights lending a surreal feel to the whole event!

Trivia: The Kiruna Snow Festival started in 1985 to celebrate the launch of the rocket Viking from the space centre Esrange (40km from Kiruna).

Kumbh Mela (Fair)

Where: Allahabad, India

When: January 27 – February 25, 2013

The Kumbh Mela, attracting between 30-70 million visitors, is said to be the largest human gathering anywhere in the world. It is held primarily in Allahabad, at the confluence of three holy rivers. Bathing in the river at this point is believed to absolve one of all sins and

confer moksha. It is truly a magnificent site to witness the sea of humanity during the ritual dip with Vedic hymns and the fragrance of flowers and incense sticks filling the air. The Kumbh Mela is held only once in 12 years and the Ardh Kumbh is held once every 6 years.

Trivia: The 'Maha Kumbh Mela' takes place once in every 144 years!





World Luxury Tourism