

REVENGE TRAVEL

# CARPE DIEM

*The desire to make up for lost holidays due to lockdowns is spurring the ‘revenge travel’ concept and driving up demand, with dream adventure travel topping our wish lists.*

WORDS BY SUE WALLACE

Revenge travel’ and Queen’s iconic hit, *I Want to Break Free* seem to follow the same vibrant beat for many: they both tap into our bubbling desire to discover, explore and experience.

The new buzzwords of travel capture the overwhelming wanderlust accumulated following lockdowns and border closure (no violence intended).

When it’s deemed safe to leave, hodophiles (keen travellers) will be off – darting here, there and everywhere, hopefully with more consideration given to how we travel.

An ingrained need to make up for lost time is behind the ‘revenge travel’ concept – a kneejerk reaction to cancelled trips and staying put.

Cruise lines and resorts are reporting surges in future bookings as a direct result of the ‘revenge travel’ movement ... and adventure travel tops the list. G Adventures’ managing director, Brian Young says there’s no wonder that pent-up demand and the desire to get away is at an all-time high among travellers.

“Travellers are now taking on [those] epic, once-in-a-lifetime achievement trips that they may have put off in previous years,” he says.

“This carpe diem attitude has seen an increase in traffic and bookings for big-ticket hiking trips such as climbing Kilimanjaro, hiking to Everest Base Camp and trekking the Inca Trail.”

Young says many who have taken up new fitness regimes during the pandemic have a desire for more active-based adventures, as well as wanting the opportunity to get as far away from Zoom calls and devices as possible, as many feel the effects of virtual burnout from the pandemic.



Trafalgar Tours has seen a big rise in bookings in once-in-a-lifetime adventure trips, with bucket-list adventure bookings up by 317 per cent this year and website visitors up by 199 per cent. In reaction, Trafalgar has created a new gold list of epic adventures including Tanzania’s Great Migration, an eco adventure in Costa Rica, and visiting Antarctica.

Managing Partner of NIHI Hotels and NIHI Sumba, Indonesia, James McBride says he’s seen a pent-up demand from past guests who dream of returning and from others around the world who have heard about the resorts. “Once you’ve experienced NIHI Sumba’s magic, it is with you for a long time to come ... memories that may have gotten a few people through the pandemic. The forward bookings and interest bode well for 2022 and beyond,” he says. Coined the ‘edge of wildness’, NIHI Sumba offers guests the chance to surf ‘the world’s most coveted wave’, swim with horses and relax in rustic luxury in the jungle.

## LUXE ADVENTURE

Meanwhile, visitors are immersed in adventure as they zipline over the forest canopy to luxe adventure-based Shinta Mani Wild in Cambodia’s South Cardamom National Park. It’s

## VISIT FIJI

Fiji is gearing for a strong return of travellers once borders open. Brent Hill, CEO Tourism Fiji says it is not just the ‘fly n flop’ that it is traditionally known for. “There’s some incredible trekking programs that explore inland villages with homestays and sunrise climbs, but there’s also many ways to explore Fiji by water with small ship cruising and yacht charters, whether for a day, a weekend or 12-day itineraries. Fiji, more than ever, is a place that the world is going to be looking for post pandemic, in the sense that it’s relatively uncrowded, with a small population and beautiful open beaches. But a lot of people don’t realise just how many islands make up Fiji. There are 333 islands and with that, there’s such contrasting landscapes that lends itself to a range of experiences.”

the dream hotel of philanthropist and conservationist, Bill Bensley, who has seen a lot of interest in booking enquiries lately. “With the world starting to open up, I know I for one will be more mindful of how I travel. Hopping on a plane will be a much rarer event, but when I do, I plan to go much further afield and spend a great deal of time wherever I am, really immersing myself and asking friends and family to join us on our adventures, too,” he says.

Antarctic operator White Desert’s bucket-list adventure trips are almost fully booked until 2023. Established by record-breaking polar explorer duo Patrick and Robyn Woodhead in 2005, it offers trips to the interior of Antarctica including South Pole visits, summiting virgin peaks and a 24-day trip including an Emperor penguin colony visit, helicopter flight and a submersible excursion.

Now open is its newest camp, Wolf’s Fang, with a fusion of luxury and a light environmental touch, with six state-of-the-art heated sleeping tents for two.

Shakti Himalaya founder, Jamshyd Sethna says they have had many enquiries for Himalayan walking trips and village house stays in India’s Sikkim, Kumaon and Ladakh regions

for 2022 and beyond. “Travellers see these destinations as somewhere ‘off grid’ and somewhere they will go to reward themselves for getting through the past two years without adventure and travel,” he says.

James Kavanagh, Flight Centre managing director agrees. His team has noticed a surge of interest in travel over the past few weeks.

“People are seeing travel resume in places like the US, UK and Europe and they can see it’s only a matter of time before Australia lifts travel restrictions and negotiates international travel bubbles,” he says.

“We are seeing a rapid surge in search behaviour of our customers with the most interest in international travel coming from our locked-down cities of Melbourne and Sydney – clearly indicating their thirst and desire to get away.”

Kavanagh says overseas destinations such as Hawaii, Singapore and New Zealand are attracting a lot of interest, while tropical North Queensland, the Gold Coast and Rottne Island in Western Australia are shaping up as hot interstate holiday destinations.

## CHANGE IN BOOKING HABITS

A shift in booking habits with travellers booking one incredible trip per year, or planning two years in advance, is evident, according to Aurora Expeditions’ CEO, Monique Ponfoort. “Guests are looking for experience-based travel, active adventures and opportunities to push their own personal boundaries plus perspective-altering experiences,” she says. “Forward bookings and enquiries for Antarctica for 2022-23 are very positive and the ‘Arctic Complete’ journey for 2022 has sold out.

“Due to pent-up demand for remote wilderness travel, in the 2020 European summer, we have included the Russian Arctic with Wrangel Island, Kamchatka and Chukotka and the Kuril Islands.”

Sustainable travel enquiries with a minimal footprint and environmental impact, as well as experience and activity-based travel, is growing.

Tahiti is experiencing robust interest with a high demand for boutique cruise offerings, including Aranui, Windstar and Paul Gauguin. The travel site Vacaay revealed Australians favoured travelling to Moorea, listed as the hottest micro destination for 2021.

Inspired honeymoons are also part of the ‘revenge travel’ trend.

World Expeditions CEO, Sue Badyari says adventure travellers are the keenest to get back to travel. “They are most enthusiastic about being in nature and getting into the rhythm of doing something active on a holiday – there is huge pent-up demand to get out there,” she says.

“We are receiving lots of enquiries – and bookings – for walking holidays in Nepal, Canada, New Zealand and Europe. A record number of people have booked our longest trek – 150 days across the Himalayas and our Larapinta Trek is very heavily booked already for the 2022 season.”

## “TRAVELLERS ARE NOW TAKING ON EPIC, ONCE-IN-A-LIFETIME TRIPS.”

BRIAN YOUNG

In Australia, adventure travel is also reflecting strong interest. Tourism Tropical North Queensland Chief Executive Officer, Mark Olsen said the Great Barrier Reef and the world’s oldest rainforest are an adventure playground for travellers after something different. New adventures include Swim with the Salties at Wildlife Habitat in Port Douglas and Walk the Plank at Skypark Cairns by AJ Hackett.

Some great Australian adventures include Uluru, the spiritual heart of Australia, with helicopter rides, walks and camel treks and Segway tours. Bruce Munro’s spectacular Field of Light installation is amazing, and you can dine under the stars at Sounds of Silence or indulge in a four-course table d’hôte menu at the award-winning Tali Wiru.

The Arkaba Walk is a Wild Bush Luxury experience in the stunning Flinders Rangers. A four-day walk with passionate field guides showcases the landscape and wildlife. In Tasmania, the Maria Island Walk is a wonderful multi-day walking experience in natural landscapes as you learn about the fascinating history, flora and fauna of the island.

Luxury Lodges of Australia Executive Officer, Penny Rafferty says rather than revenge travel, she hopes that travellers will value the privilege

of travel more highly in the future. “We do know that there’s significant pent-up demand for great outdoor adventures bookended by luxurious lodging and good things to eat and drink, which are exactly the type of rewarding, replenishing experiences offered by the 19 member lodges.”

Experiences in demand include swimming with whale sharks and humpback whales at Sal Salis at Ningaloo Reef, plus up-close-and-personal encounters with incredible corals at Lizard Island. Barefoot luxury at World Heritage-listed Lord Howe Island’s Capella Lodge is also very popular with forward bookings.

Grant Wilckens, CEO of G’day Group, which is the owner of El Questro, says demand for the 2022 season has been strong, with another 30 per cent increase on bookings currently in place for next year.

“Emma Gorge is a standout, with 90 per cent full occupancy for the 2022 season. The Kimberley is at the top of many Australians’ domestic travel checklists and El Questro is the perfect base for travellers to explore by hike, fly, drive or boat,” he says.

Meanwhile, New Zealand also has some wonderful adventure experiences combined with luxury lodge stays and fabulous walks. Helicopter into Minaret Station Alpine Lodge on the rugged South Island, walk the 72km Queen Charlotte Track and then chill at the Bay of Many Coves, a luxury five-star resort set in the heart of Queen Charlotte Sound. The Lindis, a stunning lodge set near the famous Lindis Pass, offers horseriding, stargazing and heliskiing.

Revenge travel may be a real thing, but like Bill Bensley says, hopefully it will also be about mindful, meaningful travel and giving back to communities when we finally pack our bags. 



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