

Priority packages

One of the things I love most about being on holiday is having someone do everything for me – making the bed, cleaning the room, washing the sheets, cooking, mixing a Margarita or getting me from A to B. That's my idea of heaven. I'm not a prima donna (I promise); I'm just a tired mum who works full-time and occasionally needs a real-world break. If someone can make life easier for me, count me in.

Today's cover story sums up who I've become: a lady on the lookout for the best, easiest, safest, most-organised, value-packed ways to unbox the best sights and experiences here and around the world. Maybe not for every trip, of course, but for the longer, deeper experiences that require the planning and precision I lack – well, the expertise and inclination.

I wrote a few weeks ago about the pandemic precipitating my transformation as a traveller (less of my usual winging it and more bringing it – ie, vaccine passports, masks, rapid-result tests... you get the drift). Planning and organisation will become the key to getting the most out of our trips post-Covid. Luckily, package holidays have completely upped the ante, shaking off a reputation of being for the less-adventurous, and offering a raft of intriguing one-off itineraries for longer, more immersive specialist trips.

It's no wonder organised cruises and all-inclusive tours have never been in higher demand. From food-focused trips through Italy, cruises along Portugal's River of Gold, walking tours in Tasmania, or a moving meditation through the Red Centre, these reinvented experiences organised by experts cater to your every desire.

Package tours also offer a level of safety and flexibility we're seeking post-pandemic. All-inclusive doesn't just mean cocktails and room service – with cruises it can now include testing facilities, on-board doctors or medical

specialists, and a trusted expert to organise visas, insurance, passage in and out of countries with varying restrictions and requirements, as well as getting you in and out safely at late notice if required.

I know how hard many travel agents and tour operators worked to repatriate Australians as borders tightened last year and it's that peace of mind many of us will be seeking on the long road ahead. To borrow the words of the original *Ghostbusters* crew, who you gonna call if you happen to be in some far-flung place and there's no phone number on the bottom of that online international aggregator service you booked your flights on? Personal attention – whether it's the expert itinerary or host that takes care of you via a trusted company through to the bespoke care you may need for international travel – is the currency of the day.

So if you want a way to see the sights, do it at great value, in style and safely, as well as for longer, read on to find out about the best package tours on offer now. It sounds like my kind of trip!

Kerrie McCallum
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

