

THE INSIDER

SAM NEILL
ACTOR



FAVOURITE DESTINATION

My farm on the South Island of New Zealand. I simply don't see it enough. I know that sounds lame, but Central Otago is a place other people go for holidays, so it's odd that I travel to work and go home to holiday.

FAVOURITE HOTEL

Charlotte Street Hotel, run by the Firmedale group (pictured). Located just north of Soho in London, it's luxe without the froufrou frills, and is surrounded by good restaurants within easy walking distance.

FAVOURITE SIGHTS

When travelling in Europe I am drawn like a magnet to cathedrals. And here's a tip — hardly anyone goes to service any more so at Even-song you can pretty much get a full, magnificent choir to yourself.

BEST TIP

I never leave home without my headphones. All my music is on my phone plus lots of Richard Fidler Conversations, which are brilliant podcasts from the ABC.

Sam Neill's latest film, *Sweet Country*, is in cinemas nationally.

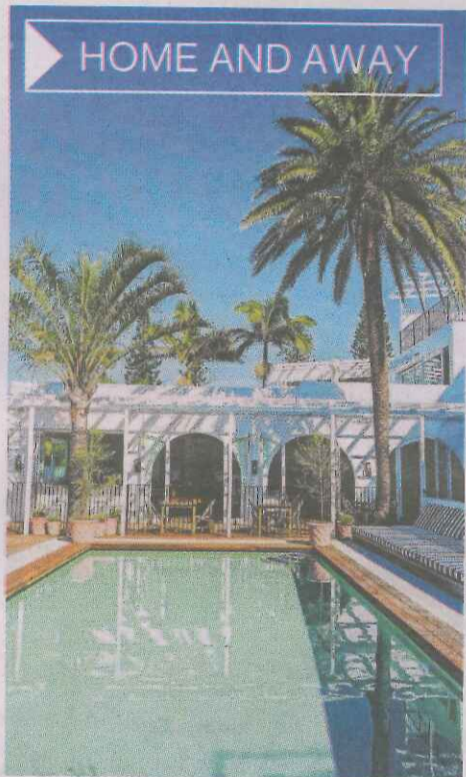
TASTE

Food and drink festivals present the perfect excuse to explore unfamiliar corners of Australia or get to know your home town better. Over the next few months as the weather cools, foodies can choose from a smorgasbord of events dotted across the country. On Queensland's Sunshine Coast, the boutique Spicers Tamarind Retreat at Maleny is hosting an Asian food festival tomorrow, while next weekend Apollo Bay in Victoria kicks off a celebration of seafood with a feast devised by tapas guru Frank Camorra (pictured) of MoVida fame. More than 180 wineries, distilleries, breweries and food producers converge on Adelaide's Convention Centre on March 2-4 for the Cellar Door Fest. Then head to Western Australia for Taste Great Southern, March 8-25, featuring food and wine events from Albany to the Frankland River region and Katanning. The charming town of Rutherglen, Victoria, has about 20 wineries participating in its Tastes festival on March 10-11, while the Melbourne Food and Wine Festival on March 16-25 is a decidedly larger affair; visitors can take part in the River Graze beside the Yarra or venture to the likes of Echuca, Bendigo, Port Fairy and Coldstream for the Regional World's Longest Lunch on March 16. Central-west NSW's Tamworth and Orange put their best food forward from April 6-15. Tamworth starts the fun with a Flavours on Fitzroy street party on opening night and there's a nine-course degustation menu to sample on a 4km stroll through Orange's wineries on April 14. Now, what's for dessert?



PENNY HUNTER

HOME AND AWAY



The cool and chic Halcyon House, at Cabarita Beach on the NSW north coast, has opened a serene wellness spa featuring T+I's favourite skin and body care brand Sodashi. The Halcyon Spa sanctuary has been conceived by specialist consultant Naomi Gregory, whose projects include Kamalaya in Koh Samui, Thailand, and designed by architect Virginia Kerridge with interiors by Brisbane's Anna Spiro, whose distinctive decorating style is found throughout the 21-room seaside property. Spiro describes the look and palette as being drawn from the ocean, "peppered with shades of blue, turquoise, pale pink, coral, beige and seafoam". There's a relaxation lounge with covered balcony, a dome-shaped steam bath and stylishly decorated treatment

rooms, including configurations for couples. Spiro has also used her bespoke textiles, which feature prominently as upholstery and soft furnishings in guestrooms, along with decorative encaustic tiles. Australia's Sodashi produces a wide range of 100 per cent chemical-free products; book its Samadara Ultimate Age-Defying facial

(105 minutes; \$285), for the ultimate in renewal or go the whole holiday hog with a Halcyon Day of Youth (five hours, \$495), including head-to-toe therapies and lunch at Paper Daisy, the acclaimed in-house restaurant.

■ halcyonhouse.com.au
■ sodashi.com.au

SUSAN KUROSAWA

ON THE ROAD

ELEVEN GIVE ME CLEAN HAIR DRY SHAMPOO, 50ML, \$9.95

Australian hair and body care brand ELEVEN has a series of 50ml travel-sized products, including shampoo, conditioner, hand cream and all-over body wash, all at \$5.95 each. But the dry shampoo option is the real boost for holiday hair emergencies; spray roots to remove any oily residue, brush and style without water. For added texture and lift, there's also an easy-to-apply Dry Powder Volume Paste in an 85g jar; \$24.95.

■ elevenaustralia.com



EDWARD MELLER GINNIE SANDALS, \$275

When things just don't cut it, consider lightweight holiday styles for beach or resort wear from Australian footwear brand Edward Meller such as Ginnie (pictured) an open-heeled braided raffia wedge in camel with vibrantly coloured butterfly embroidery detailing and non-slip sole. Available at branded boutiques, David Jones and selected stores, or online; be quick for summer discounts of up to 50 per cent, including Ginnie's stable-mate Suri, a comfy two-strap sandal with beaded trim and a sling back strap, on sale at \$178.



■ edwardmeller.com.au
SUSAN KUROSAWA

WHAT IN THE WORLD

The Farm at Cape Kidnappers luxury lodge at Hawkes Bay on the NZ North Island has a Tour de Chef package on May 25-27, featuring culinary forays by bicycle with *MasterChef NZ* judge Josh Emmett and local food and cheese guru Juliet Harbutt; highlight of the weekend is a five-course dinner by Emmett, with matched wines by award-winning Craggy Range; \$NZ2300 (\$2117) a person twin-share including two nights' accommodation, selected meals and tastings, and related events ■ The inaugural Northern Territory

Travelling Film Festival launches its program on March 4 during the Deckchair Cinema's Flix in the Wet program; the pop-up showings of 10 short films in one presentation will take place at outdoor venues from May 21-June 9 between Alice Springs and the Top End ■ From May 1, Singapore Airlines will operate a fifth daily flight from Sydney to Singapore with a new late-night departure; the carrier is also rejigging its Canberra route to link Wellington, NZ, with Melbourne and the federal capital with Sydney.

SNAP DECISIONS

Only in Kyoto

SUSAN KUROSAWA

In the narrow, funnelling streets of Gion, tourists walk in packs, regularly separated into parallel waves by white-gloved policemen whose task is mostly futile. This is the traditional heart of Kyoto, Japan's imperial seat from 794 to 1868, and a reliquary of priceless treasures.

Visitors want to observe a geisha or apprentice maiko clapping in wooden geta sandals to a teahouse appointment.

I am keen to see one too but, alas, the kimono-clad women to my right, left, and dead ahead, are tourists who've rented costumes and are strolling in flip-flops or kitten heels, obi sashes poorly tied, shrieking and suddenly stopping to snap open a selfie stick and click away.

Aside from the selfie stick embargo, this sign, which I love by the way, also asks



visitors not to scoff burgers while walking; to desist from smoking, sitting and lounging in a louche manner; and to resist poking a geisha or maiko. It's a commendable notice but no one pays the slightest bit of attention.

I find the practice of renting costumes rather unsettling. It's an odd appropriation of culture and seems disrespectful. Do such tourists dress up as, say, Native American Indians when visiting Arizona? Does going to the Tyrol mean you

should don a feathered felt hat and take up yodelling?

When I lived in Japan many moons ago, rather than cause a small international incident, I agreed to wear a kimono to a formal dinner. A neighbour helped me dress and showed me how best to kneel and, critically, manoeuvre myself onto a toilet. It was all so uncomfortable and perilous for my kidneys that I viewed my Japanese female friends with renewed respect. I wonder how those faux trussed-up maidens in Gion cope when they are caught short. Perhaps the banning of such a function could be an addition to the notice. Would adore to see the drawing.

Follow on Instagram: @susankurosawa