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WORLD

ISSUE 2, 2016

MALTA:
What to Know
Before You Go

**AUSTRALIA'S
SUNSHINE COAST**
Lives up to Its Name

3

Perfect Days on the
RIVIERA
maya

PLUS

- Your Guide to
- Exchanging With Points
 - All-Inclusive Resorts
 - Upgrading Your Exchange



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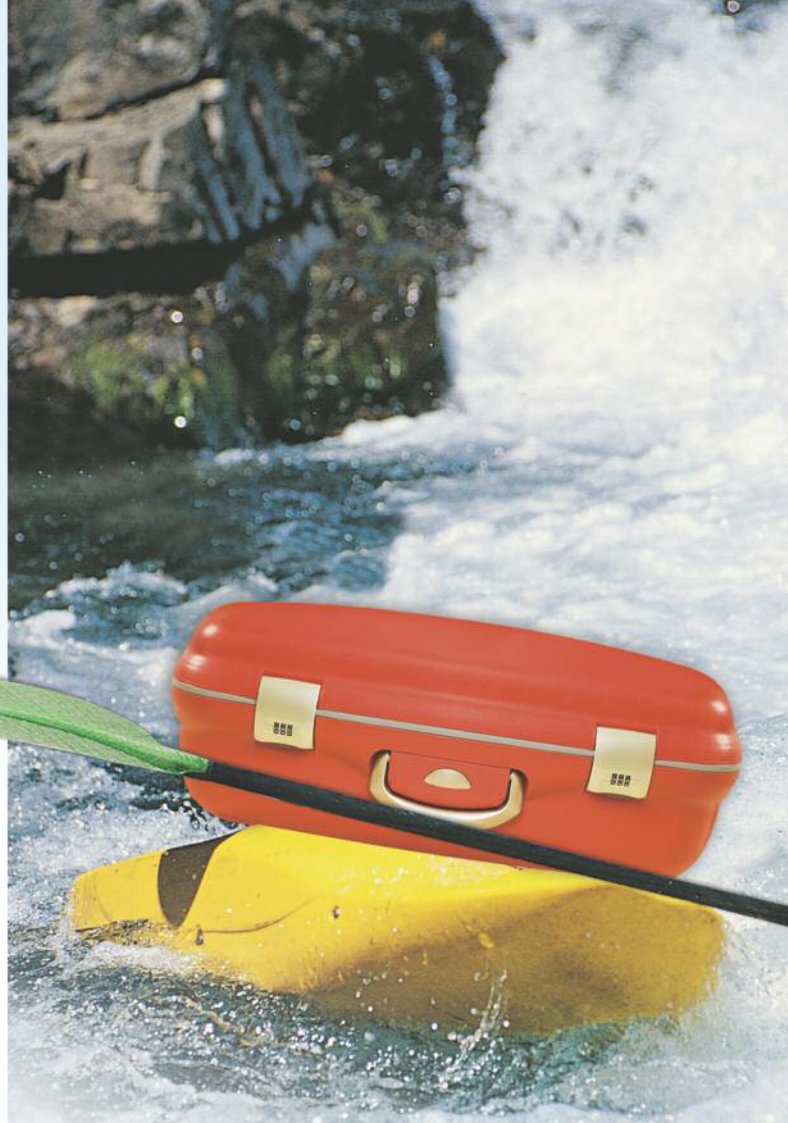
COVER: Taking a dip in a limestone sinkhole (*cenote*) in Mexico's Riviera Maya.
(Image Source)



Interval International members call 021 300 7743.
SunSwop members please call 021 300 7740/41.

FIND US ON





Request and Ye Shall Receive!

(Well, 97% of the time.)

That's right — 97 per cent of Interval exchange requests result in a confirmation.* So what are you waiting for? The advantages to placing a request abound:

- Requests get matched before instant confirmations
- The earlier you request, the more time you have to find a match
- When you place a request, we search for you

Go to IntervalWorld.com to request an exchange today.

IntervalWorld.com



*Source: Interval International's 2015 Buyers' Guide. In 2014, 884,011 exchanges were properly applied for and subsequently confirmed by Interval International. The confirmation rate on all exchange requests was 97 per cent. This figure is a summary of the exchange requests entered with the exchange programme, and does not indicate a member's probability of being confirmed to any specific choice or range of choices, since availability at individual locations may vary.



Happiness in Travelling

IN BRIEF

As the trend of farm-to-table dining grows, it's no wonder that the popularity of farmers markets is increasing, too. At home or on holiday, shop for fresh-as-can-be food, one-of-a-kind handicrafts and much more. Here are three of our favourite South African markets in popular destinations, all within proximity of resorts in Interval's network.

ROOT44 MARKET, STELLENBOSCH (CAPE TOWN AREA)

Saturdays and Sundays, 10:00 to 16:00

An outing to Root44 can easily turn into a daylong excursion. Shop rain or shine, thanks to marquees that house seemingly endless stalls displaying everything from gourmet foods and fresh produce to clothing and accessories. But a trip here is more than just a day of shopping; it's an experience. Sip a glass of wine or craft beer and dig into favourites such as roosterkoek and biltong while you take in the stunning panoramas of the adjacent vineyard. Have kids in tow? The on-site play park and live entertainment are more than enough to keep them happy.



BAGDAD FARMERS MARKET, WHITE RIVER (MPUMULANGA AREA)

Second Saturday of each month, 8:00 to 12:00

While away a leisurely Saturday morning strolling the sea of tent-covered stalls that make up the Bagdad Farmers Market. Health and wellness are big here; there are even organised trail runs on market days. Stocked and ready to purchase are items including locally crafted game-skin purses, all-natural soaps and wood-fired pottery. Follow the official Facebook page for tasty recipe postings, most of which can be prepared with ingredients sold by market vendors.

SHONGWENI FARMERS & CRAFT MARKET, OUTER WEST DURBAN (DURBAN AREA)

Saturdays, 6:30 to 11:30

This country market is great for early risers. Before you peruse, fuel up with one of many breakfast options. (Think fluffy quiches and perfectly briny lox with cream cheese on a freshly made bagel.) You'll need the extra boost of energy from a good meal; the sprawling market is home to more than 150 stalls. More than half sell fresh foods and produce, but you'll also find artisanal handicrafts such as leather goods, ceramics and even speciality dog food.



ROOT44



On Point With Interval

A Guide to Exchanging for Points-Based Members

GET THE POINT

- Contact your club or resort to determine your points value when exchanging through Interval
- The number of points required to exchange will vary depending on your desired location and unit size, as well as seasonal demand
- To determine seasonal demand of specific destinations, refer to the Travel Demand Index located in your *Travel Planner* at the beginning of each geographical region. It's also available when you search the *Resort Directory* at IntervalWorld.com.

**EXCHANGE YOUR POINTS FOR STAYS
AT HUNDREDS OF RESORTS
IN COUNTRIES AROUND THE WORLD.**

POINT IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION

- Visit IntervalWorld.com and search for your next holiday. If what you're looking for is available, Interval will verify that you have enough points to make the exchange, and then you will receive a confirmation. (Note: some members will be able to exchange at IntervalWorld.com, while others will have to contact their club or resort.)
- Can't find what you want? Just place a request and let Interval do the searching for you. You'll keep your points until you're confirmed.
- To improve your chances of securing a holiday, request as many resorts and dates as you will accept. You must request a minimum of:
 - Three different resorts and one time period or
 - One resort and three time periods or
 - Two resorts and two time periods
- Enhance your trading power and place your request as early as possible

ALL ABOUT ALL-INCLUSIVES

If getting away and leaving your worries behind sounds appealing, then consider an all-inclusive resort experience, where the only thing to worry about is which fun thing to do next.

WHAT'S AN ALL-INCLUSIVE RESORT?

Simply put, it's a property that includes added amenities, services and/or food and drinks with your stay. All-inclusive packages vary by property; most include all meals, snacks and drinks (usually alcoholic beverages, too), as well as a range of on-site activities.

Many all-inclusive resorts are destinations in themselves, with features such as beachfront access, an array of pools, numerous restaurants, spas, water sports and dedicated spaces for kids. You don't even have to leave the property to have a full holiday experience.

LEAVE YOUR WALLET BEHIND

With nearly everything paid for upfront, you can focus on enjoying the moment rather than racking up charges. Think of it like you would a cruise — with drinks included!

CONVENIENCE CHARGE

A per-day, per-person fee for the all-inclusive package is paid directly to the resort. Many resorts require the purchase of the package for your entire stay; at others, you may pay the all-inclusive supplement for select days, or it may be optional. Note that the all-inclusive fee is in addition to the exchange or Getaway fee that you pay Interval.



HOW TO FIND ALL-INCLUSIVE RESORTS

Look for resorts with the  symbol in the online *Resort Directory* and in the *Travel Planner*. You can also peruse the Index to All-Inclusive Resorts on page 19 of the *Travel Planner*.

GO TO INTERVALWORLD.COM TO BOOK YOUR ALL-INCLUSIVE HOLIDAY TODAY!

A STEP (OR TWO) UP

From time to time, you may be able to upgrade to a larger unit when you exchange your week on IntervalWorld.com (a fee applies). If the opportunity exists, you could have the choice of stepping up to a one-, two-, three- or four-bedroom unit, and enjoy private sleeping quarters along with a separate living room and dining area. Whether you have a large family or want to bring along a few friends on your next holiday, increasing your unit size means more space for everyone.

Look for available unit-size upgrades on your next exchange!

REQUEST AND RECEIVE

Did you know that a whopping 97 per cent of all Interval exchange requests are fulfilled?*

When you place a request in our exchange system, we do the searching for you. And when we find a match that meets your criteria, we'll confirm you on the spot! But don't delay — the sooner you place a request, the longer we have to find a suitable match for you.

*Source: Interval International's 2015 Buyers' Guide. In 2014, 884,011 exchanges were properly applied for and subsequently confirmed by Interval International. The confirmation rate on all exchange requests was 97 per cent. This figure is a summary of the exchange requests entered with the exchange programme, and does not indicate a member's probability of being confirmed to any specific choice or range of choices, since availability at individual locations may vary.

UPGRADED MEMBERSHIPS



UP TO 10% OFF HOTELS!

Interval Gold and Interval Platinum members: now you can receive discounts on the best hotel rates powered by the Orbitz Partner Network. Interval Gold members get 5 per cent off and Interval Platinum members get 10 per cent off every hotel stay booked on **IntervalWorld.com**. Whether you need one night, five nights or more, just click the Travel tab, go to Hotels, and search, book and save! Upgrade your membership today to get these extra savings any time you book a hotel stay.

Discounts on the best hotel rates powered by the Orbitz Partner Network — only on IntervalWorld.com!



Upgrading Really Pays! Book just five nights at a R5,000-a-night hotel in Sydney and save up to R2,500. That pays for the price to upgrade to Platinum — and then some!

HOLIDAY YOUR WAY WITH SHORTSTAY EXCHANGE

With ShortStay Exchange, you don't have to take full-week holidays.

Flexibility That Conforms to You: Whether you want to enjoy a romantic interlude over the weekend or a six-night family gathering (or both!), ShortStay Exchange offers unparalleled flexibility. You can make as many escapes of one to six nights as your available points allow. If you own a week, you can trade it for two shorter holidays, each from one to six nights.

Each ShortStay Exchange requires payment of an exchange fee.

Visit IntervalWorld.com today and take advantage of these amazing benefits!

Matthew Williams-Ellis/Robert Harding

**Not upgraded? Go to IntervalWorld.com or call 021 300 7743.
SunSwop members call 021 300 7740/41.**



Take The Plunge With A Getaway!

The only thing that's better than going on holiday is going on holiday more often. With affordable weeklong **Getaways**, you can do just that. Getaways are the smart way to enjoy spacious resort-style accommodation in a variety of destinations worldwide. You get so much fun for so little, you'll want to dive right in. Come on in — the water's perfect!



IntervalWorld.com

Happiness in Travelling

getaways

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SunSwop members: 021 300 7740/1
IntervalWorld.com

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Guarantee**
on GETAWAYS

Interval Platinum members get R500 off and Interval Gold members get R250 off every Getaway!

Go online or call to upgrade today!

Experience world-class culture with a city Getaway!

Choose from studio, one- or two-bedroom units with fully equipped kitchens — now through 2017.

CITY GETAWAYS



Chicago, USA

FROM R13,610 PER WEEK

Nightly Average From R1,943

Interval Platinum From **R13,110** Per Week

Interval Gold From **R13,360** Per Week

Chicago-style hot dogs, Chicago-style deep-dish pizza. Both are requisite meals in the Windy City. Be sure, though, to reserve (at least) one night for a Chicago-style steakhouse. Gene & Georgetti is the classic; RPM Steak is new to the scene. And for a nightcap with a view, take in the city's skyline from Roof.



London, England

FROM R10,680 PER WEEK

Nightly Average From R1,526

Interval Platinum From **R10,180** Per Week

Interval Gold From **R10,430** Per Week

Follow in the footsteps of royalty at Buckingham Palace and view the Crown Jewels at the Tower of London. Go shopping along historic Regent Street, and search for bargains in offbeat Camden Market. And for a fun night out, the pubs in Soho never disappoint.

CITY GETAWAYS

Washington, DC, USA

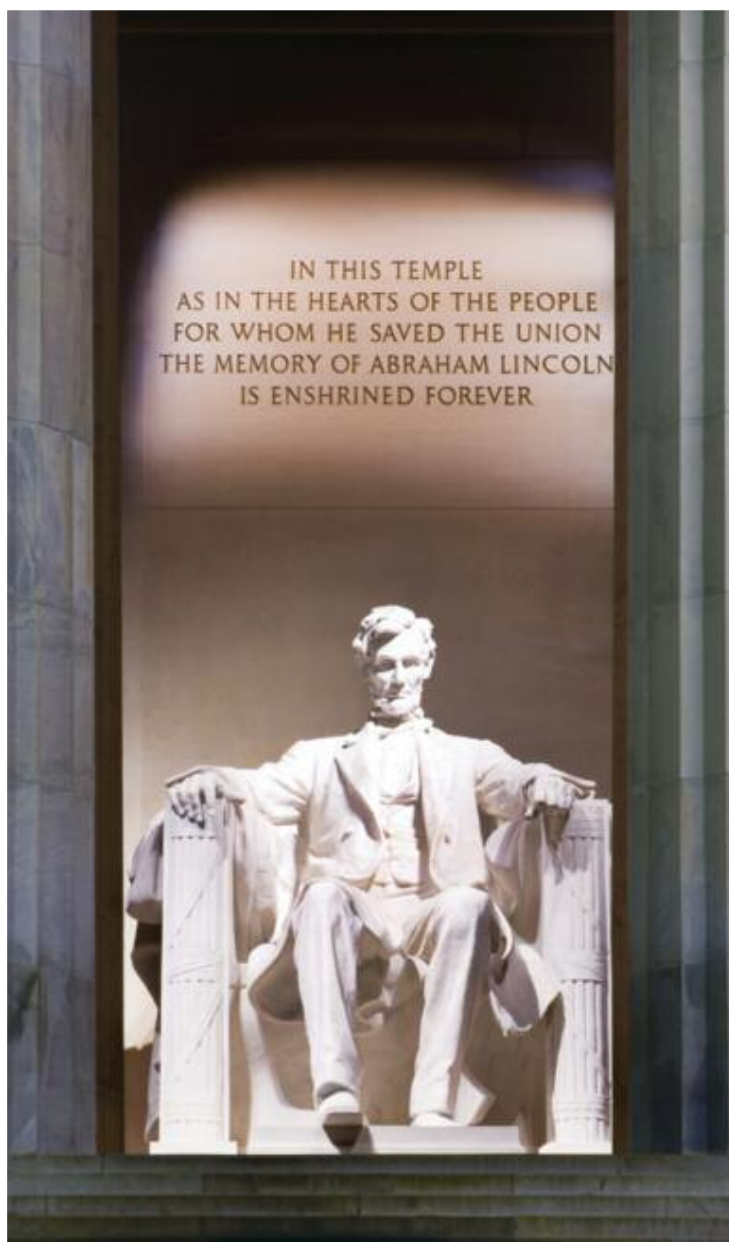
FROM R14,640 PER WEEK

Nightly Average From R2,092

Interval Platinum From **R14,140** Per Week

Interval Gold From **R14,390** Per Week

A week in America's capital seems like plenty, but with nearly 20 Smithsonian museums alone, you're going to have to prioritise your schedule. Start with the National Mall, which is home to the city's most famous monuments, along with many of the aforementioned museums, and branch out from there.



Paris, France

FROM R7,610 PER WEEK

Nightly Average From R1,088

Interval Platinum From **R7,110** Per Week

Interval Gold From **R7,360** Per Week

Escape to the City of Light for a culture-rich holiday. Go to the top of the iconic Eiffel Tower, peruse the haute shops along the Champs-Élysées, view famed masterpieces in the magnificent Louvre and savour classic cuisine in timeless bistros and brasseries.



getaways

Interval members: 021 300 7743
SunSwop members: 021 300 7740/1
IntervalWorld.com

This is just a sample of available destinations. For more options, visit IntervalWorld.com or call 021 300 7743 (021 300 7740/1 for SunSwop members). And remember, you can buy Getaway Guest Certificates. (They're free for Interval Platinum members.)

**BEST PRICE
Guarantee**
ON GETAWAYS

Siem Reap, Cambodia

FROM R4,820 PER WEEK

Nightly Average From R689

Interval Platinum From **R4,320** Per Week

Interval Gold From **R4,570** Per Week

Visits to iconic Angkor Wat and other amazing temples are a must, but add a few other cultural experiences to your list. Sign up for a Khmer cookery class, watch a traditional Apsara dance and have a drink along the appropriately named Pub Street. And to do it all, hire a *tuk-tuk* (moto-pulled rickshaw), which itself is a cultural experience in addition to mere transportation.



Bali, Indonesia

FROM R6,140 PER WEEK

Nightly Average From R878

Interval Platinum From **R5,640** Per Week

Interval Gold From **R5,890** Per Week

Don your scuba gear and head below the waves to observe a wide range of marine life. With seemingly endless dive sites and some 2,500 species inhabiting these waters, there's plenty to explore.

Koh Samui, Thailand

FROM R6,870 PER WEEK

Nightly Average From R982

Interval Platinum From **R6,370** Per Week

Interval Gold From **R6,620** Per Week

Reclining on a lounge chair at the beach is pretty idyllic. But you haven't *truly* relaxed on a beach until you've done it on a beanbag on Koh Samui. Add a passion-fruit mojito, and you just might have discovered nirvana.



Cornwall, England

FROM R6,290 PER WEEK

Nightly Average From R899

Interval Platinum From **R5,790** Per Week

Interval Gold From **R6,040** Per Week

Whether you seek sandy shores or sheltered coves, outstanding surf conditions or spectacular coastal hiking, Cornwall sets the scene for a picture-perfect beach holiday. Indulge in a Cornish cream tea (scones with cream then jam), and try a pasty (small beef-and-vegetable pie) in its land of origin.



Cape Town

FROM R8,190 PER WEEK

Nightly Average From R1,170

Interval Platinum From **R7,690** Per Week

Interval Gold From **R7,940** Per Week

Combine the energy of a city break with the chill vibe of a beach holiday to enjoy the best of both worlds. The historic V&A Waterfront is a must-do with more than 450 shops, 80 eateries, two cinema complexes, an aquarium, three museums — and a seaside beach club.

Crete, Greece

FROM R4,090 PER WEEK

Nightly Average From R585

Interval Platinum From **R3,590** Per Week

Interval Gold From **R3,840** Per Week

History and mythology are intertwined at Knossos, ancient palace of legendary King Minos, and centre of Minoan civilisation. Sir Arthur Evans famously excavated the ruins that point to the existence of a sophisticated Bronze Age culture that controlled the Aegean from about 1600 to 1400 BC.



Mallorca, Balearic Islands, Spain

FROM R4,240 PER WEEK

Nightly Average From R606

Interval Platinum From **R3,740** Per Week

Interval Gold From **R3,990** Per Week

Build sandcastles with the family at Mallorca's Blue Flag-awarded beaches such as the Platja de Sant Elm or Camp de Mar — or get wet and wild on the slides at the Western Water Park.



Looking for a last-minute break?

Try [Lake Tahoe](#) or one of the other great destinations below. Through Interval International's Flexchange service, you can request a vacation exchange from 59 days to 24 hours before check-in. The list of available destinations changes often, so sign in to [IntervalWorld.com](#) to get the most current information, or call the exchange department on 021 300 7743. SunSwop members call 021 300 7740/41.



Lake Tahoe, California and Nevada, USA

North America's largest alpine lake provides a playground for all kinds of water sports from kayaking to wakeboarding, as well as the perfect setting for a tranquil sunset cruise aboard a historic paddle steamer. The surrounding peaks offer myriad adventures of their own, including bike paths for riders of all levels, and a vast network of trails for hiking or horse riding.

But make no mistake: Lake Tahoe is no rustic backwater. Pampering spas, dining choices from casual to high-end and shopping options galore round out the picturesque destination. And the fun doesn't end when the sun sets: legendary casinos, pubs and nightclubs keep the action going into the wee hours.

ADDITIONAL ANTICIPATED DESTINATIONS

USA and Canada

Florida, Orlando
 Florida, Daytona Beach Area
 South Carolina, Hilton Head
 Virginia, Williamsburg
 New Jersey, Atlantic City
 Colorado, Vail, Avon and Beaver Creek
 Nevada, Las Vegas
 California, Palm Springs and Palm Desert
 British Columbia, Whistler

Caribbean, Mexico and South America

Dominican Republic, Puerto Plata
 Aruba
 Mexico, Cancún
 Mexico, Puerto Vallarta
 Argentina, Patagonia and Cuyo

Europe

Spain, Costa del Sol
 Spain, Costa Brava and Costa Dorada
 Austria, Alps

Middle East

Egypt, Red Sea

Australia

Australia, Queensland, Cairns
 Australia, Queensland, Gold Coast

Graceland, Dollywood and Beyond

THELMA AND MIKE DUNNE
PIGEON FORGE, TENNESSEE, US

Thelma and Mike Dunne recently returned from an Interval exchange and a musical exploration of the south-eastern US state of Tennessee. The Dunnes began in Memphis, where they enjoyed live music, dining and dancing on iconic Beale Street. And, as Thelma says, "No trip to Memphis would be complete without a visit to Elvis' home". So they spent a day touring Graceland, the King's castle, where they saw his collections of costumes and automobiles.

After a stop in neighbouring Mississippi to visit Elvis' birthplace, Thelma and Mike made their way to Nashville, aka Music City. They attended a show at the historic Grand Ole Opry and even got to shake hands with country-music stars Garth Brooks and Trisha Yearwood.

Next was Pigeon Forge, in the peaceful Smoky Mountains, where they settled into their home from home for a weeklong exchange. They visited Dolly Parton's country music-themed amusement park Dollywood, and made guided treks through the wilderness. "All in all — a wonderful and memorable holiday", says Thelma.



Good Food and Great Company

DENNIS AND LINDA EMSON
COSTA BLANCA, SPAIN

Seeking a soothing holiday, Dennis and Linda Emson exchanged for a "glorious two weeks" in Alicante, on Spain's Costa Blanca. The trip was made all the better by having two friends, not seen for more than 10 years, join them.

There's no shortage of attractions in the region, from quaint Old Town Alicante to the awe-inspiring 10th-century Santa Bárbara Castle to the UNESCO World Heritage-designated Palm Grove of Elche.

The friends thoroughly enjoyed the excellent local fare and wine and, at such affordable prices, they took full advantage of Alicante's plethora of diverse restaurants, serving everything from Spanish tapas to Mediterranean delights.

Linda says the best part of the holiday was reconnecting with old friends: "a great two weeks just relaxing and unwinding".

WIN ONE WEEK OF FREE ACCOMMODATION

Here's how: send us the details of your exchange or Getaway, along with some photos, your contact information and your membership number. If we select your story for publication, you'll get a free bonus week certificate valid for a one-week stay at an Interval International member resort!

Send your story and photos to Wendy.Long@intervalintl.com.

RAY OF LIGHT

AUSTRALIA'S
SUNSHINE COAST
CASTS A BEFITTING
GLOW ON HOLIDAY
MERRYMAKING.

BY JOCELYN PRIDE

What's in a name? When it comes to travel destinations, plenty. Stretching some 55 kilometres from Golden Beach and Caloundra in the south to Noosa Heads up north, the main seaside stretch of Queensland, Australia's Sunshine Coast, couldn't be labelled better. And it's not just because of the golden rays that drench the white-sand beaches and the undulating green hills. Whether you're lolling around in the sand, catching a wave, hiking trails, wandering about galleries, perusing markets or indulging in the local fare, your only conundrum may be figuring out how you want to spend all those sunny days — and realising you can't possibly pack everything on offer into a single Sunshine Coast holiday. Which is probably why the majority of people who visit keep coming back.

Following are four categories — beaches, the hills, markets and restaurants — along with some suggested corresponding activities to start planning your first (or return) trip.

Soak Up the Sunshine Coast

Make an exchange or buy a Getaway
at IntervalWorld.com.

Getaways start at **R5,410**.

Getaway prices are valid from
July to December 2016.



THE BEACH LIFE — This is the Sunshine Coast after all.

Wild or tame, lake or ocean, patrolled or not, with myriad designated strands (and many more off the grid), there's a beach here for every occasion and mood. And the climate is such that even during cooler months, the water's edge can be the focal point of your holiday.

Fancy surfing? Pick up a hire board at Coolum Beach and ride the archetypal Aussie waves that roll ashore in perfect sets. Other easy-does-it breaks include Maroochydore and Peregian. To hang 10 with the local pros (or just watch them) head to Moffat or Alexandra Headland.

After a day of riding the "white horses", consider saddling up the four-legged variety for a peaceful canter along Noosa's often-deserted North Shore. One- and two-hour excursions that cater to all equestrian skill levels can be arranged through Equathon, an outfit overseen by Olympic pentathlete Alex Watson.

If learning a new water sport appeals, the sheltered cove at Golden Beach is perfect for rookie kayakers, stand up paddleboarders, sailors, windsurfers and kiteboarders. It's also a famed fishing spot, home to a large colony of wisened pelicans that gather in the mornings when the anglers bring in their catch.

Currimundi is another calm-water, family-friendly area. Just don't be surprised if you lose track of time here. With a tidal lake lined by shady trees, playgrounds and the roar of the Pacific Ocean a short walk across the dunes, whole days can simply vanish in a flash. Noosa Heads is smaller and can be crowded, but it's beautiful, and a must-do. The wide Mooloolaba Beach is one of the easiest places to just flop down. This north-facing shoreline is protected from southerly breezes and the waves are usually gentle.

Of course, isn't that what the best lazy beach stints are all about? If you want to while away an afternoon, the Sunshine Coast is the right place to do it. There are several main strands sprinkled with colourful umbrellas and patrolled year-round by the pride of Australian beaches: the men and women of the Surf Life Saving team.

HEAD FOR THE HILLS — Original artwork and real-life dragons are certainly worth a day-trip to the interior.

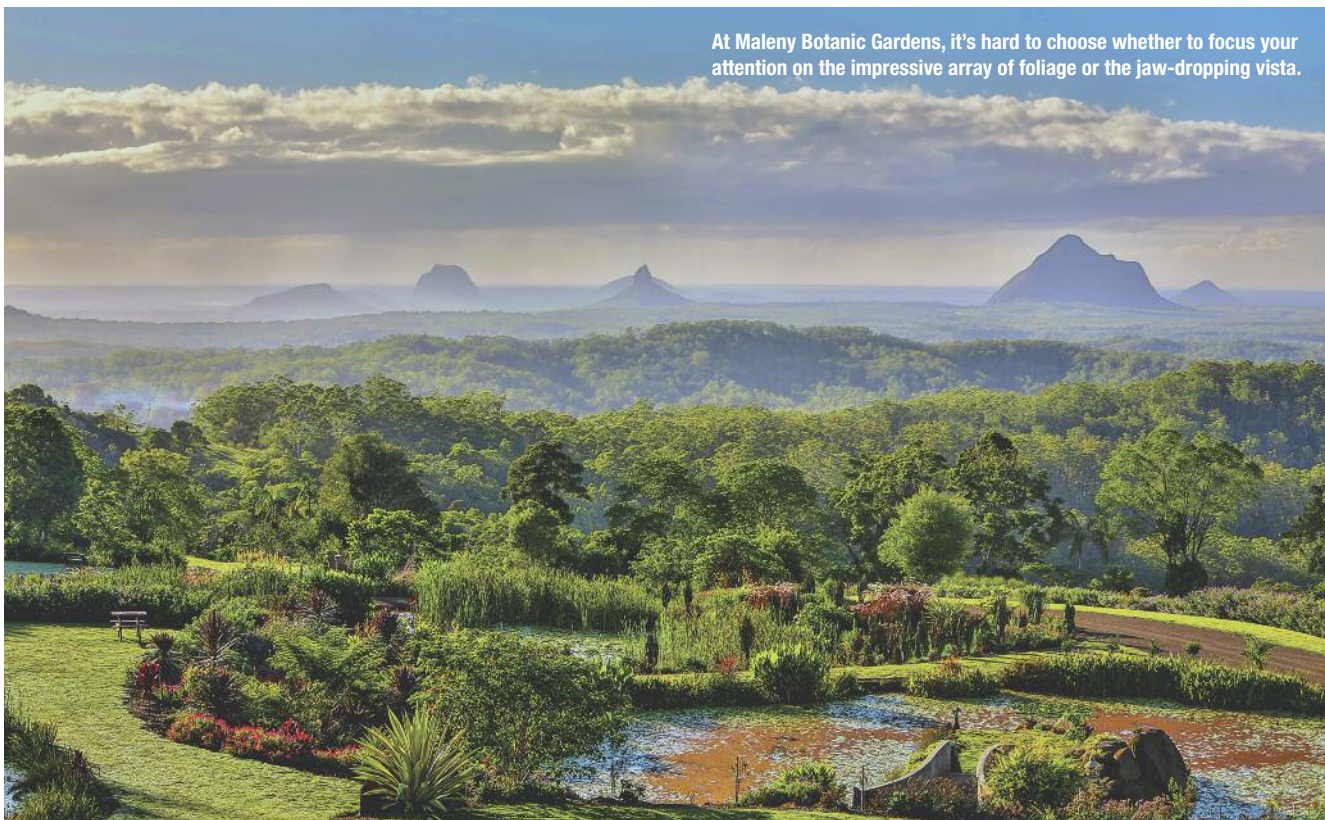
Although the beaches are the main draw for most, the Sunshine Coast's hinterland can be equally alluring. Within a few minutes of leaving the sea, the roads begin to wind around verdant fields dotted with doe-eyed cows, through dense subtropical rainforests and into bucolic villages. The air is cool, the views dazzling and the vibe dynamic.

Maleny, Montville and Mapleton — affectionately called the "three M's" — form the core of the interior art scene, with inspiring galleries and working studios set against a backdrop of the stunning Blackall Range and iconic Glass House Mountains.

Perched at the top of an escarpment, the Maleny Botanic Gardens are fast becoming renowned on a world scale. What started with Frank Shipp, the attraction's owner, simply pottering around his 45-hectare property, has transformed into 6 kilometres of walking paths that meander through rainforests and around neat-as-a-pin terraced gardens overlooking ponds with hidden waterfalls. There's also a large aviary with hundreds of happy-to-be-photographed birds.

Speaking of wildlife, the Australia Zoo is only about 30 minutes west of Golden Beach. And whether you're travelling with or without young ones, this is a place to release your inner child. Check the daily activity schedule ahead of your visit so you don't miss any wildlife shows or interactive animal encounters of interest. They range from crocodile feedings to cuddling a koala and Komodo dragon meet and greets to having your picture taken with a tiger.

Waterfalls might not be as hair-raising as posing with a tiger, but they are often considered the gems of the hinterland. Gardners Falls, outside of Maleny, is an easy forest trek from the car park past a series of small stair-step spills and rock pools. A bit north, near Montville, is Kondalilla National Park, a dreamlike place to experience the essence of the rainforest — and witness the impressive 90-metre-high namesake cascade.



At Maleny Botanic Gardens, it's hard to choose whether to focus your attention on the impressive array of foliage or the jaw-dropping vista.



The Sunshine Coast is famous for its fresh and delicious seafood. ABOVE: You never know what one-of-a-kind gifts and can't-live-without souvenirs you'll find at the Eumundi Market.



MARKET WATCH — There's plenty of shopping to be done, and the outdoor emporiums make it fun for all.

"We make it, bake it, sew it, grow it", is the mantra of the famous Eumundi Market, 25 minutes south-west of Noosa Heads. Back in 1979, three marketeers set up stalls under the towering fig trees in Eumundi. They were the first to embrace — and execute — the notion of a local European-style market for artisans and farmers. It didn't take long for news of the endeavour to spread, and now, after years of painters and producers showcasing their goods, Eumundi Market is one of the largest outdoor bazaars in Australia.

Every Wednesday and Saturday, more than 600 stalls pop up like mushrooms throughout the village. Go early to browse treasures such as silk, opals, didgeridoos, paintings, clothing, jewellery, leather, children's toys, housewares and furniture sold by the craftspeople themselves. Fill a hungry tummy with everything from juice and smoothies to mouthwatering calamari, baked treats and Asian street food. And definitely don't miss out on trying a cronut, a croissant crossed with a doughnut.

The market scene is popular in other locations along the coast,

too. On Sunday mornings, there's a vibrant street fair in Caloundra as well as the Noosa Farmers Market, a great place to sample locally made cheese, freshly baked bread and exotic fruits. Noosa is also home to Hastings Street, a shopping strip renowned for one-off items, usually with price tags to match. Set behind the main beach, a sashay along this pretty tree-lined boulevard is the epitome of retail therapy.

DINNER BELL — You'll come for the beaches, but the talk of your trip may end up being the food.

Easy access to the best ingredients from both the land and sea makes for foodie heaven. For starters, fresh Mooloolaba king prawns are legendary. Ask any fisher what makes them so good and the answer will be some variation of "because they're vibrant red, incredibly plump and impossibly juicy".

You'll find scrumptious prawns, as well as other seafood delicacies, everywhere along the coast, but my go-to is Mooloolaba Fish Market. I take my wonderfully fresh catch and set up a simple picnic overlooking the ocean. For a splurge, try Spice Bar on the Esplanade in Mooloolaba. Owner and chef Aaron Ruttan creates food as art, plus there's a view from every table and fun, funky decor.

Maroochydore's Ocean Street has seen a recent explosion of new restaurants. If you like hearty pub grub (beer-battered onion rings, lamb shank, Angus steak, house-made pizza) served with historic ambiance, head to the Post Office Bar and Restaurant. There's also innovative cuisine happening in the small enclave of Moffat Beach. The Pocket Espresso Bar is a hole-in-the-wall coastal cafe with great coffee on offer, and be sure to sample a cold beer at the Moffat Beach Brewing Co.

Rural Cooroy is not the spot you'd expect to find a Parisian-style restaurant, but Maison de Provence is exactly that. Originally a patisserie and cafe that morphed into degustation dinners due to popular demand, this bistro makes for a quirky night out Thursday through Saturday.

In addition to all the restaurants, a variety of cookery schools have opened in the area. This all started a number of years ago with the original (and many say still the best) Spirit House, which is set in lush tropical gardens next to a lily-filled ornamental lake, and is now a signature regional activity. In other words, book well ahead to secure a spot in one of their Thai-inspired culinary classes.

Or, reserve a place at Life's a Feast in Noosa. You'll learn how to prepare and plate various dishes utilising fresh, local ingredients in classes such as Seafood Barbecue and Flavours of Noosa: From Market to Plate — just the knowledge you need in order to take home a bit of the Sunshine Coast, and tide you over until your next visit. ■

Jocelyn Pride is an award-winning Australia-based travel writer and photographer. Her stories have appeared in a variety of Australian and international publications.

AREA RESORT



Noosa Sound Resort (NSO)

Located in the fun, picturesque town of Noosaville, this property puts you near some of the Sunshine Coast's greatest treasures, including Hastings Street, the Eumundi Market and of course, a number of fantastic beaches.

To view all of the Sunshine Coast-area resorts in Interval's network, go to IntervalWorld.com.

Rachael Bowes/Alamy Stock Photo; Visitsunshinecoast.com



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Happiness in Travelling



10 Things to Know Before You Go to Malta

Discover Malta's many delights, from natural splendours to cultural riches.

BY ABIGAIL BLASI

The Maltese Islands, edged by glittering Mediterranean Sea, are small, yet positively bursting with all sorts of treasures. Prepare yourself for age-old history, scenery that has featured in everything from Homer's *The Odyssey* to *World War Z*, colourful local culture and a newfound buzz. Here are 10 things to know before you go.

The impossibly clear cyan waters of Comino's Blue Lagoon just might represent the pinnacle of beach holiday perfection. ABOVE: The eight-pointed Maltese Cross, symbol of the Order of the Knights of St John, remains strongly associated with the nation.





The combination of mediaeval and baroque architecture creates an ageless atmosphere in the ancient walled city of Mdina.

1. MALTA IS NOT JUST A MEDITERRANEAN ISLAND, BUT ALSO A GLORIOUS ARCHIPELAGO NATION.

Only the three largest islands — Malta, Gozo and Comino — are inhabited. Gozo, Malta's smaller sister with sculptured sea cliffs, hidden coves, rounded hills and sleepy villages, is just a 25-minute ferry ride away. Between the two, tiny Comino is home to a single hotel and the lapis-lazuli waters of the Blue Lagoon.

Several uninhabited islets round out the set. An earthquake half-sank the pepper pot-shaped Filfla in 1856, and it was used for target practice by the military during the British rule. It's now a nature reserve, as is craggy General's Rock. This diminutive outcrop is also known as Fungus Rock, for hosting a rare fungus greatly prized by the Knights of St John for medicinal uses. St Paul's Island, a barren-looking mass marked by a statue of the apostle, is where the saint himself is said to have shipwrecked in AD 60. You can see all the Maltese Islands via a daylong boat trip, circling the dramatic coasts and enjoying the deep-blue sparkle of the Mediterranean.

2. MALTA PRESENTS EXCELLENT DIVING.

With good visibility, unparalleled accessibility and waters so warm that you can dive year-round, Malta offers amazing opportunities below the surface for everyone from beginners to technical whizzes. The rocky islands are surrounded by an underwater playground of cliffs, tunnels and wrecks — from World War II bombers to the oft-visited sunken statue of Christ. Divers are stunningly well catered for, with many excellent schools. Shore dives (less expensive than those requiring a boat) are readily available.

3. MALTA IS THOUGHT TO BE HOME TO THE WORLD'S OLDEST FREESTANDING STRUCTURES.

Ancient inhabitants constructed enormous and remarkably complex ceremonial buildings more than 6,000 years ago on Malta, predating

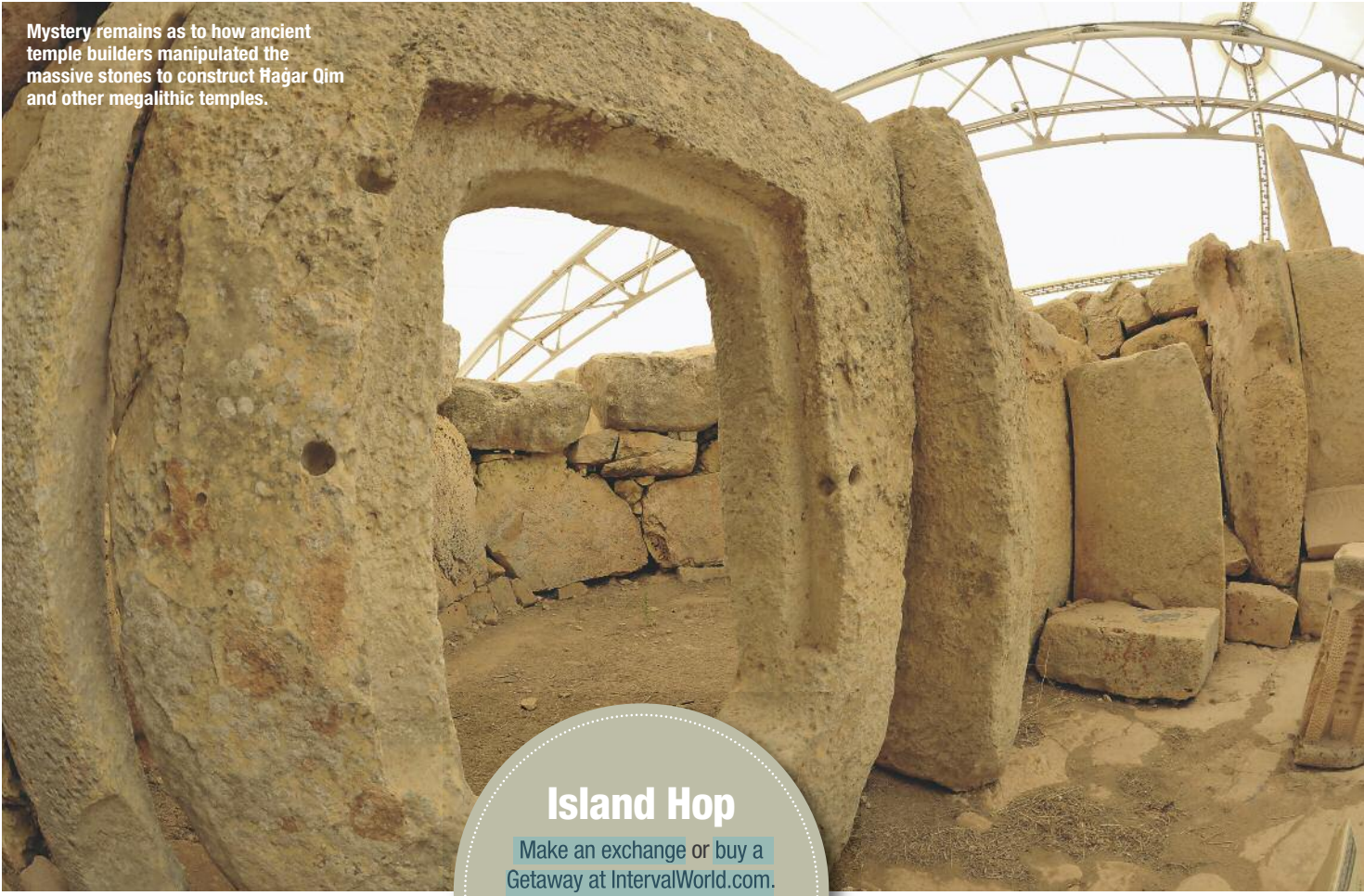
Stonehenge and the Egyptian pyramids at Giza by around 1,000 years. Many of the prehistoric structures remain, including the unequalled underground Hypogeum. This series of subterranean chambers has remained incredibly well-preserved, untouched by the weather, and only discovered in 1902. The megalithic temples of Ġgantija, Haġar Qim, Mnajdra, Skorba, Ta' Haġrat and Tarxien, constructed between the fourth and third millennia BC, exhibit notable architectural, artistic and technological achievements, especially considering their size and the limited building resources available.

4. AS FAR AS SIGHTSEEING GOES, MALTA IS WORTH YOUR WHILE.

Malta, Gozo and Comino together occupy an area of only 316 square kilometres, but this space contains three UNESCO World Heritage sites. Not only does the extraordinary prehistoric Hypogeum boast this designation, as do the megalithic temples mentioned above, but Valletta, the capital, has earned the distinction as well. This was Europe's first planned city, and it is cited by UNESCO as having one of the highest concentrations of monuments on Earth, with 320 sights stuffed into its narrow, cobbled 17th-century streets.

5. MALTA IS MENTIONED IN *THE ODYSSEY* AND *THE BIBLE*.

Calypto Cave on Gozo, hollowed out high above the red-sand beach of Ramla Bay, is said to be where the eponymous nymph kept Odysseus prisoner for seven years, as described by Homer in *The Odyssey*. Malta is also mentioned in the Bible's book of Acts of the Apostles, telling the story of how St Paul was shipwrecked nearly 2,000 years ago, bringing Christianity to the islands. There are plenty of shrines to the saint around the island, including the cave at Rabat, where, according to tradition, he lived for months, worshipping at a small altar.



Mystery remains as to how ancient temple builders manipulated the massive stones to construct Hagar Qim and other megalithic temples.

Island Hop

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6. MALTA IS UNDERGOING A RENAISSANCE.

Malta is not just ancient, but also brand new. Über-architect Renzo Piano's Parliament building, auditorium and city gate represent Valletta's biggest architectural developments since the 17th century. In preparation for its role as European Capital of Culture in 2018, Valletta is rising to the challenge, with events such as regular concerts in Strait Street, the island's most famous thoroughfare, and beautiful renovations of museums and forts. New resto-bars are creating a buzz all over Malta, including Valletta's Harbour Club, with stupendous waterfront views; Electro Lobster Project, a hip restaurant-bar-club hybrid in St Julian's; and Qawra's chic poolside Café del Mar, part of the new state-of-the-art National Aquarium.

7. MALTA IS A HOLLYWOOD HOTSPOT.

Numerous sites around the photogenic islands have stood in cinematically for everything from a Turkish prison (*Midnight Express*) to ancient Rome (*Gladiator*), and the influx shows no sign of abating: earlier this year Tom Cruise was seen reportedly scouting locations for *The Mummy*. In 2015 Brad Pitt and Angelina Jolie spent five months on Gozo filming their arthouse movie *By the Sea*, Pitt having previously filmed *World War Z* and *Troy* here. The list goes on: *Clash of the Titans* (1981), *The Count of Monte Cristo* (2002), *Munich*, *DaVinci Code*. Fans of *Game of Thrones* may recognise the dramatic coastal moonscape of Dwejra, on Gozo, while the most permanent reminder of any filming is at Malta's Anchor Bay, which still contains the colourful village built in the late 1970s for Robin Williams' *Popeye*. It's now possibly the world's most picturesque theme park.

8. THE SOVEREIGN ORDER OF MALTA IS A STATE WITHOUT A COUNTRY.

The Order of the Knights of St John, a religious military order of the Catholic church, got its start in the 11th century, and finally formed an independent state on Malta in 1530. The knights had a marked influence on the islands, building wow-factor churches, impressive military structures and the beautiful capital city. The order gradually ceased its military function, and lost territorial administration with the Napoleonic occupation of 1798.

The modern incarnation is the Sovereign Order of Malta, an autonomous subject of international law that has no territory, but a base in Rome and diplomatic relations with more than 100 countries and the EU.

9. MALTA IS GREATER THAN THE SUM OF ITS INFLUENCES.

After millennia of invasions and colonisation, Malta bears imprints of numerous cultures. For example, you'll find that the cuisine has French, Italian and Arab influences; the Maltese language draws from Arabic, Italian and English (though English is also an official language); and *luzzus* (traditional fishing boats) still bear a pair of decorative eyes at the bow, a legacy of the ancient Phoenician traders.

Yet Malta is resolutely Maltese, a proud nation with a penchant for fierce competition, be it about football, politics, music, fireworks or hunting. It's also renowned for its stoicism and toughness. The islanders famously withstood the Turks in 1565 against seemingly impossible odds, and in 1942, King George VI bestowed upon the entire population the George Cross, the UK's highest civil decoration, for bravery in withstanding years of near-constant aerial bombardment during WWII.

10. ANY TIME IS A GREAT TIME TO VISIT, BUT SHOULDER SEASON MAY BE THE BEST.

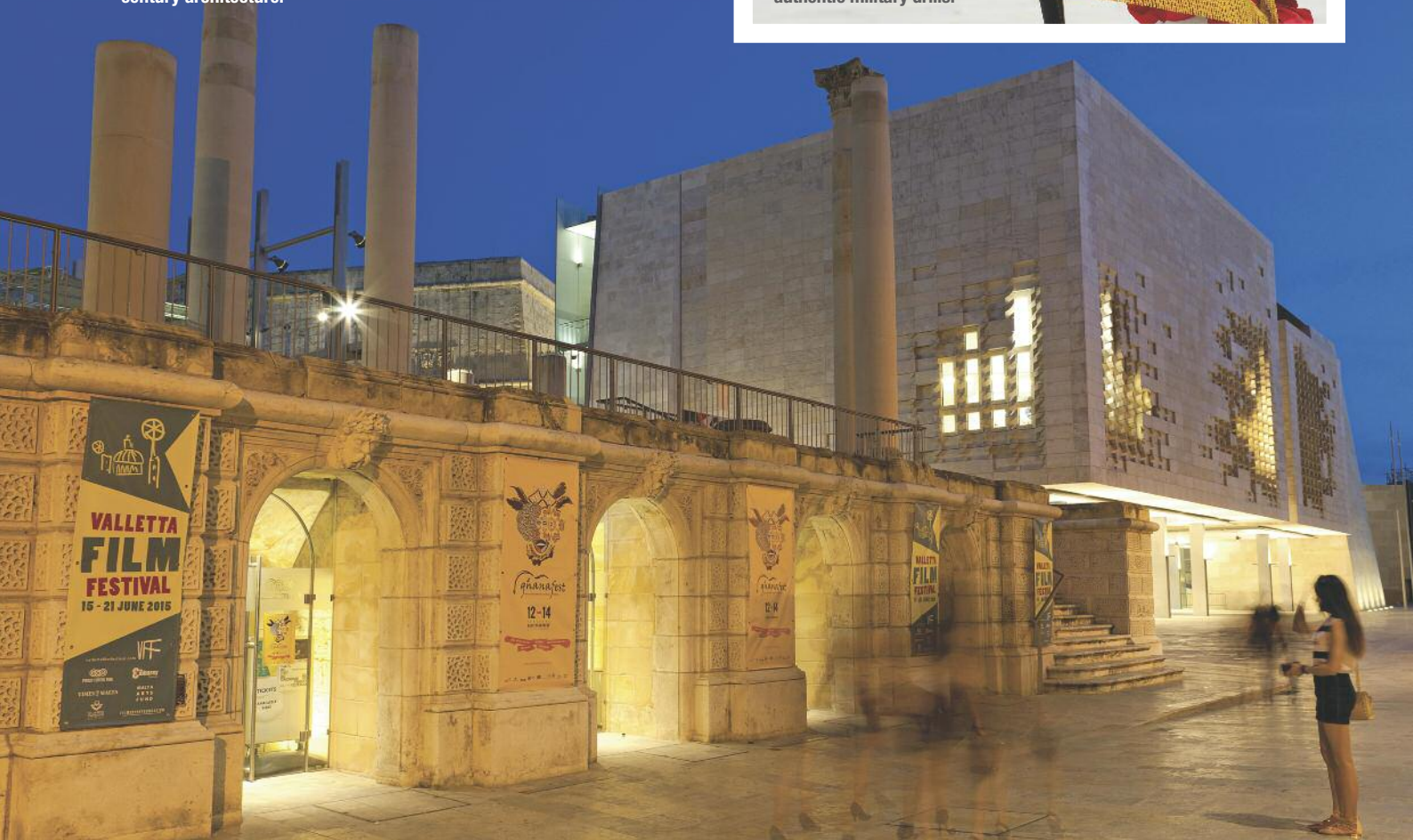
With more than 300 days of sunshine per year, Malta enjoys what is arguably the best climate in Europe. Visitors flock for summer beach holidays, but an even better time to go may be from September to November, when you'll still enjoy plenty of sunshine and warm temperatures — but with far fewer tourists. September high temperatures generally hover around 28°C, dropping only a few degrees in October and November. As the sea has been warmed over the long summer, it's often still possible to swim in these months. Beaches tend to be empty, as locals only swim in the height of summer and the high-season crowds have ebbed. ■

Abigail Blasi is a travel writer who has spent many months researching and writing on Malta, and covers many other destinations from India to Italy.

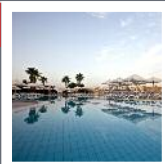


The In Guardia Parade at Valletta's Fort St Elmo presents re-enactments of authentic military drills.

The modern design of Renzo Piano's recently completed Parliament building provides stark contrast to Valletta's typical 16th- and 17th-century architecture.



AREA RESORT



Eden Bay Resort and Suites on Malta (EBT, SSM)

Located on beautiful St George's Bay and 90 metres from the sandy beach, the resort is also within walking distance of the trendy areas of Sliema and St Julian's, and a short drive from historic Valletta. Guests can enjoy a panoramic swimming pool overlooking the bay, eight restaurants, three bars and a fully equipped health-and-fitness club.

To view all of the Malta resorts in Interval's network, go to IntervalWorld.com.



3

PERFECT DAYS ON THE **Riviera Maya**

BY JANICE AND GEORGE MUCALOV

Whether you yearn to discover ancient cultures, long for encounters with nature or simply seek serenity, one of these three daylong itineraries is sure to suit your style. (That is, if you can tear yourself away from your fabulous resort.)

The sea is cerulean. The sand is powdery white. The coral reefs teem with colourful fish. And the resorts, often all-inclusive, are so amazing that you may never want to leave. Think pampering spas, a variety of water sports and activities, gourmet dining choices galore — all in lush, tropical, perfectly landscaped settings.

This is the Riviera Maya. The 160-kilometre strip of fabled Caribbean coastline on Mexico's Yucatán Peninsula stretches south of Cancún, down from Puerto Morelos, past Tulum, and to the Sian Ka'an Biosphere Reserve. You could easily spend your entire visit at your resort, departing refreshed and fully satisfied. But do ditch your beach chair. At least for a day (or two or three). Mayan ruins, breathtaking limestone sinkholes, spectacular ecoparks and much, much more present once-in-a-lifetime experiences.

Read on for three ways to have a perfect day on the Riviera Maya, tailored to your tastes, whatever they may be. Mixing and matching is allowed.

Ricardo De Mattos/Getty Images



FACING PAGE: The Riviera Maya sets the perfect scene for an unforgettable beach holiday. **ABOVE:** Cosmopolitan Playa del Carmen is the Riviera Maya's hub for shopping, dining and nightlife. **BELOW:** Intrepid visitors can scale Cobá's Nohuch Mul, the Yucatán's tallest pyramid, for rewarding vistas of the dense jungle canopy.



Fideicomiso de Promoción Turística de Riviera Maya e Isla Cozumel; Blaine Harrington/Robert Harding

A PERFECT DAY FOR: CULTURE ENTHUSIASTS

Morning

Kick off your day at Cobá, the ancient Mayan city that flourished between 400 and 1100 AD. Buried deep in the jungle, most of it hasn't been uncovered, lending an air of mystery. Scale the steep stone steps to the top of Nohuch Mul, the Yucatán's tallest pyramid, and puzzle over the limestone hoops at two ball courts. Ponder the risks of the game — it's believed the loser (or maybe the winner) was sacrificed at the end. You can explore on your own, but the tree-shaded site is big, so you'll want to hire a bicycle, or get a pedicab to take you around. Or, to maximise your understanding and appreciation of the Maya's history and culture, go with a guided tour.

Afternoon

Cool off with a dip in a *cenote*. The Riviera Maya is riddled with hundreds of these natural limestone sinkholes, which the Maya believed were sacred gateways to the underworld. Take your pick of the three subterranean grottoes just minutes from Cobá: Choo-Ha,

Tamcach-Ha and Multum-Ha. These smaller, off-the-beaten-path cenotes offer unforgettable descents into underground depths beneath the jungle without the crowds the more-touristed pools attract. Choo-Ha's shallow, fish-populated waters and stalactites and stalagmites are ideal for families with children; Tamcach-Ha's narrow spiral-staircase entrance and dual diving platforms will thrill the adventurous; and Multum-Ha's clear waters are perfect for snorkelling. Whether you visit one or all, you'll undoubtedly agree with the Maya — they look absolutely otherworldly.

Dinner

Head into Playa del Carmen ("Playa" for short), the Riviera Maya's vibrant urban hub, and stroll along Fifth Avenue. Lined with shops, restaurants and bars, the pedestrian promenade buzzes at night with roving musicians, diners and clubbers. For a taste of Mayan cuisine, dine at Yaxche. Its well-rounded menu of difficult-to-pronounce dishes leans heavily on sour orange juice, *xcatik* chilli peppers and reddish *achiote*. Try the crunchy duck served with cucumber salad and tortillas.



Striking stalactites and stalagmites decorate elaborate systems of underground caverns and waterways.



Perfect Days

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Getaways start at **R3,360***

The Getaway price is valid July to December 2016.

*This is an all-inclusive resort, requiring the purchase of a meal plan payable to the resort.

Evening

End the night with a mezcal tasting at Don Mezcal, a cool little bar off Fifth Avenue. Like tequila, mezcal is made from the agave

plant, but it's smokier and more intense. The ancient Mayans drank mezcal and its predecessor *pulque* as a way to celebrate the gods. (It's said that if you drink a lot, you could hallucinate.) Ask the bartender to pour sampler shots of some of the numerous varieties stocked — you might get a couple on the house.

a gently flowing river, dive into the clear water and float past mangroves using your life jacket as a seat. See pelicans, ibises and — if you're lucky — maybe even small (harmless) freshwater crocodiles. Take a longer boat tour, and you could glimpse reclusive manatees, too. Whatever creatures you see, you'll be in awe of the untouched wilderness that surrounds you.

Dinner

In Playa, Oh Lala! is a lovely, intimate spot for dinner. Not too fancy. Just locally sourced, international food done really well. Oh Lala! gets top ratings on TripAdvisor (with good reason) and only has nine tables, so email Geral@ohlalabygeorge.com to reserve in advance.

A PERFECT DAY FOR: NATURE LOVERS

Morning

The absolutely massive UNESCO World Heritage site of Sian Ka'an Biosphere Reserve will be your playground for the day. Sian Ka'an is home to an incredible diversity of ecosystems: wetlands, native tropical forest, mangrove lagoons and the second-largest barrier reef in the world. As a biosphere reserve, it's protected through sustainable tourism. (Visitors may only access certain areas.) You can take a public *colectivo* minibus to get there, but your money supports Maya guides and park keepers if you go with Community Tours Sian Ka'an. Enjoy a serenade of birdsong as you hike past tangled vines around the steep-walled pyramids of Muyil, one of the oldest Mayan sites. Marvel at enormous ceiba trees, held sacred by the Maya as the tree of life, connecting earth with the underworld and sky.

Afternoon

From Muyil, a forest promenade leads to a dock where small boats ferry visitors across two lagoons and through a 1,000-year-old Mayan canal. Keep your eyes peeled for agile dolphins. At the entrance to

Evening

Summer visitors to the Riviera Maya can witness — and even take part in conserving — a remarkable phenomenon of nature. From May to September, female green and loggerhead turtles complete epic migrations (sometimes hundreds of kilometres) and come ashore at night to lay their eggs on the same beaches where they were born years earlier. Your resort may offer tours, or you can book with Flora, Fauna y Cultura de México at X'cabel Beach. Through this organisation, you can also volunteer to help study, collect data on and protect the nests and endangered creatures.

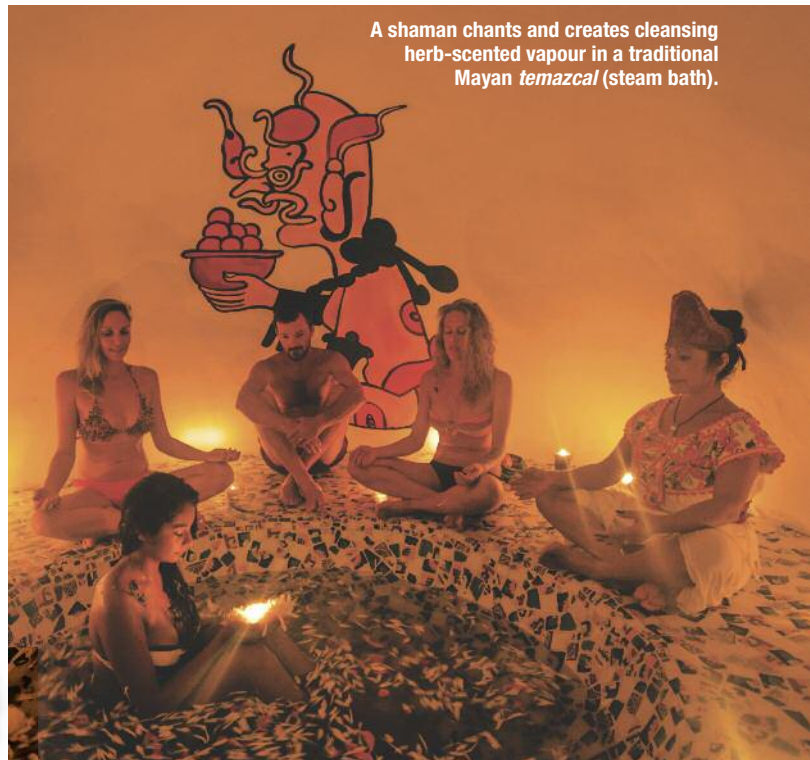
A PERFECT DAY FOR: SERENITY SEEKERS

Morning

Greet your day in laid-back Tulum. Along the town's blindingly white 11-kilometre beach, eco-chic hotels run on solar power and organic restaurants thrive. Tulum's crowning jewel is its Mayan ruins, perched high on a cliff overlooking turquoise waters. This was the



Once a major crossroads of trading routes, the Mayan city of Tulum maintains a sense of grandeur in its unique seaside setting.



A shaman chants and creates cleansing herb-scented vapour in a traditional Mayan *temazcal* (steam bath).

only Mayan city built by the sea, and there are wooden stairs leading down to a beautiful beach where you can swim. Arrive when the site opens at 8:00 am, and (sunning iguanas aside) you could be the only living souls around. Explore and relax a while, then drop in at the glass-walled Sanará yoga studio for a 10:15 am yoga class (10:30 am on Sundays) surrounded by full-on sea views.

Afternoon

Open to a *temazcal*? It's a traditional Maya sweat lodge purification. In Tulum, Maya Spa was the first to create the experience for Riviera Maya visitors almost 20 years ago. Sit in a small, circular stone hut as a shaman chants and shares Mayan wisdom while throwing herb-infused water on hot rocks, enveloping you in steam. It's an intense experience, and even sceptics say they feel physically, mentally and spiritually cleansed after.

Dinner

Back in Playa, embark on a leisurely journey into culinary bliss at the acclaimed *Cocina de Autor*, celebrated for its cutting-edge, modernist cuisine. Think melt-in-your-mouth tuna with avocado foam, grilled scallop on a slice of beet in hibiscus-raspberry sauce, and chocolate mushrooms. There's no menu, and the chefs choose your 14 tasting courses. Reserve in advance, and allow three hours to savour each and every heavenly mouthful.

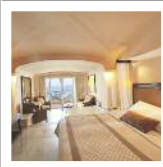
Evening

Back at your resort, slip off your sandals and stroll barefoot in the sand by the light of the moon — the perfect way to reflect on your mellow day. ■

Janice and George Mucalov are award-winning travel writers who contribute to many US and Canadian magazines and newspapers. Follow their adventures on their travel blog sandinmysuitcase.com and on Twitter @SandInSuitcase.

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Cozumel Palace (CZP)*

Accommodation at this beachfront resort boasts contemporary Mexican decor, satellite TV, Wi-Fi access, whirlpool baths and a minibar. Relax in one of four swimming pools and snorkel right from the beach. Nearby, swim with dolphins and dive around the world's second-largest reef.



The Grand Bliss Riviera Maya (GBM)

Conveniently located between Puerto Morelos and Playa del Carmen, The Grand Bliss Riviera Maya offers a relaxing beach holiday experience. Enjoy the serenity of a private pool and garden views from your balcony and receive personalised attention and pampering in an ambiance of casual elegance.



Azul Sensatori Mexico, a Gourmet Inclusive Hotel (AZS)*

Situated along more than 300 metres of beachfront in Puerto Morelos, Azul Sensatori is an excellent choice for families, with its Azulitos Kids Club and Breeze Teens Club. Guests can spend their day lounging on a beach bed or indulging in spa treatments.

To view all of the Riviera Maya resorts in Interval's network, go to IntervalWorld.com.

*This is an all-inclusive resort, requiring the purchase of a meal plan payable to the resort.

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