**Australasia**

Australia, New Zealand & South Pacific

**When to travel** Australia Being in the southern hemisphere, Australia’s seasons are the reverse of Europe and America. Spring: September to November; summer: December to February; autumn: March to May; winter: June to August. Southeast Australia, incorporating Sydney and Melbourne, experiences a temperate climate typified by warm summers and mild winters. Central Australia, The Red Centre area, has a harsh desert climate with extremely hot summers reaching 40°C, and warm winters reaching 25°C. Western Australia is mainly arid desert, similar to Central Australia, however Perth and the coast find it more comfortable as summer temperatures are lower. A tropical climate prevails in Northern Australia, as being close to the equator, temperatures are high year round with little seasonal fluctuation and more abundant rainfall. New Zealand With temperatures around 30°C, moderately low rainfall, and many hours of sunshine throughout most of the country, New Zealand is a great place to visit anytime. The climate does vary from the warm far north to the cool far south, but not having a large temperature variance, it is common to experience four seasons in one day. South Pacific The peak dry season tends to be April to October, because the weather is cooler thanks to the easterly trade winds which ventilate the humid tropical climate and prevent thunderstorms. However, it can still rain, but showers come and go pretty quickly

**Australia** will quite simply take your breath away. Whether you choose to head north, east, south or west, Australia will showcase the very best mix of cities, beaches, countryside and culture. From the cosmopolitan bustle of Sydney, with its world-famous Opera House, to the vibrant and laid back café culture of Melbourne or perhaps even the relaxed and easy going atmosphere of Perth, you’ll be spoilt for choice if you’re looking to include a city escape ‘down under’. But it’s not just the cities that delight – Australia is a country of contrast, from the simply stunning sights of the Great Barrier Reef to the rainforest in Tropical North Queensland, relaxing on the glorious Gold Coast to wine tasting in the famous Yarra Valley in Victoria – take it all in. The World Heritage Listed Blue Mountains reveal a secret beauty and outdoor adventure. Or for a true taste of the outback head to the Red Centre, a place steeped in rich Aboriginal culture and rugged beauty, shadowed by the majesty of Ayers Rock.

**New Zealand’s** natural highs Heaven on earth is often how New Zealand is described. With snow-capped mountains to deep, crystal clear lagoons, plunging cave networks to raging rapids, the islands are a playground for thrill-seekers looking for the next adrenaline high. The North Island is home to secluded beaches, stunning coastlines, abundant wildlife and of course the vibrant city of Auckland, also known as ‘The City of Sails’. Here visitors can sample delicious food, take in 360-degree views of one of the world’s greatest harbour cities and even take a hike up one of Auckland’s 53 volcanic peaks. Meanwhile on the South Island be prepared for some of New Zealand’s most glorious scenery. The West Coast in particular offers mountain peaks, massive glaciers and mysterious lakes, while Christchurch is an elegant, rather English city surrounded by the beautiful Canterbury Plains.

**South Pacific** desert island dreaming French Polynesia’s deserted beaches, aqua lagoons and lush rainforests are just as perfect as the postcards make out. Of its six island groups, the Society Islands are the most visited with Bora Bora, Tahiti and Moorea the brightest jewels in this sparkling crown. If watersports are top of your holiday to do list then look no further than Fiji with mile upon mile of white sand beaches and coastlines just waiting to be discovered. The largest island and tourist hub of Viti Levu is home to 70 per cent of Fiji’s warm-hearted people. Last but by no means least consider the Cook Islands, fifteen castaway islands scattered over the empty ocean. From the rugged mountains of Rarotonga to the pearl fringed sands of Penryhn each island has its own inimitable characteristics and culture to enjoy.