

THE INSIDERS | JERUSALEM



JOANNA KUJAWA
AUTHOR

STAY: Seven Arches Hotel
Located on the Mount of Olives, with the most magnificent views of Old Jerusalem, this hotel is one of the city's best-kept secrets — cheap with fantastic, if somewhat relaxed, service and decent meals. Room 301 has the best view; 7arches.com.

EAT: American Colony Hotel
This hotel is steeped in history — Lawrence of Arabia and Bill Clinton have been guests. The main restaurant, Arabesque, is great, but I prefer The Cellar Bar and adjacent Val's Brasserie — low-key, intimate and tiny. At Val's, try the delicious pistachio ice cream with apple crumble; americancolony.com.

EXPLORE: The Old City walls
The best way to reflect on the complexities of Jerusalem's history and daily life is to walk on the Old City walls. Buy a ticket at the small shack at the Jaffa Gate for fantastic views into the backyards of 1000-year-old houses lived in by generations of the same families. The walk ends at the Golden Dome mosque; goisrael.com.

SHOP: Claire Kosinski Jewellery
Visit Irish expatriate and merchant Claire Kosinski's site for a preview of upscale, beautifully designed modern jewellery by local artists; clairekosinski.com.

PILGRIM'S TREAT: The Garden Tomb
Considered an alternative to the Holy Sepulchre as the site of Jesus's tomb, it was discovered late in the 19th century and is a few minutes from the Damascus Gate; gardentomb.org.

INSPIRATION: The Friendship Garden
Three Australian men are building a botanic garden on this neglected block a five-minute walk from the American Colony Hotel. The garden, at present in its design stages, will be open to all to promote interfaith dialogue; friendshipgardenofjerusalem.com.

MARKET: Old Jerusalem souk
For souvenirs and produce, the souk is a truly authentic experience of Old Jerusalem, its seemingly endless tiny streets filled with shops selling anything from herbs and shoes to underwear, as well as cafes with Palestinian food. Enter through the Damascus Gate.

Joanna Kujawa is the author of *Jerusalem Diary: Searching for the Tomb and House of Jesus* (amazon.com; bookdepository.co.uk).



BOOK by March 31 for Holland America Line's 140th birthday sale, with fare discounts of up to 50 per cent, shipboard credits and free upgrades. Volendam's around-Oz voyage in October starts at \$5199 a person twin-share. More: cruise guru.com.au.



THE EU has banned cosmetics with animal-tested ingredients, a move applauded by Australian chemical-free skincare company Sodashi, which has long encouraged alternative methods to testing on animals. More: sodashi.com.



IT has been more than a decade since the launch of the SeatGuru website for best-and-worst aircraft seating. Its app is just as useful, with colour-coded seating maps and functions such as real-time flight status updates. Free for all devices.



VILLA consultant Merrion Charles is the go-to specialist for la dolce vita holidays; the British-born Italy expert handles a wide portfolio of charming accommodation, from Abruzzo and the Amalfi Coast to Sicily and Sardinia. More: merrioncharles.com.

HOME AND AWAY



SHOE pastry, anyone? Something Choo-ey? The puns are inevitable as the Landmark Mandarin Oriental Hong Kong prepares to launch a fashion tea in collaboration with shoe and handbag design supremo Jimmy Choo. On weekdays from 3pm to 5.30pm from April 2 to May 5, the hotel's groovy MO Bar will be the setting for the themed tea, which takes inspiration from Choo's spring and summer 2013 collections and "the haute gypsy glamour of the late 1960s and early 70s". Executive chef Sidney Schutte and his team have come up with savouries such as Thumbelina-sized foie-gras high heels on brioche, and smoked salmon, cucumber and cream sandwiches folded to resemble Choo's signature Cayla clutch bags, plus dainty sweet treats such as white chocolate leopard-print handbags filled with lychee, rose and raspberry mousse, and milk chocolate stilettos. There's also a package with top suite accommodation, MO Bar's Jimmy Choo afternoon tea for two and a pair of shoes to the value of \$HK5000 (\$620) from the Jimmy Choo boutique in the adjoining Landmark mall. The tea is \$HK260 a person; add 10 per cent service charge. The Landmark Mandarin Oriental is the sister property to the nearby Mandarin Oriental, celebrating its 50th anniversary this year. More: +852 2132 0077; mandarinoriental.com/landmark. SUSAN KUROSAWA

ACCESSORY

Coast New Zealand
Sponge Bag, \$149

HAND-MADE from sturdy marine-grade Sunbrella fabric (used for sails) and designed to last, this roomy toiletries bag from homewares and outdoor accessories specialist Coast New Zealand features soft nubuck leather trim and grips, has a fully lined waterproof interior, one internal pocket and comes in taupe or charcoal tweed (pictured). More: 1800 197 172; coastnewzealand.com.

SHARON FOWLER



T&I LOVES



BARRY Oakley, former literary editor of *The Australian*, is a ferociously funny writer and while his latest book, *Mug Shots* (Wakefield Press, \$24.95), is not a travel book, it charts his voyage through a life of small humiliations and accidental victories, from the Christian Brothers' College in St Kilda, Melbourne (a decade swiftly covered), through to retirement in the Blue Mountains west of Sydney (but not a knee-rug and slippers sort of end — Oakley is still writing plays and essays, and as wittily as ever). This is a laugh-out-loud memoir and if we must have a travel angle, turn to page 129 and join the Oakleys in Ireland (Barry with wife Carmel and five of their brood of six) in a modest cottage that shed paint specks like dandruff in a woebegone village amid "soft, misty intangible rain" that fell and fell and "the people in the rain-soaked streets spoke in accents so musical it sounded like recitative. And in the pubs turned into bel canto." SUSAN KUROSAWA

ON THE BENCH

Smart 'n' Green
Planter, \$79



KEEP a watchful eye on those delicate microgreens with this quirky porcelain and wood planter, perfect for the kitchen windowsill. Lay a cotton or paper towel in the dish, place your seeds on top, keep them moist and in about a week snip your garnish. Transplant a bought punnet if you lack a green thumb. More: designforuse.com.au. MICHELLE ROWE

ON THE ROAD

Aesop Travel Essentials, \$75

STYLISH London and Boston black-microfibre kits of 10 travel essentials for women and men contain 15ml and 50ml versions of Aesop hair, body and skincare staples plus alcohol-free mouthwash and pocket-sized where-to-go guides to the respective cities. In conjunction with the launch, Aesop is promoting its full range of travel-friendly products, including

Ginger Flight Therapy and Immediate Moisture Facial Hydrosol. On sale May 7. More: aesop.com. SUSAN KUROSAWA



ACCESS ALL AREAS

Towards the tipping point at a rate of knots



LISA ALLEN

BY the time an American cruise ship arrives here, whether for a whole season or just a couple of days in port, it has usually been "Aussified" with Australian wines, local draught beers and, of course, Vegemite and HP Sauce. And there's often better coffee on board.

The other big hurdle for American-owned cruise lines such as Royal Caribbean is how to handle tipping. Americans are big tipplers, Australians are not. Royal Caribbean (Australia) boss Gavin Smith offers a pre-paid tipping system, making it easier for Australian passengers to contribute. "With alternate dining, the fact that you are at different restaurants, at different times, means you rarely see the same waiter. [Our] pre-paid tipping system evolved from that," Smith says.

However, he concedes a small number of Australian passengers opt out of the pre-paid option, preferring to pay cash to reward staff at their own discretion.

"Hopefully, [the pre-paid system] protects service, as it takes away from the embarrassment of giving cash at the end of the cruise."

The luxury Italian-owned cruise company Silversea has operated an all-inclusive policy on tipping since its inaugural cruise in 1994 and this eliminates the embarrassment created when some guests want to tip the waiter \$10 and others proffer more than \$100 at the end of each meal.

"I think people book with us because they like the all-inclusive value concept," says Silversea's Australian boss, Karen Christensen. "They know what they are getting for their money and there are no hidden surprises."

"There is nothing nicer than to not be handling money or signing tabs... there's not this question of who should pay... it makes for a nice environment when you are making new friends."

Phil Asker, founder of The Captain's Choice Tour, a luxury tour operator providing cruise, coach and air itineraries, also operates an all-inclusive policy on gratuities. "The main thing is that the passenger does not have to think about tipping," Asker says.

This all-inclusive policy works in Asker's favour because the company uses a lot of local guides. "Generally, Australian groups can end up with the worst guides because Australians are not big tipplers. Guides want the American groups because they tip. The best guides in the world want to make money, and they know they will make money out of an American."

So how much does The Captain's Choice tip? "We vary it. On meals, we will normally tip 10 per cent. In the US, we normally tip 20 per cent... [but] if we get lousy service we will let them know why [and] obviously [give] a different amount."