

# Kiwis love an authentic flavour



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If the crystal ball gazers of the travel business have it correct, we'll be embracing "spartan" breaks, "nakations" and "friendmoons" (taking our mates on our honeymoons) this year, and treating our pets to luxury trips.

Almost half of Kiwi pet owners say their fur babies are as important to them as their human children, Booking.com states, with 32 per cent claiming they're happy to pay more to stay in a place that's pet-friendly.

Wise to the trend, a growing number of pet-friendly properties are seeking to tempt owners with the likes of dedicated doggie daybeds, and room service menus reserved for the furry and four-legged.

"Animals on vacation can definitely expect a five-star experience," according to the website.

"Undertourism", aimed at counteracting the overtourism that plagues popular destinations worldwide, is also tipped to be a big trend this year.

HelloWorld Travel general manager marketing David Libeau says many Kiwis are now taking two or three overseas trips a year.

"Europe remains a favourite but we are seeing a shift in destinations, and an increase in conscious travellers who are avoiding spots with 'overtourism', and looking for a more authentic experience where they can interact with locals, taste their cuisine and see the sights without being surrounded by lots of other people."

Similarly, Trafalgar's Scott Cleaver says, "Kiwis tend to be savvy travellers and know they can get a more enriching experience by travelling

to spots of 'undertourism' that benefit both the visitor and visited".

It makes sense. Why would you want to risk being fined for "messy" eating near a monument or resting your weary backside on the Spanish Steps – among Italy's crazier attempts at crowd control – when you could have medieval monasteries almost to yourself in nearby(ish) Armenia, among the places travel experts recommend you add to your bucket list? See pages 12-13 for the full list.

Even in tourism hot spots, you can usually find a quiet corner. On a recent trip to Thailand, our group didn't have to drive far from Chiang Mai to find ourselves in a Karen hill tribe village where the only other people on the streets wore saffron robes or carried huge haystacks on their heads. We walked in the nearby cloud forest and tried a Thai barbecue over potent glasses of mulberry wine, before enjoying surprisingly sound sleeps on the rock-hard beds in basic huts with prime rice paddy views. It was a perfect antidote to another stressful year in the city and I hope that your break, if you've been lucky enough to have one, has been just as restorative.



**Teardrop-shaped Sri Lanka is home to wild elephants, Indian Ocean-lapped beaches, temples, tea plantations, and world-famous train trips. Tourism took a hit after the Easter terror attacks last year. ISTOCK**