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THE AUSTRALIAN

Women's Weekly

YOUR 2025
HOROSCOPES

**Chrissie
Swan**
Joins *The
Weekly!*

Dame
Judi
Dench
at 90

'The things that
bring me joy!'



1936-2024

**FAREWELL,
MAGGIE T**
Our special tribute
to a *Weekly* icon

*Ready, set,
Summer*

Best beach reads,
bumper puzzle special
plus 2025 bucket list travel

Travel

Did you KNOW?

Kazakhstan is No. 5 on Lonely Planet's top 10 countries to visit in 2025.

Around the world in

WORDS by BERNARD O'SHEA & GEORGIA MOORE

365 days

2025 special

It's a favourite time of the year for the *Women's Weekly* travel section as we present our top recommendations of places to go. Drum roll, please ...



Getting off the beaten track is a big theme for travel in 2025 and it promises to be pleasurable. For while there are places where over-tourism can cause resentment, the flip side to it is under-tourism – worthy but neglected destinations where visitors are rare and revered. Places where your tourist buck goes a whole lot further than, say, in Paris, Venice or New York. One example is the five “Stans” along the cultural crossroads between Asia, Europe and the Middle East: Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. World Expeditions CEO Sue Badyari recently returned from Kyrgyzstan and is singing its praises. Here, she says, you’ll get an incredibly warm welcome not just from staff in hotels, restaurants and yurt camps but also from locals in the markets.

“For many Kyrgyz, especially in remote villages, encountering a foreigner is rare and exciting,” she says. “Their eyes light up as they share stories of their land and traditions, and you can feel how deeply they appreciate the effort travellers make to reach their corner of the world. For travellers, the warmth of these encounters is humbling and unforgettable. A beautiful exchange takes place – one of mutual curiosity and respect. You’re not just a tourist; you become part of their story. In a world where some places are overwhelmed with visitors, it’s refreshing to be truly welcomed and celebrated.”

Plus, the scenery is spectacular. “These are huge areas knotted with towering mountains and vast valleys that nomadic empires and Silk Road traders traversed, leaving behind a rich cultural and archaeological legacy,” says Sue. **We like: World Expeditions’ 23-day Ancient Silk Roads Cities – The 5 Stans tour, from \$8340 per person, excluding flights. See worldexpeditions.com**

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BEST FOR FOODIES

Deliciously different with Traveling Spoon

Top restaurant food is one thing, but for all its flashy, Insta-worthy qualities it can lack the flavour and ambience of an authentic, intimate home-cooked meal. To put it another way, on our travels we can spend a week in a foreign country sampling the commercial cuisine and come away still not knowing what the locals relish cooking and eating in their homes. Tour companies try to address this by including in-home cooking demos on their itineraries, but these can have a school outing vibe.

Want something different? This is where Traveling Spoon comes in. Set up by frustrated foodies Aashi Vel and Steph Lawrence in 2013 as a sort of Airbnb of home cooking, it now offers culinary experiences with carefully vetted hosts in 70 countries. One of its trending destinations for 2025 is Portugal's Azores islands, where Maria (pictured at top) will take you to the local markets to select ingredients for a picnic with BBQ and wine at the Ponta do Sossego viewpoint (from \$US76) or to sample seasonal Azorean food in a farmhouse outside Ponta Delgada (from \$US144). Also trending are Buenos Aires, Seattle and France's Provence region. See travelingspoon.com