

# Take-off

## YOUR SUNDAY TRAVEL DOSSIER

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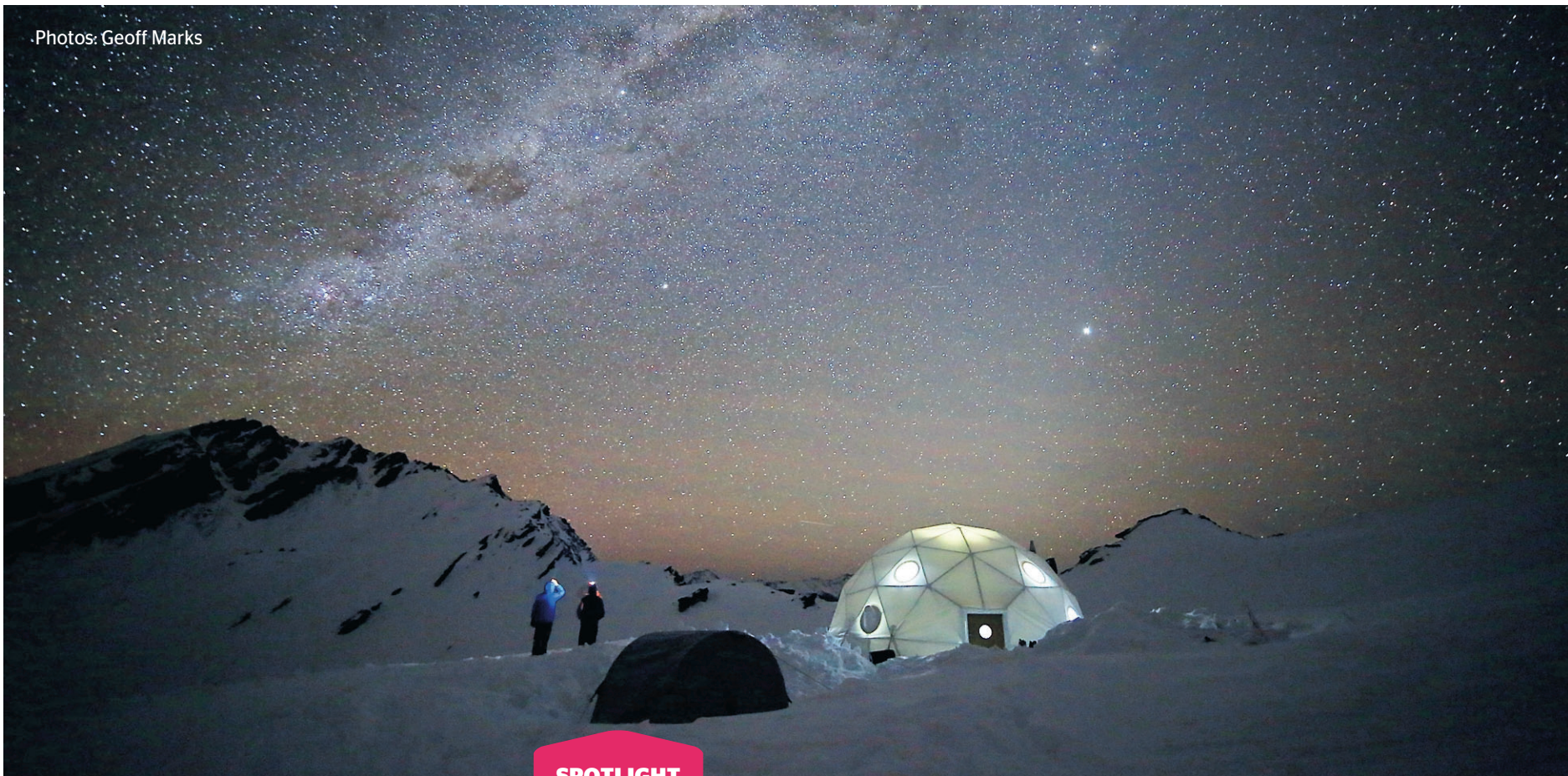
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Sydney skyline from the pylon lookout on the Sydney Harbour Bridge, 1957 - FXJ250902



Photos: Geoff Marks



SPOTLIGHT

They organise Himalayan base camps and expeditions, so surely it wouldn't be too difficult for Everest veteran Guy Cotter, his partner Suze Kelly (she also has climbed that peak) and their team at Adventure Consultants to make camp in the alps above Wanaka, in New Zealand's South Island.

Turns out it wasn't straightforward, but after a couple of years negotiating with the Department of Conservation and applying some astonishing Kiwi ingenuity to complete the structures, the First Tracks Wanaka

## Snow place like dome

Alpine Heli Camp is a reality. Built for ski tourers in the winter and bushwalkers in the summer, the camp is in the McKerrow Range, well above the snowline at about 1600 metres.

The main shelter is a metal-framed dome with double PVC layers to keep the weather out and cope with condensation. Despite its relatively sheltered location, the dome has been built and anchored to handle winds of up to 250 km/h.

The high ceiling gives a sense of space to

the Tardis-type interior that contains a dining table, gas-range kitchen, four bunks, solar-powered lights and charging (blissfully, no phone reception though) and even bean bags to scatter around a wood stove.

Nearby is a bush toilet with its frame refashioned from a trampoline and a weather-proof cover. A second, eight-bunk dome will be moved to the site this spring.

The ski touring out the door is superb, with slopes of varying pitch and views to

lakes Wanaka and Hawea and peaks such as Aspiring in the distance. Ski touring this year should go well into October.

Trips starts at \$NZ980 a person (four-share) including helicopter transfers, camp accommodation, meals and guided ski touring.

*Jim Darby was a guest of Adventure Consultants and Lake Wanaka Tourism. See [adventureconsultants.com](http://adventureconsultants.com) and [lakewanaka.co.nz](http://lakewanaka.co.nz)*

**Jim Darby**

FIND

## Ice caving

Those already missing winter can now retreat to Australia's first ice cave, at the innovative Peninsula Hot Springs on Victoria's Mornington Peninsula.

The mercury drops to -4 in the cave, while temperatures plunge to -25 degrees in its inner chamber, appropriately named Deep Freeze, making the accompanying

+12-degree plunge pools sound positively balmy. The hot component of the new wellness Fire and Ice experience comes



from its 50-degree dry and wet saunas.

The springs' \$13 million expansion will be unveiled on September 22-23 as part of

World Wellness Weekend. Discover seven new hot springs pools, more plunge pools, a new cafe, stage and meeting centre, where it will explore wellness trends and traditional therapies and rituals from around the world.

Entrance to the springs costs from \$25 (weekdays) or \$55 (weekends). A special package during the weekend includes body

clay workshops, Pilates, meditation and yoga for \$80. See [peninsulahotsprings.com](http://peninsulahotsprings.com)

GEAR

## Soft landing for tech heads

Is it a pillow? Is it a laptop saviour? For those tired of hauling pointless pillows on long-haul flights (note: they are neck pillows, not fashion statements), the new Scrubba Air Sleeve by Melbourne company Calibre8 doubles as comfort for your weary head and safety for your laptop. The sleeve auto-inflates to cushion precious tech, and with a couple more puffs of air, offers extra protection and becomes a snug pillow for impromptu napping, with the laptop safe inside. Take the laptop out and unzip the sleeve completely for a larger pillow, ideal for travel. Its lack of tech branding throws would-be thieves off the trail of your electronic goods. The Air Sleeve comes in five sizes to accommodate 10-inch tablets and laptops up to 15.4 inches, and is available in splashproof grey or blue. Costs from \$59.95 to \$84.95. See [thescrubba.com.au](http://thescrubba.com.au)



EXPAT

## I live here ... Madrid

**WHO** David Gillison, 42, runs small-group tour company [madridivine.com](http://madridivine.com)

**FROM** Cairns, living in Madrid for 11 years



**SEE** Madrid has amazing galleries, like the Prado, Reina Sofia and Thyssen, but don't ever try to see all three in one day as your brain will explode. Buy tickets for the Prado online and visit during the quietest time, from 2pm-6pm. Entry is free Monday to Saturday 6pm-8pm and on Sundays, but the queues are very long. Check out the Madrid opera, the Zarzuela, in the theatre of red velvet, gold and crystal chandeliers, which has a folkloric feel. See [museodelprado.es](http://museodelprado.es), [teatrodelazarzuela.mcu.es](http://teatrodelazarzuela.mcu.es)

**DO** Walk the streets of Malasana, La Latina and Lavapies, full of great cafes, boutique shops, graffiti art and local life, with terrace bars on cobbled streets and 17th-century churches. For good coffee, try la bicicleta in Malasana ([labicicletacafe.com](http://labicicletacafe.com)). Watch the sunset sitting on the grass in front of the Royal Palace.

**EAT** Locals in the know move from eating house to eating house to savour each venue's speciality in tapas or raciones (sharing plates). Start in downtown Las Letras and Plaza Santa Ana and drift across to the high-end tapas Mercado san Miguel. Visit La Casa de Abuelo for some of the best garlic prawns in town. See [mercadosanmiguel.es](http://mercadosanmiguel.es) and [lacasadelabuelo.es](http://lacasadelabuelo.es)

**DRINK** My favourite jetlag cure is traditional Spanish Vermut, a delicious aperitivo with a good kick, served either on tap or bottle. One of Europe's best jazz bars, Cafe Central, has a great vibe and divine, crisp white wine, Verdejo. See [cafecentralmadrid.com](http://cafecentralmadrid.com)

**AVOID** Don't carry valuables that aren't hidden from pickpockets. See [esmadrid.com](http://esmadrid.com)

**Know an expat who's in the know? Contact [belinda.jackson@fairfaxmedia.com.au](mailto:belinda.jackson@fairfaxmedia.com.au)**



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