

HOT DEALS

Melbourne

Perfect for a short holiday break. House of Travel has packages including return economy class airfares to Melbourne flying Pacific Blue direct from Auckland or Christchurch, three nights at Ibis Melbourne and a Phillip Island Penguin Parade Tour from \$899 a person. Contact 0800 838 747 or visit www.houseoftravel.co.nz

Alaska cruise

United Travel has a seven-night cruise on Holland America's MS Zuiderdam. All meals and entertainment on board, port charges and fees included, plus return economy airfares from Auckland to Vancouver, with a pre-cruise stay in Vancouver. May 27 departure from NZ. Sales until February 25. Contact 0800 730 830 or go to www.unitedtravel.co.nz

Australian Grand Prix

House of Travel has packages to the Australian Grand Prix including three nights' accommodation at All Seasons Kingsgate Hotel and a ticket to all days of the Australian Grand Prix from \$729. Travel March 25-28. Sales until March 1. Airfares additional. 0800 838 747 or visit www.houseoftravel.co.nz

WEBSITE



www.travelsense.org

TravelSense is a one-stop travel site with consumers in mind. Ignore the numerous commercial pitches and you'll find plenty of free consumer advice ranging from tipping etiquette to how to pack smartly. Well worth a look.

WIN



Summer city getaway

Auckland is a fantastic summer destination with a lively waterfront and easy access to the islands of the Hauraki Gulf. Crowne Plaza Auckland, in the heart of the city, is just a short walk away as well.

Crowne Plaza Auckland is giving one lucky winner the chance to win a night's prize package.

The prize includes: one night's accommodation for two people at Crowne Plaza Auckland (subject to availability), free car parking and winner's choice of two free extras from the hotel's Summer Dozen.

Crowne Plaza Auckland's Summer Dozen is a menu of specially priced items that will be available to all guests during December and January 2011, priced from only \$4. The menu includes late checkout, oysters and a glass of bubbles, dessert and coffee, or two tap beers and two bar bites.

To enter send your name and contact details to [name of paper and competition email] by [closing date of competition]. Prize package does not include travel.

For information on specials visit www.crowneplaza.co.nz



THE PLACE TO MEET.

noshing, shopping, lingering . . . romance



GRAND: Vienna's state opera house.

TRAVEL

with MIKE YARDLEY



THE splendid city of Vienna. I could spill rivers of blue Danube ink, gushing with superlatives, to try to do the city justice.

It's the city that vaulted Mozart, Beethoven, Haydn and Strauss into our universal music consciousness.

It's the city that gave rise to the brilliance of Freud, was annexed by Hitler, published the world's first newspaper, produced the delicious sacher torte, and was home to the imperial Hapsburgs.

It's a city of culture, class and beauty, a city of churches, castles, art collections and concert halls.

A city that has elevated the coffee house and the horse and carriage to the highest level.

If you're short on time, make every moment count by utilising the hop-on, hop-off tourist bus. Vienna Sightseeing Tours threads all of the must-see sights together. For more information, see www.viennasightseeingtours.com

Vienna's coffee houses are a revered institution. It's ironic that the rampaging Ottoman Turks, who desperately tried to seize Vienna because of its strategic importance, inadvertently sowed the seeds for one of the city's great legacies.

Defeated Turkish forces left behind many bags of coffee beans, giving rise to the great cafe society. Four centuries later, the coffee houses, resplendent with red velvet seats and lavish wall mirrors, remain central to the city's social heartbeat.

They're sprinkled liberally throughout the city. Be sure to sample kaffee and kuchen (cake).

Shopping, noshing and lingering is a most alluring pursuit in the heart of Vienna, particularly on the Karnter Strasse and in Stephansplatz, around the cathedral.

The only notable rivals to the profuse and frenetic foot traffic are the army of cyclists and the fairy-tale sight of many horse-drawn carriages. Vienna's love



Oh, Vienna!



affair with this romantic form of transport stretches back many centuries, and the fiaker, as the locals call a carriage-rider, is a top job. The tourist-

driven business is heavily regulated and securing a licence to be a fiaker is highly sought after. It was not until 25 years ago that women were allowed to apply

TRADEMARKS: Horse-drawn carriages in Hofburg (left); Mozart memorial.

for a licence.

The central terminus for the horse and carriage trade is outside Vienna's august Gothic cathedral of Stephansdom, its 13th-century soaring spires dominating the skyline.

The Steffl, as the locals affectionately call it, was severely damaged by bombing raids during World War II. Its rebuilding was a potent symbol of hope as Austria emerged from the ashes of conflict.

The Staatsoper, the Vienna State Opera House, is unquestionably one of the world's most acclaimed concert halls. The masterworks of Mozart, Beethoven and company continue to be performed every week at the opera house, which also offers daily tours. The Renaissance-style Staatsoper has a grand entrance hall and majestic staircase, setting the perfect tone for a magical evening of stirring classical music.



Living testament to an age of luxury and loss

The Hofburg, the former Imperial Palace and nerve-centre of the Hapsburgs, is one of Europe's most lavish royal complexes, lording over much of the historic city centre.

You could spend days exploring the gilt-edged collection of buildings, but the showpiece attractions include the Imperial Apartments, a live performance of the Vienna Boys' Choir in the Royal Chapel, and the Spanish Riding School.

First brought to Austria from Spain in 1562, the elegant white lipizzaner stallions were regularly used by the Hapsburgs for military equestrian pursuits, imperial celebrations and entertainment.

When the Hapsburgs relinquished power in World War I, the school was finally opened to the general public, and now stages daily performances.

Be sure to soak up the scenery and



ambience of Heroes' Square.

The vast recreation park was formerly the Hapsburgs' parade ground. Lavishly adorned with imperial equestrian statues, it was also the site of Hitler's feverish address to the Viennese, after Nazi Germany annexed Austria in 1938.

GRAND: Belvedere Palace (left); the Imperial Apartments at the Hofburg (right).

The mighty Hapsburg dynasty was never short of real estate. Its summer retreat, Schonbrunn Palace, 10km west of Hofburg is a sprawling estate.

However, for a mix of art exhibitions, stirring sculpture and manicured lawns, the Belvedere Palace ticks all the boxes.

Constructed by Prince Eugen to celebrate the defeat of the invading Ottoman Turks in 1683, it is now one of Vienna's most popular weekend haunts for locals and visitors.

The French-style formal gardens are replete with fountains and topiary. However, it's the classic statuary, complete with Greek mythological figures, that's particularly eye-catching.



TOP TIPS

■ Vienna is perceived as being a pricey destination, but it doesn't have to be. For a affordable and fulfilling stay, rest your head at the family-run Austria Classic Hotel Wien, which has been operating within the same family for more than 200 years. Traditional, elegant and friendly, with all the comforts of home, this central city establishment is a real gem. www.classic-hotelwien.at

■ Emirates flies daily from New Zealand to Vienna via Dubai. Fly in comfort with their award-winning, in-flight cabin service and facilities. For the best-price airfare specials to Europe, check out www.emirates.com/nz