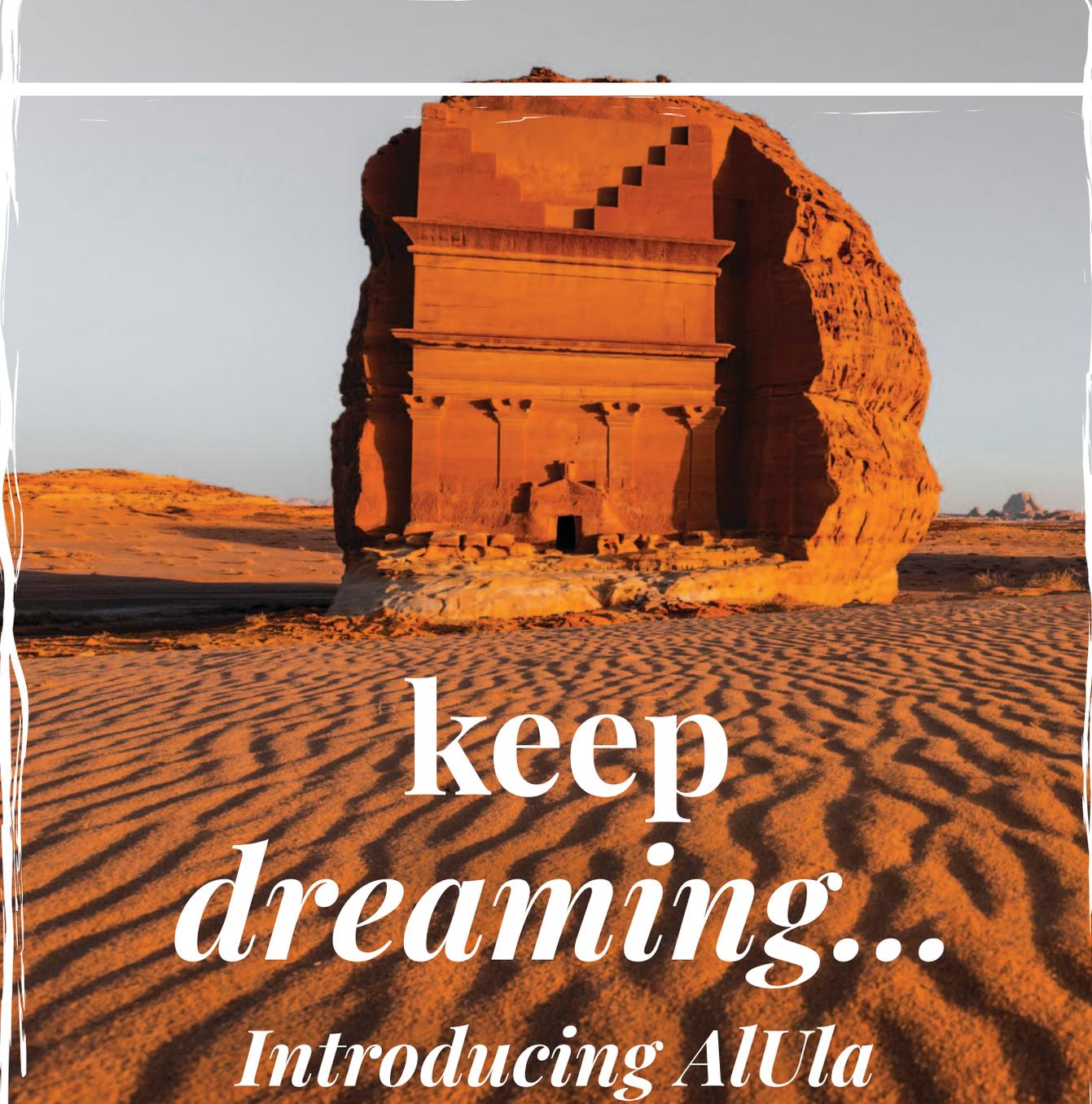


Issue 047

Travel & Cruise



Weekly



keep
dreaming...

Introducing AlUla



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This issue of *Keep Dreaming* has been produced in collaboration with ExperienceALUla



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Front cover image and imagery throughout issue:
©ExperienceALUla



From the Publisher

Jenny Piper

Welcome to our special edition of *Travel & Cruise Weekly*, which for the first time is solely dedicated to a brand new destination - ALUla. I have to confess that until recently I had never heard of ALUla, but having read all about it I am excited that such a place steeped in culture, heritage and natural beauty is now welcoming visitors.

Located in the north west of Saudi Arabia, ALUla is one of the first destinations in the country to be opened to travellers. Pronounced Al-Oola, the city is one of the oldest in the Arabian Peninsula and has many spectacular attractions for visitors to discover. From ancient tombs such as Hegra, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, through to unique oasis, desert and rock formations, there is so much to explore.

We take a deep dive into what ALUla has to offer as a destination, including its food, nature, heritage and accommodation. ALUla looks like it is definitely one to put on that list of places to explore once we begin travelling again. I know it is now on my bucket list, and I hope you enjoy learning about ALUla as much as I have.

Enjoy the read and follow us on **Facebook** and **Instagram** (@travelcruiseweekly) for more inspiration between issues.

xx Jenny

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AlUla Arch, Saudi Arabia

One of AlUla's most recognisable rock formations is found about 90 minutes from the city centre. Its bridge-shaped structure resembles a rainbow flanked by two clouds. While spectacular from a distance, step closer and you'll be enthralled by the multi-coloured pieces of quartz embedded in the rock itself.



For foodies

ALUla has a growing restaurant and dining scene, from casual to fine dining options.

Located at the entrance of the wadi near the oasis is the Pink Camel – a café and traditional sweet and pastry bakery. The café is made from traditional wooden architecture, and with terrace-style seating, patrons can sit outside and enjoy the shaded surrounds and the perfume of millions of palms.

Located in the heart of ALUla Old Town is Suhail, a high-end Saudi Arabian dining concept serving dishes inspired by the old Arabian Peninsula and time-honoured traditions, matched with a modern twist and exemplary service.

Opening in October 2021 is Maraya Social

by Jason Atherton. This will be ALUla's first restaurant by a Michelin star chef. Think exquisite dishes created to pair with ALUla's unique nature and beauty.

The plentiful supply of water from the oasis, enables plants and crops to flourish in ALUla, including barley, wheat, oat, figs, olives, citrus fruits, herbs and, of course, dates. The most famous date is the sweet and sticky, yet highly nourishing, barni date. Citrus fruits are also bountiful – there are 29 varieties in total. Look out for sweet lemons and kumquats (referred to locally as maliki). At ALWadi Farm, you can take a tour with a local farmer and pick your own fruits and enjoy the on-site restaurant.



In the News

Vaccination opens up USA

The rapid roll-out of COVID-19 vaccinations in the USA has seen the Centers for Disease Control update its travel guidance for American citizens, who are being told it is safe for those who have had a jab to travel across the country without quarantine.

For international travel, US citizens are also now unrestricted but must obtain a negative COVID-19 test result before boarding their flight back to America.

The ruling has given hope that Australia might also relax its restrictions once the vaccination program gets back on track, but in

the meantime the highly anticipated New Zealand travel bubble has also finally been approved, with quarantine-free trans-Tasman travel in both directions starting from next Monday.

Prime Minister Scott Morrison has also tasked the Australian Health Protection Principal Committee with developing a risk profile and timelines which would allow vaccinated Aussies to travel overseas.

More cruise lines restart

Silversea Cruises has joined the ranks of global cruise lines recommencing operations, with its brand

new *Silver Moon* to operate in Greece from June this year.

The company is requiring passengers to be vaccinated, similar to new protocols announced by Norwegian Cruise Line which has announced its planned resumption in Greece and the Caribbean from 25 July.

Viking Cruises is expanding its footprint after selling out new UK voyages aboard its new *Viking Venus* in just one week, with new departures in Iceland and Bermuda, while fledgling cruise line Virgin Voyages has announced its flagship *Scarlet Lady* will make her debut in England.

The Virgin offering, for vaccinated UK citizens only, will feature “short and sweet” staycation-style sailings.

JOURNEY THROUGH TIME



experiencealula.com

Arabia's hidden treasure

It's not very often that you get the chance to be one of the first people to travel to a brand new destination, let alone one that is as beautiful as AlUla, writes Sarah Beyer.



Hegra is Saudi Arabia's first UNESCO World Heritage Site and features over 100 tombs carved into the sandstone rock ©ExperienceALUla



Visit Dadan which was occupied in the 1st millennium BCE ©ExperienceALUla

AlUla is a city in the north west of Saudi Arabia and for the first time is open to travellers, revealing 200,000 years of human history to discover. Tourism is at the heart of Saudi Arabia's 2030 Vision to create a thriving economy through diversification, and the Kingdom is encouraging travellers to come and visit.

AlUla is one of the first destinations to be opened up, and travellers to the city can discover an ancient landscape where time has stood still. The heritage and culture of this destination is fascinating, and visitors to the city will be warmly welcomed by the people,

the elders, the rawi (Arabic storytellers) and tour guides.

Heritage

AlUla is a must-visit destination for discerning travellers seeking meaningful, authentic travel experiences. There are traces of many civilisations who have built AlUla over the millennia, from the capital of the kingdom of Dadan to the trading hub of the Nabataeans into the Islamic era. Much of AlUla's epic rock formations, valley and sandy desert remains as an untouched expanse, with discoveries yet to be made to add to its rich and layered past.

The most well-known and recognised site in AlUla is Hegra, Saudi Arabia's first UNESCO World Heritage Site. A 52-hectare ancient city, Hegra was the southern capital of the Nabataean Kingdom dating back to the first century BCE. Today visitors will find more than 100 well preserved tombs with elaborate facades carved from rock formations.

Centuries older than Hegra, is Ancient Dadan, one of the most developed 1st millennium BCE cities of the Arabian Peninsula. Dadan controlled the ancient caravan trade routes. A highlight of Dadan are the famed Lion Tombs. While

nearby Jabal Ikmaah, often referred to as the 'open-air library', offers insights into ancient beliefs, rituals and practices of every-day life. In many ways Jabal Ikmaah was the ancient Arabian version of Twitter!

AlUla Old Town is overlooked by Musa bin Nusayr Castle, a citadel dating back to at least the 10th century. Old Town is where pilgrims, travellers and permanent settlers congregated through the ages. Today visitors can explore the labyrinth of mud brick buildings, go on a journey through the town with a rawi, explore the bazaar, watch live re-enactments, learn traditional handicrafts, browse the shops for spices, dates and pottery.

Nature

As well as incredible history, AlUla is a place with stunning natural landscapes. The oasis runs like a river through the centre of town, with 20km of palm trees and local farms with citrus and fruit trees where you can visit and enjoy a long leisurely lunch of local produce.

The desert surrounds of the city are also full of natural wonders. Rock formations like Elephant Rock, Face Rock, and Dancing Rocks are a photographer's dream. You can book a walking, cycling or horseback riding tour to best appreciate these canyons and mountains.

Those looking for a wildlife encounter should visit

Sharaan Reserve where you might spot an ostrich, ibex or gazelle, and you can learn about conservation efforts to restore native gazelles and the Arabian leopard to their natural habitat.

Arts and Culture

AlUla is blessed with natural and man-made art on a monumental scale. From contemporary artists projecting light against the rocks to locals studying traditional handicrafts, the spirit of the arts lives on in the valley of AlUla.

At the forefront of AlUla's arts and culture scene is Maraya, one of the world's architectural wonders. Maraya which means mirror in Arabic is a concert hall and events centre covered in

“
The desert surrounds of the city are also full of natural wonders...book a walking, cycling or horseback riding tour to best appreciate these canyons and mountains
 ”



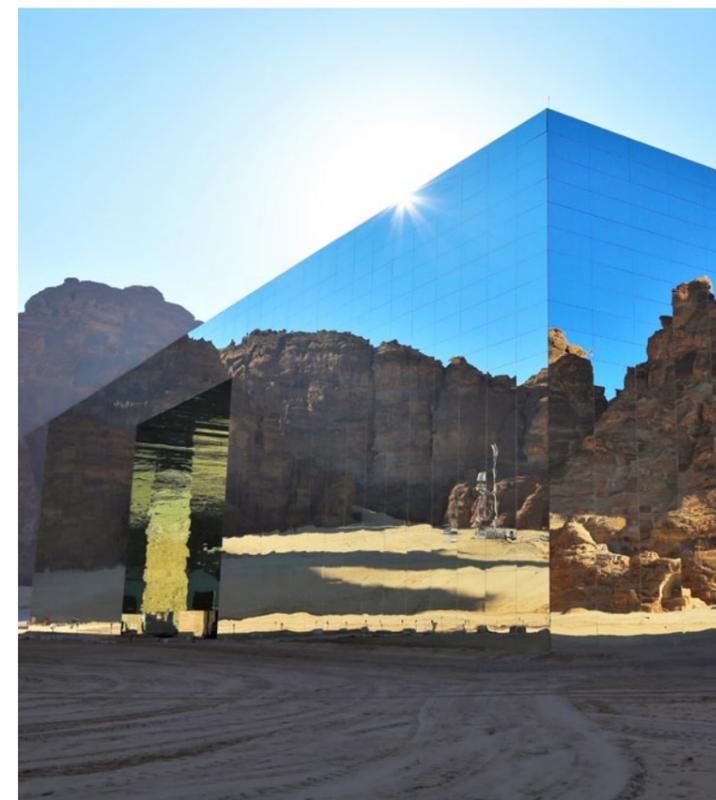
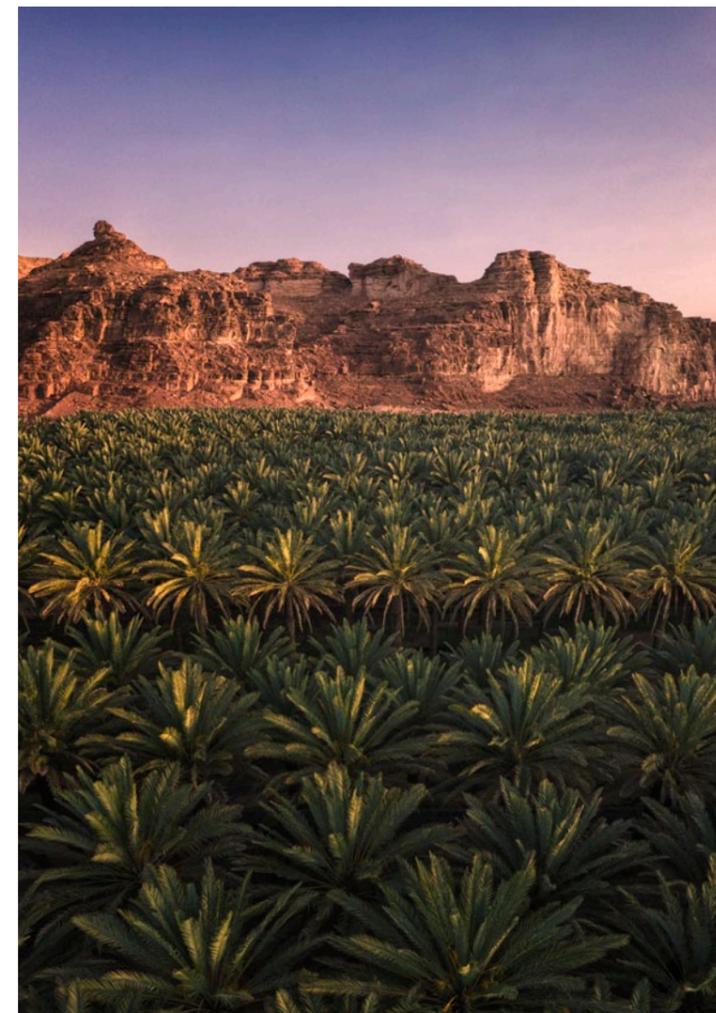
Clockwise from top left (all images © Experience AlUla): Jabal Ikmaah is sometimes referred to as the 'open-air library' for its hundreds of rock inscriptions.

Take in the scents of dates, oranges and mints as you explore the Oasis.

Maraya is the largest mirrored building in the world and is a multi-purpose conference and entertainment venue.

AlUla's Old Town is a maze of mud brick buildings dating from the 12th century.

Spot a gazelle in Sharaan Reserve.





Top: Get an aerial view of AlUla's spectacular landscape with a hot air balloon ride.

Centre: Take to the skies in a vintage aircraft to see stunning AlUla from above.

Bottom: AlUla is located in the north west of Saudi Arabia, historically a stop on the Incense Route.

All images ©Experience AlUla



over 9,000m² of mirrors reflecting the desert surroundings. Surrounded by mountains Maraya's brilliance combines both modernism and antiquity.

A new handicraft pavilion at AlUla Old Town will provide an insight into the crafts and arts practiced by the residents of the town over generations. In addition to the traditional arts, contemporary artists are finding creative ways to express themselves across AlUla's extraordinary landscape including exhibitions, installations and galleries that celebrate AlUla's distinct artistic heritage.

Adventure

AlUla's heritage doesn't mean you can't experience the city in a modern way, with plenty of adventure activities which interact with the backdrop of the area's landscape. Travellers of all fitness levels can hike and bike around various sites, and vintage car transfers between attractions is a great novelty. Getting an aerial view of AlUla is a fantastic way to experience the city and visitors can head to the skies in a vintage aircraft or helicopter, or even a hot air balloon in season.

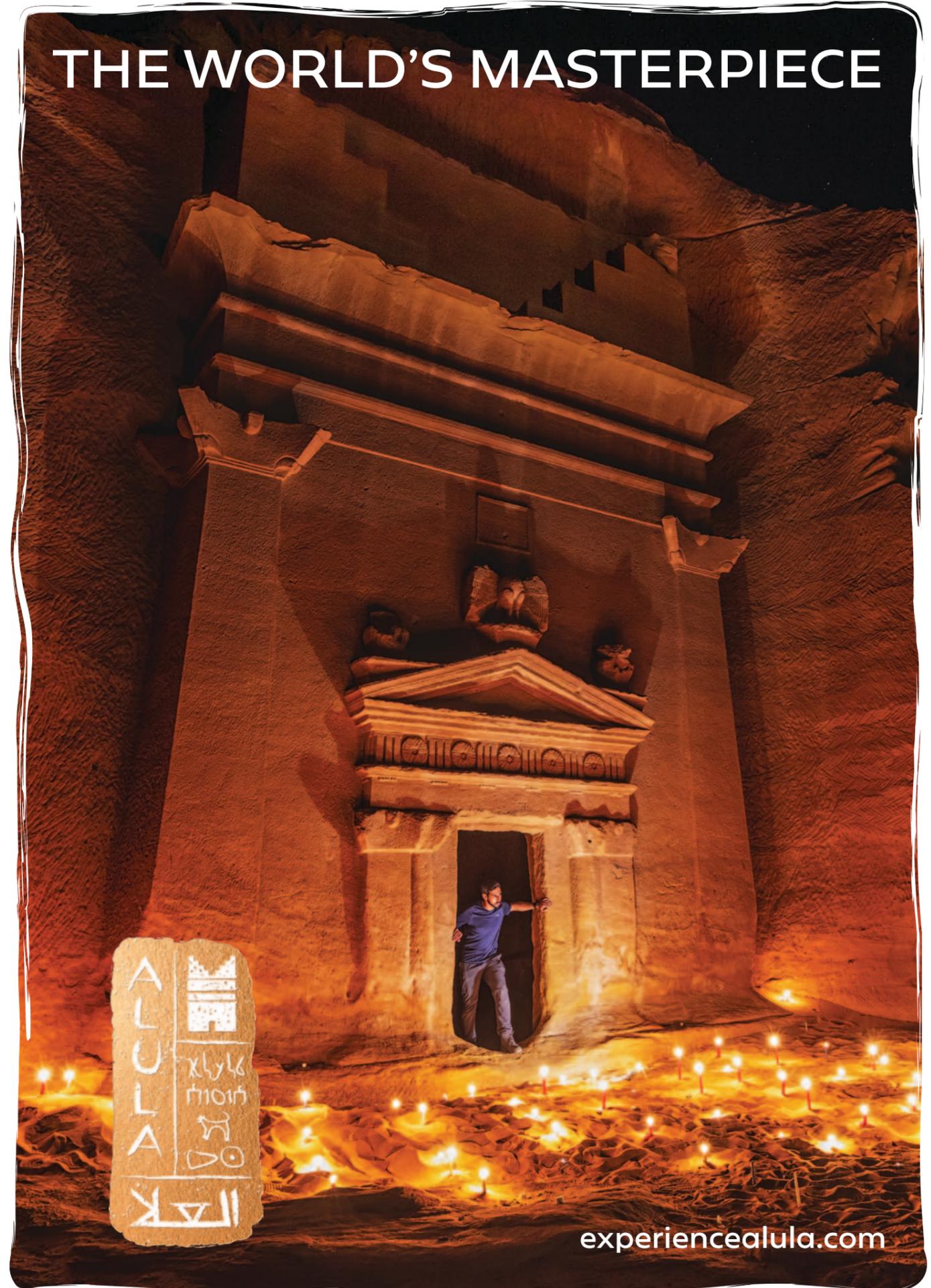
Travelling there

AlUla's International Airport is a short flight (only 1.5 hours) from Riyadh or Jeddah which are serviced by many airlines flying from Australia. If you've had enough of flying once you get to the Middle East, you can road trip from Petra in Jordan in 6 hours, from Jeddah in 7 hours and Riyadh in 10 hours.

When it comes to accommodation, there are a range of options available in AlUla from self-catered RV resorts to eco-hotels and luxury desert suites, with more coming online between this year and 2023.

Visit experiencealula.com for more information.

THE WORLD'S MASTERPIECE



experiencealula.com

Four things

Don't miss these four truly AlUla experiences



Star-gazing

AlUla's vast desert landscape and dark skies provide an idyllic location for star-gazing. Book an evening tour at Al Gharameel, where you can get comfortable sitting on a traditional carpet as local storytellers point out constellations relating to the local culture. It is a humbling and breathtaking experience to look out at the pitch-black sky smothered in brilliant stars, against the thin sandstone pillars of Al Gharameel. The best time for star-gazing is around each new moon.

Centuries of hospitality

The people of AlUla have long been lauded for their warmth and hospitality. Historically vital crossroads along the famous incense-trading routes, AlUla's oases provided a welcome respite for caravans of weary travellers. Today, the people of AlUla, the elders, the rawi (Arabic storytellers), the craftspeople and tour guides are excited to welcome back visitors and to share their stories and unveil some of the secrets this vast untouched landscape.



Experience Elephant Rock

Climbing three stories high, Elephant Rock (Jabal Alfil) is one of AlUla's most recognisable natural sites. As the light changes in the afternoon, no two visits are the same. For an experience like no other, take a seat in the stylish sunken booths at the foot of the rock formation, sip Arabic coffee and enjoy local sweets as you watch the wonder of nature.

Archaeology - The world's oldest domestic dog

Archaeological excavations continue in AlUla. Recently, evidence of the oldest domestic dog, dating back to 4th millennia BCE was discovered, pre-dating other examples by more than 1,000 years. The researchers found the dog's bones in a burial site that is one of the earliest monumental tombs identified in Arabia. The ongoing archaeological work in AlUla is a great source of interest globally and as more details are revealed, is anticipated to change the current understanding of the significance of the Arabian Peninsula.



Stay in style

From luxury resorts and high-end villas, to Airstream RVs surrounded by natural wonders. No matter what your style, AlUla is sure to have the perfect place for you to rest your head.

Habitas AlUla

Nestled amongst the ancient oasis and surrounded by the spectacular sandstone cliffs and palms of the Ashar Valley, Habitas provides guests the opportunity to immerse themselves amongst the environment, heritage and people of AlUla through various authentic experiences. Each of the 100 rooms on offer are made from ethically sourced organic materials which seamlessly blend into the natural surroundings with minimal disruption to the environment aligned with Habitas' very own sustainable program. Facilities include a yoga deck, wellness and fitness centres, swimming pool and restaurant which draws upon the local Middle Eastern farm-to-table practices.



Shaden Resort

Shaden Resort is a traditional desert retreat situated amongst the striking rock formations which surround AlUla. Guests can choose from the collection of 121 Deluxe Rooms and Villas here, all of which include a private terrace or balcony. For something more luxurious, you can also choose one with a private pool.

Airstream RV Resorts

Enjoy the great outdoors by staying in these state-of-the-art appointed Airstream RVs. There are 50 of these in total between two locations: Ashar and Shaden. With a retro-chic look, each trailer has a bathroom, mini-kitchen and a covered patio area. At night, gather around the community firepit where you can sit back for the evening and gaze into the starry night sky.



Ashar Valley Resort

Situated at the southern end of the Ashar Valley and nestled amongst the sky-high rock formations, Ashar Valley Resort has 44 luxurious three-bedroom villas to choose from, which blend into the desert surroundings. Strolling between the canvas roofs, wooden walls and candlelit pathways allows guests to see the epic views that surround Ashar. Tented villas are appointed with luxurious plush beds, ensuite bathrooms and terraces.



Pub quiz

- Which street in London is known for its many traditional gentlemen's clubs?
- In which city would you be able to visit Museum Island, known for its five cultural institutions?
- Australia's Moorilla Estate winery also features what other landmark?
- Which is the largest airline in Indonesia, according to 2015 statistics?
 - Lion Air
 - Garuda Indonesia
 - Sriwijaya Air
 - Batik Air
- Grand Harbour and Marsamxett Harbour are located in which country?
- Monastiraki is a flea market located in what city?
- The Great Southern train journey from Adelaide to Brisbane ends at which station?
- You would fly into Faa'a International if you were flying to which island?
- The Chief Executive of which European airline is known to be a highly rated pilot himself?
 - Eurowings
 - Easyjet
 - airBaltic
- The Houtman Abrolhos is a chain of islands located in which country?

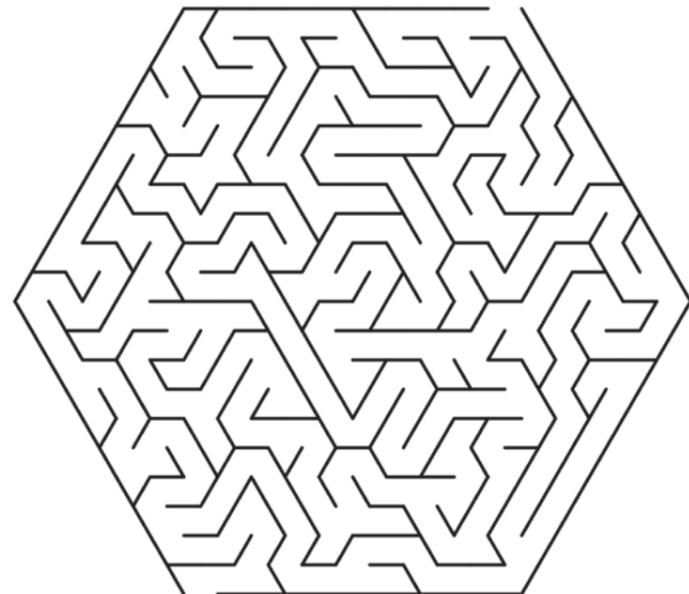
Icon under a microscope

This landmark is iconic and easily recognisable when you see the whole picture, but can you identify it from this small portion of the image? The largest of its kind in the world, this impressive structure was built over 10 years starting in 70 AD. Today substantial parts of it still remain standing, it has become an icon of the city it is in, and appears on the country's version of the five-cent euro coin.



A-maze-ing

Can you find your way through this maze? Start at the top right corner and finish in the bottom left.



YoFreeSamples.com ©2017

Pub quiz

- Which former Las Vegas hotel-casino also operated a golf course?
- Which six routes meet at London's Charing Cross junction?
- Kebnekaise is the highest mountain in which country?
- Was Fernsehturm Berlin, the tallest building in Germany, built by East or West Germany?
- Which building overtook the Great Pyramid of Giza in the 14th century to become the tallest structure in the world?
 - Eiffel Tower
 - Lincoln Cathedral
 - Notre Dame Cathedral
 - Tower of Pisa
- The Karnak Temple Complex is located in which country?
- What country is host to the highest population of camels?
- The Cavill Hotel, an entertainment venue, is located in which Australian town?
- What Australian city is known as T-Ba?
- Donald Trump was born and raised in which city?

Sudoku

DIABOLICAL

The aim of Sudoku is to complete the entire grid using the numbers 1-9. Numbers can only be used once in each row, column & 3x3 box.

	7	3				9		
	6				7	2		
1				4				
8		9		3				
	2		4		8		3	
				1		6		8
				2				6
		4	8					1
		7				4	8	

www.sudokuoftheday.com – visit them and get a new Sudoku every day!

Seen it at the movies



This Adam Sandler classic makes great use of Hawaii's amazing natural beauty, with many scenes taking place on its golden beaches, amazing cliff top lookouts and tropical bars. Ironically, the unforgettable landscapes are a far cry from the mind of the main character, whose chronic amnesia causes many hilarious romantic hiccups throughout the feature. Can you name the movie?

Pick the nation

Countries have unique geography, ethnicities and cultures which come together to often form very distinctive symbols.

Based off the four different symbols and famous faces, see if you can figure out which country they represent.



Where in the world?



This is one of the most popular Hindu shrines outside of India, and is visited by around 1.5 million people each year. This image only shows part of this site, with the main section comprising of a series of caves which are used as temples. In order to reach the caves, visitors have to climb just over 270 stairs. Do you know where in the world you could visit this place?

Unscramble

How many words can you make out of these nine letters? Every word needs to include the centre letter, have four letters or more and not be a proper noun or a plural. You can only use each letter once.

O	N	D
N	B	W
E	I	R

Good – 19 words

Very good – 28 words

Excellent – 37 words

NOTE: We've used Chambers Dictionary to decide what words are acceptable.

Malaysia Airlines word search

C	O	M	P	E	T	I	T	I	V	E	F	A	R	E
M	H	G	R	O	U	P	P	O	R	T	A	L	I	Y
R	V	D	R	A	C	T	I	D	E	R	C	Q	B	H
M	W	T	E	N	D	T	O	E	N	D	R	D	G	U
P	Y	M	F	O	C	T	I	C	K	E	T	S	H	B
N	V	B	O	F	C	S	N	Z	A	G	Q	J	B	U
N	A	D	H	O	C	R	E	Q	U	E	S	T	R	R
R	I	N	F	A	N	T	F	A	R	E	C	F	P	W
Y	T	Q	G	R	O	U	P	T	R	A	V	E	L	X
D	R	A	O	B	H	S	A	D	M	B	I	N	Z	Z
M	M	F	C	U	S	T	O	M	R	E	P	O	R	T
X	Z	C	A	U	T	O	M	A	T	I	O	N	X	C
F	L	E	X	I	B	L	E	D	A	T	E	S	S	J
S	T	E	N	P	A	S	S	E	N	G	E	R	S	Y
A	Z	Q	U	I	C	K	R	E	S	P	O	N	S	E

See if you can find these words. They are hidden horizontally, vertically and diagonally, forwards and backwards.

MHGROUPPORTAL
GROUPTRAVEL
ADHOCREQUEST
COMPETITIVEFARE

TENPASSENGERS
FLEXIBLEDATES
FOCTICKETS
INFANTFARE

CREDITCARD
QUICKRESPONSE
ENDTOEND
AUTOMATION

DASHBOARD
CUSTOMREPORT

Where in the world?

This stunning island in the Celebes Sea is the second largest in this Marine Park. Though an overnight stay on the island isn't possible, it's a popular day trip for birdwatching enthusiasts, trekkers and divers. But what truly sets it apart from other islands is the majestic view of archipelago from its highest peak – that view alone draws tourists year-round. The island is the home of the nomadic local tribe also known as the 'Sea Gypsies', with their settlements being the only visible small cottages in the area. Do you know where this is?



Origins of the Rawi

The story behind AlUla's unique tour guides



Rawis are a special class of tour guide. The term 'rawi' translates to 'storyteller', and each has a specialist knowledge of the heritage sites, as well as their own family history to share. The term comes from a time when skilled storytellers in the community would have the informal role of entertaining people around the campfire, in the days before television. The rawis are highly regarded and celebrated for their abilities to recite much-loved poems and to captivate the audience with their gripping tales.

Puzzle answers

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Pub quiz: 1 Pall Mall, 2 Berlin, 3 The Museum of New & Old Art, 4 a) Lion Air, 5 Malta, 6 Athens, 7 Acacia Ridge, 8 Tahiti, 9 c) airBaltic, 10 Australia

Icon under a microscope: Colosseum, Rome, Italy

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Pub quiz: 1 The Dunes Hotel, 2 Charing Cross Road, the Mall, Northumberland Avenue, the Strand, Trafalgar Square and Whitehall, 3 Sweden, 4 East Germany, 5 b) Lincoln Cathedral, 6 Egypt, 7 Australia, 8 Surfers Paradise, 9 Toowoomba, 10 New York City

Seen it at the movies: 50 First Dates

Sudoku:

4	7	3	2	8	6	9	5	1
9	6	8	1	5	7	2	4	3
1	5	2	3	4	9	8	6	7
8	1	9	6	3	5	7	2	4
7	2	6	4	9	8	1	3	5
3	4	5	7	1	2	6	9	8
5	8	1	9	2	4	3	7	6
6	9	4	8	7	3	5	1	2
2	3	7	5	6	1	4	8	9

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Where in the world: Batu Caves, Malaysia

Pick the nation: Colombia

Unscramble: bend, bide, bier, bind, binder, binned, bird, bode, bond, bone, boned, bonier, bonnier, bore, bored, born, borne, bowed, bower, bred, brew, bride, brine, brow, brown, browned, brownie, inborn, inbred, newborn, orbed, rebid, rebind, robe, robed, robin, WINDBORNE

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Where in the world: Bohey Dulang, Sabah, Malaysia

ALUla oasis has provided civilisations of ALUla with water, sustenance and shelter for thousands of years. To this day, a variety of crops flourish in the fertile soil as the oasis nourishes life in the middle of the Arabian desert. ©ExperienceALUla

Feeling inspired?

Contact your local travel agent to start planning your next dream holiday

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