

GREAT EXPECTATIONS

AUGUST 25, 2006

COVER STORY, HERALD-SUN TRAVEL SECTION

The Greek Islands

The beauty of the Greek Islands is their ability to be whatever you want. From small villages serviced by infrequent ferries to tourist hotspots thumping with nightclubs and bars. Whatever your fancy the Greek Islands can cater to that style and make your dream holiday in the Aegean Sea a reality.

Have you ever heard of anyone coming back from visiting the Greek Islands and saying “Oh well, it was ok but I wouldn’t want to go back there”. Of course not. Ask anyone who has been seduced by the soft sands of Koufonisia or the precipitous cliff views on Santorini – they will pause for a second and drift back to happy memories of the beautiful life on the islands and the endless blue of the water.

www.vacation-greece.com

The Serengeti

Sometimes bigger is better, and the Serengeti National Park is one of the biggest wildlife reserves Africa has to offer. Regardless of whether you’re sleeping in a tent or living large in the 5-star resort, the real attraction here is the wildlife. Big cats, elephants, hippos and giraffe are just a few of the star attractions of the Serengeti, but perhaps it’s the sheer magnitude of the park that makes it so special. After three days of spotting antelope and their predators on wildlife drives the magic still stops a heartbeat at the possible sighting of lions, leopards and cheetah. The endless plains of the Serengeti are also home to the wildebeest and their annual migration. Take a long lens and twice as much film as you think you will need.

www.serengeti.org

The Taj Mahal

This temple to love is an inspiration to a nation, if not the entire world. Few buildings on earth can evoke the same intensity emotion. As you clear the archway and take your first few steps towards the Taj Mahal it draws your eyes ever inwards to admire its geometric perfection. The minarets that flank the main dome were built at a gentle angle to compensate for the distortion of perspective. When viewed from the gardens they appear straight. Similar tricks of the eye are employed for the fine Arabic lettering engraved into the tiles. The presence of thousands of other onlookers somehow adds to the majesty of this unique experience – you are one of millions of people who have gazed upon the lovingly created facade and watched the afternoon sun cast shadows across the dome.

www.tajmahalindia.net

Marrakech

The very name Marrakech evokes a particular blend of exotic and rustic, a place where the roughest of rogues deal in the finest of valuables. Jewellery, textiles and leather goods are just a few of the delights that fill the ancient souks of the bizarre. The confluence of Persia, Africa and Europe are blended to form a uniquely Moroccan style. Marrakech is a city of private courtyards, lavish gardens and accommodating riads. Here at the edge of Africa the most enticing of all cuisines are offered in a nightly celebration in the city’s old square – music, performers, story tellers and vendors compete to entertain and profit from the delighted passing of tourists and locals alike. To leave Marrakech is to head into the desert and the unknown, like watching the gates of the last known civilization disappearing behind you in the distance.

www.visitmorocco.com

Angkor

Centuries of kingdoms have been etched into the dense forests of north western Cambodia, so many that even today they are still being discovered. The region of Angkor is known to contain at least 70 temples which cover an area of 400 square miles – in some parts the jungle has begun to reclaim the ancient temples, as Banyan trees extend their roots into the solid rock foundations. The lineage of temples across the region of Angkor reveals the changes in religious dominance of the land. Successive waves of Hindu and Buddhist influence can be seen not only between the different temples for each ruler, but the largest and most famous of the ‘temple cities’, Angkor Wat, retains elements of both its original Hindu heritage and the latter adaptation to a Buddhist shrine. Even knowing what treasures have been lost to the pillage of recent empires the magnificence of Angkor is no less impressive. The scale, elegance and beauty of the carvings and temples will never leave your mind.

www.theangkorguide.com

