

There's no folk like Norfolk



Norfolk Island Exclusive

ALL PACKAGES INCLUDE

- Return economy airfare from Sydney
- Airport transfers
- Half Day Introductory Tour
- 7 nights twin share accommodation
- Individual property bonuses as shown

BONUS EXCLUSIVE OFFER

- Convict Settlement Tour
- Mutiny On The Bounty Show
- Entry to Cyclorama, a gigantic 360 degree panoramic painting
- Shopping Tour

CHOOSE YOUR ACCOMMODATION WITH EXTRA BONUS OFFERS

Norfolk Holiday Apartments

Bonus 7 day car hire* _____ from **\$899[^]** pp plus \$174 tax

Dayreamer Holiday Apartments

Bonus 7 day car hire* _____ from **\$939[^]** pp plus \$174 tax

Cumberland Holiday Apartments

Bonus 7 day car hire* _____ from **\$1069[^]** pp plus \$174 tax

Colony Lodge

Bonus 7 day car hire* _____ from **\$1079[^]** pp plus \$174 tax

The Governor's Lodge Resort

Bonus 7 day car hire* _____ from **\$1079[^]** pp plus \$174 tax

Highlands Lodge

Bonus 7 day car hire* _____ from **\$1089[^]** pp plus \$174 tax

The South Pacific Hotel

Bonus breakfast daily _____ from **\$1109[^]** pp plus \$174 tax

The Colonial of Norfolk Hotel

Bonus breakfast daily _____ from **\$1129[^]** pp plus \$174 tax

Poinciana Cottages

Bonus 7 day car hire* _____ from **\$1159[^]** pp plus \$174 tax

It's the work we do before you leave that makes all the difference

Travelscene



13 13 98

www.travelscene.net.au



*An additional Credit Card Service Fee may be applied by the tour operator to the dollar amount paid by credit or charge card. Booking conditions apply. All prices are per person twin share. Prices correct as at 06 May 05 subject to availability, changes in taxes and charges. Packages valid for travel from 15 May - 31 Aug 05. All packages subject to specific airline seating availability. *petrol/insurance not included. LIC NO. 27A00002 WA00014

Vietnam

How to feel gorgeous in one perfect week

A week of shopping and massages found **Kirsten Galliot** doing some serious woman-only bonding.

THE PLANE touched down in Ho Chi Minh City just 45 minutes ago, but en route to a domestic flight to Da Nang, a quick stop in the airport gift shop is made and so is the all-important first purchase. "Look," beams Maureen, as she proudly shows off two lacquered Vietnamese handbags. "Only \$25."

Her companions for the next six days on this "Gorgeous Safari" spontaneously burst into a round of applause and so the bar is set. This is the stuff women dream of. A week away from the family, the job or the mundane and a gateway into a world of shopping, eating and some serious pampering. Gorgeous Safaris has been conjured up by Maeve O'Meara, best known as a presenter on *Better Homes And Gardens* and a host of food tours around Sydney and overseas that earn the tag Gourmet Safaris.

O'Meara, a gregarious host with an infectious laugh, describes the women-only trip as "one mad idea in the middle of a massage". The idea, she says, is to "give women a single perfect week of total indulgence to be able to do all the things we love doing and don't have time to do while we're at home".

O'Meara, co-host Annie Fitzpatrick and the "token bloke", make-up and hair stylist Kenneth Higgins, who has the group laughing helplessly at his rapid one-liners. He's here to do one-on-one make-up consultations with each of the women. (His top tip? Concealer is a girl's best friend.) The trip begins for some with a

And so the week away is a seductive mix of everything the fairer sex loves to do to make them even fairer. Three days are spent north of Ho Chi Minh City in Hoi An, a World Heritage-listed town with a French influence that offers an injection of culture, shopping and food (the "white rose" prawn dumplings are made by only a couple of families in the region and are moreishly delicious). The remaining three days are shamelessly indulgent, courtesy of a four-star stay featuring treatment after treatment on

manicure and pedicure in the gardens of the beautifully serene Life Resort, a new four-star boutique hotel that's set on the bank of the Thu Bon River in the old quarter of Hoi An. Most of the group, however, are champing at the bit to hit the shops and outdoor Maureen.

Hoi An is known as the tailoring capital of Vietnam and with good reason.

The streets - which are teaming with locals on motorbikes who are well-practised in the art of ducking, weaving and using their horns as often as possible - are lined with tailors. But there is a mecca among this madness and its name is Yaly, reputed to be the best tailor in town.

Some have come prepared. Melissa, a 35-year-old mother of three, has brought along a

Those too 'tired' to go to town are caught skinny-dipping in the pool

the beach at Quy Nhon.

The 15 women, who have forked out just over \$3000 each for the week, are here for a variety of reasons. Bev and Lynne are two 50-something sisters on their first holiday together. Peta, a 32-year-old Australian and a Gourmet Safari regular, needs a break from her demanding telecommunications job in Amsterdam. For Chris, in her late forties, who has never been out of Australia, it's the first time she has been away from her husband in 32 years of marriage and, she jokes: "I might not go back!"

There is an easy camaraderie within the group, helped along by O'Meara, co-host Annie Fitzpatrick and the "token bloke", make-up and hair stylist Kenneth Higgins, who has the group laughing helplessly at his rapid one-liners. He's here to do one-on-one make-up consultations with each of the women. (His top tip? Concealer is a girl's best friend.) The trip begins for some with a

favourite dress to copy while another Maureen (dubbed M2) has even packed some fabric. Suits, according to the consensus, is what Yaly does best and with jackets costing about \$US40 (\$52) and pants about the same, it is money well spent.

Be warned, though: you will need to go back for at least one fitting and some of the group habitually pop in and out of Yaly's for adjustments. In Lynne's case, it's as easy as jumping on the back of a motorbike and shooting over there in between courses at dinner!

THOSE WHO don't have the energy for getting in and out of their clothes on a regular basis find plenty of other things to spend their dong on in Hoi An, including silk scarves, handmade shoes, crockery and lacquered paintings.

There is little chance of shopping in Quy Nhon, the next stop on the itinerary and home to





COLOURFUL: Clockwise from above: Hanoi fruit vendors; shopping for material at a Hoi An tailor; sandals to inspire; and the 'Gorgeous' girls at lunch.

Pictures: Getty Images, JIM SKOURAS, Zefa, PETA COGHLAN

> TRIP NOTES

■ There are two more Gorgeous Safaris planned for this year - one in September and one in October. Next year, there are four trips on the agenda - March, April, September and October. The tours will be led by Annie Fitzpatrick and the \$3300-\$3500 cost includes return flights, accommodation, transfers, all treatments, a cooking class, a private consultation with Kenneth Higgins and most meals. For more information, see www.gourmetsafaris.com.au or phone 9960 5675.

■ For information on other trips catering exclusively for women, see www.womenstravelclub.com or www.infohub.com/travel/sit/sit_pages/Women_Tours.html.

the other Life Resort in Vietnam. (Dutch owner Louk Lennaerts plans to open eight resorts, all concentrating on spa treatments, across the country within the next few years.) The final days are all about winding down and with treatments ranging from a coconut body scrub to a Japanese dry sand and salt sauna to a four-handed Vietnamese massage, there is little chance of not being able to relax.

CLAD in bathrobes, the group is swiftly transformed from bargain-hunting shoppers to blissed-out goddesses. "I feel like a new woman," enthuses Margaret, a Scot who has lived in Australia for more than 20 years. Her words are echoed across the ages women in their 30s, 40s, 50s and 60s all grabbing a bit of time for themselves and revelling in it.

But if massage is good for the back,

then laughter is great for the soul and there are plenty of giggles between treatments. A trip to the centre of Quy Nhon for dinner, bowling and a spot of dancing at the local nightclub turns hilarious when the group engages in a competitive "cheers" ("yoo" in Vietnamese) with the locals and Helen, a 31-year-old marketing executive, is literally picked up by (and almost thrown over the shoulder of) a local.

Back at the resort, those too "tired" to go to town are caught indulging in a little skinny-dipping in the pool (and there are pictures to prove it).

On the final night, an impromptu

fashion parade is organised and each woman shows off her favourite purchases, turning the resort bar into a catwalk of sorts. The parade is followed by a seafood barbecue on the beach where the women dine with the sand between their toes and toast their new friends.

"Of all my mad ideas," says O'Meara, a scarlet bougainvillea tucked behind her ear, "I think this has been the best."

I can name 15 extremely well-rested women who would agree with her.

The writer was a guest of Gorgeous Safaris.