

TRAVEL

OUTDOOR LEISURE



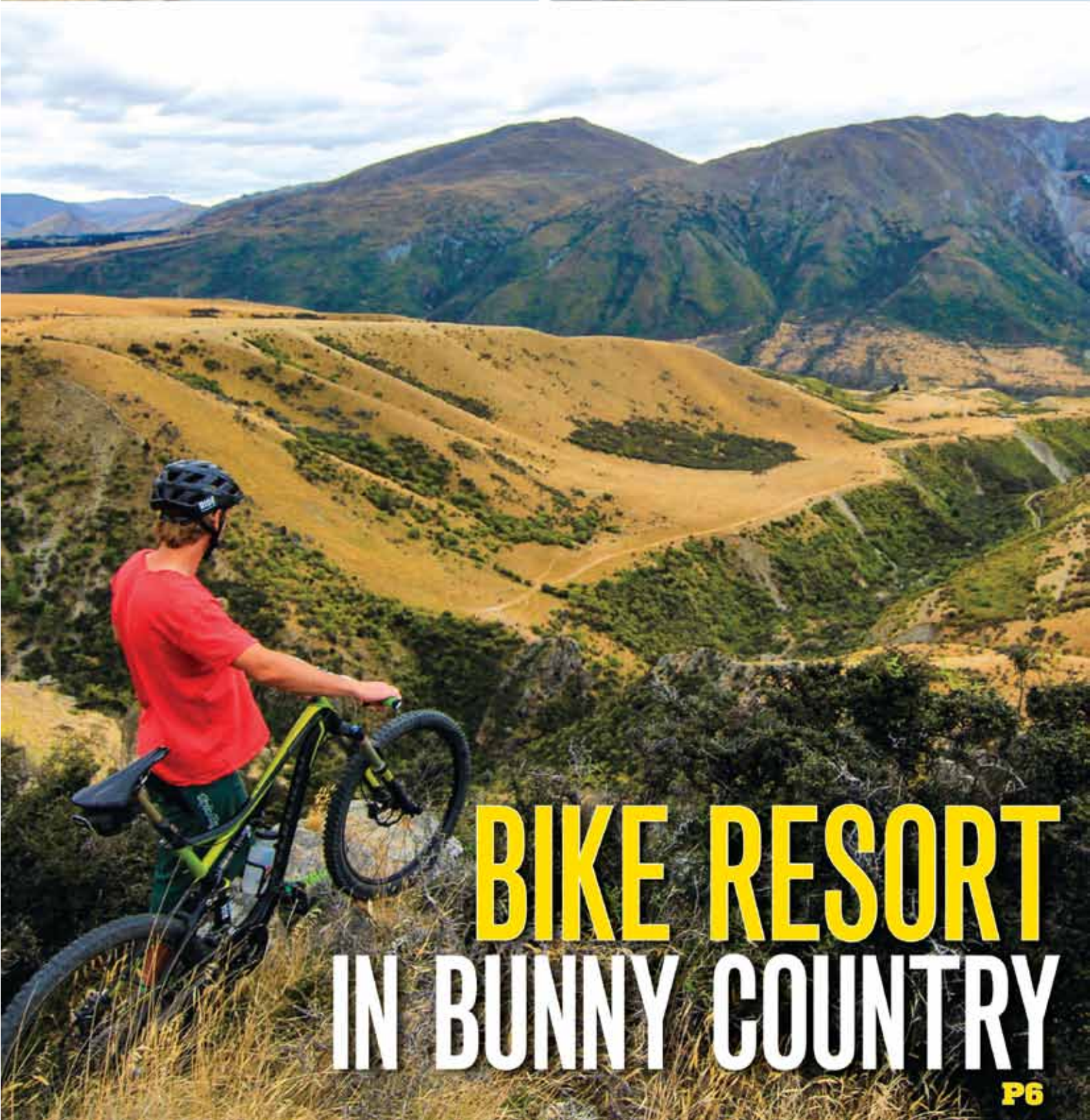
MADAGASCAR

Extraordinary fauna and flora lure tourists P4-5



ZIPPING AWAY

Latest addition to Kawarau Bridge Bungy site P7



BIKE RESORT IN BUNNY COUNTRY

P6



New territory: Mountainbikers test out new Rabbit Ridge trail.

Bike resort in bunny country

The new Rabbit Ridge Bike Resort, near Queenstown, will ultimately feature 30 kilometres of tracks.

A year-round biking resort catering for beginner and intermediate riders will open at the end of this month on 400 hectares of land adjacent to Queenstown's award-winning Gibbston Valley Winery.

The Rabbit Ridge Bike Resort, on Gibbston Valley Station rabbit-prone land, will ultimately feature 30 kilometres of tracks suitable for all levels of riders and will also include a new bike trail linking the bike resort with Gibbston Valley Winery.

Gibbston Valley Winery and district bike-tour operator Around the Basin have combined to create the bike resort at an estimated initial outlay of \$100,000 with further investment to come.

Designed and developed by trail builder Ben Rafferty, the first tracks are almost complete and will provide a family-friendly resort with a base area for relaxing between runs.

Around the Basin director John Knight says he was "blown away" by the beauty of the site and the biking opportunities it offered.

"This terrain really is stunning. It's world-class and a mountainbiker's paradise, with accessible trails for everyone, not just the adrenalin junkies," he says.

Gibbston Valley Station has been granted consent to build a resort which will include accommodation, a commercial hub and various recreational facilities such as a golf course and walking tracks. The bike park is seen as a natural addition to these outdoor resort activities.

It is anticipated that hotel construction will begin next year. This first hotel development is close to Gibbston Valley Winery and is set among the vines.

Gibbston Valley Winery chief executive Greg Hunt says he is excited by the new project which had developed

"very quickly" as a result of the explosion in popularity of mountainbiking in the region.

"The Rabbit Ridge Bike Park will offer the rider the experience of a great ride on a high country station.

"This will be the area's only year-round dedicated and serviced bike resort and will help put Queenstown on the map with biking enthusiasts everywhere.

"It'll offer an approachable network of trails perfect for families and entry level bikers, but will also have more challenging trails for riders to test their skills on."

The resort opens the same week Skyline's gondola access to its downhill mountainbiking tracks closes for winter.

Bikers at the new resort will be able to choose to cycle to the top of the Rabbit Ridge bike trails or use a provided shuttle at a cost. There are plans for heli-biking options in the future.

COVER

A mountainbiker enjoys the view over Rabbit Ridge.

GETAWAYS

Walk the Great Wall

Travel through the lush mountainous areas northeast and east of Beijing on the back roads and interact with the locals. Visit the Eastern Qing Tombs and explore the Forbidden City and the Temple of Heaven. Intrepid My Adventure Store has an eight-day tour of the Great Wall of China, including one-night traditional homestay accommodation, four nights' hotel accommodation two nights in a guesthouse, seven breakfasts, five lunches, four dinners, transport, sightseeing and entrance fees. An English-speaking local tour leader and local guides at some sights, and arrival transfer, are part of the total package from \$1695 a person, twin share; airfare are additional. Sales till April 30 for travel on various dates to December 31. The tour starts and ends in Beijing. Phone 0800 600 610.

Snow bargains

Porters, focusing again on affordable skiing and snowboarding for families, has launched its April early-bird season pass sale. The Ultimate family season pass starts at \$995, providing unlimited access for two adults and two youths. Additional immediate family members may be included at reasonable rates. Unlimited access for an adult is \$499, while tertiary students pay \$299 and youths aged 7-17 \$199. All children under 7 ski for free, paying only a \$30 administration fee. Season and midweek passes, training academy, and seasonal rental products are available exclusively via a revamped Porters online store. See website skiporters.com.

Vanuatu deal

It's no secret that Vanuatu's clear waters are perfect for snorkelling, and Vanuatu has built the world's only underwater post office just off Hideaway Island. Flight Centre has Vanuatu holidays, including Christchurch return airfares, seven nights' accommodation (shared bathroom facilities) with tropical breakfast daily and return airport transfers from \$1225 a person, twin share. Sales till April 13 for travel August 4-September 1. Phone 0800 27 555 or visit flightcentre.co.nz

Kangaroo Island

Experience the unspoiled beauty of Kangaroo Island, South Australia, at your own pace. House of Travel has a two-night, self-drive Kangaroo Island package from \$675 per adult, twin share. The deal includes two nights' accommodation, breakfast daily, return coach transfers from Adelaide, return ferry and a three-day small automatic car rental. Sales to May 31 for travel from now till September 20. Airfares are additional. Phone 0800 838 747 or visit houseoftravel.co.nz.

Thai holidays

Travel Associates has Koh Samui holidays with Christchurch return airfares. Included are two nights' five-star accommodation at the Banyan Tree Bangkok in a deluxe room and seven nights' five-star accommodation at the Six Senses Samui in a hideaway room with buffet breakfast daily and private airport transfers from \$4899 a person, twin share. Sales till April 16 for travel April 24-July 9. Contact Vuksich & Greive Travel Associates on 0800 482 776 or visit travelassociates.co.nz

Arrowtown treat

Stay at 4-star-plus Arrowtown House Boutique Hotel and receive accommodation in deluxe room, welcome drinks and canapes on arrival night, a la carte breakfast, cookies and fresh-ground coffee, parking and Wi-Fi. Book the Wotif Luxury Escape deal from \$299 per night for two people (normal full rate is \$489). Phone 0800 441 092 or see wotif.co.nz/hotelW66018

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