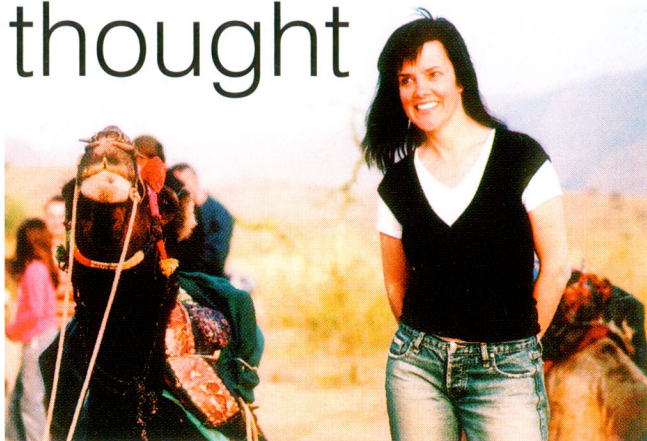


Food for thought



A Melbourne travel agent has found a solution for travellers grounded by their food allergy

When Michelle Horne returned from a holiday in India, she thought she was suffering a severe case of delayed Delhi Belly. But tests revealed she was one of Australia's many coeliacs: people allergic to gluten, a protein found in grains including wheat, barley and rye.

The disorder is easily handled if you do your own shopping and cooking, but what happens if you love travel but can't be sure what's in your food?

In the case of Michelle (pictured above on her holiday), travel is also a livelihood: she works with husband Karsten in a South Yarra travel agency.

The inevitable question cropped up: "What happens if we are in the middle of the Amazon and the only thing to eat has gluten?" Or even, what would happen on a simple trip to watch their beloved Western Bulldogs play in Sydney.

"I started wondering how other coeliacs cope when they travel," Karsten Horne recalls. "Was there a list of hotels and resorts in Australia and overseas that cater for gluten-free travellers? After weeks of research, phone calls and emails to my travel industry network – 'Computer said no'."

Well now it says yes. Their business Reho Travel in South Yarra has a division called Gluten Free Travel, where researcher Aline Koerner is constantly adding to the worldwide database of hotels, cruise companies, restaurants, resorts and airlines sympathetic to the plight of the coeliac.

"We've been overwhelmed by hundreds of replies from people in the industry," Mr Horne says. "One hotel chain is talking about revamping their menus Australia-wide. And several airlines are looking at the special meals they provide."

The ailment often goes undiscovered – Coeliac Australia estimates that only 15-20% of sufferers have been diagnosed. After that, with a gluten-free diet, they usually return to normal health.

For information on Gluten Free Travel, call 9823 5222 or visit www.glutenfreetravel.com.au.

Paul Edwards