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TAKE THE PARTY OVERSEAS

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There's a new destination celebration in town. Once, the only excuse to persuade a few dozen of your closest friends and family members to come overseas with you was your wedding. Today, more and more Aussies are choosing to have international parties to celebrate milestone birthdays.

The destination 50th, in particular, is having a moment, and it's a moment that can occur anywhere from rural France to Bali. Those hitting the half century generally have more cash to splash, some favourite travel destinations in mind and a hankering to take their best mates and family hostage in an exotic location.

Julie Primmer, head of branded network for Helloworld Travel, was joined by her nearest and dearest in Hawaii for her 50th. "If I could do my party every year, to have all those people in the one spot at the same time, I'd do it again and again," she says. "You get real quality time with

people. If you go to a birthday party on a Saturday night, 7pm to midnight, you might see the host once."

Having done it once, she's now hooked. "Live life now. I'm not waiting till I'm 60. I want to have a 55th. Why not?!"

Julie says her experience, which includes being invited to seven destination 50ths in the next year, is being mirrored in Helloworld Travel bookings. "It's definitely a trend. More and more people are doing 50ths and other special occasions

away and our agents are seeing that as well," she says.

Destination 50ths typically involve themed events over the course of a few days, with guests staying an average of a week, often combining the party

with family travel. Julie says, just as with destination weddings, discounts and bundles are available for those who arrange group bookings of accommodation, flights and tours. And she says the most popular destinations are those easily reached from most parts of the world.

Bail is popular for Australians, with many villa accommodation options allowing families and friends to have privacy within the same complex, and for the party to be in the same spot.

Others take advantage of specific hotel deals built around 50ths. Outrigger's Waikiki Beach Resort offers a Hawaii 5-0 package for those who want to enter their sixth decade with a bang. It includes special room rates for guests, transfers and priority bookings at the resort's restaurants with add-ons including a

catamaran cruise and sunset dinner party for up to 50 people.

Sean Dee, executive vice president and chief marketing officer for Outrigger, said the company created the package in 2015 to satisfy demand for multigenerational travel.

"It's a popular concept and certainly popular with North American guests, but our largest 50th this past year came from an exec from Manly who travelled with his family and friends from Australia and met long-time friends from North America as well," he says. "The event culminated with a special sunset cocktail party and dinner overlooking Waikiki Beach on the Ali'i deck at Outrigger."

But it's not just 50ths. Outrigger's Castaway Island, in Fiji, saw a family of 19 arrive to celebrate an 80th in recent years, booking out five beachfront bures for a week.

Closer to home, ZEN Beach Retreat at Bargara, Queensland, on the southern Great Barrier Reef, is a

complex of five residences, accommodating 22 people, which markets itself as a milestone celebration destination.



