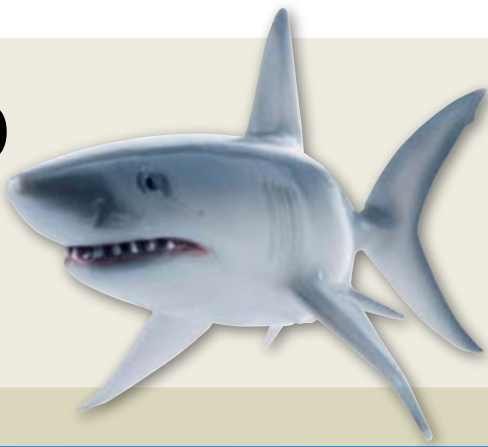


600,000

Number of square kilometres of ocean to be protected in South Pacific island Palau's recently designated shark sanctuary, the world's first such haven for jaws and chums.



Wanderlust wins!

William Gray has won four (yes, FOUR!) British Guild of Travel Writers 2009 awards – for us. His *Wanderlust* features on Mull and the Falklands, and his Falklands photos were voted winners; he was also runner-up Travel Writer of the Year.

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ALTERNATIVE AIRPORT TRANSFERS

'Helicopter into town, Madam?'

Airport shuttle bus? So last year. Leave the terminal in a truck, chopper or train instead! Kathryn Tomasetti gives the lowdown on getting downtown

NICE FRANCE

What's cheaper than a taxi and gets you from Nice airport to Monaco in six minutes flat? Heli-air Monaco's (€120 per person; www.heli-airmonaco.com) scheduled services depart every 30 minutes from Terminal 1's Aviation Privée zone. Rate includes minibus service from heliport to your Monaco hotel.



VENICE ITALY

The sexy way to arrive in the Most Serene Republic is by sea. The airport-to-city vaporetto (€13 pp; www.venicelink.com) runs to Piazza San Marco by way of Murano and the hotel-laden Lido. Or splurge and book a private water taxi (from €98 for four).

SHANGHAI, CHINA

Pudong International's new Maglev (www.shanghaiairport.com) is currently the fastest train in the world, whizzing passengers the 30km downtown in less than seven minutes at speeds of 460km/h, according to the onboard tachometer. Cost: ¥50 (£4.50).



SANTO DOMINGO DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

Upon arrival at Las Américas International, Aerodomca's (www.aerodomca.com) bevy of four single-engine Cessnas, a 1960s Britten-Norman BN-2 Islander and a Piper Cherokee can speed you to the island's coastal highlights for US\$80 per person.



VIENTIANE LAOS

Tuk-tuks may be outlawed at nearby Bangkok's shiny terminals, but they ply the 3km route from Laos' Wattay International downtown with wild abandon – for \$3 a ride.



SÃO PAULO BRAZIL

São Paulo may be the world's only city where helicopters are an everyday mode of transport. TAM (www.tam.com.br), Brazil's national airline, operates 20-minute helicopter transfers from Guarulhos International to the downtown Congonhas Airport. Cost: £270.



FREETOWN SIERRA LEONE

To get downtown from Lungi Intl, you could endure a four-hour bus ride, or take an hour-long ferry, a 15-minute hovercraft, or (our favourite) a seven-minute helicopter hop in a Russian-built Mi-8. There's only one chopper serving the route since its partner crashed in 2007. Cost: US\$50.



PAPEETE TAHITI

Taxis line up outside Tahiti's Faa'a International for the run to central Papeete. Authentic? We think not. Instead, follow locals across to the truck stop. These jazziily painted converted lorries form the backbone of Tahiti's transportation system. Flag down the driver to board; rides are £1 a piece.