

# McFlurry

By **Michele Martin**

MCDONALD'S has launched a range of toys aimed at children as young as three to get round possible curbs on TV advertising which is targeted at youngsters.

The fast-food giant has issued licences to manufacturers to sell a number of products in UK toyshops which are already flying off the shelves in the run-up to Christmas.

The range includes plastic mealtime sets complete with fries, McFlurry Makers that produce real desserts and 3ft-high plastic Drive-Thrus. The toys cost between £6 and £40.

It is a considerable departure from the company's previous strategy of giving away small toys with meals and, although the items are proving popular, parents are concerned at the way children are being targeted.

Pressure is mounting to curb the way that food giants advertise - 85 consumer groups have called for legislation to protect children from junk food adverts after a Food Standards Agency report linked commercials with obesity.

Kath Dalmeny, of the Food Commission, an independent watchdog, said: 'The whole food

## Parents' fears at McDonald's toys aimed at children as young as three

industry is looking for ways to get around conventional advertising and this is one approach.

'Corporations are talking about "a gathering storm" of regulations and they know the benefit of a toy is that it stays in the home for years while a 30-second ad comes and goes. It's a worrying development.'

Michele Elliott, of child protection charity Kidscape, said: 'Toys like this should come with a health warning. It's a cynical marketing move to get children to associate pleasure with McDonald's so they will continue to buy its food.'

The toys, complete with the McDonald's logo and famous golden arches, are on sale in outlets including Woolworths, Toys 'R' Us and the Index cata-

**ICY RECEPTION:**  
Toys like the McFlurry Maker are being used to get round TV advert curbs



logue. US firm Creative Designs International Toys has tripled the number of items it is importing into the UK this year.

And British company Vivid Designs, which launched the McFlurry Maker this summer, had to pull a commercial promoting the toy after just two weeks because supply could not keep up with demand.

The company expects to sell

200,000 before Christmas. A McDonald's spokesman insisted: 'Our brand represents quality, fun and value - universal attributes that appeal to mothers and fathers all around the world.'

FANCY a dim sum in Kowloon or a shopping spree in Rodeo Drive? Then break the 24-hour journey to Australasia with a stopover in the Far East, the Pacific or North America.

Stopping off for a day or two eases jetlag. Better still, it's free. Standard return airfares to Australia and New Zealand include stops in either direction, so your only extra payments are for hotels.

Make the stopover as stress-free as possible by dumping your big suitcase at the airport and stuffing essentials into an overnight bag. Most hotels run shuttles from the airport, so you won't need to splash out on taxis. The best cities-for stopovers are those with fast connections to the centre.

**Singapore:** Changi is one of the most passenger-friendly airports in the world, with fast baggage handling and shuttle services that will have you downtown in just 20 minutes. Unwind with a stroll through the ethnic neighbourhoods, linked by a safe and easy underground system. In a single day, you can explore the temples of Chinatown, browse through silk and spice stalls in Little India's Tekka Centre and haggle with Malay traders along the Arab Road.

Order sizzling shrimp curries at open-air food courts where hawkers juggle woks over Calor Gas cookers. Singapore has rigid hygiene standards, so you won't suffer for your short adventure.

**Hong Kong:** A 24-hour stopover gives you just about enough time to have a custom shirt made at outfitters such as



Float off on a boat in Tahiti; and below, hit the market in Hong Kong or explore Los Angeles

## ON YOUR WAY DOWN UNDER

You can buy a Round the World (RTW) ticket that allows you to visit as many as a dozen countries for the same price as a peak-season return to Australia and New Zealand.

Some skip continents so you can fly into New York, travel overland by car or train, then pick up global flights out of Los Angeles. Other fares let you fly to several cities within the same country — good value if you're spending time in the USA or Australia.

RTW tickets use more than one airline at a time. The Escapade airfare is available via a partnership between Air New Zealand, Singapore Airlines and Virgin. You fly to LA, cross the Pacific, visit

several cities in New Zealand and return via Asia. That fare starts from £929.

Qantas and BA sell a ticket starting at £989 with Air Pacific that flies to New York and LA before crossing to Fiji, NZ, three stops in Australia and back through the Far East.

**Stopover prices with Austtravel:**  
Singapore: The Copthorne Orchid Hotel, £78pp

Hong Kong: The Metropark Hotel, £72pp

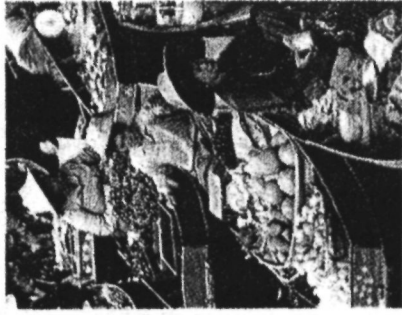
Dubai: Rydges Plaza, £135pp

Fiji: Hideaway Resort, £132pp

Tahiti: Hotel Matira Bora Bora, £129pp

LA: Holiday Inn Anaheim, £114pp

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ular stopovers on the way home when you have only another six to seven hours' flight ahead of you.

You can buy a Welcome Pack at the airport for £18 that includes a meet-and-greet service to whisk you through express Customs and Immigration lanes ahead of the queues. Transfers are fast, just a 30-minute ride to resort hotels along Jumeirah Beach.

Dubai was once a smugglers' haven, a trading post for gold and jewels carried by dhows up and down the coast. Even today, its souks handle a fifth of the world's gold bullion every year.

Browse through the souks for sandalwood and spice then spend an afternoon wandering around the ultra-modern shopping centres touting everything from designer trainers to electronic gadgets. The biggest made this one of the most pop-



before crossing the Pacific. Book a hotel beside the ocean, where you can at least take a stroll along the boardwalk, dodging inline skaters and skateboarders. Santa Monica is the nearest beach, about 30 minutes from the airport.

Let kids burn off energy between flights with a visit to Disneyland. However, you'll need at least a three-night stopover because it's in Anaheim, an hour-and-a-half drive south of LAX airport.

**South Pacific:** Fiji is less than three hours' flight from Auckland. Make the most of your short stay by booking a hotel

on the main island, Viti Levu. Within an hour and a half of touching down you can be sitting on the veranda of your bungalow with a cold beer.

Tahiti is farther from New Zealand, about a six-hour flight. Outer islands such as Bora Bora are a further hour's transfer, so be sure you have two or three days to spare.

Tahiti and Fiji have some of the loveliest coral reefs in the world. Scuba diving is the best way to explore the reef but is safe only if you complete the dive 24 hours before your next flight. Or borrow a snorkel and spend a few hours finning about with the angel fish.