#### JANE NICHOLLS

Simply hanging your towel for an extra day's use or just forgoing an overnight change of linen in a hotel guestroom is so last century. Ditto using those tiny, non-recyclable plastic bottles of shampoo, conditioner and shower gel that are on a one-way trip to landfill.

But many accommodation providers are trying to tread more lightly on the planet. Here are a few innovative initiatives helping travellers to make considered choices. It's far from an exhaustive roundup of Australian accommodation operators doing right by our environment, but rather a celebration of laudable strategies, planet-friendly initiatives and perhaps even ideas to spark a behaviour change at home.

### **Power plays**

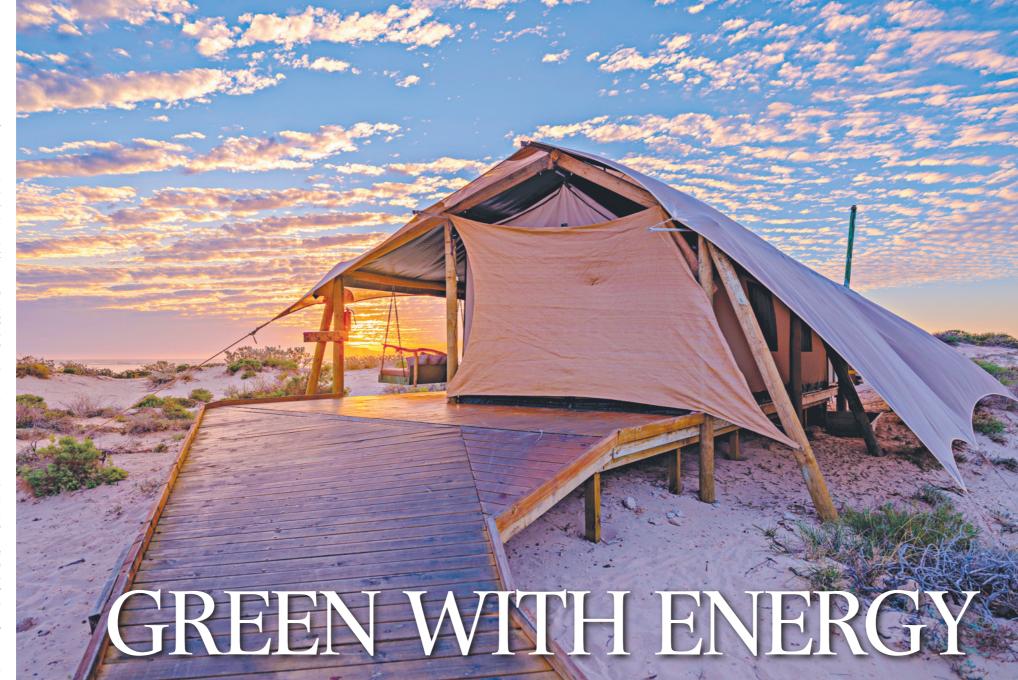
Hotels are ravenous electricity munchers; even when a keycard is required to activate a guestroom's lights, the whole beast sucks up power like a kilowatt cookie monster. Accor's new Hotel Chadstone MGallery by Sofitel in Melbourne has solar panels on its roof and reflective materials on the exterior to reduce heat. It also collects rain $fall \, for \, its \, native \, plantings, all \, help$ ing it to become the first five-star hotel in Australia to receive a fivestar rating from international sustainability rating system Green Star. Pullman Quay Grand in Sydney, also an Accor member, has 350 solar panels on its roof, one of the largest in scale in the CBD and enough to power the equivalent of about 20 homes.

In the NSW Hunter Valley, InterContinental Hotels Group's Voco Kirkton Park's solar farm powers its meeting rooms, reducing its carbon footprint by 20 per cent and energy usage by 20 per cent year-on-year. Nearby, hotel mogul and cosmetic surgeon Jerry Schwartz is generating enough electricity for his hotel and then some with a \$10m solar farm he built on land adjoining his Crowne Plaza Hunter Valley in Cessnock.

In sun-soaked regions, solar really rules. In Western Australia, at Ramada Eco Beach south of Broome, Kimberley-strength sunshine powers the hybrid solar system and guests can check their villa's usage. At Faraway Bay, northwest of Kununurra, solar heats water for showers and there are no "overindulgent, waterwasting baths". South down the coast at Sal Salis Ningaloo Reef, solar power provides almost all the property's energy needs; the 15 wilderness tents are cooled by sea breezes and, as with many solar properties, hair dryers are not available. Dirk Hartog Island Eco Lodge, on Australia's westernmost island, boasts that 92 per cent of its energy is produced by a hybrid solar and wind system. A back-up diesel generator kicks in during the winter months, but since the renewable system's installation, generator run-time has reduced from an average of 18 hours a day to 1.8 hours a day, saving 36,000 litres of diesel a year.

Down the road in Perth's CBD, the boutique Alex Hotel doesn't aircondition its corridors on that basis that it's "an unnecessary use of energy; instead there are windows at either end". Minibars also have been dispensed with, reasoning, "there is less energy expenditure, particularly when guestrooms are unoccupied, and the production and replacement cycle has been eliminated".

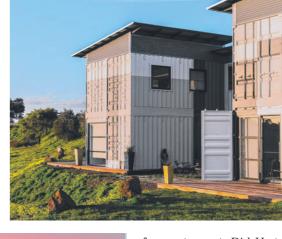
Near Port Lincoln in South Australia, Jill Coates, co-owner of Tanonga Lodge, says: "(The lodge)



A deeper level of eco-accommodation is on offer at Sal Salis Ningaloo Reef, above, in Western Australia; top right, Stillwater Seven in Launceston; below from left, King Island's Kittawa Lodge; Tanonga Lodge near Port Lincoln, South Australia; Hotel California Road in McLaren Vale, South Australia; bottom, Inverloch Glamping in Victoria's Southern Gippsland







has stand-alone solar power, har vested rain water and ecologically and environmentally sustainable design features so guests can enjoy the luxury without the guilt." In Tasmania, on King Island in Bass Strait, the new Kittawa Lodge has opened fully off the grid, with its own water-catchment, retention and treatment facilities, solarpower system and waste management and treatment all on site (yet out of sight). The solar system went in first to power the construction of the property, mostly using rechargeable tools.

## **Waste warriors**

Generally speaking, hotels are looking for a competitive edge. The Spicers Group is revving up the hospitality industry to join its war on waste, with five-star Spicers Balfour Hotel in New Farm, Brisbane, the group's standout, aiming to become the city's first zero-waste hotel. "I invite other hoteliers and restaurateurs to join us in reducing waste and working towards greater sustainability," says Jude Turner, founder of Spicers. "As a sector, we can make a huge difference."

Within three months of launching its zero-waste initiative, the property reduced to a single domestic wheelie bin of landfill

# MORE TO THE STORY

Inverloch Glamping in Victoria's Southern Gippsland region, which escaped the recent bushfires, uses the My Green Butler app, "the smart green holiday adviser", which includes tips to stay cool or warm in the tent or cabin. My Green Butler was invented by Christopher Warren, who was convinced that guests would happily join in environmental efforts, especially if given hard data. He set out to disprove the tourism truism that "you can only talk to guests about luxury, not savings". Warren and his wife run Crystal Creek Meadows in NSW's

waste per fortnight, down from two 600-litre commercial wheelie bins a week, representing a 95 per cent reduction. "It shows what can be achieved when everybody gets on board, from kitchen hands to senior management and everyone in between," Turner says of the intense focus from Spicers Balfour GM Simon Magnus and head chef Nick Stapleton.

Examples of the changes include ditching the plastic prep containers in the restaurant kitchen in favour of stainless steel, using specialist recycler TerraCycle for the thousands of latex chef's gloves that otherwise would be disposed of, and working only with suppliers who agreed to eliminate styrofoam boxes and plastic bags from their deliveries, reducing the amount of waste that enters the premises in the first place. A compost machine dehydrates food

Kangaroo Valley, his first trial

developed by a local coder "20

minutes from my home in rural

Australia", he created an app to

After a year operating it at

Warren says: "We saved 38 per

cent in firewood, 33 per cent in

support his scheme.

Crystal Creek Meadows,

site. Using sensors and software

on the kitchen garden. "We're going to transfer what

they've done to all our other properties," says Alice Dahlberg, who since 2017 has been the fulltime sustainability officer and earth-check co-ordinator with the Spicers Group. "We ask for feedback from our guests and it's 99 per cent positive, but we want to know what we can do better, and be on the journey with them. If they have a good suggestion, we contact waste and anything leftover goes them and let them know we're

electricity use, 21 per cent in

water and 20 per cent in gas,

which we use for hot water and

cooking." Information on usage

is shown on a digital display in

reception, on guestroom TVs

and in a paper report. "I believe

my business is the only one like

it because it's focusing on using

persuasive communication

going to take it further." Other little changes add flavand in Britain. our and reduce waste. As well as Spicers Group, small hotels such as Stillwater Seven in Launceston and Maylands Lodge in Hobart are offering loose-leaf tea and pots rather than tea bags and French presses and local roasts rather than pods for coffee. As you'd expect, those properties and others of their ilk are also obsessive about

(with guests)," Warren adds.

advertising and marketing, so

I'm applying those dark arts to

larger properties, with trial sites

at the five-star Amora Hotel

Jamison in Sydney, in France

My Green Butler is moving to

encourage people to use less."

'My background is in

a depressingly enormous part of hospitality. But recycling can be a problem

eliminating single-use plastic, long

for remote resorts. Dirk Hartog Island Eco Lodge solves it with its own glass crusher, which reduces glass to grains the size of sand, which can then be used in cement for works on the resort. Reducing housekeeping saves energy, water and chemical use.

Guests who've come to expect it are now being incentivised to forgo it, with some European chains offering bar credits if guests opt for no housekeeping services on stays above one night. The IHG group's global A Greener Stay initiative pays guests in reward club points for each night they forego housekeeping.

"In 2019 in Australasia, 26,598 room nights activated the offer, saving as many as 100,000 toiletries, as well as energy and water," says Leanne Harwood, managing director of IHG Australasia and

## Grand green designs

TFE Hotels' 200-room Hotel Adina Apartment Hotel Melbourne Southbank, scheduled to open mid-year, will be Australia's first cross-laminated timber hotel. CLT is an engineered timber product made from sustainably sourced material and will be a signature

of this property's design. The building process with CLT



is quieter than construction with concrete and steel, with an electric crane deployed on the Adina site to further reduce noise. Proponents of CLT construction claim the panels require much less energy to make than production of concrete or steel.

At the other end of the construction scale, Hotel California Road, part of the certified organic Inkwell Wines vineyard in Mc-Laren Vale, has repurposed 20 former shipping containers to create tasting rooms and a luxury microhotel, eliminating the need for a significant amount of new materials. The interiors are outfitted with

#### Many operators are working to nurture the land on which their properties stand

reclaimed hardwood flooring, and all new hotel furniture and cabinetry was built from plywood, which is considered "waste stream". Carpeting was manufactured from 70 per cent post-consumer, recyclable waste. (No surprise that co-owner Irina Santiago Brown is a renowned sustainability consultant.)

Many operators are working to nurture the land on which their properties stand. At Emirates One & Only Wolgan Valley, west of Sydney, more than 200,000 indigenous trees have been planted during the past decade by the resort's team, and guests are invited

tojoin in and help. Since 2009, at Arkaba in South Australia's Flinders Ranges, Wild Bush Luxury has been turning a former sheep station into a wildlife conservancy. About 18 species, including the western quoll, have reappeared, and Arkaba is the only Australian member of global sustainable tourism collection The Long Run.

In the Murchison region of Western Australia's northwest, David and Frances Pollock are nurturing the vast Wooleen Station back to life after a century of being run into the ground by stock; their book. The Wooleen Way, was praised by Tim Flannery as "a revelation". Wetlands are returning to life as the couple works to revive the natural ecosystem and leave a sustainable legacy.

## **Local heroes**

There's also a pleasing trend to source full-size and refillable or biodegradable hotel toiletry supplies from local suppliers, thus providing regional jobs and avoiding the carbon footprint of imports in a (literally) clean sweep.

Stillwater Seven in Launceston has theirs made "up the road in the Tamar Valley", says co-owner Kim Seagram, who buttonholed Lentara Olive Grove maker Sophie Grace at the local markets. Kittawa Lodge co-founder Aaron Suine chose his own botanicals for the property's toiletries, all made on King Island.

Faraway Bay in the WA Kimberley adds insect repellent to its locally produced range of biodegradable products for guests.

# Revel in an English country garden

From classic styles to more contemporary, Britain's gardens are a wonder

**CHRISTINE McCABE** 

FAB FOUR

## 1. ARUNDEL CASTLE

Home to the dukes of Norfolk and their ancestors for a millennium, Arundel Castle in West Sussex is one of the prettiest piles in England but it pales against the more recent and quite magical garden created by designers Isabel and Julian Bannerman, great favourites of Prince Charles. Intended to conjure the spirit of the 14th earl of Arundel, dubbed the "collector earl", the gardens are overlooked by an enormous 19th-century cathedral and designed as a "theatre garden". With what must have been an extraordinarily generous budget, the Bannermans have created an otherworldly realm of temples with pediments of deer antlers, fountains fizzing from columns of green oak, gilt bronze



agaves in timber urns and a field of tens of thousands of yellow and purple irises. Amid all the whimsy and allegory there's a delightful vegetable garden, pretty greenhouse stuffed with pelargoniums, and lush plantings of palms and towering echiums (pride of Madeira) wrapping around a wildflower meadow. Pure poetry. arundelcastle.org

## 2. LOSELEY PARK

The 16th-century house at Loseley Park in Surrey will be familiar to fans of The Crown and The Favourite; its fusty, panelled interiors remain largely unchanged since the reign of Elizabeth I, who apparently visited four times and planted a mulberry tree that grows to this day. The lha walled garden is a stunner, divided into "rooms"



including one of the finest rose gardens in the country — planted with more than 1000 old-fashioned roses, at their best in mid-June to early July. The lovely herb garden is beautifully laid out and crammed with culinary and medicinal simples. There's an elegant garden of white, silver and cream plants, and an ancient wisteria scrambling along the west wall un-



derplanted with deep purple irises and a treat in May. A leisurely picnic atmosphere prevails, with a little caravan dispensing tea and cakes and estate-made ice creams available in the tiny gift shop.

3. CHELSEA PHYSIC GARDEN If I lived in London I would take tea in this charming garden every

loseleypark.co.uk

Worshipful Society of Apothecaries and occupying 1.4ha near the Thames, the Physic garden didn't open to the public until 1983 and remains almost a secret, tucked behind high brick walls, a world removed from the hustle and bustle of fashionable Chelsea. Mums and nannies with small children picnic on the lawns; trainee horticulturalists explore the maze of paths crisscrossing a collection of 5000 different plants. The Garden of Medicinal Plants is particularly fascinating and still visited by medical students; the rockery at the heart of the gardens is thought to be the oldest in Europe. Most diverting are the century-old greenhouses filled with cactuses, succulents and carnivorous plants. During warmer months the garden cafe sets tables on the terrace, perfect for a cuppa or Pimms. chelseaphysicgarden.co.uk

4. HOTEL ENDSLEIGH Set high above the River Tamar

day. Established in 1673 by the deep in the Devon countryside, this former hunting lodge built in 1810 for the duke of Bedford, is famous these days for being owned and run by hotel doyen Olga Polizzi. About 15 years ago she transformed the Grade 1 listed building into the perfect country house hotel, all squishy sofas, creaking stairs and indulgent afternoon teas, more Miss Marple than Claridge's. Many bedrooms overlook the gorgeous gardens, also Grade 1 listed and one of the last projects for the 18th-century landscape designer to the beau monde Humphry Repton. Falling down to the river, the site is steep and Repton was apparently conveyed in a sedan chair as he made his sketches. His faithfully restored garden includes one of the longest herbaceous borders in England, a quaint folly lined with shells, crystals and coral and a pretty dell and woodland featuring several national champion trees (the largest

of their kind in England). • hotelendsleigh.com