

# Luxe ways to visit our natural wonders

From world-renowned beaches to iconic monoliths, here are our picks of the ultimate Australian natural wonders and the best ways to experience them.

By ELLE HALLIWELL



The pristine sands of Whitehaven Beach, Whitsunday Island. Picture: Brooke Miles/Riptide Creative

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## Whitehaven Beach, QLD

Its blinding white silica sand and surrounding aqua water has made this stretch of beach in Queensland's Whitsunday Islands one of Australia's must-see natural attractions. The pristine spot is accessible via boat from Airlie Beach or the many nearby islands including Hayman, Hamilton and Long, but to see the true beauty of this beach, it's worth also viewing it from the nearby Hill Inlet lookout.

Stay: Qualia Resort

Considered one of the best luxury resorts in Australia, Qualia's 60 pavilions are nestled among 30 acres of lush native bushland on the southern doorstep of the Great Barrier Reef.

## Lord Howe Island, NSW

For an island of its size, Lord Howe punches well above its geographical weight. There's a lot of natural beauty crammed onto the island's 14.5 square kilometres and its surrounding waters; enough to secure it a UNESCO World Heritage listing.

It's a twitcher's paradise, with hundreds of thousands of seabirds flocking to the island to nest each year, as well as a hiker's, thanks to its largely untouched landscape and the challenging 14km trek up and down Mount Gower, the island's tallest peak.

It's also one of the few locations where switching off – literally and figuratively – is actually possible, with limited network availability and tight visitor restrictions; only 400 visitors are allowed on the island at a time.

Stay: Capella Lodge

Book one of the lodge's nine recently renovated suites, located above the romantically named Lover's Bay. And dining at its restaurant, which offers unencumbered views of the Bactrian-esque Mount Lidgbird and Mount Gower, is the ultimate way to appreciate the geographical beauty of this unique island.



Capella Lodge, Lord Howe Island

## Great Barrier Reef, QLD

It's the only living thing visible from space, but the best way to view the World Heritage-listed Great Barrier Reef is in a scuba suit, submerged in its underwater splendour. This 348,000 square kilometre reef system, which boasts around 400 species of coral and 1500 species of fish, stretches along the Queensland coast from Fraser Island to Cape York and with its myriad coral cays and atolls is a scuba enthusiasts paradise.

Stay: Lizard Island

Located on its namesake island at the northernmost point of the Great Barrier Reef, north of Cairns, the luxury resort offers privacy and seclusion and of course, a front-row seat to one of nature's most incredible triumphs.

<https://www.lizardisland.com.au>





Snorkellers explore Flynn Reef. Picture: Tourism QLD

## Nitmiluk National Park (Katherine Gorge), NT

There are so many ways to experience the 12km cleft that is Nitmiluk (Katherine) Gorge. You can cruise, canoe and swim between its towering sandstone cliffs, explore its many escarpments and lookouts by foot and even fly over the snakelike chasm in a helicopter for a bird's eye view of its 13 gorges.

Stay: Cicada Lodge

While currently closed for bookings until April 2022, you won't find anywhere as close to the action as this award-winning, eco-friendly resort. Located within Nitmiluk National Park, it's just a few steps away from the Katherine River and its beauty.



Nitmiluk (Katherine Gorge), Nitmiluk National Park

## Uluru (Ayers Rock), NT

Australian natural wonders don't get much more iconic than Uluru.

Immortalised in countless tourism campaigns, artworks and kitsch souvenirs, it's impossible to appreciate the beauty and grandeur of this sacred, sandstone monolith without seeing it in the flesh. Located in Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park in the Northern Territory's Red Centre, Uluru is best seen at dusk or dawn, when the surface of the 500-million year old landmark is illuminated by the changing light.

Stay: Longitude 131

Unless you're camping in the shadow of Uluru itself (which is illegal) you won't find a better place to witness the ever-changing chromatic variegations of Uluru than in the luxurious confines of one of Longitude 131's luxury safari tents.

[longitude131.com.au](https://longitude131.com.au)



The rainbow hues of Uluru at Sunset

## Kakadu National Park, NT

Ancient Aboriginal rock art, lush rainforests, hidden swimming holes, majestic waterfalls such as Jim Jim and Twin Falls and expansive wetlands teeming with wildlife are just some of the natural highlights of this UNESCO World Heritage site. The best time to visit is the dry season, between May and October, but it's also the most popular time, so plan a visit well ahead if possible.

Stay: Bamurru Plains Lodge

A mesh screen is the only thing which separates guests from the abundant wetland wildlife at this eco-friendly lodge, which is largely off-grid and a perfect base for Top End adventuring.

[bamurruplains.com](http://bamurruplains.com)





Sunset over Kakadu National Park Picture: Peter Eve/Tourism NT

## The Twelve Apostles, VIC

Millions of tourists a year flock to see the impressive limestone sea stacks, which majestically rise from ocean off the coast of Victoria's Great Ocean Road. Erosion has reduced the number of the impressive formations but they are still an incredibly awe-inducing sight, and one in which most Australians would have on their list of national must-see attractions.

Stay: Alkina Lodge

The three architecturally-designed four-bedroom lodges which make up Alkina Lodge are just a fifteen minute drive to the Shipwreck Coast and it's famed apostles.

[alkinalodge.com.au](http://alkinalodge.com.au)



The Twelve Apostles. Picture: iStock

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