

## Luxury escapes to enrich heart and soul



Penny Rafferty, the executive officer of Luxury Lodges of Australia, at her home in the Barossa Valley in South Australia. Picture: Morgan Sette

### • **GEORGE EPAMINONDAS**

### **PENNY HUNTER**

EDITOR, TRAVEL + LUXURY

As the post-pandemic era of travel dawns for Australians held captive by border closures and lockdowns, pent-up demand for luxury destinations is soaring, but our priorities have shifted.

With an insatiable appetite for overseas exploration and new-found appreciation for our own high-end offerings, Australians are focusing on the experiential and enrichment value of luxury travel, rather than the cost.

“It’s about lingering longer and diving deeper into places and experiences,” says Penny Rafferty, executive officer of Luxury Lodges of Australia, a collection of upscale properties dotted across the continent.

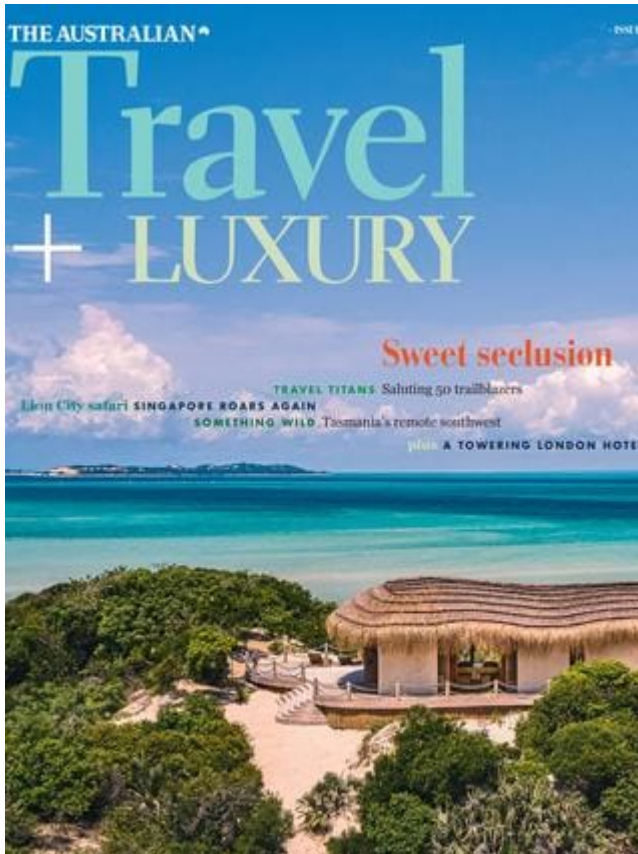
Despite border restrictions, the lodges have seen “fantastic” domestic visitor numbers, Ms Rafferty says. Tour operators such as APT, which runs Captain’s Choice private jet journeys and cruise ship Caledonian Sky, have reported no shortage of bookings.

Nonetheless, Ms Rafferty insists the national vaccination rollout is central to getting everyone moving again. “When people travel, they want to feel safe and protected ... vaccination is the tool at our disposal to protect ourselves and the people we want to engage with,” she says from her Barossa Valley home.

And she warns consumers face multiple layers of complexity in travel arrangements, particularly in the international domain.

“We have an incredibly complex time ahead while governments and global measures on how to travel safely are worked out,” she said.

As the driving force behind the establishment of Luxury Lodges to promote Australia’s upscale offerings in global markets, [Ms Rafferty is emblematic of a cohort of trailblazers featured in today’s issue of Travel + Luxury magazine](#) – which salutes a roll call of Australian and international pioneers, tastemakers, tourism advocates, ecowarriors and cruising trendsetters.



The latest issue of Travel + Luxury magazine.

These eclectic individuals share an energy, curiosity and desire to inspire people to travel in a more mindful manner.

Some on the list are at the helm of the lodges themselves: James and Hayley Baillie (Longitude 131 at Uluru); Charles Carlow (rustic-chic Arkaba Conservancy in the Flinders Ranges); the Oatley family (Qualia's understated elegance in the Whitsundays); Jude Turner (Spicers Retreats).

Travel titans abroad include canny hoteliers such as Luke Bailes, founder of Singita safari lodges in Africa, and Neil Jacobs of the serene Six Senses resorts, and Viking Cruises' Norwegian founder Torstein Hagen.

Luxury hotel design is adjusting with the times, too. "We create warm, nourishing and inspiring environments that are all about the experience of being there," says architect Felicity Beck, who, with her partner Stewart Robertson, makes the list.

Defying the global slowdown, the Melbourne-based duo behind Bar Studio have been busier than ever, with a full slate of projects in the Asia-Pacific and Europe. One of their most notable recent achievements is the Park Hyatt Niseko Hanazono, an award-winning retreat in Japan.

The refurbishment of Rosewood Villa Magna in Madrid and the design of Rosewood Rome are on the drawing board.

Soon they will be able to finally visit the properties they've conceived, which resemble grand, multilayered and inviting residences. "As a Melburnian, I'd be happy to see the inside of anybody else's house now," Ms Beck says.

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**EDITOR, TRAVEL + LUXURY**

Penny Hunter is editor of The Weekend Australian's Travel + Luxury. Her extensive career in newspapers includes several years on The Scotsman in Edinburgh, The South China Morning Post in Hong Kong and The Dail... [Read more](#)