

Game changers: top 50 titans of the travel industry

From tourism pioneers to eco-advocates, they're the industry's leading lights. Meet the 50 innovators who have transformed luxury holidays here and abroad.

The world is in flux, but one thing is certain: our desire to travel never dissipates. As the post-pandemic era gradually takes shape, it's apparent that discerning travellers are seeking more meaningful experiences than before. Making the most of local sights, planning ambitious itineraries and a longing for immersion, seclusion and connection are among the leading trends. With that in mind, we set out to identify the most forward-thinking individuals in travel – the pioneers, taste-makers and trailblazers who have made an indelible imprint here and abroad. Some foster a mindful approach to travel, while others fire our imaginations with visionary ideas.

Here, in no particular order, are the figures who inspire us to explore what's on our doorstep and around the globe when we're ready to go.

HOTEL VISIONARIES

1. Luke Bailes

The South African founder of Singita oversees a portfolio of 15 impeccable safari lodges in South Africa, Zimbabwe, Rwanda and Tanzania, home of the latest, Singita Sabora. The group is renowned for combining extraordinary wildlife experiences, elegant digs and genuine respect for the environment. Bailes is a conservation crusader who uses his influence to bring about real change with anti-poaching initiatives, the preservation of large tracts of land and community development with a focus on upskilling. "Community partnerships only work if our commitment to local communities is so deep that they trust that what we're doing, preserving this land, is in their interest," Bailes says.



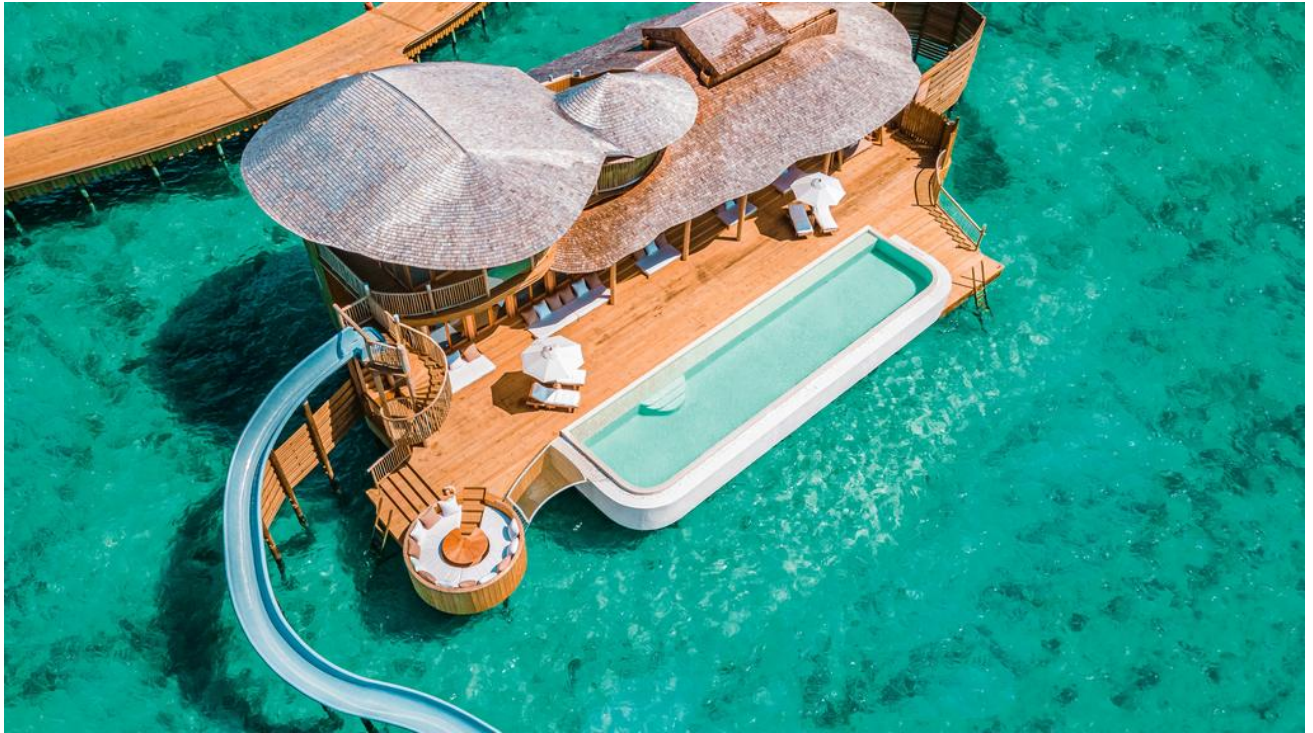
Earthy elegance at Singita Sabora in Tanzania.

2. Ronald Akili

Bali's Seminyak is known for bustling hotels, buzzing restaurants and whizzing scooter traffic. But this Jakarta-based hotelier has added a more enlightened presence with Desa Potato Head, a hotel meets-community centre that was a decade in the making. "We're not trying to change the industry; we want to create an entirely new model for it," Akili has said of his project that marries sleek accommodation, a beach club and a sustainability hub. Desa has a strong focus on eco-friendly design – zero-waste restaurants, upcycled furnishings and bamboo accessories – as well a line-up of cultural events for residents and visitors alike to enjoy.

3. James and Hayley Baillie

With six landmark lodges in their portfolio, including the Uluru-adjacent Longitude 131°, this Australian couple is well-versed in the language of luxury travel. Baillie Lodges resorts are synonymous with contextual design, superlative dining and community engagement. Silky Oaks Lodge in Tropical North Queensland is undergoing a major makeover, while Southern Ocean Lodge on Kangaroo Island is being restored after the 2020 bushfires. In 2018, US-based KSL Capital Partners took a majority stake in their business, enabling them to go global with the addition of acclaimed luxury camp Clayoquot Wilderness Lodge in Vancouver, Canada.



An extravagant Soneva Jani villa in The Maldives.

4. Sonu Shivdasani

You've seen the images of the Soneva resorts in the Maldives – stylish, secluded bungalows floating above an impossibly turquoise sea – or maybe you've even stayed at one. A third blissful resort, Soneva Kiri, opened in Thailand in 2019. Soneva is the brainchild of this Indian-British hotelier who, along with his wife, Eva Malmström Shivdasani, espouses a mantra of barefoot luxury, considered sustainability and corporate responsibility. At the Soneva properties, single-use plastic and bottled water (it bottles its own) are banned, carbon footprints are reduced and local communities are supported. The Soneva Foundation invests in clean-water projects and forest restoration.

5. Neil Jacobs

Almost every progressive hotel group speaks to sustainability. But Six Senses, under the leadership of its canny chief executive officer, Neil Jacobs, really backs up those claims. Its resorts, located in breathtaking settings from the Seychelles to Oman, all devote monies to green causes. Bottling its own drinking water, growing its own organic vegetables and eliminating plastics entirely by 2022 are among its many programs. Jacobs views his resorts as places where guests can have their spirits reawakened. "Connection has always been our vision – reconnecting with oneself, others, and the world," he has said. Next up is an urban bolthole near the High Line in New York.



Baillie Lodges co-founders James and Hayley Baillie.



Pellicano Group's Marie-Louise Scio.

6. Marie-Louise Scio

Summering at her family's legendary hotel Il Pellicano in Tuscany instilled in Scio an affinity for jet-set glamour. So when it was her turn to take the reins, as CEO and artistic director of the Pellicano Group, she excelled. Scio now runs three fabled haunts in Italy – Il Pellicano, La Posta Vecchia in Ladispoli and Mezzatorre Hotel in Ischia – and has spent the past few years positioning each as a hub of fashion, art and worldly cachet. Not content with tweaking her sun-dappled playgrounds she also launched Issimo, an online platform dedicated to the best of Italian style with bougainvillea-print dresses, yellow-striped pillows and artisanal soaps.

7. Jude Turner

“Our luxury is green, not gold.” So says the founder of Spicers Retreats, the group known for its leafy escapes on Australia's eastern seaboard. As travellers seek out peaceful and polished lodges, properties such as Spicers Peak Lodge at Maryvale, west of Queensland's Gold Coast, and Spicers Sangoma near New South Wales' Blue Mountains are in demand. Turner, the wife of Flight Centre co-founder Graham Turner, manages nine hideaways, eight restaurants and a collection of bush camps. Spicers Scenic Rim Trail in Queensland thrives with its hikes. A range of private properties – from beach shacks to snow chalets – debuts this month in the Spicers network.



Soak up the views at Spicers Sangoma Retreat in the Blue Mountains.

8. Arnaud Zannier

Carving out a resort on a far-flung peninsula in southern Vietnam was always going to be a challenge, but add in the global pandemic, devastating typhoons and seasonal monsoons and you might be questioning your sanity. This intrepid French entrepreneur, however, has cornered the market in opening fashionable hotels in unexpected places (Namibia, Cambodia), and Zannier has done it again with his latest. Bãi San Hô features 73 exceptional villas whose architectural styles reflect their setting, from paddy fields to grand bay to beach. It's the type of place where travellers will want to linger.

ECO LUMINARIES

9. Janine Duffy

Through bushfire, drought and human carelessness, the koala population of Victoria's Gippsland region has counted on Duffy since 1993. After the ferocity of the 2019-20 fires, Duffy acted swiftly, launching the Koala Recovery Experience where guests are invited to help her team plant trees essential for the population's survival. Last year they funded the planting of 9000 trees and this year they're on track to plant 45,000. "We've got the land, we just need the help," says Duffy, also the co-founder of Echidna Walkabout.



Bungalows exude simple sophistication at Kisawa Sanctuary, Mozambique.

10. Nina Flohr

Kisawa Sanctuary, recently opened on an idyllic island off the coast of Mozambique, is a breathtaking ode to sustainable luxury. The 14 beachfront

bungalows were built with 3D-printed materials, and its sister property on the island is devoted to marine research. This unconventional project is the brainchild of this well-connected Swiss entrepreneur. Flohr is the creative director of her family's aviation company, VistaJet, and also the wife of Prince Philippos of Greece and Denmark. On Benguerra Island, known for its coral reef and unspoiled beaches, she has created a next-level eco-retreat with local design, private chefs and princely glamour.

11. Andy Ridley

Founded in 2017 and headed up by Cairns-based Ridley, Citizens of the Great Barrier Reef is a network of people, organisations and businesses all working to drive positive action for the reef. Last year, Ridley led the charge on a world-first citizen science project to survey the reef – much of it had never been documented. “As the impacts of climate change and other threats accelerate, there's an urgent need to scale-up conservation efforts globally, which requires everyone to take part,” Ridley says.

12. Juliet Kinsman

As the founding editor of Mr & Mrs Smith, Juliet Kinsman has written about the world's most stylish hotels. Now, with Bouteco, she's helping travellers find the chicest eco-hotels. Behind the scenes, Bouteco consults for dynamic hoteliers, giving advice on positive-impact strategies. “By spotlighting the heroes who've been operating with impact front of mind, or using their businesses to fund wildlife regeneration, or health and education services in deprived areas, we're leaving more money in the pockets of those who most need it,” she says.



Water buffalo in front of Bamurru Plains Lodge, Northern Territory.

13. Charlie Carlow

The conservationist worked in the corporate world in South Africa before returning to Australia 13 years ago to establish Wild Bush Luxury, a high-end experiential tourism business with a focus on the intricate links between wildlife conservation and tourism. Carlow's vision is to connect guests to our most remote and spectacular landscapes, including the coastal plains of the Top End at luxe safari lodge Bamurru Plains, and the magnificent Flinders Ranges at Arkaba camp and homestead, where he has created a private conservation sanctuary.

14. Gisela Purcell

A guilt-free holiday packed with indulgences in New Zealand's lush Nelson-Tasman region? Purcell is the tourism powerhouse who created Aotearoa's (and quite possibly, the world's) first zero-carbon travel itinerary. The four-day experience currently features 15 local certified businesses, treating travellers to experiences such as a visit to the country's first climate-positive pub and fuel-offset sky-diving. "Traditionally, people have linked 'green' experiences with deprivation, but we're hoping to show this is far from the case," says Purcell, who is currently expanding the itinerary's offerings.



Ponant's Sarina Bratton. Picture:

Hollie Adams



Rob and Lou Tandy of Captain's

Choice.

15. Joost Bakker

This Melbourne-based eco-visionary uses creativity to draw attention to the planet's wasteful ways. In 2008 he created The Greenhouse by Joost, a pop-up restaurant that earned international acclaim for its focus on waste reduction and sustainability, and in 2012 he opened the world's first zero-waste restaurant Silo by Joost. More recently his Future Food System structure alighted on Melbourne's Federation Square. It's a self-sustaining, closed-loop, two-bedroom home that shelters, feeds and provides energy for its inhabitants – chefs Matt Stone and Jo Barrett.

16. Andrew Dixon

The Singapore-based Australian banker turned hotelier is the founder-director of Nikoi and Cempedak, two scene-stealing sustainable island resorts in Indonesia. A big believer in reducing harm and making a positive impact, Dixon built both resorts using the four C's of sustainability: community, culture, conservation, and commerce. In 2010, he established The Island Foundation, a community-based non-profit supporting education, better health and ethical practices for the islands' local communities. Fast-forward to today, and the foundation has eight learning centres with almost 250 primary school-aged students from the local areas.

TOUR WIZARDS

17. The McGeary family

For 95 years the McGeary family have been pioneers in Australian tourism, beginning in the 1920s when Bill McGeary converted his truck into a bus to ferry commuters around Melbourne during an extended tram strike. His son Geoff was only 19 when he took over the business in the early 1960s. He introduced camping holidays to Queensland and Central Australia and later started bus tours taking Victorians to Sydney to see the stage show Hair. Under his guidance, Australian Pacific Tours (APT) bloomed to become the major tour operator in Australasia during the 1970s and '80s and expanded into international markets, adding to the portfolio a luxury train and river ships in the '90s. The third generation of McGearys, son Rob and daughter Lou Tandy, are now on the management team. Rob is director of APT and Lou, with her husband Rob Tandy, now co-founder of Snowdome foundation, drove the expansion of APT's ultra-luxury private-jet excursion brand, Captain's Choice, as creative director, and is now chair of the board of the family's philanthropic foundation.

18. Geoffrey Kent

Legend has it that the impresario behind Abercrombie & Kent was born when his parents were on safari in what is now Zambia. A fitting start for the co-founder of

the highly regarded luxury tour company, which he and his parents launched in Africa in 1962. A&K focuses on delivering life-changing experiences, tailor-made adventures, and polished journeys with only a handful of guests in more than 100 countries. Kent pioneered lavish safari camps with mobile refrigeration, hot showers, real china, and private pools. “I always say, ‘You’ve got to do two things before you die: go on safari and see the Pyramids,’” he says. A&K operates its own camps, lodges and cruise ships on the Irrawaddy, Nile and Yangtze rivers.



Indigenous elder Uncle Roy Gibson.

Picture: Adam Bruzzone



Craig Wickham of Exceptional Kangaroo Island. Picture: Sean McGowan

19. Uncle Roy Gibson

Gibson, a traditional owner and elder for the Kuku Yalanji people in Far North Queensland, conceived the Mossman Gorge Visitor Centre, an award-winning eco-tourism destination at the gateway to the Daintree Rainforest. The centre welcomes 370,000 visitors each year with Indigenous tours that meld nature, history and culture.

20. Craig Wickham

The tireless force behind Exceptional Kangaroo Island, the South Australian island's leading tour operator, is a trouper for safeguarding wildlife and supporting the community. After the summer 2020 bushfires, he undertook a whistlestop tour of the US and Canada to advocate how tourism could support the island's recovery.

21. Sab Lord

Lord has spent more than 25 years in the Northern Territory and Western Australia leading specialised tours throughout the Kimberley, Kakadu and Arnhem Land. His deep knowledge of flora, fauna and history, as well as his personal connections

with local Aboriginal custodians, make him an in-demand guide for private luxury tours.

22. Shaun Hossack

An expert on street art and urban culture, Hossack commissions artists to transform blank walls into vivid works of art that inspire communities, elevate tourism and deliver moments of joy via his Juddy Roller Studios. In his rural hometown of Benalla, Victoria, he founded the annual Wall to Wall Festival, and he is also behind the Silo Art Trail, the art project that transforms rural silos.



Viking Eistla near the Hungarian parliament building on the Danube.

CRUISE INNOVATORS

23. Torstein Hagen

In 1997, this Norway native launched Viking Cruises with four riverboats in Russia. Now the Basel-based company has a sleek fleet of river, ocean and expedition vessels. Hagen is not a fan of the term “luxury” when describing his vessels. “Don’t overdo it,” he once said. “You can still be elegant.” Hagen has announced that Viking will soon launch new expedition voyages, sailing to Antarctica, the Arctic and North America’s Great Lakes. The Viking approach, with its appreciation for science, history and culture, reflects his own endlessly curious nature.

24. Jason Montague

The president and chief executive officer for Regent Seven Seas Cruises since 2016, Montague has been working tirelessly during its voluntary suspension of sailings. One initiative has been an expansion of the line's health and safety protocols, including the need for guests and crew to be fully vaccinated at least two weeks before departure. The journey back to normalcy begins this month with a 12-day cruise around the UK, with the rest of its fleet expected on the oceans early next year. The company's 2024 World Cruise voyage, flitting from Central America to the Mediterranean and with fares starting at \$US73,499, sold out in a few hours.



Scenic Eclipse in Antarctica.

25. Glen Moroney

This Newcastle native made his first foray into the travel business in 1986 when he was asked to manage his family's regional hotel in Warrnambool, Victoria. To attract guests, he launched a coach company, which morphed into Scenic Luxury Cruises & Tours, offering land journeys and river cruises in Europe, Asia and Canada, with a fleet of luxury ships on storied rivers such as the Rhine, Douro and Mekong. In 2019, the company added ocean cruising with the sleek yacht Scenic Eclipse, launched with Helen Mirren as "godmother".

26. Greg Mortimer

The mountaineer has had a dizzying career, literally, as one of the first two Australians to climb Mount Everest, in 1984, and the first Australian to climb Antarctica's highest peak. With partner Margaret Werner, he founded Aurora

Expeditions in 1992, taking small groups of travellers on voyages of discovery, with the mission to inspire new generations to preserve the world's pristine places. Always innovative, Aurora was the first company to introduce ice camping, kayaking, and polar snorkelling. The cruise line's latest exploration vessel is named in his honour. Mortimer is no longer actively involved in Aurora, but he still leads expeditions. You can't keep him down.



Exploring Antarctica with Aurora Expeditions.

27. Sarina Bratton

She's known as the first lady of Australian cruising for her stellar career as a pioneer of high-end small ship cruises. The savvy entrepreneur was the first woman in the world to found a cruise line, Norwegian Capricorn Line, in 1997. Bratton realised there was a need for a smaller type of self-sufficient expedition vessel that could cruise to untouched, remote areas. That idea became Orion Expedition Cruises, Australasia's only five-star small ship line when she launched it in 2004 with one ship, MV Orion (later joined by Orion II). Orion became a trailblazer in opening up to luxury expedition cruising destinations such as the Indonesian archipelago, Papua New Guinea and the Kimberley. Bratton sold to Lindblad Expeditions in 2013. Since then, she has helmed French luxury cruise line Ponant's expansion into the Australia Pacific region.

28. Roberto Martinoli

As president and chief executive officer of Silversea Cruises, this Italian national has been at the helm of the super-luxe line since 2016. Martinoli has overseen its

growth, enhanced its vessels and itineraries (including new Galápagos sailings) and steered its 2018 acquisition by the Royal Caribbean Group. Silversea's boats are marked by small-ship intimacy, spacious suites and exceptional service. Earlier this year, Martinoli unveiled Silversea's 2023 world cruise, departing Sydney on January 9, 2023, and arriving in Fort Lauderdale 140 days later. Silver Shadow will visit five continents, 66 destinations and 34 countries. "We are continuously seeking ways to nurture our guests," he says.



The pool deck on Celebrity Edge.

29. Kelly Hoppen

In 2018, when Celebrity Cruises tapped this London-based designer to completely rethink its interiors, it was a watershed moment for ship aesthetics. Hoppen, known for her East meets West opulence, instilled the ship's staterooms with a residential vibe, plush furniture and bright accents. The cruise ship, called Celebrity Edge, has 1,500 suites and the world's first cantilevered deck, also furnished by Hoppen. The designer has since revitalised additional vessels for the company, each more stylish than the last.

DESIGN STARS

30. Bjarke Ingels

His atelier is named Big – short for Bjarke Ingels Group – and this immensely ambitious Danish architect is a global superstar. When he's not working on groundbreaking projects for clients like Google or Elon Musk, he's designing

imaginative accommodations. Guests will be able to ski down the roof of his forthcoming Audemars Piguet hotel in western Switzerland. For The Line in San Francisco, Ingels proposed a faceted white structure that echoes the city's historic flatiron buildings. And in downtown New York, The XI is a pair of twisting towers that will house the new Six Senses hotel. The towers' asymmetry becomes, he says, "almost like a dance".

31. Jean Nouvel

Set in the centre of São Paulo is a plant-covered, lattice-steel building that could only be the work of one mind. Rosewood Tower, by this ingenious French architect, will be an urban oasis with a 275-room hotel when it opens later this year. Next up is a subterranean hotel carved into sandstone in the Alula desert in Saudi Arabia. Dubbed Sharaan by Jean Nouvel, its design nods to the nearby Nabataean wonders of Hegra. "It's the only place to create such a masterpiece," he says. Expected in 2024, it will include 40 guest suites and three resort villas.



Contemporary curves in the atrium of ME Dubai hotel.

32. Zaha Hadid

The British-Iraqi architect died in 2016, but her legacy lives on with the ME Dubai hotel, which opened last year in the Burj Khalifa district. Hadid conceived both the mirrored glass exterior and the sinuous interior of the Opus building. It's a symphony of curvaceous balconies, marble floors and shapely seating pods upholstered in burgundy. The 93 rooms feature sculptural bed frames, undulating

sinks and angular rugs. ME is a design marvel that confirms the Pritzker Architecture Prizewinning architect's singular vision and futuristic aesthetic.



Bill Bensley's Four Seasons Tented Camp Golden Triangle, Thailand.

33. Bill Bensley

This boundary-pushing, Bangkok-based architect may be responsible for some of the most-loved genre-defining Asian hotels – Capella Ubud in Bali, Rosewood Luang Prabang in Laos, and Four Seasons Tented Camp Golden Triangle in Thailand – but it's his commitment to environmental design where he has really made his mark. His showstopper, Shinta Mani Wild, is a collection of tented camps that doubles as a conservation project in the Cambodian jungle. He recently released an open-source white paper sharing 30 years of experience on eco-friendly practices.

34. Felicity Beck and Stewart Robertson

The principals of Melbourne-based Bar Studio have quietly, diligently and impressively assembled a series of world-class hotels across the Asia-Pacific. Among their most notable achievements are The Westin Perth, Rosewood Hong Kong, and Park Hyatt Niseko Hanazono – a pared-back, poetic retreat in Japan's mountainous region. The refurbishment of Rosewood Villa Magna in Madrid and the look of Rosewood Rome are on the drawing board now. Closer to home, Bar Studio is also finessing the Ritz-Carlton Melbourne. The pair are raising the bar in hotel design.



Rooftop lounge at the Little National hotel in Sydney.

35. Bates Smart

The Australian design studio excels at conjuring top-notch hotels in heritage buildings (the nimble Hilton Melbourne Little Queen Street opened this year) and in compact spaces (the 230-room Little National Sydney sits on an 800-square-metre site above Wynyard Walk). Now the studio is tweaking Ace Hotel Sydney, for the US group known for hipster hangs in Portland and LA. The 18-storey structure rethinks a heritage warehouse in Surry Hills with 264 rooms.

36. Nic Graham

QT Hotels in Australia and New Zealand are admired for their quirky, jaunty and inviting public spaces. This Sydney-based interiors whizz has hatched the group's most playful properties, including in Melbourne, Gold Coast and Perth. Graham has a penchant for vivid colour, eclectic furniture and visual references to a destination. In Auckland, the hotel's iridescent shades echo the city's fishing culture. Coming up is QT Newcastle, St Regis in Melbourne and a hotel in Singapore.

37. Kerry Hill

Few architects have done more to elevate tropical modernism than Hill. His designs for Aman, including the group's Tokyo and Shanghai properties, are serene, sensitive and globally celebrated. One of his final projects before passing in 2018 was One&Only Desaru Coast in Malaysia, unveiled last year. Inspired by the

local vernacular, it features cascading terraces, timber suites and abundant blooms. His Perth-based practice continues to hit graceful notes. The group recently completed a sublime resort for Ritz-Carlton in the Maldives with a circular-shaped spa.

TOURISM TRAILBLAZERS

38. Roger Allen

There are passion projects, and then there's championing more than 67 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander operators across the country. For Allen, a social impact investor with a focus on early-stage Indigenous businesses, the 2020 launch of his online marketplace of ready-to-book experiences, Welcome to Country, is the culmination of a decade-long quest to help First Nations communities gain self-sufficiency. All the experiences are owned, operated, or led by Indigenous peoples, with proceeds flowing back to their communities. "Our communities are eager to share their knowledge, while non-Indigenous Australians are keener than ever to learn about Australia's real history and culture," he says. "Our goal is to help make that connection."



The Louise in South Australia's Barossa Valley.

39. Penny Rafferty

Self-described as combining "passion and pragmatism", Rafferty has been instrumental in shaping and defining high-end experiential travel in Australia for more than a decade. With a background in the performing arts, festivals and

publishing in the UK and South Africa, Rafferty returned to Australia in 2000 and later became the general manager of The Louise in the Barossa Valley. She was one of the driving forces behind Luxury Lodges of Australia, a collective of independently owned lodges, launched in 2010. A skilled marketer and ardent advocate for preserving Australia's natural legacy, she currently oversees Tourism Australia's sustainability strategy, with a mission to drive awareness and build capacity.



Avalon Coastal Retreat's glass-walled living area, Tasmania.

40. Brett Torossi

This transplanted Sydney developer burst onto the Tasmanian scene in 2005 with Avalon Coastal Retreat, a glass-walled sanctum anchored above Great Oyster Bay north of Hobart. It set the tone for her subsequent tourism projects – nearby Rocky Hills Retreat, the remarkable Avalon City Retreat in Hobart and her work on the stunning pavilions at RACT's Freycinet Lodge, shortlisted for the World Architecture Awards in 2018. All were motivated by a single aim: “to create beautiful spaces for transformative experiences”. One of the state's most energetic ambassadors, Torossi is on the board of Tourism Tasmania and Brand Tasmania, and chairs the Tasmanian Heritage Council and the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery.

41. Andrew Smith

Smith heads up Sand Dune Adventures, quad-bike tours of the Stockton Beach dunes in Port Stephens, two hours north of Sydney. What makes the venture

unique is that it's owned and operated by the Worimi Local Aboriginal Land Council, allows access to sacred lands, and aims to share the Worimi story with local and international visitors. Incredibly popular, the tours offer both exhilaration and illumination.

42. Brenda Miley

What could be more emblematic of visiting Sydney than learning to surf at Bondi Beach? Miley launched Let's Go Surfing in 1995 with a view to encourage more girls and women to surf. Turns out tourists lapped it up, too. Additional schools have sprung up in Maroubra, Ballina and Byron Bay under the aegis of the self-described "business woman in boardshorts".

43. Simon Currant

The man responsible for developing Cradle Mountain Lodge, most of Strahan and Peppermint Bay, Currant is probably best known as the visionary behind Australia's most ethereal hotel. Pumphouse Point, Currant's painstaking passion project in Cradle Mountain-Lake St Clair National Park, is a hotel to inspire dreams. A tidy neoclassical temple amid the glacial landscapes framing Australia's deepest lake, its key attractions are mesmerising serenity, the comfort of fine wines and hearty food, the cosiness of log fires and the World Heritage-listed wilderness waiting to be explored.



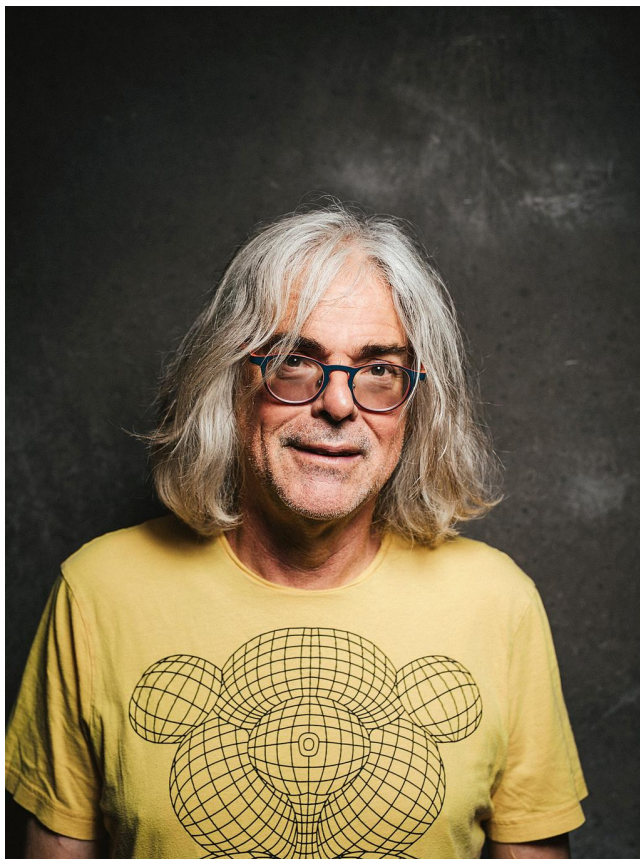
Hamilton Island in the Whitsundays.

44. The Oatley family

The late Bob Oatley, who acquired Hamilton Island in the Whitsunday archipelago in 2003, played a crucial role in recreating it as a global destination. The Oatley clan added the revered and rarefied Qualia resort, luxury villas, a yacht club and golf course. His son Sandy now helms the business, while Sandy's daughter Nicky Oatley is brand manager. Qualia, in particular, has collected a string of awards over the years for its supreme sophistication.

45. David Walsh

It sounds a bit like a movie script: a young man raised in a Hobart housing estate has a rare gift for numbers, which he uses to develop a gambling system that beats casinos and makes him very rich. An art collector since his teens, Walsh put his private collection on display at the riverside Museum of Old and New Art a decade ago, and it became a place of radical ideas and decadent pleasures. Fuelled by his avant-garde ideas, Mona has become a cultural powerhouse of festivals (Mona Foma, Dark Mofo), gastronomy, public events, art projects and luxury accommodation. Now the state's number-one attraction, Mona has also changed the way the world thinks of Tasmania.



David Walsh, founder of MONA in Hobart.



NGV director Tony Ellwood.

46. Pania Tyson-Nathan

Few have done more to encourage a deeper cultural understanding of Māori culture than Wellington-based Tyson-Nathan. As chief executive officer of New Zealand Māori Tourism for more than a decade, she has highlighted the unique opportunity that a Māori experience offers visitors, from canoe tours in the Bay of Islands to snowshoeing in Queenstown down south, enriched with an Indigenous perspective. Her contributions to the empowerment of Māori women and businesses are also countless.

47. Jay and Sonia Cox

This Western Australian couple know the Abrolhos Islands better than most. They've lived and worked on this archipelago of more than 100 islands in the Indian Ocean north of Perth for decades. Jay was a cray fisherman there for 30 years and, since 2003, he and Sonia have operated multi-day cruises to this remote and remarkable place, most recently on their custom-built cruiser with 19 ensuite cabins, two bars and a restaurant. Their tours explore the islands' rich history and promise encounters with wildlife.

48. Sam Lovell

Long before the Kimberley became a tourism hotspot, and before the nationwide emergence of insightful Indigenous tours, there was Lovell, who established a pioneering “safari tour” of the wilderness region in 1981. “We had a head start, because we knew the country, the people and all the station-owners,” he told *The Australian* in 2017. Now in his 80s, and known as Mr Kimberley, Lovell received an Order of Australia in 2003 for his services as a mentor to Indigenous communities in Western Australia.

49. Grant Hunt

The former CEO of Voyages Indigenous Tourism Australia (he’s presently its non-executive director) was instrumental in positioning Uluru as a global destination. Hunt developed Longitude 131° and The Lost Camel Hotel at Ayers Rock Resort, established the Anangu Communities Foundation to support the local community, and he was awarded a Member of the Order of Australia in 2020 for his efforts.

50. Tony Ellwood

Under his watch, the National Gallery of Victoria has become the most-visited gallery in Australia. Ellwood is a whizz at orchestrating blockbuster exhibitions, from Jean Paul Gaultier to David Hockney, that draw national visitors to Melbourne. Before joining the NGV as director in 2012, he turned the Bendigo Art Gallery, Queensland Art Gallery and Queensland Gallery of Modern Art into tourist magnets.

Contributing writers: George Epaminondas, Kendall Hill, Chloe Sachdev, Lee Tulloch and Dilvin Yasa.