

It's thrilling to see Australian animals in their natural habitat, but you can deepen your appreciation for wildlife and wilderness when you combine the experience with a stay at a luxury lodge. Try these for size.

PERFECT  
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**1 Arkaba, South Australia** Sit on the verandah of this beautifully renovated 1851 homestead as the escarpment that abuts Arkaba is rendered rust-red by the setting sun. Since being reimagined from a sheep station to a wildlife conservancy, the sprawling 25,000ha property in the Ikara-Flinders Ranges has experienced a revival in native wildlife populations. The yellow-footed rock wallaby and western quoll are two of many vulnerable species that might be spotted from the exclusive Wild Bush Luxury property, which sleeps just 10 guests. Join a fully guided outback safari to learn more about the conservation programs underway before lazing away the afternoon in the dappled light of the pool overlooking Arkaba Creek.

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

**2 The Crocodile Hunter Lodge, QLD** Gaze over the landscape from the infinity pool at The Crocodile Hunter Lodge and you are almost guaranteed a glimpse of two koalas, Popcorn and Pretzel, in the outstretched limbs of a giant gum. There are also good odds of seeing red kangaroos, echidnas and emus from your table at Warrior Restaurant & Bar in the main building. Twelve newly minted cabins are dotted around the property, which is a three-minute shuttle-bus ride from Australia Zoo at Beerwah on the Sunshine Coast. Their launch was the realisation of the late Steve Irwin's dream to offer premium accommodation alongside an immersive wildlife experience. Rest easy knowing your stay here will help protect animals such as Popcorn and Pretzel, victims of the 2019-2020 bushfires.

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

**3 Bamuru Plains, NT** This luxury safari operator is located on the frayed edges of the Mary River floodplain, which is close to the coast and borders Kakadu National Park. It offers guests exclusive access to 300km of waterways and savanna woodlands, making it a perfect launch pad for exploring the remote and beautiful wilderness, which draws in animals ranging from estuarine crocodiles and dingoes to agile wallabies, water monitors, wild pigs and buffalo. Take an exhilarating airboat trip to spot crocs before settling back into your safari bungalow amid the bush. Bamuru Plains has just added Jabiru Retreat, two bungalows linked via a walkway to a private plunge pool, to its inventory.

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

**4 Jamala Lodge, ACT** Expect the screeching of ruffed lemurs to dominate the soundtrack to your stay at Jamala Wildlife Lodge. As day becomes night, hyenas, lions, frogs, birds and tigers chime in on a rather chaotic chorus with hoots, barks, shrieks and roars reverberating across the 19ha of Canberra's National Zoo & Aquarium. As you luxuriate in your fluffy robe in one of the five-star Jungle Bungalows, a floor-to-ceiling glass wall is all that separates you from the beasts, which also include cheetah and a pair of Malayan sun bears. You can also stay in the swanky uShaka Lodge, which has its own shark tank, or the Giraffe Treehouses, where the tall mammals leg it past the window of your lounge room.

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

**5 Port Stephens Koala Sanctuary, NSW** Leisurely strolls along One Mile Beach can be enhanced with some serious wildlife spotting during a stay here. Koalas are the star attraction, so expect a few cameos from Blinky, Jackie



Crocodile Hunter Lodge, main. Below from left: Arkaba Homestead in the Flinders Ranges; Jamala Lodge, ACT; Bamuru Plains, Northern Territory; red crab on Christmas Island, inset

# HIDE AND SEEK

WILDLIFE STAYS

The best safari-style encounters across Australia

CARLA GROSSETTI

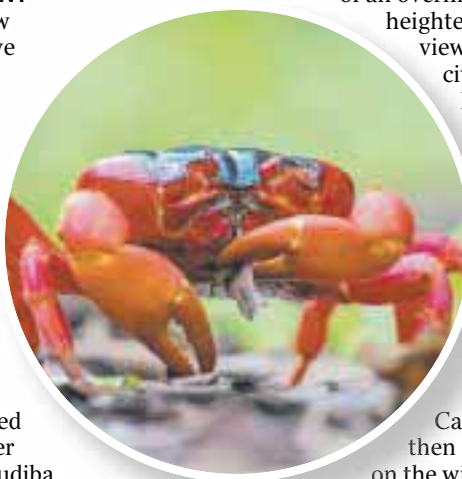


Chan and Callie. Spot the marsupials in their natural habitat or receiving treatment at Port Stephens Koala Hospital. The glamping tents are set in beautiful bushland where keen-eyed observers can see echidnas engaged in earthworks and brush-tailed possums curled up in the hollows of trees. Learn about the koala and its habitat on the 250m-long Sanctuary Story Walk.

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

**6 Cooina Lodge, NT** Five fresh Yellow Water Villas have upped the luxe stakes at Indigenous-owned Cooina Lodge since they opened last month, featuring large verandas (with private bathtubs), handmade king beds, and arts and crafts from local creatives adorning the walls. Alternatively, stay in one of 20 outback retreats clustered around the Yellow Water Billabong/Ngurrungurrudjba, where you can cruise or fish. Listen for the high-pitched calls from plumed whistling ducks and the soft honking of magpie geese, among more than 250 bird species that perch here at various times of the year. An estimated 10,000 crocodile, buffalo, brumbies and wild pigs roam the area. Include an Indigenous-led tour of Kakadu's famed rock art sites in your itinerary.

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



**7 Wildlife Retreat at Taronga, NSW** Wake up to whistling when you book a treetop suite at this retreat. The eco cabins are in the flight path of hundreds of native birds, which are in clear view from bed or balcony as they flap past each morning. A tour of the exclusive sanctuary led by a khaki-clad zookeeper is another treat for those who book The Ultimate Retreat Package, which includes access to the zoo, and breakfast and dinner at onsite restaurant Me-Gal. The pleasure of an overnight stay is further heightened by those dramatic views over the glittering cityscape and Sydney Harbour. The Wildlife Retreat at Taronga Zoo offers a glorious sense of seclusion just 15 minutes by ferry from the CBD.

[taronga.org.au](http://taronga.org.au)

**8 Luxury Lodges of Australia, WA** Pinball from Cape Lodge, to Sal Salis, then El Questro Homestead on the wildlife holiday of your dreams. The trio of WA properties makes this remote country accessible on a nine-night Safari in Western Australia itinerary, offered from March to September. It presents myriad ways to get among the natural wonders. Swim with whale sharks (from March to July), humpbacks (August to October) and dolphins, spot dancing brolgas, black-footed rock wallabies, colourful rainbow bee-eaters, and sea eagles feeding their young. After a day



spent ogling animals, retreat to your swanky suite at one of these three luxury hideaways.

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

**9 Swell Lodge, Christmas Island** There are just two glass-fronted pavilions hidden amid the tangled rainforest that blankets Christmas Island, 63 per cent of which is national parkland. You never lose sight of the native inhabitants, from sea birds spearing into the blue-green seas to pairs of red-footed boobies. Perhaps you will paddle into the water with endangered whale sharks, which converge here during the wet season. Time your visit to coincide with the annual red crab migration (October or November) and you might observe millions of the crimson creatures clattering out of the forest heading for the ocean. Enjoy dinner cooked by your private chef on the balcony overlooking the wave-washed cliffs at Martin Point.

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

**10 Sequoia Lodge, Mt Lofty Botanic Garden, SA** This retreat delivers on both indulgence and wildlife, with 130 species of native critters roaming freely within an enclosure on the Adelaide Hills property. The animals are a fascinating diversion but we all know it's the wine tasting, three-hatted Hardy's Veranda Restaurant, star gazing, Jurlique day spa, nightly campfires, plunge pool and private club lounge that truly draw in guests. Sit on your private deck after dark when the volume is turned up on the surround sound of grunts and squawks.

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