



THE WEEKEND AUSTRALIAN

Travel + LUXURY

July 13-14, 2024 / theaustralian.com.au/travel

FROM 1964
TO NOW

Sixty years of trips, tours and stays

ANNIVERSARY EDITION

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60 OF THE BEST

Take your pick from this stellar array of accommodation options spanning city, country and coast

NSW

City slickers

CAPELLA, SYDNEY: If you're looking for luxury, this is the place. The 192-room (including 34 suites) hotel, carved from the long-abandoned Department of Education edifice, retains period features such as walnut panelling, marble steps and vestibules, plus steel windows, all of which is augmented by fine original art. In the guest quarters, luxuriate in Italian Frette bed linen, cloudlike mattress topper, glam corduroy slippers and soft gowns, adjustable lighting, a thick layering of curtains, Spotify playlist of night-time tunes, essential oil pillow spray and "soothing pulse point roller". "Culturalists" in The Living Room social lounge offer expert advice on what to see and do in town.

capellahotels.com

W SYDNEY HOTEL: In an era when luxury hotel and restaurant interiors so often serve up oatmeal tones, W Sydney embraces brassy, performative glamour. Wedged between twin motorways whizzing by Darling Harbour, its luminous chambers are kitted out with nautical shades, mirrored furnishings and curvaceous beds and chaises. Nestled on level 29 is a cocktail den, supper club and free-flowing pool deck with cerulean vistas. Btwn, the hotel's sprawling restaurant, is infused with a high-octane energy, with red track ceiling lighting, chevron patterns that recall road signs, and columns decorated with aerosol art by Sophi Odling. You'll be wowed with a capital W.

marriott.com



Il Delfino in Yamba on the NSW north coast, main; Capella Hotel, above; Btwn restaurant at W Sydney, left; Little National Hotel in Newcastle, below

Regional gems

SUN RANCH, NORTH COAST: A 1980s farmhouse on a 22ha property in the Byron Bay hinterland was the starting point for this groovy, new-age escape, where yoga and margaritas are a marriage made in heaven. There's more than a hint of New Mexico in the look across the four pool suites (called Wam Bam, The Rattler, Gettin' Lucky and Saddle Up) and half a dozen two-bedroom off-grid barns. Expect macrame wall hangings, cowboy hats, timber panelling and subdued 1970s colour palette. A sunken lounge, whiskey saloon, basalt-paved pool, ice bath and sauna round out the amenities. Yee-haa and woo-woo all in one place.
sunranch.com.au

LITTLE NATIONAL, NEWCASTLE: Expanding its reach after the success of sister properties in Canberra and Sydney, the Little National opened in the Steel City in April. The comfortable but compact concept is clever, offering 181 cosy, minimalist rooms with all the essentials. The difference here is the addition of more spacious apartment options featuring living area and kitchenette. The communal lounge and library are designed for work and pleasure, serving coffee or cocktails. Light meals are available from the kitchen and there's a 24-hour wellness centre.
littlenationalhotel.com.au

Small but sweet

THE LODGES, BELLS AT KILLCARE: This longstanding NSW Central Coast success story has recently unveiled a quartet of self-contained, family-friendly lodges. Each has



two guestrooms, located on the ground floor, set up with king beds that can be split into twins. Ensuites are accessorised with deep-green glossy tiles and feature an oval tub and two showers, including an al fresco option with access to a private plunge pool, softened with magnesium and warmed year-round. Add daybeds, covered dining and barbecue area.
bellsatkillcare.com.au

202 ELIZABETH, SYDNEY: This six-storey boutique establishment emerged from an unprepossessing 1980s blond-brick block last year. With 38 guestrooms and suites, it joins a chic network of arty properties in the neighbourhood, among them Crystalbrook Albion, The Old Clare and Ace Hotel. Each of the guestrooms is different in design and layout, but they all feature colourful wall coverings adorned with the likes of pineapples and palm fronds. You're in the heart of hip Surry Hills, but smart soundproofing ensures a peaceful stay. Bring the pooch, too.
202elizabeth.com.au

Island idyll

ARAJILLA RETREAT, LORD HOWE ISLAND: Single and two-storey cabins with louvred windows and beachcomber decor inspired by Aussie shack vernacular range along boardwalks fringed with kentia palms, a short stroll or cycle from Old Settlement Beach. This all-inclusive lodge is delightfully laid-back, with Balinese-style spa and bountiful cuisine. Thoughtful extras include beach equipment, hiking

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ANNIVERSARY EDITION



King deluxe safari tent at Paperbark Camp, main; Sun Ranch in the Byron Bay hinterland, right; 202 Elizabeth, Sydney, below; Logan Brae Retreats in the Blue Mountains, bottom



gear, bikes and excursion-ready picnic baskets or barbecue packs. For an extra dash of style, there's the on-site two-bedroom Blue Peter Beach House.
arajilla.com.au

Go coastal

IL DELFINO, YAMBA: Set on a bluff between Main and Convent beaches, Il Delfino consists of five self-contained units refashioned from a 1940s cottage. They are snug but snazzy spaces – three with two bedrooms and two with one – offering unfettered ocean views. Each is named for an Italian playground: Cinque Terre, Portofino, Ischia, Scopello and Ravello. Although the apartments are arrayed with Smeg coffee machines, Sonos speakers and vintage bibelots, they're not so precious that you feel you can't scatter sand after a beach swim. Il Delfino is Italian for dolphin and you might glimpse, from your balcony, a pod of these playful creatures whirling by.
ildelfino.com.au

The glampers

PAPERBARK CAMP, SOUTH COAST: Celebrating its 25th birthday, this luxe retreat 2½ hours south of Sydney paved the way for dozens of other canvas operations across the country. Roughing it is not required at this sophisticated camp, with each of the 13 tents featuring hardwood floors, plush interiors, private ensuite bathrooms and solar-powered lighting. Top of the range is the king deluxe safari option, which adds a Moroccan slant to its cool fit-out, replete with egg-shaped bathtub. Bliss in the bush with the beach a short stroll away.
paperbarkcamp.com.au

EVAMOR VALLEY, MUDGEES: This award-winning glamping property just outside Mudgee township features six permanently sited khaki canvas tents, with decks and fire pits (marshmallows and toasting forks provided), spread in an arc on a glorious green-and-gold rural spread. Owner Charmaine Hurrell's love of design shines through in the chic furniture, thoughtful accessories and generous provisions. Eastern rosellas flit about, imperious ducks rule the dam, and a walking trail leads to a billabong and Cudgegong River. Sunset views are wonderful, the sense of solitude profound.
evamorvalley.com.au

Country roads

LOGAN BRAE RETREATS, BLUE MOUNTAINS: Spread across two properties encompassing pristine bushland and thriving farmland, Logan Brae is a true city escape. Two couples' cabins are the perfect perch for admiring the Blue Mountains escarpment, kitted out with wood-burner fireplaces, deep tubs, plunge pools and attractive interiors of timber, stone and leather. Nearby, The Lodge has room for eight with open-plan living and dining areas, a billiards room and expansive barbecue deck. Option No 4 is the Machinery Shed, a generously proportioned and slickly restored farm building within the original apple orchard.
loganbraeretreats.com.au

NORTHERN TERRITORY

City slicker

DARWIN AIRPORT RESORT: Launched in December last year after a \$30m upgrade, this resort combines the Novotel and Mercure hotels to offer 423 guestrooms next to Darwin International Airport. A new Olympic-plus-sized swimming pool is the main attraction, along with poolside cabanas and dining, plus an aquatic playground for youngsters. Pool villas and resort bungalows surrounded by lush tropical gardens are part of a wide accommodation inventory that elevates a stay in Darwin from pit stop to actual holiday. It's a quick 15-minute drive into the city and complimentary airport shuttle services are available.
darwinairport-hotels.com.au

The glampers

BAMURRU PLAINS WILD BUSH LUXURY LODGE: The new Jabiru Retreat stands a little removed from the 10 safari bungalows and Kingfisher Suite of the original Bamurru Plains set-up. The retreat's two stilted dwellings are connected by a walkway and share an exclusive plunge pool and outdoor lounge and dining spots, perfect perhaps for couples or a family group with older children. There's an Aussie rustic touch in the corrugated iron ensuite, where the shower snakes up an old tree trunk, but there's no bush slumming; hot water is instant. Located at the edge of the Mary River wetlands, this lodge is all about nature, offering twice-daily safaris, by airboat across the flood plains or by 4WD in the savanna woodlands.
bamurruplains.com

LONGITUDE 131, ULURU: The Red Centre's premier accommodation underwent a \$2.5m refresh this year, reopening in March. Each of the 15 luxury tents benefited from the makeover, which included new rugs, leather tub chairs and joinery in Tasmanian blackwood. The Dune House, which encompasses the restaurant, bar and terrace, now features a





Jabiru Retreat at Bamurru Plains, main.
Below left: Darwin Airport Resort pool;
guestroom at Bullo River Station;
revamped interiors at Longitude 131

showpiece work by Anangu artist Carlene Thompson from the Ernabella Arts Community in South Australia. Titled Kalaya Ngura (Emu Country), it depicts her family's country near Kanpi in the Western APY Lands.
longitude131.com.au

Country roads

BULLORIVERSTATION: Absolute isolation is the drawcard at this vast, 162,000ha property 800km from Darwin. The former home of Sarah Henderson and her family is now part of the Australian Wildlife Conservancy and the latest addition to the Luxury Lodges of Australia portfolio. It has a strong focus on biodiversity, and supports 32 mammal species plus 67 reptile, 20 frog, six fish and 184 bird varieties. Accommodation is in 12 guestrooms with Sibella Court interiors, and guests can help themselves to the bar – a glass of rose, perhaps, while lounging by the pool? Birdwatching and croc-spotting are high on the list of daily adventures.
bulloriver.com.au

Regional gem

FINNISS RIVER LODGE: Meeting the cattle while sipping chilled white wine and nibbling canapes is one of the experiences at Finnis River Lodge, a 22,250ha property about 90 minutes' drive southwest of Darwin. Accommodation is in a string of six luxury suites, each a spacious airconditioned sanctuary of polished bluegum floors with king bed, velvet armchairs, smart TV and private balcony. To dine, drink and socialise, guests stroll to a communal zone with leather lounges, dining hall and bar. A wall of French doors leads to a vast hardwood deck where a sparkling swimming pool offers welcome relief from the Territory's heat. There's action aplenty on farm trails and waterways.
finnisriverlodge.com.au

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NORFOLK ISLAND



ALL INCLUSIVE PACKAGE

NORFOLK'S WINDING ROADS

Hiring a car is the most sure-fire way to experience Norfolk Island to the fullest. Despite being only 8km by 5km, the island is volcanic in origin and very hilly, with over 120km of sealed road. Enjoy scenic car journeys from points 'A to B' at a leisurely pace, with speed signs identifying the limits at 30km/hr along the beachfront, 40km/hr through town and 50km/hr on the country roads.

No need to worry about waiting at traffic lights, as there are none! You may encounter local cows meandering



the commons to graze the verges or find shady spots under pines. Be sure to slow down to give them their official 'right-of-way' and don't forget the customary 'friendly wave' that other drivers (and even pedestrians!) offer passing motorists.

While you could easily drive around the island in a day (or even just a few hours!), with numerous side roads, lanes and stunning lookouts, as well as en route scenery, there is still so much to take your time over. The island also has many public picnic spots set up with modern gas barbecues, including at: Kingston, Captain Cook's Monument, Puppies Point, Bumboras Reserve, Anson Bay and Palm Glen – each offering magical views to go with a cook-up of fresh caught Trumpeter or locally produced sausages and steaks.

Keep your eyes peeled while driving for roadside stalls to purchase locally made jams, pickles, relishes and seasonal produce. Visit one of the National Parks reserves and roam the pathways along the cliff-tops to bask in the warmth of the sun, taking in the pure ocean breezes as you observe migratory South Pacific sea birds.

Booking your Norfolk holiday is easy, even if you're travelling from regional Australia. Simply call the experts at Spacifica Travel on 1800 999 100 or visit our website and book online today. We also have staff located on Norfolk Island to provide you with customer care – as well as a friendly chat – during your holiday.



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ANNIVERSARY EDITION



Samphire Rottnest Island; Wonil Hotel, below; The Ritz-Carlton, below left

WESTERN AUSTRALIA

City slickers

THE RITZ-CARLTON, PERTH: The hotel's much-heralded opening in 2019 marked the brand's return to Australia after about 15 years. It has the wow factor, but in a very WA way, striving for a sense of place through its architecture, interior design, service, and food and beverage offerings. The 13m-high lobby was inspired by the Karijini gorges in the Pilbara, and about 10,000 pieces of Kimberley sandstone were used in the building. The heart of the hotel's dining experience is Hearth Restaurant and Lounge, which has a strong focus on Indigenous ingredients. Head to Songbird Bar, too, for a splendid view of Elizabeth Quay and a sunset over the Swan River.

ritzcarlton.com

COMO THE TREASURY, PERTH: History and luxury combine at this award-winning hotel in the centre of Perth. A generously spread-out inventory of 48 guestrooms and suites is arrayed across four floors within the fabric of the State Buildings, an interconnected trio of late 19th-century red brick and Kimberley stone edifices that variously served as General Post Office, Land Titles Office and Treasury departments until the complex was left vacant in 1996. West Australian architect Kerry Hill, creator of Aman Tokyo, revived the conjoined Victorian dowager piles, reinstalled myriad original features and restored mouldings and wide-planked jarrah floors. Hallways are so luxuriously wide it wouldn't seem inconceivable if a horse-drawn carriage or a gaggle of hoop-skirted court ladies were to pass by.

comohotels.com

QT, PERTH: Australian boutique hotel accommodation provider QT took its whimsical design ethos west when it built a 184-room hotel on the site of an old cinema complex on the corner of Perth's Murray Street and Barrack Street. Those trademark quirky QT interiors feature plenty of local detailing, including jarrah timbers and wallpapers daubed with black cockatoos and wildflowers. There's the usual costumed door staff, and restaurant Santini Grill gives local ingredients an Amalfi twist. Then there's the hotel group's signature super-comfy bed, diverting minibar and a smart rooftop bar with dreamy city views.

qthotelsandresorts.com



Small but sweet

WONIL HOTEL, PERTH: Wonil (an Indigenous word for peppermint tree) is in a curious location – the site of a former car-park 5km from the city on the grounds of the University of Western Australia. It was designed by Kerry Hill Architects, which is fitting, given the late Perth-born Hill was one of UWA's early architecture graduates. His trademark sustainable design features include naturally ventilated walkways, stone screens and green "walls" that filter light and noise. The 66 guestrooms are all restrained lines and palette (tan, grey, white), and balconies offer views over a rowing-boat shed and sailing club fronting the Swan River's Matilda Bay.

all.accor.com

WARDERS HOTEL, FREMANTLE: Hoosgow, pokey, cooler, stir or Her Majesty's Hotel? One slang synonym best fits the World Heritage-listed Fremantle Prison, "the big house". This 1850s jail covers 6ha and processed 10,000 convict transportees before becoming a civilian prison. The old jail-keepers' cottages are now Warders, an 11-room boutique hotel where local art, handcrafted furniture and marble bathrooms have civilised the original timbers and hewn limestone. Freo's high-vis bolters included bushranger Moondyne Joe, the Irish Republican "Catalpa" rebels and 1990s "postcard bandit" Brenden Abbott. AC/



DC's late frontman Bon Scott did a stint here in 1963. Contemplate it all over a cocktail in the Gimlet Bar or dinner at Emily Taylor restaurant.

wardershotel.com.au

The glampers

SWELL LODGE, CHRISTMAS ISLAND: This pair of canvas chalets for two are perched on the island's northwest coast, with a wall of sliding glass doors facing the ocean and leading to a veranda that almost overhangs the cliff. The lodge treads lightly and was assembled by hand on raised platforms. The solar-powered pavilions feature odour-free composting toilets but also deliver on the luxury front, with coffee machines, king beds and gratis minibar. There's no restaurant but a chef will happily whip up a feast for guests.

swelllodge.com

SAL SALIS NINGALOO REEF: It's hard to go past this stalwart of the glamping scene given it has set such high standards for years. There are 15 pavilion-like safari-inspired tents on elevated platforms facing the Blue Lagoon; you can rouse yourself from bed and stumble sleepily down to the water's edge, wade in and drift over the corals of a natural aquarium. A resident turtle may even give you a flipper wave



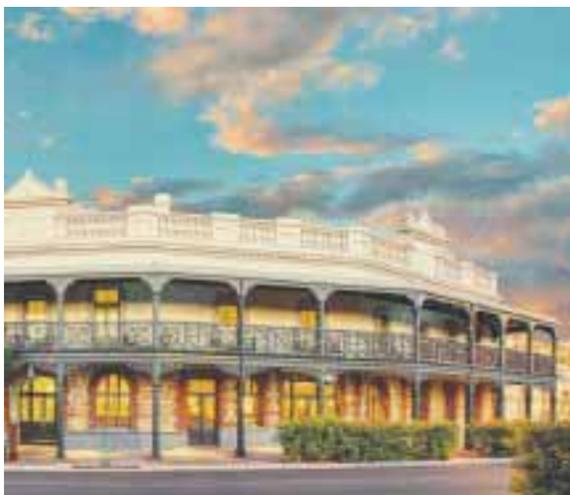
as it scuds along the sandy bottom. This is the gift of Sal Salis: unfettered access to the World Heritage-listed Ningaloo Reef, an encrusted jewel along 280km of Indian Ocean shoreline. Sal Salis (meaning “salty salt”) serves breakfast, lunch and dinner at the lantern-lit group lodge where drinks and canapes as the sun sets is a truly unforgettable experience.
salsalis.com.au

Country roads

FARMERS’ HOME HOTEL, NORTHAM: In this country town, 100km northeast of Perth, the Farmers’ Home Hotel, dating from 1866, has been lovingly restored to well beyond its former glory. It is owned by cafe chain Dome, and the coffee side of things is open into the evenings. For a tippie, try the Temperance Bar and admire a cartoon mural titled The Drunkard’s Progress, recalling the prohibition movement that shaped the town in the late 19th century. Upstairs, 16 light-filled guestrooms offer classy, country-heritage accommodation. Woollen rugs complement original Baltic pine floors, and custom-made furniture includes king-sized beds and mid-century-inspired chairs.
farmershomehotel.com

Go coastal

SAMPHIRE ROTTNEST: Rottnest Island has been something of a WA secret. Likewise, the unique marsupials, quokkas, that inhabit the place (there are an estimated 10,000). Just 30 minutes by ferry from the state capital, it was long the destination of choice for WA families but the only way to secure accommodation was to chance your luck in a ballot. That all changed when luxury hotel Samphire Rottnest opened a few years ago with 98 guestrooms, lagoon-like pools and beachside dining. The relaxed coastal vibe of the property, with its use of natural materials and neutral-coloured linens, appeals to the barefoot luxury guest. Strolling stunning beaches and taking a dip in the aquamarine water are essential activities but avoid taking selfies with the quokkas, as rangers discourage feeding or touching these very cute creatures.
samphirerottnest.com.au



Swell Lodge, above; Sal Salis Ningaloo Reef; Farmers’ Home Hotel, left

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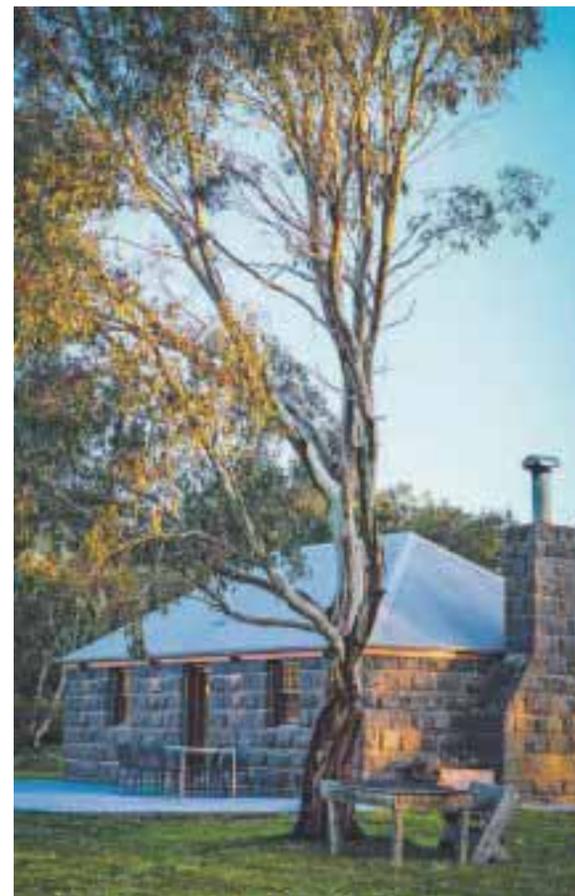
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VICTORIA

City slicker

LE MERIDIEN MELBOURNE: This hotel rose from the rubble of the Palace Theatre at the top end of Bourke St, and the art deco facade is all that remains of the former 1912-built building. Its European elegance, modern art program and mid-century design feels like an inspired fit for the city's entertainment precinct. Glass sliding doors lead to a dazzling lobby of polished stone, terrazzo and Grecian fluted columns. The all-day cafe bar Intermission riffs on the MGM cinema that was here in the 50s, and a spiralling, balustrade staircase descends to Dolly, a sparkling, subterranean restaurant heavy on 30s Hollywood nostalgia. Don't miss the resort-like rooftop pool deck, Le Splash. There are 235 guestrooms, including 14 suites. marriott.com

Small and sweet

UNITED PLACES, MELBOURNE: This tiny three-storey surprise package in fashionable South Yarra is opposite the Royal Botanic Gardens, so a great green parkland on the doorstep is a lovely bonus. The spacious accommodation features compact kitchens and laundries, plus high-end design flourishes. Street-level Matilda 159 is the "in-house diner", helmed by superstar chef Scott Pickett, which puts a new spin on the concept of room service. There's a clear connection to neighbourhood and a concierge service well-versed in recommendations off the usual tourist radar. unitedplaces.com.au

Regional gem

HOTEL ERNEST, BENDIGO: The Ernest is a boutique hotel in a historic bank building erected in 1864 and perfectly plonked parkside on View Street. Original features, including a cellar, bank vault and a vintage bullet hole in a thick glass window, blend with modern luxury furniture and a stunning array of good Australian art. Guesthouse-style hospitality is presented in a chic five-star package, so charming it's tempting to linger in the lounge after a divine breakfast of fruit, local croissants and granola. hotelbendigo.com.au



Country roads

DAIRY FLAT LODGE & FARM, DAYLESFORD: This outpost of the much-celebrated Lake House boutique hotel and restaurant at Daylesford, northwest of Melbourne, sits on a diverse 15ha estate. Up to 12 guests are accommodated in six ensuite doubles on a single house party booking. There's an olive grove, small vineyard, woodlands, country walks, cooking classes, spring-fed dam for a spot of trout fishing and neighbourhood experiences. Add a cedar hot-tub, concierge, on-site bakehouse, country-style breakfasts and use of electric bikes for unstructured excursions. dairyflatfarmdaylesford.com.au

MOUNT STURGEON COTTAGES, GRAMPIANS: Building on the success of their accommodation and dining destination, the Royal Mail Hotel in Dunkeld, the Myer family has revamped the nearby deluxe Mount Sturgeon one-bedroom cottages, just 3km from town. Built to accommodate farm workers in the 1850s, the cottages are set in seclusion inside the biodiversity reserve that abuts Grampians National Park. Those labourers could hardly imagine the scene now: voluptuous leather lounges, linen curtains, jarrah floorboards and eye-catching pendant lights. In a quirky, country touch, ensuites are inside water tanks, tiled in rectangular mosaics, with luxury fittings and generous vanity basins. royalmail.com.au

JACKALOPE, MERRICKS NORTH: Opened in 2017 on what used to be considered the wrong side of the Mornington Peninsula (Portsea is a good 45 minutes away), this avant-garde hotel is like walking inside the brain of its owner, Louis Li, who was just 28 when he opened its doors. Chinese-born Li came to Melbourne to study film-making at RMIT and fell in love with the city. His family background in hotels and his obsession with modern art and design have all combined to create this edgy luxury property as well as winery and two restaurants: Rare Hare and Doot Doot Doot. jackalopehotels.com



Clockwise from top left: Dairy Flat Lodge; Mount Sturgeon cottages; United Places; Metung Hot Springs; Le Meridien Melbourne



Go coastal

THE CONTINENTAL, SORRENTO: Everyone loves a comeback and few have been as well received as the return of this limestone-clad landmark. Deftly designed by Woods Bagot, the reimagined 145-year-old hotel swirls together seaside motifs, heritage restoration and splashes of art deco style. The Conti's eating venues range from fine-diner Audrey's to the light-filled Atrium, and The Promenade, an alfresco spot on Ocean Beach Road. There are also three additional bars and a beer garden. Guests stay in the elegant 108-room InterContinental hotel. sorrento.intercontinental.com

The glamper

METUNG HOT SPRINGS, GIPPSLAND: Guests who bed down in these safari-style pavilions at Gippsland Lakes have the region's hot springs literally on tap. Two wine barrels sunk into the deck of the tents can be filled with geothermal water at the flick of a switch. A recycled timber breakfast bar and a couple of plump beanbags complete the outdoor setting, ringed by a brushwood screen. Inside is an AH Beard four-poster bed and tiled ensuite. Rotate through the emerald waters of the bathing pools, the Scandinavian sauna, the thermal water showers and, if you dare, the cold plunge pool. metunghotspings.com

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ANNIVERSARY EDITION

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

City slickers

SOFITEL ADELAIDE: French panache is applied lightly at these swish city digs, with an impressionist's brush rather than a plasterer's trowel. The ground floor lobby features a cosy champagne bar, and a meandering red chandelier flows above the room like a river of wine, referencing Adelaide's cultural links with Bordeaux. Gallic touches are turned up a notch in the level nine Garçon Bleu. The 90-seat brasserie-style restaurant is straight out of Paris, with gleaming brass railings, mirrored pillars, large-format art in the style of Matisse and Picasso and elegant pale blue velvet seating. Parquetry flooring, marble and the black-and-white photographs of local snapper Drew Lenman are features of the 251 guestrooms and suites.

sofitel.accor.com

HOTEL INDIGO ADELAIDE MARKETS: This 145-room property launched in 2021 as an Australian first for the Indigo brand, which focuses on neighbourhood cred, design and art. The palette is defiantly jazzy, with an emphasis on hot pink, referencing two-term SA premier Don Dunstan's shorts, his unforgettable fashion statement for social diversity and justice. Adelaide Central Markets are practically on the doorstep, Chinatown is within cooee, and rooftop Merrymaker bar is as joyous as it sounds when wattleseed negronis and Coffin Bay oysters do the rounds.

ihg.com



Wander Pod on Kangaroo Island; Merrymaker bar at Hotel Indigo Adelaide Markets, top; CABN X at Seppeltsfield in the Barossa Valley, right



Regional gems

SEQUOIA LODGE, ADELAIDE HILLS: Only 20 minutes from downtown Adelaide, Sequoia Lodge is poised above the Piccadilly Valley's poetic tapestry of forest and vines. Its 14 luxury suites, in the grounds of the historic Mount Lofty House hotel, are surely some of the most technologically advanced in the country. Control pads by the bed, in the hall and bathroom operate blinds, lights, music, streaming and temperature. The television rises from the credenza at the push of a keypad, and there's a "moon window" above the bed for stargazing. The mood is cosy, a palette of stone, wood and leather anchoring the suites to the bush outside. There are trails to explore, meals to savour in the lounge and picnics to be had. And then there's the spa.

sequoi lodge.com.au

THE LOUISE, BAROSSA VALLEY: Revamped in 2022 and sitting pretty in the winegrowing valley's green and gold countryside, this Luxury Lodges of Australia member, hunkered amid vines and folds of green and gold, has developed a fine reputation for its food and personalised service. Dine, recline and repeat is the message here, snug in villa-style suites, enjoying sweeping vistas, and gathering at the main lodge for meals in Appellation restaurant and pampering at the spa. Hot-air balloons drift past, kookaburras chortle away, glasses of shiraz appear as if by magic.

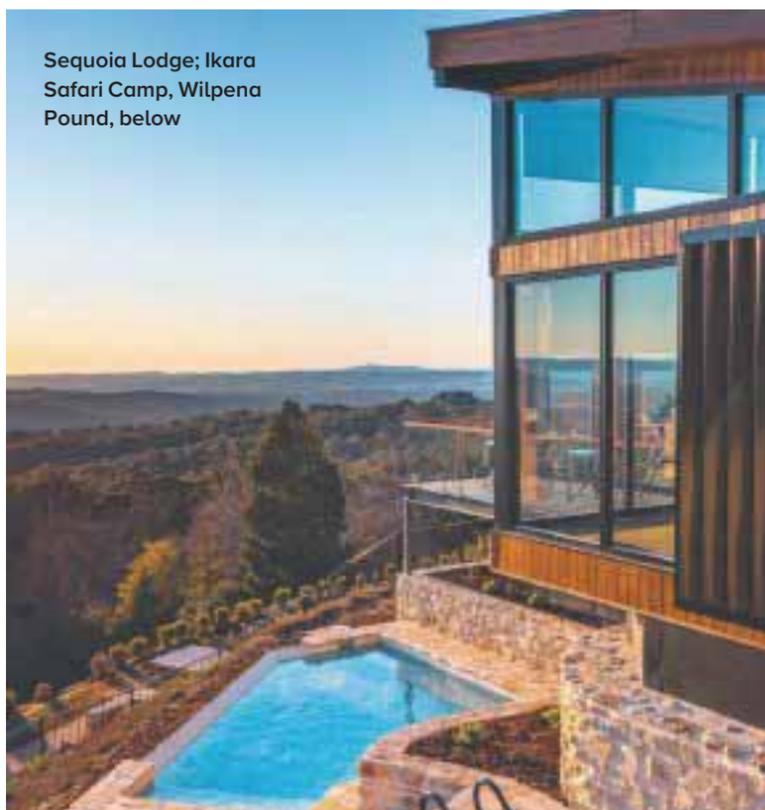
thelouise.com.au

Small but sweet

CABN X, SEPELTSFIELD, BAROSSA: Pod pioneer CABN is slowly populating South Australia's wine regions, with several upscale iterations in the McLaren Vale and a new site just opened in the Adelaide Hills. In the Barossa, esteemed vineyard Seppeltsfield is home to four of the little eco-cabins ideal for couples. They are off-grid, with solar power and an on-site treatment system to recycle water, but hardly remote, with the valley's many pleasures on the doorstep. Mod cons range from an indoor gas fireplace, sauna and compact kitchen with coffee machine to an outdoor firepit and Weber barbecue. Time to open a bottle of red.

cabn.life

THE CRAFTERS HOTEL, ADELAIDE HILLS: One of the oldest pubs in South Australia, the Crafters was once a ragtag watering hole frequented by hard-living loggers and the odd bushranger. In the 21st century it is better known for its oo-la-la French restaurant and epic 10,000-strong wine list. The seven guestrooms



Sequoia Lodge; Ikara Safari Camp, Wilpena Pound, below



upstairs have high ceilings, underfloor heating and smart bathrooms stocked with Aesop unguents. The hotel is especially lovely in winter, with log fires blazing in the bar and the sun streaming into the conservatory-style bistro, where steak frites is the order of the day.

crafershotel.com.au

Island idylls

SOUTHERN OCEAN LODGE, KANGAROO ISLAND: One of the most hotly anticipated revivals in Australian hospitality history, SOL 2.0 emerged triumphant in December last year from the ashes of the 2019-20 bushfires. The \$55m rebuild resulted in 23 guest suites strung along the coast plus an exclusive owner's pavilion with two plunge pools perched high on a cliff top. The Great Room, with its elegant, curved sofas and suspended fireplace, is identical to its predecessor, while the sculpture of Sunshine the kangaroo is back in the upper lounge. There are cinematic views, too, from the restaurant. It's good to be back.

southernoceanlodge.com.au

WANDER PODS, KANGAROO ISLAND: The four Wander pods on KI's north coast are decidedly off-grid, positioned two hours from Penneshaw via an ever-diminishing network of empty roads. This is a smart retreat, stylishly fitted out, mostly in moody blacks and charcoal. All along the front, a wall of floor-to-ceiling windows transforms the pod into an oversized camera trained on the sea and dramatic coastline. The log fire is set and ready to strike, and in the bedroom next door the king bed is dressed in on-trend crumpled linen. Stock up en route, as it's a long drive to the corner shop if you run out of milk.

wander.com.au

The glamer

IKARA SAFARI TENT, WILPENA POUND RESORT: Jaw-dropping night skies are just outside the canvas door of your safari tent at this secluded outpost in Ikara-Flinders Ranges National Park. Part of Wilpena Pound Resort, the 15 ensuite safari tents are airconditioned, making them a year-round proposition, with the bonus of a firepit for chilly nights. Two are designed for a family of four, and each is equipped with tea and coffee-making facilities. There's dining available at the on-site restaurant, with Indigenous ingredients taking a leading role, and choices aplenty on the activities front, including Aboriginal cultural experiences, guided tours, hiking and scenic flights.

wilpenapound.com.au



East Hotel lobby; Monster Kitchen at Ovolo Nishi, bottom left; Hotel Kurrajong, bottom right

ACT

City slickers

OVOLo NISHI, NEW ACTON: When Hotel Hotel first opened in Canberra in 2013 it was a line-in-the-sand moment for the nation's capital. It marked its transition from much-maligned city that everyone fled on the weekend to the start of an interesting hospitality scene that drew people in. The luxury hotel, the culmination of work by 600 architects, designers and artists, has a striking exterior and a lobby that leans into the capital's winter ambience and its subzero temperatures. There is a roaring fire as well as cosy rooms and excellent food. Hotel group Ovolo bought it in 2018 and has maintained its cool vibes, adding its own stamp with cutting-edge vegetarian restaurant Monster Bar and Kitchen.

ovolohotels.com

EAST HOTEL, KINGSTON: Located in Canberra's inner south and just a few minutes' drive from Parliament House, this design-focused property was opened in 2012 by siblings Dion and Dan Bisa, who wanted to offer something different to guests beyond the usual nondescript business hotels. They have achieved this through inviting interiors, dedicated services and three venues onsite that attract locals as well as visitors. There is Muse, which combines food, wine and books; Joe's Bar, which does excellent cocktails and pizza; and Agostinis, an authentic Italian restaurant inspired by their mother Marisa's love of cooking. The 140 guestrooms range from studios to two-bedroom family apartments.

easthotel.com.au

HOTEL KURRAJONG, BARTON: Built to plans by commonwealth chief architect John Smith Murdoch, Hotel Kurrajong, known first as Hostel No 2, opened in 1926 just when Parliament House, by the same designer, was being completed. It became the home away from home for Labor MPs and most famously the 16th prime minister, Ben Chifley, who preferred it to the Lodge. The heritage-listed hotel is an art deco delight, with 147 refurbished guestrooms, 26 in the heritage wing. History buffs can book the Chifley Experience, which includes breakfast in the Chifley Bar and Grill followed by the 700m walk the prime minister took each day to his office at Old Parliament House, now the Museum of Australian Democracy.

hotelkurrajong.com.au



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ANNIVERSARY EDITION



QUEENSLAND

City slickers

EMPORIUM HOTEL SOUTHBANK, BRISBANE: Glistening northeast panoramas from the top levels of this glossy high-rise take in a 180-degree sweep of bridges, boats gliding along the Brisbane River, and jagged skyscrapers punching the clouds. An urban oasis vibe prevails on Level 21, with rooftop infinity pool, bar lounge and tropical-themed The Terrace diner, where light and zingy Asian flavours prevail. Among 143 suites in myriad categories, consider the poolside Cabana styles that open to palms and private patios.

emporiumhotels.com.au

THE CALILE HOTEL, BRISBANE: This luxury property on James Street was named the 12th best in the world and the only Australian entry on this year's inaugural list of the top 50 global hotels, compiled by the same team that puts together the highly influential World's Best 50 restaurants. Designed by architects Richards & Spence, The Calile opened in 2018. "Channelling a luxe 1950s-style Miami beachside vibe in the heart of the city" is how it was described by the award judges. "The Calile Hotel is the centrepiece of the chic James Street precinct, a leafy oasis in the centre of Brisbane that's upping the city's design and dining credentials at a rapid pace." Foodies are spoilt for choice with six restaurants.

thecalilehotel.com

Regional gem

ARDO, TOWNSVILLE: With an infinity pool and lively rooftop bar presenting the blue hues of the Coral Sea in panorama, the recently opened Ardo has plenty to recommend it. Add two signature restaurants (Japanese plus steak and seafood) and 132 guestrooms and suites, and this new hotel has taken Townsville's hospitality scene up several notches. The decor combines cork floors with concrete ceilings and bathrooms with terrazzo surfaces and mosaic tiles. Grab a pew on your balcony, sip an Army & Navy cocktail and admire Magnetic Island across the water.

ardohotel.au

Island idyll

HAYMAN ISLAND, WHITSUNDAYS: Some readers may recall 1970s holidays on Hayman, complete with conga lines, pi-

rate nights and cocktails served in hollowed-out pineapples. This great Aussie survivor has undergone myriad incarnations since then but none as glam as today's iteration under the InterContinental brand. New to the scene amid diverse accommodation choices are 12 ultra-chic Beachfront Pavilions with dipping pools and direct beach access. Diverse dining options abound, from Asian-inspired fare at Bam Bam to generously topped wood-fired pizzas at Amici.

haymanisland.intercontinental.com

Small but sweet

ESSENCE, PEREGIAN BEACH: Skip the Noosa hordes and head instead to Peregian, a paradisiacal slice of sand just to the south. A recent arrival is Essence, a boutique hotel offering 22 smartly appointed studios and 10 two-bedroom apartments. The beach-chic aesthetic marries rattan furniture and concrete with cool timber floors and art deco touches such as fluted credenzas and scalloped velvet headboards. Many of the balconies look out towards the Glasshouse Mountains and are perfect sunset perches.

essenceperegianbeach.com.au

Go coastal

THE ELANDRA, MISSION BEACH: This once revered resort on the Cassowary Coast, south of Cairns, was pummeled by Cylone Yasi in 2011 and limped along for the next decade or so. It has now undergone a metamorphosis and emerged as beautiful as a Ulysses butterfly. The 20 design-driven rooms are nestled within 6ha of tropical rainforest, delivering vistas along Wongaling and South Mission beaches, and across Lugger Bay to Dunk and Bedarra islands. The airy bar and restaurant lead to a pool deck topped with pairs of sun lounges, and there's a spa and gym for those with wellness on their mind. Beach strolls and trips to the outer reef beckon.

theelandra.com.au

THE LANGHAM, GOLD COAST: The city's first beachside hotel in three decades, The Langham opened in its prime position between Surfers Paradise and Broadbeach with much fanfare in 2022. There are 169 luxury hotel rooms and suites and 170 serviced apartments stacked in the centremost of the three glass Jewel towers. Key elements



Pool at The Elandra, top;
Emporium Hotel Southbank



Ardo, top left; The Calile, above; The Langham, Gold Coast, above left; Narrows Escape, below; Essence, bottom right; Hayman Island Beachfront Pavilion, bottom left



of the Langham’s signature British-influenced style have been transplanted here: lavish sprays of freshly cut pink flowers, elegant furniture and uniforms, gleaming silverware and fine bone china, a lobby scented with ginger flower, and the ever-smiling “service stylists” who swan about in tailored pastel pink suits. There is, of course, the famous afternoon tea, along with a pool to laze around in between going for swims at the beach just metres away.

langhamhotels.com

Country roads

NARROWS ESCAPE, MONTVILLE: Tucked away at the edge of Kondalilla National Park in Montville, Narrows Escape is an adults-only retreat set amid rainforest. After being named Tripadvisor’s Most Romantic Hotel in the World in 2021, and with packages named “honeymoon heaven”, “romantic cocoon” and “babymoon”, you’d be forgiven for thinking that it’s just for loved-up couples. However, Narrows Escape is a good spot for a girls’ getaway, and is popular with (well-heeled) hikers. Guests of the eight luxurious villas – two with heated private plunge pools – are pampered with chocolates, fresh flowers, gourmet cheese platters and home-baked croissants.

narrowsescape.com.au

The glammer

MITCHELL GRASS RETREAT, LONGREACH: At a place indelibly linked to the tough life of the drover, this tented oasis would surely turn a stockman soft. Airconditioned, fully screened and with a king bed and ensuite – some with a free-standing tub – each tent is kitted out to convert the most ardent anti-camper to sleeping under canvas. A kitchenette plus barbecue on a private deck means guests can be fully self-sufficient, especially when supplied with a breakfast basket. The operation is well positioned for visits to Longreach attractions such as the Stockman’s Hall of Fame, Qantas Founders Museum and a cruise on the Thomson River.

mitchellgrassretreat.com.au



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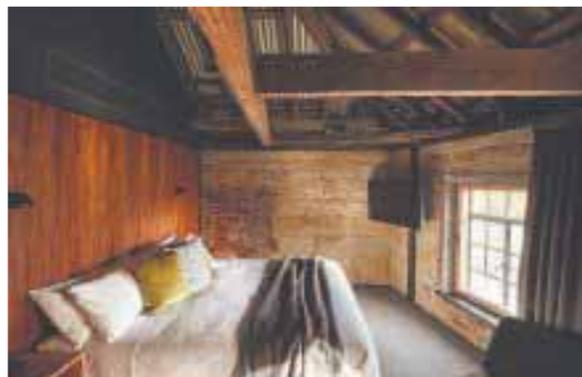
Kittawa Lodge on King Island; Moss Hotel bedroom and MACq 01's terraces, below centre; Peppina restaurant at The Tasman, bottom left; Satellite Island, bottom right

TASMANIA

City slickers

THE TASMAN, HOBART: As the first of Marriott's top-tier Luxury Collection to debut in Australia, this is a splendid hotel. It knits together a trio of buildings in the historic parliament precinct: an early 19th-century former hospital, art deco government offices and the contemporary Pavilion building. Interiors reflect these different eras and attention to detail is exceptional, from the modern light fittings to the timber-lined lifts, with tactile handrails retaining the scent of a recently sawn log. A drink in the mysterious Mary Mary bar is a must, and signature restaurant Peppina serves up tastes of the Mediterranean. marriott.com

MACq 01, HOBART: On the waterfront on gorgeous Hunter Street, just across from its glamorous sister property the Henry Jones Art Hotel, MACq 01 offers a journey into the history and psyche of Tasmania, without even leaving the building. Stuffed with local artefacts, art and references to the cold-climate warriors who have made the state what it is, this is a hotel that has a story to tell. Each of the 114 guestrooms and suites is named after a notable Tasmanian whose life story is told on the door. Study those intriguing portals or take the guided tour that runs through the highlights. Try a whisky tasting in Evolve bar, followed by a perfectly grilled steak at Old Wharf restaurant. macq01.com.au



to desks of ironbark and stringybark recycled from 1930s wool-stores. Room tones are warm and rich with charcoal carpets and acid-green, velvety chaises and armchairs, and the curved walls and cave-like cosiness ensure solid sleeps. all.accor.com

Island idylls

SATELLITE ISLAND: Lying low and lovely in the D'Entrecasteaux Channel off Tasmania's southeast coast, this magical 34ha isle is available to private parties of a maximum eight guests across a stylish summer house on a hill, boatshed by the water-lapped jetty and luxurious bell tent, all with seafarer touches and salvaged finds. There's a wildly ethereal end-of-the-world feel, with coves and cliffs, pristine bushland, walking and kayaking, birdwatching, oyster-shucking and a cosy environment for lazing about. Catering is DIY but why not splurge on a private chef to putter across in a dinghy from the mainland and rustle up meals. satelliteisland.com.au

KITTAWA LODGE, KING ISLAND: Seachangers Aaron Suine and Nick Stead relocated from Sydney to construct this rather quixotic property on land previously occupied by cattle. The two self-contained guest villas face the sea and are cleverly positioned for privacy. They comprise a living and dining room – including fireplace, fully appointed kitchen and comfortable lounge suites – plus a roomy bedroom and a bathroom with arguably the most gorgeously located bathtub in Australia. Fastidious attention to detail means they're equipped with Dyson hairdryers, wellington boots, jackets, Akubras and local art – while the fridge is filled with Tasmanian wines, King Island Dairy cheeses and generous brekkie provisions. kittawalodge.com



Small but sweet

MOSS HOTEL, HOBART: As the name heralds, the great green landscape of the Apple Isle is at the core of this Georgian-era warehouse turned bijou hotel spread over two adjoining buildings at Salamanca Place. Expect a palette of natural shades such as forest green and sage, slate and rust, plus original timber beams and convict-cut sandstone, across 41 smart guestrooms in categories with evocative names such as Bower and Grove. The centralised location is terrific and collaborations with local design studios, artisans and providores celebrate all things Tasmanian. mosshotel.com.au

Regional gem

PEPPERS SILO HOTEL, LAUNCESTON: A row of four 1959 silos was reimagined to create this hotel beside the Tamar River, just by Cataract Gorge. Of the 108 guestrooms, only 52 are inside the silos; the remaining 56 are in a north-facing tower. Fortunately, interiors have plenty of personality, from Waverley Mill blankets arranged artfully on plump white beds