



28 Sep 2024
Author: Emma Breheny
Article type: Publication
Page: 215
Sydney Morning Herald, The
Readership: 580000
AVE: \$322583.77

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New South Wales

= EV CHARGER = PET-FRIENDLY

52 Weekends Away

Want to make sparks fly, or sloth it out? Whether you want to get wild or get pampered, find bucolic bliss or urban buzz, max out that 48-hour window with our annual round-up of bright, beautiful escapes across the country.



Il Delfino

4 Ocean St, Yamba; 0477 518 770;
ildelfino.com.au



THE LOCATION This renovated jewel spills down to the sea in a fishing town seven hours north of Sydney.

THE PLACE Five apartments of varying layouts – each with a balcony and buckets of Amalfi Coast charm – are terraced into a sparkling white stucco building high on a hill above one of Yamba's six beaches. A seaside inn since 1948, its Spanish Mission bones have been lovingly updated by creator Sheree Commerford, who grew up nearby. Terracotta tiles, rattan, striped linen, hand-painted ceramics and sea-creature motifs bring the Med chic, while each bathroom is a more-is-more clash of Edwardian and Marrakesh style. Clever architecture gives each apartment (named after Italian coastal towns) ocean views.

THE EXPERIENCE There's nothing between you and the blue horizon, which means maximum privacy and minimal noise (unless you count the waves). Lazy days might be spent on the shared terrace under a rust-coloured umbrella, watching for dolphins through the binoculars provided, or playing backgammon indoors. Surfboards and a list of recommended beaches are on hand, along with intel on nearby walks and towns to explore. Well-appointed kitchens with white Smeg appliances, a shelf of cookbooks and a hamper service (from breakfast to aperitivo) make it entirely possible to ensconce yourself at Il Delfino.

DON'T MISS Yamba's ocean pool, watched over by towering Norfolk pines, is five minutes' walk away. **FROM** \$500 a night; minimum two-night stay. *Emma Breheny*

PHOTOGRAPHY BY ANNA PHAN



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Wildacres

193-197 Shipley Rd, Blackheath;
 0429 782 678; airbnb.com.au

THE LOCATION The property is on a secluded road near Blackheath, an hour and 45 minutes west of Sydney in the Blue Mountains.

THE PLACE From the outside, the sprawling, bushfire-resistant house resembles a glorified tin shed. Inside, it's an architectural triumph, featuring expansive windows, vaulted ceilings and

heated, polished-concrete floors. The home sleeps eight guests across two bedrooms and various living spaces.

THE EXPERIENCE Swish televisions, sound systems and other gadgets litter the property but don't distract from the true star of the show: the bushland views. The kitchen is the heart and soul of the home, but the master suite on the first floor commands impressive views to the bush and is hard to leave each morning. Outside, relax by one of

three open fireplaces (including a gorgeous amphitheatre), treat yourself to a soak in a stainless steel hot tub, and whip up dinner in the luxe wood-fired pizza oven. **DON'T MISS** The 16-hectare property atop the Shipley Plateau includes several private lookouts. The best, with views to the Kanimbla Cliffs, is a 15-minute bushwalk from the house and is the perfect location for a sunset drink. **FROM** \$999 a night; two-night minimum stay. *Bevan Shields*

Wallaringa Farm

21 Wallaringa Rd, Wallaringa;
wallaringafarm.com.au

THE LOCATION On the slope of a family beef farm 2.5 hours north of Sydney in the cattle country of the Hunter region, the Wallaringa homestead's surroundings are quintessentially Australian: bleached paddocks, blue hills, grey gum trees. Most of the drive is easy, but be prepared for a surprisingly potholed final 10 minutes.

THE PLACE The homestead was extensively renovated during lockdown. It has a spacious, minimalist charm: quality, large-scale finishes such as travertine tiles, blackbutt floors and a rammed-earth fireplace are echoed in small details – hardwood logs for the fire, a professional-level coffee machine, and (in contradiction of the universal truth that no holiday house on earth contains a decent cutting implement) several very sharp knives. It sleeps eight, and



two families can roam with room to spare on the wide balconies and in the enormous living space. **THE EXPERIENCE** Cook a steak on the Heston Blumenthal Everdure barbecue; toast marshmallows in the firepit; play family cricket on the lawn. There's no TV; there is a record player and board games. There are also bushwalks and historic homesteads nearby (this is

Captain Thunderbolt territory), and Barrington Tops National Park is within an hour's drive. **DON'T MISS** The CWA fresh produce market in Dungog on a Saturday morning sells everything from kaffir limes to fabulously bizarre pumpkins, as well as giving you all the local gossip. Cash only. **FROM** \$800 a night; two-night minimum stay. *Amanda Hooton*

Selah Valley Estate

110 Youngs Rd, Limpinwood;
 0439 405 177; selahvalley.com.au



THE LOCATION Selah Valley Estate is a 174-hectare farm in the green, subtropical foodie enclave of the Tweed Valley. It is a 54-kilometre drive from Gold Coast Airport, and 23 kilometres from Murwillumbah.

THE PLACE On a hillside with views across a soaring mountain range covered in thick rainforest, three fully self-contained luxury cabins await, their floor-to-ceiling windows set to capture the landscape. A further three suites are set beside the creek, a short walk below. Inhabitants of these don't miss out – there are views of the region's tallest peak, Mount Warning (Wollumbin) from all over the property.

THE EXPERIENCE Your phone won't work here, and there's no Wi-Fi in any of the rooms (although there is in the estate's communal Pavilion area); nor are there TVs. Selah Valley Estate offers instead an escape into a wilderness that's actually not that far away from civilisation. Swim in crystal-clear freshwater creeks, hike through rainforest and spend time with the chickens, cows and goats that share the farm with you. The estate's location at the end of a kilometre-long dirt road enhances the feeling of detachment.

DON'T MISS There's a pub nearby in the picturesque village of Tyalgum that serves hearty country fare, but spend at least one night in with ready-to-heat meals, eating beside your firepit and staring at the stars.

FROM \$400 a night. *Craig Tansley*





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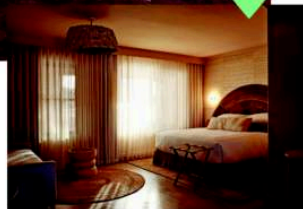
New South Wales
 52 WEEKENDS AWAY

If you're not up for going out for brekkie, there's a vintage caravan serving coffees and juices.

Swell Hotel Byron
 11 Butler St, Byron Bay;
 0481 602 937; swellhotel.com

THE LOCATION In the heart of Byron Bay township at the northern end of Butler St, Swell is right across the road from the iconic weekly farmers' market.
THE PLACE Swell is a 16-key, adults-only hotel built on the bones of the old Byron Bay Motor Lodge. Aussie designer Nyree Mackenzie has kept the best of the old motel – the functional layout, the informal vibe – while re-casting the rest in a soothing, retro-luxe style, a richly curated blend of caramel-coloured

interiors, thatched umbrellas, velvet '70s sofas and iridescent green gardens. The rooms – unusually large for an old motel, ranging from 22 to 46 square metres – feature sisal mats and hand-carved timber side tables. All have king beds; there's a two-bedroom suite with its own private garden.
THE EXPERIENCE Swell is pretty much peak-chill, Palm Springs-meets-Tulum-meets-Morocco-meets-Bali-meets, well, Byron Bay. There's a pool out the back with an open-air bar and a separate spa area featuring a small sauna and an ice bath kept at five degrees. Main Beach is close, as is the storied beer garden at the Beach



Hotel. If you're not up for going out for brekkie, there's a vintage caravan in the front garden that serves coffees and juices.
DON'T MISS The Cape Byron lighthouse, Australia's most easterly point, is perfect for whale watching if you're there in season.
FROM \$350 a night; two-night minimum stay on weekends.

Tim Elliott



Common Kosci
 92 Bungarra Ln, Jindabyne;
 0424 461 102; commonkosci.com

THE LOCATION The cabin is on a rural property about eight minutes' drive from the Snowy Mountains town of Jindabyne, five hours' drive south-west of Sydney or two hours from Canberra.
THE PLACE Two architect-designed pods clad in charred timber – black boxes, essentially – have been fitted together to create 80 square metres of living space. The emphasis is on simplicity and practicality but the lines are clean, the fittings are good quality and the comfort level is high. There are two bedrooms, one with a king-sized bed, the other with two sets of bunk beds. Double insulation and efficient heating keep the place snug when it's cold outside. The small, well-equipped kitchen and sitting area open onto a deck with a hot tub.
THE EXPERIENCE You're definitely in the bush. Kangaroos graze just beyond the deck and large windows frame views of slender alpine gums in grey-green paddocks. You could go mountain-biking, fish for trout in Lake Jindabyne or head for the ski fields less than an hour's drive away. Or you could stay where you are and enjoy the tranquillity. Skylights above the beds mean that on clear nights, you can fall asleep while stargazing.
DON'T MISS After dinner, gather round the outdoor firepit and toast marshmallows under the spangled sky.
FROM \$300 a night; two-night minimum stay. *Jane Cadzow*

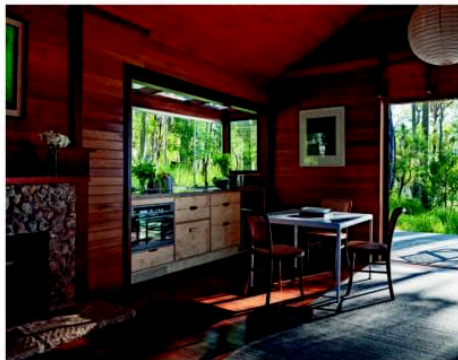


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New South Wales

52 WEEKENDS AWAY



The Cottage at Trincomalee

Lovett Bay, Pittwater;
airbnb.com.au

THE LOCATION Lovett Bay is in the Ku-ring-gai Chase National Park, on the western shores of Pittwater, about an hour's drive

from the Sydney CBD. The tiny suburb – about 150 residents – is on the mainland but can only be accessed by boat, public ferry or water taxi from Church Point.

THE PLACE A former caretaker's residence in the grounds of historic 1896 Trincomalee, The Cottage is one of the oldest homes in Pittwater. Recently renovated, it

has a separate bedroom with queen-size bed and open-plan living with mid-century furniture and eclectic art. A new limestone-tiled bathroom has been added and there's a galley kitchen. There's also a copper outdoor shower on the private deck.

THE EXPERIENCE Trinco, as it's known, is owned by acclaimed garden designer Richard Unsworth, of Garden Life, and his partner. No surprise, then, that the restored garden, in which guests are free to wander, is a highlight, with sandstone paths and plenty of native species creating a thriving habitat for birds and other fauna. The property is adjacent to a national park and an ideal base for a spot of quiet forest bathing without technically leaving the city. The deck is the perfect place to sit and read or be entertained by the wildlife.

DON'T MISS The sandy base of the Elvina Waterfall, surrounded by rainforest-like vegetation, is only a gentle 30-minute hike away.

FROM \$495 a night; two-night minimum stay. *David Meagher*



Basq House

4 Fletcher Ln, Byron Bay;
 (02) 5671 1000; basqhouse.com.au



THE LOCATION Basq is in Bundjalung Country in the heart of Byron Bay, eight hours' drive north of Sydney.

THE PLACE It feels like you're staying with a friend with exceptional taste at the new 32-room, boho-inspired Basq House. Taking its cues from a traditional riad, this sanctuary is oriented around a central magnesium pool hemmed by cabanas, overhanging palms and pink umbrellas. Monochromatic rooms feature king-size beds, Mr Smith toiletries, linen bathrobes and minibars stocked with local artisanal fare; some have Juliet or full balconies. Entered from a hidden laneway, the reception-cum-bar leads to a speakeasy-style lounge and intimate library featuring local artwork, fireplaces, woven pendant lights and objets d'art. Guests are offered a complimentary vino on arrival while staff in hip khaki jumpsuits offer warm, personalised service. A wellness-focused rooftop space opens next.

THE EXPERIENCE Take the complimentary Lekker bikes out for a spin; catch a wave at The Pass on Basq's candy-coloured boards. Order a coconut margarita on return and partake in poolside reverie until dinner beckons. Two dedicated share vehicles can be hired for coastal or hinterland jaunts. **DON'T MISS** A long, lazy lunch of modern Australian fare with a Mediterranean bent at hatted Raes on Wategos, overlooking Byron's most exclusive set of waves.

FROM \$340 a night; two-night minimum stay on weekends.

Sheriden Rhodes

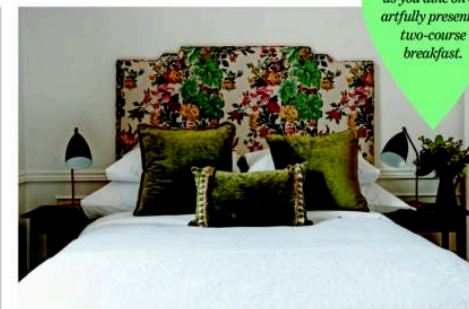
Moss Manor

1a Throsby St, Moss Vale;
 (02) 4861 5668; mossmanor.au



THE LOCATION The bustling Southern Highlands heritage town of Moss Vale is about 1.5 hours' drive south-west of Sydney, or under two hours by train.

THE PLACE This stately, 1890s former mayoral residence in the Georgian style has been transformed into a boutique art hotel with the addition of a striking jet-black glass and steel pavilion. Hemmed by landscaped grounds and a canopy of European trees (including a 150-year-old weeping cherry), interiors marry classic comfort with artwork (available for



Feel like lord or lady of the manor as you dine on an artfully presented two-course breakfast.

purchase) curated by Sydney's Defiance Gallery. Sleep soundly in one of eight luxurious suites (one wheelchair-accessible) with king and queen-size beds dressed in soft white linen. One features a decadent full-sized marble bath.

THE EXPERIENCE Feel like lord or lady of the manor as you dine on an artfully presented two-course breakfast served by attentive staff. Browse antique and textiles stores nearby along Argyle Street and jump in the car for a tippie at

English-style pubs. Afternoon teas, such as Eton Mess, are worth returning for, as is time by the wood fire or around the firepit in cooler weather. Suppers of house-made treats with port are offered before retiring. **DON'T MISS** Seek out the elevated modern Australian fare at Eschalot, housed in a stone cottage at Berrima, followed by a stroll along the Wingecarribee River.

FROM \$350 a night.

Sheriden Rhodes



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New South Wales

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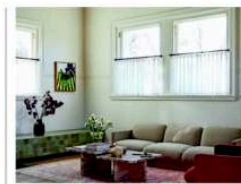
Sona Molong

68 Bank St, Molong; 0418 165 852; sona-molong.com.au

THE LOCATION The historic streetscape of Molong village is 25 minutes' drive from the wine-blessed regional city of Orange and four hours west of Sydney.
THE PLACE Nick and Pip Brett have transformed a 1930s art deco and Spanish mission former bank into a luxurious, gelato-hued getaway paying homage to its rich past. Five queen-sized bedrooms (sleeping 10), three bathrooms and two living spaces are found inside the handsome building with its twisting, decorative columns. The couple (Pip owns renowned lifestyle store Jumbled; Nick is a

seasoned builder) collaborated with high school friend and architect Felicity Slattery from Studio Esteta to transform Sona (meaning gold in Sanskrit). Original features are enhanced with a bold, playful aesthetic of clashing prints, patterns and textures.

THE EXPERIENCE A vast, well-equipped kitchen and three-metre-long dining table beside a roaring fire beg for entertaining. Comfy lounges invite movie nights, cards or board games (found in the old bank safe, along with an espresso machine) or pour some complimentary bubbles and take a soak in one of two baths. Step outside for stargazing by the firepit. Molong Stores (see Two of Us, page 11),



the Telegraph Hotel and Molong Creek, where platypuses are spotted, are a short stroll away. **DON'T MISS** At Rowlee Wines' swish new restaurant overlooking undulating vineyards on Mt Canobolas, Simon Furley, formerly of hatted Homage Restaurant in Queensland, heads up the kitchen. **FROM** \$600 a night, minimum two-night stay. *Sheriden Rhodes*

Cottage 79

79 Hill St, Orange; airbnb.com.au

THE LOCATION A three-and-a-half-hour drive west of Sydney, the cool-climate wine region of Orange, known for chardonnay and pinot noir, sits 862 metres above sea level, so it's cold in winter, when it can snow, and relatively mild in summer.

THE PLACE This sweet two-bedroom home sleeps four with a king and a queen bed. There's a gas fireplace that warms the place beautifully, antique floorboards, a separate dining room and an outdoor area that's perfect for summer. Owners Liddy and Gordon leave a loaf of bread, milk and fruit for guests (the region is an apple and pear producer), and the kitchen is well stocked for cooking.



THE EXPERIENCE The beauty of Cottage 79 is that it's so close to all that Orange has to offer. It's a five-minute walk from the main shopping strip and, handily, a few doors down from Ferment, a small bar serving wines from the region. So, after a few tipples, you can stroll back to your fireplace or garden, depending on the season. Robertson Park is a five-minute walk from the cottage, and the Orange Botanic Gardens are about three kilometres away. If you're keen to dine out, try the relaxed Hey Rosey wine bar; for a more upmarket experience, The School House is the go. Alternatively, stay in and eat in front of the fire.

DON'T MISS There are plenty of wineries to visit; we enjoyed Swinging Bridge, Printhe and Patina. For coffee, Bills Beans in East Orange is good. **FROM** \$360 a night, two-night minimum stay. *Katrina Strickland*



PHOTOGRAPHY BY NICHOLAS WAT; ELISE MASSEY; PIP BRETT; MILLY MEAD

Hotel Indigo Potts Point

2/14 Kings Cross Rd, Potts Point; (02) 9295 8888, ihg.com



THE LOCATION Just behind the iconic Coca-Cola billboard at the crest of Kings Cross, Hotel Indigo is brilliantly positioned for a weekend on the town – 30 seconds from the strip, and five minutes' walk through Darlinghurst to Oxford St.

THE PLACE In a small misnomer, neon pink is the feature shade in Hotel Indigo's 105 rooms, starting in retro chairs, art and fluorescent wall lights. But after a local investment group bought, refurbished and rebranded the old Larmont Sydney, it's now part of IHG Hotels and Resorts' Hotel Indigo brand, and it feels like the best of both worlds: the benefits of

large hospitality-group management (excellent cleaning and cheery, professional staff), but with just enough glam (Gary Heery photographs, room-service martinis) to be hip.

THE EXPERIENCE Put on a palm-tree towelling robe (high-length, à la 1970s) and order a room-service cocktail to enjoy as you sharpen up before heading out on the town. Downstairs, the hotel's Luc-San bar serves tasty izakaya-inspired snacks and meals curated by Luke Mangan; you can also use the Anytime Fitness gym next door for free. But basically, you're staying here to go out there. **DON'T MISS** The room-service breakfast arrives in a brown paper bag, is delicious, and includes a stunningly good coffee – a Kings Cross miracle. **FROM** \$218 a night.

Amanda Hooton





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Shelter

Garden Bay Beach, Malua Bay;
airbnb.com.au



THE LOCATION Malua Bay is on the NSW South Coast, a four-hour drive south of Sydney. The nearest airport is Moruya Airport, a 20-minute drive away, and Batemans Bay is about 10 minutes away.

THE PLACE This renovated, inviting beachfront house, transformed from its original life as a fibro shack, has three bedrooms, one bathroom with a walk-in rainfall shower, a fully equipped kitchen, barbecue facilities and Wi-Fi.

THE EXPERIENCE Once you step onto the expansive terrace at the back of the house – and take in the exquisite, tranquil view over a secluded cove – you'll be enveloped by a Zen-like calm. You can sit in a private backyard with a firepit, or take the flight of wooden stairs down to the beach, which has an adjoining grassy park dotted with children's play equipment. The accommodation is so suited for those with kids or a dog (or both) that you won't want to leave, offering snorkelling, kayaking and fishing only steps from your back lawn. You can go on local drives around Batemans Bay, but you really want to be back for the sunset. Grab a glass of wine, put one of the many LPs on the turntable – some in the collection were once owned by Leonard Cohen when he lived on the Greek island of Hydra – and watch the sun go down. Bliss.

DON'T MISS Magnificent Guerilla Bay is less than a 10-minute drive away from the accommodation.
FROM \$500 a night; two-night minimum stay. *Greg Callaghan*

The Writer's Room

Goonengerry; address provided after booking; (02) 6684 9327;
mygeneral-store.com

THE LOCATION This intimate retreat is set high in the Byron Bay hinterland, about 15 minutes' drive south-west of Mullumbimby.

THE PLACE Perhaps you've bought a kimono, beach shirt or wool blanket from Michelle Glew-Ross's My General Store lifestyle brand. Perhaps you've seen her design-nerd husband, Tim Ross, presenting architecture



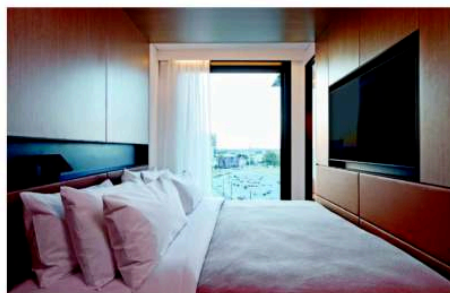
shows on the ABC. This is their little weatherboard cottage for single guests or couples to unplug and recalibrate with very nice linen, a queen-sized bed, and gorgeous outdoor shower overlooking lush forest. Glew-Ross has carefully selected all ceramics, napkins and towels (some of which you can buy), plus pots and pans if you want to cook, although the size of the two-burner stovetop is better suited to reheating rather than three-course dinners.

THE EXPERIENCE You could do what it suggests on the box and get stuck into your own writing, or

you could just relax on the daybed with the background song of native birds. It's a screen-free place, but plenty of Penguin classics are provided if you forget to bring a book, and *An Easy Guide to Southern Stars* is on hand for constellation-spotting at night. There are 1.2 hectares of land for strolling, too.

DON'T MISS In charming Bangalow, 20 minutes' drive away, Manu's Alimentari is your one-stop deli for cheese, charcuterie and focaccia to take back to the cottage.

FROM \$300 a night; \$120 cleaning fee per stay. *Callan Boys*



Little National Hotel

44 Honeysuckle Dr,
 Newcastle; (02) 4091 9000;
littlenationalhotel.com.au



THE LOCATION Two hours' drive north of Sydney, Newcastle's historic steelworks are gone but its magnificent beaches are

ever-present, including in photos by Katie Carmichael that dot the walls of this hotel.

THE PLACE The third hotel in the Doma Group's Little National chain (after Sydney and Canberra), the Little National's 181 rooms are spread over eight levels and have a minimalist Scandi aesthetic. Think blond wood and black-metal-framed floor-to-ceiling windows. There are

two appealing communal spaces for reading and chatting, with snacks and drinks available, and on the ground floor, an expansive gym.

THE EXPERIENCE The rooms are very compact but that's the ethos of the chain, to cater for those spending more time outside their room than in. The king bed is pushed up against a full-frame window, with a large TV at the foot of the bed. The tech extends to check-in, where you can use an electronic kiosk if not in the mood for banter, as well as to sensor-controlled blinds and tablet-based temperature control in the rooms.

The bathroom amenities are by Swedish brand Byredo and there's T2 tea, a coffee pod machine and good Wi-Fi.

DON'T MISS A swim at the magnificent 100-metre Merewether Ocean Baths; dinner at the family-owned Humbug; baked goods at Uprising Bakery.
FROM \$189 a night.

Katrina Strickland



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The Black Shed

535 Lue Rd, Milroy; airbnb.com.au



THE LOCATION A three-and-a-half-hour drive north-west from Sydney, Mudgee oozes historic charm, from the old clock tower that sits at the intersection of the two main streets to the numerous picturesque churches dotted around. Find The Black Shed an easy 10-minute drive out of town.

THE PLACE The Black Shed is what it says: a handsome, black Colorbond-clad, two-storey, two-bedroom, modern build overlooking a small plot of vines. The owners live next door, and if you're lucky, one of their two dogs will pay you a visit. There's a highly effective fireplace, big (black) bathtub, well-equipped kitchen and a barbecue on an inviting patio. The main bedroom has its own private balcony with vineyard views.

It's the kind of place you could happily sit in with a book all day. But Mudgee's food and wine mecca will beckon.



THE EXPERIENCE This is the kind of place you could happily sit in with a book all day, periodically re-stoking the fire and making endless cups of tea. Warm timber features throughout in interior beams, walls and doors. There are louvre windows for letting in the cross breezes on warmer days, and in addition to the indoor fireplace, a firepit outside to toast toes while admiring starry skies in cooler

weather. Wider Mudgee will beckon, though. After all, this is a food and wine mecca and it'd be a shame not to step out and try at least some of it. **DON'T MISS** The Lawson Park Sculpture Walk along the banks of the Cudgegong River, and the Mudgee Arts Precinct, a regional gallery staging small but impressive exhibitions. **FROM** \$460 a night, two-night minimum stay. *Katrina Strickland*



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Victoria



PHOTOGRAPHY BY NISHA BREEN

Tiny Lenore Mooramong, 635 Mooramong Rd, Skipton; intothewildescapes.com

THE LOCATION Lenore is in an isolated paddock (pictured, above) at Mooramong, a National Trust sheep farm. It's 45 minutes west of Ballarat, and two-and-a-half hours north-west of Melbourne.

THE PLACE The National Trust of Victoria has partnered with Into the Wild Escapes to put three tiny homes on Mooramong, formerly owned by Hollywood silent-movie-era star Claire Adams and her Australian millionaire husband,

Donald "Scobie" MacKinnon. Lenore is one of these, featuring two double beds, one in a loft accessed by a steep ladder. Tiny is the word: pivot from the Tetris-like kitchenette and you're in the living area, with its folding table. There's solar power, a little 4G, a hot shower, tank water and a non-stinky drop toilet.

THE EXPERIENCE Lenore puts the away in getaway; the chief joy is that there's nothing much to do. Lie on the bed watching lambs trot after their mums and you'll probably see great drifts of kangaroos hopping across the fields, too. Bring a simple meal to

cook on the stovetop or barbecue and wine to enjoy in the outdoor bathtub or by the firepit. Reading, stargazing and forgetting to charge your phone are key activities. You'll pass Mooramong's 1870s homestead on the drive. It's being renovated but Lenore residents will soon be able to enjoy the pool and tennis court – apparently by summer.

DON'T MISS Travel via the new Meredith Farm Produce store to buy their famous feta plus goat chops to grill on your not-so-tiny barbecue.

FROM \$329 a night.

Dani Valent



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Hotel artwork reminds visitors they're in Melbourne culture hub Fitzroy – with a fire for the city's unpredictable weather.



The StandardX, Melbourne
 62 Rose St, Fitzroy; (03) 9124 4800;
standardx.com



THE LOCATION Fitzroy has long been one of Melbourne's coolest inner suburbs, and still is, but now the best bits are found tucked off the main thoroughfare of Brunswick Street, like this 125-key hotel.
THE PLACE From the outside, it's a giant rusty box of weathered steel that glows in the sunrise. But make your way through the red, revolving door and the foyer has a textile-rich, 1980s feel thanks to art created by local talent, including the macramé of Sarah Parkes and the paintings

of Dane Lovett. The rooms – from the smallest option of a Cozy King to ones with city views or balconies, up to the 48-square-metre Suite Spot – are stylishly appointed with blue striped carpet (a nod to the palette of the original Hollywood Standard hotel), Smeg kettles and Frank Green French presses.
THE EXPERIENCE After a welcome negroni, head to the guests-only rooftop lounge for the best vista of Fitzroy. It has strong Brooklyn-rooftop vibes and you can spend

hours looking at the wonderful urban jigsaw puzzle that is Fitzroy: the Victorian-era terraces squeezed cheek-by-jowl between slick apartment buildings and old warehouses and pubs.
DON'T MISS The hotel includes the newly opened restaurant BANG, led by chef Justin Dingle-Garciya. The menu leans on Victorian produce but is inspired by Thai street food. Standard? Absolutely not.
FROM \$260 a night. *Melissa Fyfe*

The Victoria Rutherglen
 90-94 Main St, Rutherglen;
 (02) 6032 8610;
victoriahotelrutherglen.com.au



THE LOCATION A resplendent landmark restored, this two-storey historic hotel is on the main street of the gold town-turned-winegrowing centre, Rutherglen, three hours north-east of Melbourne and 30 minutes from Albury.
THE PLACE Owners Kate and Matt Halpin asked Ballarat's Porter Architects to instil modernity into the

heritage-listed, 156-year-old grand dame without losing its connection to history. Contemporary elegance and a simple palette of monochrome and neutrals extend into five king suites upstairs with wainscoting, wing-backed armchairs, textured cushions and Hunter Lab toiletries bringing cosiness. Another eight suites, opening soon, will include an EV charging facility and two pet-friendly rooms, plus an accessible suite.
THE EXPERIENCE Relax in the upstairs guest lounge or on the beautiful wide wrought-iron balcony before joining the fun downstairs. The hotel recently won

best regional pub restaurant at the 2024 Australian Hotels Association (Vic) Awards. Ex-Melbourne Stokehouse Pasta and Bar chef Brendan Anderson reigns, showcasing local produce and flame-focused finesse, plus outstanding High Country imbibements. There are a number of intimate and historic spaces for dining and celebrations.
DON'T MISS Join a chauffeured winery hop or master new culinary skills at a Pickled Sisters Cafe cooking class.
FROM \$245 a night; two-night minimum on weekends.

Sue Wallace





28 Sep 2024

Author: Emma Breheny

Article type: Publication

Page:

Sydney Morning Herald, The

Readership: 580000

AVE: \$322583.77

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Victoria

52 WEEKENDS AWAY



Le Méridien Melbourne

20 Bourke St, Melbourne; (03) 9123 3900; marriott.com

THE LOCATION The hotel is in the east end of Melbourne's theatre district, a minute's walk from Parliament House and Treasury Gardens.

THE PLACE Originally built as a hotel in the 1850s, the building has been a theatre, cinema and nightclub before reopening in 2023 as a 12-storey luxury property with 235 guest rooms, including 14 suites, all fitted out with custom walnut-veneer joinery, easy-on-the-eye downlighting, and marble bathrooms. Suites have some nifty mid-century design touches, including velvet lounge chairs, art books, Smeg appliances, a beautifully crafted oak wood backgammon set and a TV that is swear-to-god almost cinema-sized.

THE EXPERIENCE You're surrounded by some of the most elegant theatres in Australia, so go to a show, or explore Chinatown (three minutes' walk away). You could also just roam the hotel hallways listening to the specially curated nouvelle vague playlist. The rooftop pool and terrace, called Le Splash, has an open-air bar serving cocktails, snacks and gelato.

DON'T MISS There's some standout food in this area, but you shouldn't miss Dolly, the hotel's restaurant beneath the lobby, where French-born executive chef Hervé Borghini produces upscale European dishes including the odd-sounding but excellent warm croissant pudding.

FROM \$329 a night. *Tim Elliott*

PHOTOGRAPHY BY GEORGE PHOTOGRAPHY; SHARON CURRIS PHOTOGRAPHY

Mt Duneed Estate

65 Pettavel Rd, Waurin Ponds; (03) 5266 1244; mtduneedestate.com.au

THE LOCATION You might know Mt Duneed Estate at Waurin Ponds, 10 minutes from Geelong and just over an hour's drive south-west of Melbourne, as the site of A Day on the Green concerts. But it's also a successful winery and brewery, and now a vineyard stay.

THE PLACE Mt Duneed Estate has a new range of accommodation with views across the grapes that feature in their range of wines. Turn right at the regal-looking cellar door for tiny-house-style stays with comfy armchairs, lush knitted throws on the bed and a small kitchenette with continental breakfast provided. Outside on the enclosed deck is a stand-alone bath where you can soak and sip from your bottle of the estate's blanc de blanc sparkling while admiring the views.

THE EXPERIENCE Wander along the vineyard, head into the cellar door or have a meal at The Barrel Hall on-site restaurant, choosing



from a Mediterranean-style menu designed to share. Add a cheese box to your booking and it will be waiting for you on arrival. Take a seat (or a bath) on the balcony and tuck in.

DON'T MISS Dive into the burgeoning local food scene in

nearby Geelong. Start the night at Felix Restaurant with a caviar bump, try south-east-Asian fusion at Two Noble or Baah Lah! Dining or head to the hatted Tulip Restaurant for mod-Oz.

FROM \$325 a night.

Paul Chai



The Lyall S. Yarra

16 Murphy St, South Yarra; (03) 9868 8222; theyall.com

THE LOCATION The Lyall is in a leafy street off Toorak Road, with the fashionable strip's shops and eateries a short walk away.

THE PLACE Billed as a hotel for people who don't like hotels, The Lyall prioritises calm, with 51 rooms and suites featuring Parisienne-style balconies with street views or looking over an internal courtyard featuring a Japanese maple garden. The decor is in muted tones, with

bespoke dark-stained Tasmanian oak furniture and marble bathrooms featuring – sigh – shower heads the size of Paris. A clever configuration means you rarely cross paths with other guests, giving the agreeable sensation that the hotel has been built solely for you.

THE EXPERIENCE Treat The Lyall as your pied-à-terre – after partaking of the Dyson hairdryers and Molton Brown bathroom products, stroll around the outstandingly bougie surrounding area with its broad, tree-lined avenues and standout architecture. Toorak Road offers some of the best eating in Melbourne, including Cosi, a local institution, and France-Soir, which has attracted the likes of Mick Jagger and Bruce Springsteen, while the gorgeous, pocket-sized Cucinetta is 20 metres from the hotel.

DON'T MISS A run around The Tan, an internationally renowned track that starts alongside the Yarra River and then laps the Royal Botanic Gardens Victoria. **FROM** \$305 a night. *Tim Elliott*



28 Sep 2024
 Author: Emma Breheny
 Article type: Publication
 Page:
 Sydney Morning Herald, The
 Readership: 580000
 AVE: \$322583.77

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Victoria

52 WEEKENDS AWAY

Re'em Yarra Valley

12-14 Spring Ln, Gruyere;
 1800 989 463;
helenandjoeyestate.com.au

THE LOCATION This sparkly new boutique hotel sits among vineyards in the Yarra Valley, an hour's drive north-east of Melbourne and 20 minutes from Healesville.

THE PLACE The \$22 million development has 16 luxury rooms alongside a restaurant and cellar door. On the top floor there are four Premium Suites with deep, circular baths framed by windows with views of the vines, an ornamental lake with a geyser-like water fountain and the hulking Yarra Ranges beyond. A further two categories of rooms on the

two floors below have either private balconies or garden access. The decor is slick and modern, with the gold lettering of Re'em – a Hebrew word that was translated as "unicorn" in the King James Bible – stitched into every white fluffy towel.

THE EXPERIENCE Owners Helen Xu and Joey Zeng have put their hearts into this place, and their attention to detail shows. Once you're settled in, slip down to the cellar door/bar for a complimentary glass or premium tasting of the Helen and Joey Estate range. If romance is on the agenda, the superb restaurant is the place to be. Book a window-side booth table and enjoy the modern Australian menu with flavour influences from Helen and Joey's birthplaces in Chengdu and Zhejiang.

DON'T MISS Try the magical river-sledding experience offered by the Warburton Adventure Co. It's the Yarra River like you've never seen it before – on your belly.

FROM \$430 a night. *Melissa Fyffe*



Harry's on Moodemere

12 Moodemere Rd, Rutherglen;
 (02) 6032 9449;
moodemerevines.com.au

THE LOCATION Rutherglen, home to more than 20 wineries, is a three-hour drive north-east of Melbourne while Lake Moodemere, a natural billabong and bird sanctuary, is five minutes from the vibrant town.

THE PLACE It's a dream come true for builder Harry Chambers who, fuelled by his childhood memories, has constructed two spacious villas overlooking his family's Lake Moodemere Estate winery. The Chambers family has been growing vines here since 1886. Recycling stars in the open-gabled ceiling and open-plan villas, with bricks rescued from nearby Seppelt ruins. A sleek kitchen, huge en suite with free-standing bath – a definite contender for best rural bath views – a deck with a heated plunge pool that's great for stargazing and a firepit enhance those country feels.

THE EXPERIENCE Spy on grazing kangaroos from the expansive windows at dusk, listen to lakeside birdsong or curl up fireside on the dark olive-green sofa and sip from the wine fridge. If you're lucky, listen to the pitter-patter of night rain on the corrugated-iron exterior. The nearby cellar door offers tastings of sustainably grown, single-vineyard wines and the estate-grown tender lamb is a hit at the onsite Lakeside Restaurant.

DON'T MISS A complimentary self-guided, 25-kilometre sip-and-cycle tour explores scenic riverside tracks and pretty country lanes.

FROM \$400 a night; two-night minimum stay on weekends.

Sue Wallace

The Keith

1929 Point Nepean Rd, Tootgarook;
 (03) 5987 8800; thekeith.com.au

THE LOCATION A 75-minute drive from Melbourne, this retro motel is in Tootgarook, a small Mornington Peninsula suburb sandwiched between the bigger ones of Rosebud and Rye.

THE PLACE Another once-dowdy motel gets a makeover, this one recalling the glory days of 1950s beach holidays, with jute rugs and paintings of local beach scenes. Its 16 rooms include three family rooms; the largest sleeps five. Each, though, has a kitchenette with fridge and microwave. Check-in is contactless – access your room and the rainy-day games room, with its comfy sofas and board games, via a PIN texted to you ahead of arrival. There's no pool, but none required when you've got Capel Sound Beach on the other side of the busy Point Nepean Rd.

THE EXPERIENCE The new owners – the group behind Alba Thermal Springs & Spa – add luxe with essential-oil-infused toiletries

and breakfast packs of locally made granola and banana bread (costs extra). But you don't come here to hang out indoors. The Keith means beach days, fish and chips, watching the sunset and sipping local wines. Come summer, a cocktail caravan is scheduled to pull up to The Cabana, the motel's outdoor kitchen.

DON'T MISS Hire a kayak from the

hotel for a paddle or one of their bicycles for a spin along the foreshore's Bay Trail.

FROM \$169 a night; three-night minimum December 20-January 26.

Belinda Jackson





28 Sep 2024
 Author: Emma Breheny
 Article type: Publication
 Page:
 Sydney Morning Herald, The
 Readership: 580000
 AVE: \$322583.77

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Victoria

52 WEEKENDS AWAY

Salt House Retreat

204A The Esplanade, Surf Beach, Phillip Island; airbnb.com.au



THE LOCATION Surf Beach is one of the first of Phillip Island's dramatic beaches after you cross the bridge from San Remo, 95 minutes from Melbourne. Find the pitched-roof house behind the sand dunes, among the coastal banksias.

THE PLACE Everything is relaxed in this beach retreat, from the long, leather sofas around the gas fireplace in the living room to the slouchy, linen-clad king beds. The house sleeps four in two bedrooms. The kitchen is fully kitted out for self-catering in style, from wine glasses to well-chosen crockery and an outdoor barbecue. For nights in, break out the board games, the Bose sound system, books or TV; otherwise, the sunken spa in the bathroom beckons for serious soaking.

THE EXPERIENCE After sleeping to the sound of the sea, crank up the espresso machine and take a coffee out to the table in the courtyard to hear honeyeaters and king parrots squabbling overhead,

then take yourself to the water, a two-minute walk across the boardwalks. The property's enclosed yard means two well-behaved dogs are welcome, although they'll need to be leashed as the dunes abound with sweet-faced swamp wallabies and, from September to April, nesting short-tailed shearwaters.

DON'T MISS Phillip Island is an ambler's dream; walk the George Bass Coastal Walk or the gentle boardwalks at The Nobbies. Locals report having seen whales from Surf Beach lookout.

FROM \$255 a night; minimum two-night stay on weekends.

Belinda Jackson



Take a coffee out to the courtyard to hear honeyeaters and king parrots squabbling overhead.



Miette

6B High St, Yackandandah; 0456 361 246; mietteyack.com.au

THE LOCATION Yackandandah, or "Yack" as it's known locally, is a diminutive gold-mining village turned contemporary creative hub three hours' drive north-east of Melbourne. It's not far from touristy Beechworth and Bright, and half an hour's drive south of Albury-Wodonga.

THE PLACE Miette means "crumb" in French and the name is a nod to its location – behind an 1853 bakery, now a boutique. The dramatic, full-glass frontage opens into the light and bright open-plan living space with polished concrete floors, stone benchtops and cosy furniture. The downstairs bedroom

is moody, with a grey-tiled en suite and Charles Blackman prints.

THE EXPERIENCE Miette places you in the centre of the action in this town full of lovely gold-rush-era architecture. Stroll up to The Guard for a coffee served from a century-old train carriage. It's part of the buzzy Yack Station arts precinct. Bring your bicycle – there's storage at Miette for four, trail info at hand and state forest nearby. Soak in the outdoor bathtub, fire up the barbecue and get busy in the well-appointed kitchen. You can even wash your sweaty cycling gear in the laundry.

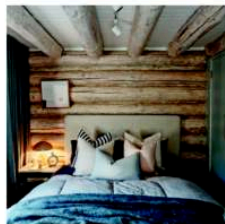
DON'T MISS Cat Leahy is a drummer and hatter who hand-builds custom felt headwear at Feather & Drum on High Street. **FROM** \$390 a night; two-night minimum stay. *Paul Chai*

Norsu Cabin

7A Haig St, Macedon; (03) 5312 2772; discoverdaylesford.com

THE LOCATION Find this log-lined hideaway at the base of the forested slopes of Mount Macedon, an easy one-hour drive north of Melbourne.

THE PLACE No detail has been overlooked in this picture-book-perfect log cabin. And with Nat Wheeler and Kristy Sadiier of super-stylish south-east



Melbourne home emporium Norsu Interiors at the helm, it's no surprise. Designer furnishings, quality linen and thoughtful little extras everywhere (almost all available to buy) – from cooking condiments and top-quality kitchenware to the curated alt-country playlist and the cocktail bar in the cosy TV room – make it feel like your very own luxurious Nordic hidey-hole, even if only for a couple of nights.

THE EXPERIENCE BYO supplies, because there's no way you'll want to leave once you step inside, except maybe to venture a few metres for a soak in the outdoor bath by the firepit (or opt for the indoor one). Savour a wine on the deck, looking out at silverbirch trees and the lush garden beyond. Fix yourself a cocktail, cosy up under a soft woolly blanket on the sofa and watch movies all day. Cook up a storm in the well-stocked kitchen.

DON'T MISS Sit by the fire and



finally read that book, or just turn your phone off and drift away on the cloud-like beds for as long as you darn well like.

FROM \$550 a night; two-night minimum stay, three nights on long weekends. *Andrea McGinniss*



28 Sep 2024
 Author: Emma Breheny
 Article type: Publication
 Page:
 Sydney Morning Herald, The
 Readership: 580000
 AVE: \$322583.77

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Victoria

52 WEEKENDS AWAY

Carrajung Estate

322 Lays Rd, Willung South;
 (03) 5194 2215; carrajung.com.au



THE LOCATION A two-hour-and-15-minute drive from Melbourne takes you through the Latrobe Valley, past the soaring cooling

towers of Yalourn Power Station, which look like something out of *The Simpsons*. The last leg, on a winding, bush-lined, gravel road, ends at this Central Gippsland vineyard, restaurant and getaway. **THE PLACE** In 2023, new owners took over this 30-year-old property, previously known as Toms Cap Vineyard, and renamed it

Carrajung Estate after the nearby town. They've been steadily waving their renovation magic wand over the cellar door restaurant, event space and accommodation. The four separate living quarters range from a single cottage with a log fire, luxurious stone-floored bathroom and outdoor bath, to a four-bedroom lodge with a fully equipped kitchen, two bathrooms and a fire pit for sunset hangs.

THE EXPERIENCE Miles from anywhere, this is an ideal spot for an unplugged mini break. Roam the property, which combines towering gums and hillsides braided with vines, sample the wines, feed the alpacas, eat lunch or dinner at the restaurant, and drag out one of the thoughtfully provided board games.

DON'T MISS If you're staying in the single-bedroom cottage known as The Nest, have a long twilight soak in the deep bath on the deck outside as the sun dips behind the surrounding hills.

FROM \$369 a night; two-night minimum on public holiday weekends. *Roslyn Grundy*



The Vineyard House

Sedona Estate, 182 Shannons Rd, Murrindindi; 0432 435 180; sedonaestate.com.au

THE LOCATION Sedona Estate Winery is a 90-minute drive north-east of Melbourne, 16 kilometres from the historic town of Yea.

THE PLACE Sonja Herges and Paul Evans discovered their dream block 36 years ago, established a cool-climate vineyard and built a weekend. Recently renovated, the smart two-bedroom Vineyard House, with eclectic artwork and garden sculpture, is surrounded by look-at-me vistas. From the comfy couch that makes the cosy living room hard to leave, you can gaze through a huge window at manicured vines and distant hills. The king bedroom has an en suite and the queen bedroom opposite has a large bathroom with a free-standing tub.

THE EXPERIENCE Listen to a chorus of frogs and a neighbouring cow named Cupcake and watch inquisitive kangaroos and the resident wombat wander by. Head over for the complimentary cellar-door wine-tasting and pre-ordered platter, test-drive the kitchen or pick up meals from Marmalades of Yea. You could also wander along the Murrindindi Cascades or just sit and revel in those velvety emerald vistas and oodles of fresh air.

DON'T MISS Take the Yea Wetlands Walk from the Discovery Centre across a cable suspension bridge, watching for shy platypuses. **FROM** \$400 a night, two-night minimum stay. *Sue Wallace*

The Churches

6592 Maroondah Hwy, Yarck;
 0414 442 223; airbnb.com.au



THE LOCATION Yarck is a small township on the way to the ski fields Mt Buller, a two-hour drive out of Melbourne.

THE PLACE Sitting on prime church real estate in the centre of this blink-and-you-miss-it town, twin buildings The Chapel and The Rectory (the latter soon to open as a lifestyle shop) were built in 1878.



The Chapel has been converted into an open-plan stay, recently renovated by new owners.

THE EXPERIENCE It's out with the pews and in with a lounge area separated from a king-size bed by a gas fire visible from both sides. A kitchenette is stocked with local Delatite wines and snacks, and a clawfoot bath dominates the bathroom. The dark wood floors and beautiful arched doors remain, and a huge window seat looks onto the country garden. Just behind The Chapel is Yarck Bikes, where

you can rent a bike and tackle the Great Victorian Rail Trail. This stretch of track takes in quirky sculptures, modern scar trees by artist Mick Harding and plenty of wildlife and farm life, including deer darting through the bush. The double-sided fire is the perfect spot for a post-ride red wine.

DON'T MISS Either bike or drive to the Cheviot Tunnel, a historic 200-metre long train tunnel that was hewn in 1883 and makes for a spooky visit.

FROM \$260 a night. *Paul Chai*

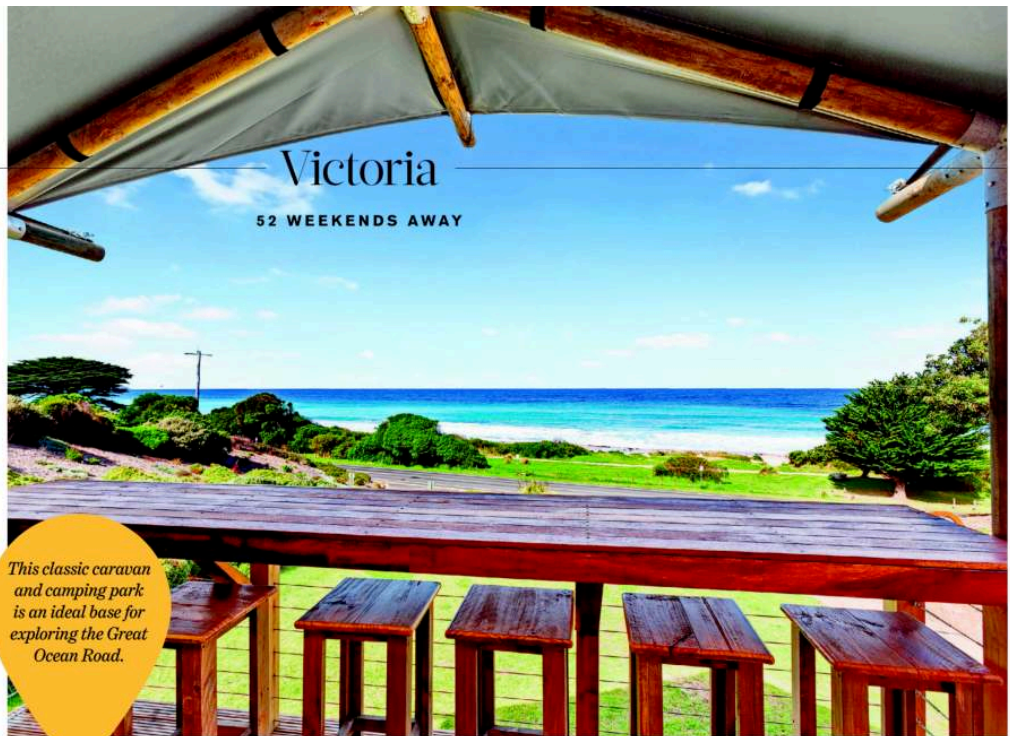


PHOTOGRAPHY BY JIM MCCORMACK, DYLAN JAMES PHOTO



28 Sep 2024
 Author: Emma Breheny
 Article type: Publication
 Page:
 Sydney Morning Herald, The
 Readership: 580000
 AVE: \$322583.77

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Big 4 Pisces Apollo Bay

311 Great Ocean Rd, Apollo Bay;
 (03) 5237 6749; big4apollobay.com.au

THE LOCATION Wedged between the Southern Ocean and the foothills of the Great Otway National Park, Apollo Bay on the Great Ocean Road is busy in summer, sleepy in winter, and two-and-a-half hours' drive from Melbourne.

THE PLACE This classic caravan and camping park just outside Apollo Bay township is an ideal base for exploring the Great Ocean Road, or just enjoying the surf and turf of its seaside locale. The campground's pride and joy is a collection of five glamping tents, each offering a fully self-contained stay with king bed, living and kitchenette in an open-plan arrangement, plus an en suite, and an adjoining bedroom with double bed and bunk for the kids.

THE EXPERIENCE Clustered at the bottom of the hill, the Beach

This classic caravan and camping park is an ideal base for exploring the Great Ocean Road.

Tents make the most of Big4's excellent location directly opposite the beach. Inside is rustic, with raw timber panelling tempered by stylish touches such as black fixtures and leather butterfly armchairs. The front deck features a built-in barbecue with

warm string lighting that sets the mood for sundowners. Kids are entertained: facilities include a basketball court, flying fox and skate track. The park has a coffee van during spring and summer. **DON'T MISS** Paddle out to Marengo Reefs Marine Sanctuary

with Apollo Bay Surf & Kayak to check out colourful seaweed gardens and fur seals hauling up onto the rocks at sunset, then surf back into town on the waves. **FROM \$180** a night; minimum-stay periods vary throughout the year. *Justin Meneguzzi*



28 Sep 2024
 Author: Emma Breheny
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 Sydney Morning Herald, The
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Australian Capital Territory

Lakeview Luxe

Trevillian Quay, Kingston;
 0425 727 616; airbnb.com.au



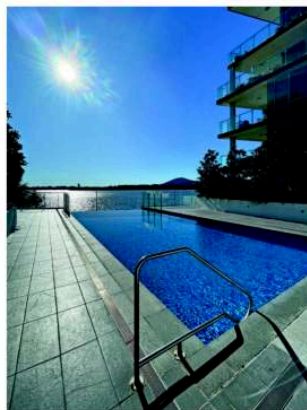
THE LOCATION On the shores of Lake Burley Griffin in Kingston, this apartment sleeps four and is a short drive from all the major sights in the nation's capital.

THE PLACE There's only a public walkway and some trees between you and the lake at this two-bedroom, ground-floor apartment. There's also an impressive infinity pool looking straight on to the lake at the centre of this resort-style complex, Trevillian Quay. The apartment has a balcony with a substantial outdoor entertaining area, a well-stocked, shiny kitchen, two bathrooms and its own lift access, laundry and car park. As well: a gym and even a guitar, if you feel like strumming something.

THE EXPERIENCE The apartment is a great base from which to explore wider Canberra or stay ultra-local, with plenty of bars and restaurants around the nearby foreshore. You could also scoot or kayak around the lake from here. Stock up on some Canberra produce to serve in your private box seat on the lake.

DON'T MISS The Supabarn Kingston – yes, a supermarket – is a gourmet wonderland with a New York vibe. You might run into a pollie while picking up your ready-to-cook ramen pack, but it's worth the risk.

FROM \$485 a night; two-night minimum stay. *Melissa Fyfe*



PHOTOGRAPHY BY LIFEONTRAVELFAMILY



Beltana Farm

14 Beltana Rd, Pialligo;
 (02) 6202 1130; beltanafarm.au

THE LOCATION This stay is 15 minutes' drive from the Canberra CBD; four minutes from the airport. It's neighboured by several nurseries in a road roamed by peacocks.

THE PLACE It's a working truffière – with 800 oak and hazel trees planted in mesmerising symmetry, creating perfect paths diagonally, as well as directly, from the outlook of the farm's popular restaurant. Accommodation-wise, there are three yurts sleeping two, four or

six and a new, contemporary yet cosy two-bedroom cottage which sleeps four. There's also a tennis court, bikes to borrow, and a children's play area.

THE EXPERIENCE You come here for the stunning restaurant, ideally, in the July-August truffle-hunting season. The chefs, headed by The Boat House's John Leverink, work entirely with locally sourced produce; the only outlier, apparently, is the French champagne. Visit with foodie friends, forgive any who can't help repeating the word "umami" as the afternoon or evening unfolds, and afterwards, simply take the 100 or

so steps back to your door. The yurts are a memorable piece of design, with up to three large bedrooms well spaced around a great central living area. Like the cottage, they feature a fireplace, a full kitchen, bluetooth speaker systems and enormously comfortable beds.

DON'T MISS Stop by the farm shop, ideal for sourcing locally-made gifts – chocolates from Murrumbateman, pasta from Braidwood, and from the farm itself: truffle-infused, butterscotch schnapps (a way to make normal ice cream anything but vanilla). **FROM** \$385 a night.

Sally Rawlings

The Truffle Farm

23 Mt Majura Rd, Canberra;
 0400 483 082; thetrufflefarm.com.au



THE LOCATION It's just a 15-minute drive from Canberra's city centre, but you wouldn't know it – this off-grid cabin is perched on the slopes of Mt Majura, above the truffière at The Truffle Farm, and faces away from the capital.

THE PLACE You're only a few minutes off the highway, but the air is fresh, views are expansive and privacy abundant once

Immerse yourself in the wood-fired hot tub on the deck and watch the sky change colour as the sun sets.



you reach your self-contained accommodation. Floor-to-ceiling windows and electronically activated skylights allow the light to pour in all day, and wooden finishes seamlessly integrate the outdoors and deck with a cosy interior. The bed, set at the front of the room, is piled high with lush pillows and linen. It faces due east for a sunrise wake-up, internal heating warms the room quickly and there's a sleek bathroom.

THE EXPERIENCE Bring dinner ingredients – there's both an oven and gas stoves in the kitchenette. Immerse yourself in the wood-fired

hot tub on the deck and keep the wine handy as you watch the hills and sky change colour as the sun sets. You might spot kangaroos through the steam. A complimentary breakfast basket ensures the next morning is just as relaxed.

DON'T MISS Complete the weekend with an experience from The Truffle Farm, which runs truffle hunts, lunch and degustation options on weekends between May and September. **FROM** \$500 a night; minimum two-night stay.

Natassia Chrysanthos





28 Sep 2024
 Author: Emma Breheny
 Article type: Publication
 Page:
 Sydney Morning Herald, The
 Readership: 580000
 AVE: \$322583.77

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Tasmania
 52 WEEKENDS AWAY



The Finish Line
 2 Castray Esp, Battery Point; 0457
 691 868; thefinishlinehobart.com.au



THE LOCATION The Finish Line is on the waterfront of Hobart's Battery Point – right by the finish line of the famed Sydney-Hobart yacht race.

THE PLACE Two spectacular penthouses with views of the Derwent sit atop a former 1929 fruit cannery. The largest, a three-bedroom, three-bathroom apartment dubbed "Hobart", is inspired by the streamlined interiors of superyachts, with a nautical colour scheme. The two-bedroom, two-bathroom "Sydney" has a moodier palette, with black-stained timber cabinets, an apple-green velvet couch, and brass features including a dual-sided fireplace that casts a warming glow over the lounge and upon the outdoor tub on the sturdy Victorian ash deck.

THE EXPERIENCE Owners Michael and Pip Cooper are yachting enthusiasts and have spared no expense in their homage to the drama and spectacle of Australia's toughest yachting contest. (Michael was a crew member of Robert Clifford's Tasmania, which won the race in 1994.) Floor-to-ceiling windows and cleverly positioned skylights flood the "Hobart" penthouse with light, and mirrored walls maximise the stunning views. A cantilevered pool juts out towards the river and is flanked by a huge, back-lit, Richard Bennett photograph of the 1984 Sydney to Hobart.

DON'T MISS An opulent cocktail or two at the Mary Mary bar in Salamanca, followed by dinner at Peppina next door, headed by celebrated chef Massimo Mele.
FROM \$800 a night; two-night minimum stay; three-night minimum during Christmas and Easter.

Gabriella Costovich

PHOTOGRAPHY BY ADAM GIBSON



28 Sep 2024
 Author: Emma Breheny
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 Sydney Morning Herald, The
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Tasmania

52 WEEKENDS AWAY



Share the serenity at this off-grid eco-retreat with white-bellied sea eagles, white-faced herons and captivating river views.

Swan River Sanctuary
 Riversdale Farm, 14228 Tasman Hwy, Swansea; (03) 6257 0119; swanriversanctuary.com.au

THE LOCATION Find this eco-luxe stay within a 343-hectare regenerative cattle farm on the east coast, two hours from Hobart and 10 kilometres from Swansea.

THE PLACE Step into the spacious open-plan living, kitchen and dining area and it's a matter of where to look first – the shimmering abalone-shell wall, the

hefty, antique, Bohemian crystal chandelier or the captivating river views. This three-bedroom, secluded, off-grid eco-retreat was built by a family who are now sharing the serenity. The upstairs main bedroom with in-room white stone bath and en suite has the best river views. Two downstairs queen rooms share a bathroom. Golden-brown macrocarpa timber stars throughout and the unique 1860-built dining table flips for billiards.

THE EXPERIENCE Plonk yourself in the rocking chair on the verandah for spotting white-bellied sea eagles and white-faced herons. Paddleboards and kayaks are at the ready as well as fishing rods and bait to snag black bream and yellow-eye mullet. Enjoy a hearty breakfast from the hamper left for you. Break out the board games beside the stone fireplace and look up for great night skies. Extra-cost activities include use of the onsite sauna and a river safari with owner Matt Routley.

DON'T MISS Head to Melshell Oyster Shack at nearby Dolphin Sands or taste wine at Mayfield Estate at Little Swanport with great Freycinet Peninsula views. **FROM \$590 a night.** Sue Wallace

Vineyard House

1055 Port Sorrell Rd, Northdown; (03) 6428 4005; ghostrock.com.au



THE LOCATION It's rare to find a serious winery by the ocean, so good wine and views of wild Bass Strait in the middle distance are among the reasons to linger at Ghost Rock Wines, a 15-minute

drive from the Devonport ferry terminal and a one-hour drive north-west of Launceston.

THE PLACE There's clever repetition (linen light shades, natural tones and textures, reclaimed timber tables, leather chairs, lots of glass) linking Ghost Rock's cellar door, its light-filled eatery and adjacent Vineyard House. Once the residence of the winery's first generation,

the freshly renovated house has three bedrooms, two bathrooms and large living spaces. Two decks with firepits radiate from living spaces to the lawn and, just beyond the garden gate, 30 hectares of showpiece vineyard.

THE EXPERIENCE After a day on the coast, unwind here in spaces styled for prolonged lounging, with books and board games on hand. Or you could book the Ghost Rock Cellar Door & Eatery. Neither pretentious nor pedestrian, the menu hits all the right notes for leisurely lunching with estate-grown wines and represents a roll-call of the region's star producers. **DON'T MISS** Plot a route along the Tasting Trail, a network through north-west Tasmania spanning 44 producers and makers, from hazelnuts and honey to berries and truffles. First stop, naturally, should be a guided wine tasting at Ghost Rock's cellar door.

FROM \$850 a night; two-night minimum stay. Helen Anderson



PHOTOGRAPHY BY ADAM GIBSON, DEARNA BOND



28 Sep 2024
 Author: Emma Breheny
 Article type: Publication
 Page:
 Sydney Morning Herald, The
 Readership: 580000
 AVE: \$322583.77

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Tasmania

52 WEEKENDS AWAY

THE EXPERIENCE Watch horses graze and flocks of cockatoos descend on towering trees on either side of the homestead. Mountain views – snow-capped in winter – are best enjoyed from the “wellness platform” (sauna, hot tub, firepit, yoga deck) at the end of a garden path. Leighton’s social centre is a glass-enclosed kitchen, dining and living room with double-height ceiling and a deep, brick fireplace indoors, and barbecue and pizza oven outdoors.

DON'T MISS Browse Evandale’s boutiques or walk to the banks of the South Esk River on the farm’s western edge.

FROM \$900 a night; two-night minimum stay. *Luke Slattery*

Leighton House

466 Evandale Rd, Western Junction; leightonhouse.com.au

THE LOCATION The colonial-era homestead sits on a 120-hectare working farm 15 minutes’ drive from the Tamar Valley, Tasmania’s oldest and largest winemaking

area. The heritage village of Evandale is a few minutes’ drive away, and so is Launceston Airport – planes can pass low overhead.

THE PLACE Up to a dozen guests can stay in the freshly renovated mid-19th-century homestead and in a new two-storey rear wing, designed by award-winning local architect Core Collective.

In the old homestead, circled by a wide verandah, are three spacious bedrooms with en suites, high ceilings, antiques and deep sash windows, and a study with a hunting lodge vibe. The new wing has three double bunks and a pool room upstairs, with large living spaces downstairs.



St Martin’s of Tasmania

Church St West, Dunalley; 0404 770 088; stmartinsoftasmania.com.au

THE LOCATION A 30-minute drive from Hobart airport, Dunalley is a small fishing and farming village on the road to Port Arthur.

THE PLACE Built in 1924 as a World War I memorial, this former Anglican church teems

with history. Its stones were sourced from one of Tasmania’s most punishing penal stations, the World Heritage-listed Coal Mines Historic Site. Miraculously, the church was the only public building to survive the 2013 bushfires that ravaged the town. Sold in 2019 to raise funds for the Anglican Church’s National Redress Scheme, the building was bought by gardening guru Simon Holloway and family, who painstakingly converted it into a one-bedroom home in a project on the ABC’s *Restoration Australia*.

THE EXPERIENCE With its soaring timber ceiling, gothic arched windows, striking stained glass and meticulously repointed stone, St Martin’s retains the integrity of its former life. Cleverly placed vintage furniture, including repurposed pews, divide the vast interior into three distinct and intimate areas: bedroom, dining, and lounge with wood fire. Floaty fabrics, dried flower arrangements,



and an abundance of candle-holders up the romance. There’s no television, but Tasmanian-themed books, old board games and a nook for writing and painting make for a warm, creative space.

DON'T MISS Blue Lagoon Oysters, which serves fresh from the farm, is a four-minute drive from St Martin’s.

FROM \$450 a night. *Gabriella Coslovich*



28 Sep 2024
 Author: Emma Breheny
 Article type: Publication
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 Sydney Morning Herald, The
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Queensland

52 WEEKENDS AWAY

Kirra Point Holiday Apartments

4 Miles St, Coolangatta;
 (07) 5690 5000; kirrapoint.com.au



THE LOCATION Just 100 metres from one of the world's most iconic surf breaks, these apartments are within Kirra's dining and entertainment precinct, and less than a five-minute drive from Gold Coast Airport.

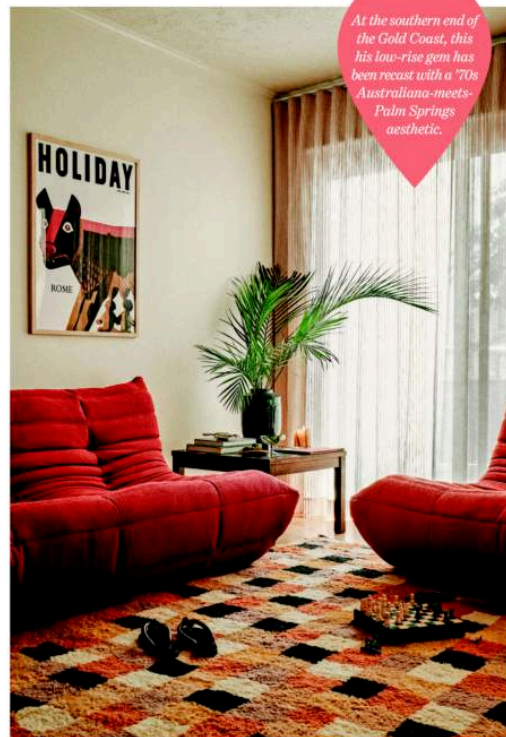
THE PLACE Inhabiting arguably the southern Gold Coast's best vantage point, Kirra Point Holiday Apartments is a game-changer for this side of Broadbeach, upping the accommodation ante. Rooms feature custom-built furniture and art by local practitioners. Floor-to-ceiling windows capture views across the ocean to Surfers Paradise. The self-contained apartments have large kitchens,

laundries and wrap-around balconies with outdoor tables and barbecues (where you'll likely spend a lot of your time).

THE EXPERIENCE You really won't have to leave the complex. There's a third-floor pool deck with a 25-metre heated pool, barbecue areas and alcoves for entertaining. The second floor features a 1200-square-metre venue – The Kirra Beach House – with waterfront dining, a wine bar, two cocktail lounges and an enormous patio. There's also a more casual pub at street level.

DON'T MISS While it's tempting to stay in-house, don't. Walk along the beach paths that link some of Australia's best surf beaches, eat at the Gold Coast's latest restaurants – such as Billy Chow, just 200 metres north – and enjoy the vibes.

FROM \$395 a night; two-night minimum stay. *Craig Tansley*



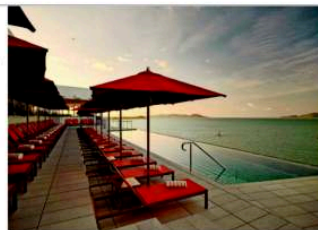
At the southern end of the Gold Coast, this low-rise gem has been recast with a '70s Australiana-meets-Palm Springs aesthetic.

Ardo Hotel

67 Sir Leslie Thiess Dr, Townsville;
 (07) 4722 2333; ardohotel.au

THE LOCATION Occupying a prime spot beside the marina on Townsville's waterfront, Ardo Hotel is a five-minute walk from the city's downtown area and a 15-minute drive from the airport.

THE PLACE No expense was spared to create Townsville's first genuine luxury hotel, and it shows. Owner, billionaire Chris Morris, has been busy coaxing Townsville and its surrounding islands into an emerging luxury-travel playground (his company owns Pelorus Private Island, Orpheus Island Lodge and The Ville Resort-Casino next door). Rooms and suites at Ardo are enormous – from 40 to 107 square metres – with floor-to-ceiling windows providing views of the region's striking natural attractions: the Coral Sea, Magnetic Island (13 kilometres offshore) and the pink granite monolith, Castle Hill. The hotel's fine-dining restaurants – Terasu and Marmor – are two of



North Queensland's leading gourmet establishments.

THE EXPERIENCE While luxury permeates, there's still an unmistakable North Queensland feel about the place. And while your suite may have a curved bath on the balcony, nothing tops the rooftop. Order a cocktail at sunset and gaze at Magnetic Island or Castle Hill from an enormous open-air bar that makes you feel like you're floating with the clouds. There's also a roof-top pool.

DON'T MISS For more casual dining, head next door to The Ville Resort-Casino's Quarterdeck for burgers or pizza by the pool, or join in the fun at The Ville's swim-up Splash Bar.

FROM \$275 a night. *Craig Tansley*

The Cheshire Cat Motel

1005 Gold Coast Hwy, Palm Beach;
 0428 938 343; cheshirecatmotel.com

THE LOCATION At the southern end of the Gold Coast, bordered by Burleigh Heads and Tallebudgera Creek, Palm Beach feels a world away from the high-rises of Surfers Paradise 30 minutes' north.

THE PLACE This low-rise, 1960s gem with neon signage, cacti and swaying palms offers a nostalgic stay on the beach side of the Gold Coast Highway. Local husband and wife – Matty Roberts and Monique Luchterhand – have recast the dated motel (parking below; rooms above) with a '70s Australiana-meets-Palm Springs aesthetic. Six queen rooms in burnt orange, cream and eucalypt feature cork bedheads, vintage

curios and stylish, compact bathrooms. A retro kitchen with breakfast nook, low-slung lounges and vinyl turntable are on offer in a roomy two-bedroom bungalow. There's no reception nor daily housekeeping, and entry is keyless.

THE EXPERIENCE Good coffee, fabulous dining and one of the coast's quietest stretches of sand are a stroll away from the motel affectionately dubbed "The Cat". Take an early-morning dip, paddleboard or kayak Tallebudgera Creek, then wash the sand off beneath the outdoor shower in the communal garden. Complimentary bevies from the minibar are best enjoyed beside the terracotta-clad, magnesium pool (aply named "Le Plunge"). **DON'T MISS** Enjoy authentic Mexican and margaritas at the taqueria and tequila bar, Frida Sol. **FROM** \$250 a night.

Sheriden Rhodes



28 Sep 2024
 Author: Emma Breheny
 Article type: Publication
 Page:
 Sydney Morning Herald, The
 Readership: 580000
 AVE: \$322583.77

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Queensland

52 WEEKENDS AWAY



Amora Hotel
 200 Creek St, Brisbane;
 (07) 3309 3309; amorahotels.com

THE LOCATION In the middle of Queensland's capital, with Manhattan-style views all around, the Amora is just a short stroll from many of the city's more lively precincts.

THE PLACE The rooms are serene enough to lower blood pressure: elegantly solid furniture, off-white upholstery, pale woods, and the occasional palm-frond stencil hinting at the tropics. One of six in a luxury Thai-based, family-owned hotel group, it was a

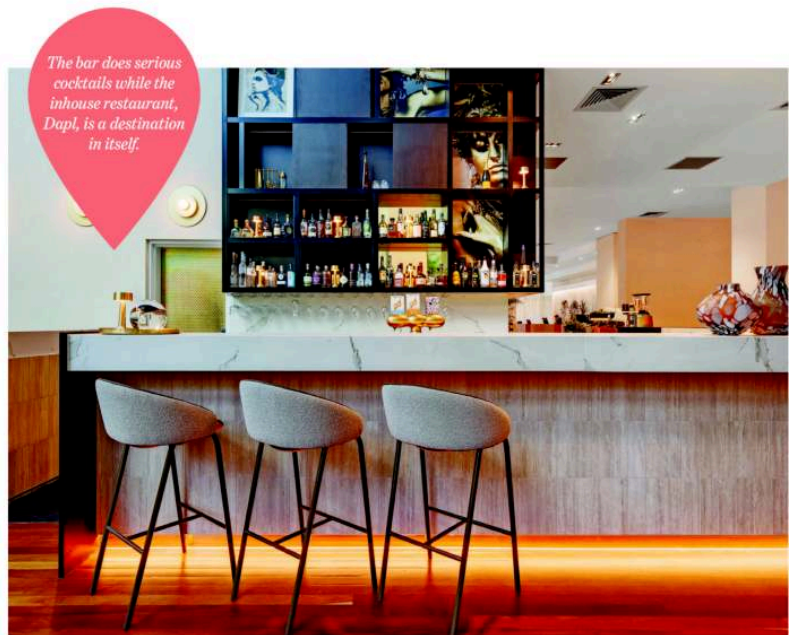
Novotel until 2021. The \$30 million refurbishment – it was reopened with some fanfare in February – includes a renovated outdoor pool and a small but serious gym.

THE EXPERIENCE The peace and the friendly staff make this the perfect pad for a relaxing weekend getaway. The hotel's Dapl dining room is a destination in itself. It has a menu built out of local and Indigenous foodstuffs, from robust kangaroo with Davidson plum sauce to salmon with delicate ice-plant fronds. It's also strong on dairy-free dishes for those who can barely find anything to eat these days, and the bar does serious cocktails.

DON'T MISS The buzz of Southbank, with its theatres, museums and restaurants, is only a few minutes away by taxi. A little further in the opposite direction is the fashion hub of James Street.

FROM \$250 a night.

Miriam Cosic





28 Sep 2024
 Author: Emma Breheny
 Article type: Publication
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 Sydney Morning Herald, The
 Readership: 580000
 AVE: \$322583.77

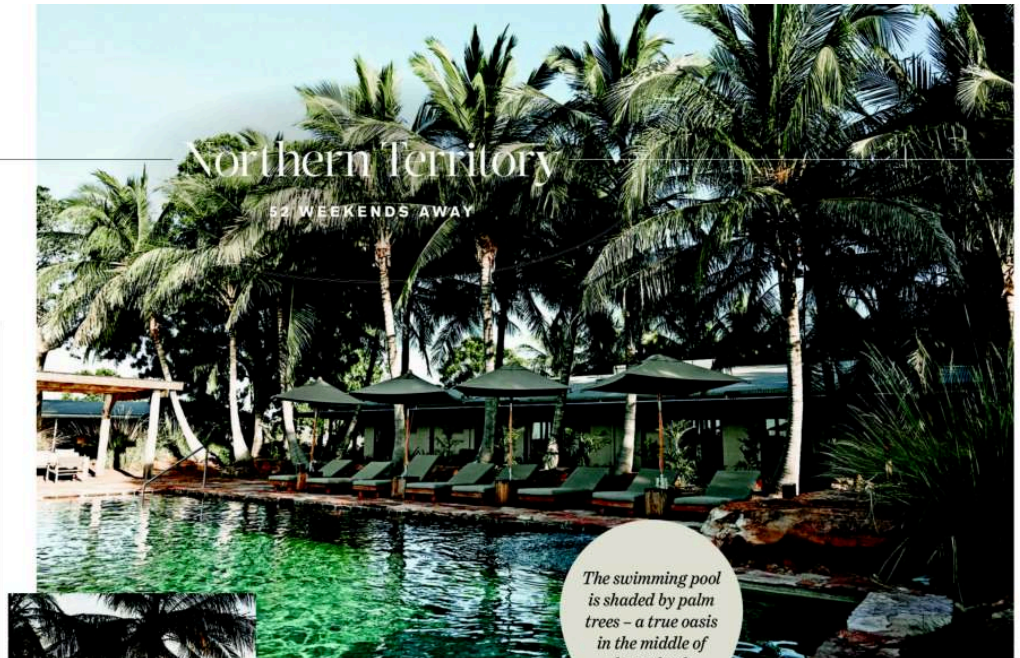
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Bullo River Station

9870 Victoria Hwy, Baines;
 (08) 9168 7375; bulloriver.com.au

THE LOCATION Find your digs on a 162,000-hectare cattle station that's the definition of remote. Bullo River Station is 800 kilometres south-west of Darwin and 200 kilometres east of Kununurra in the Kimberley, WA. Take the chartered 90-minute flight from Darwin (at extra cost) to an airstrip right out the front of your accommodation.

THE PLACE The cowboys and girls may be sleeping rough on this working station, but you won't. Twelve guest rooms next to the homestead are styled by celebrity interior designer Sibella Court and feel as much African safari lodge as Australian outback. Rooms face the lawn and a swimming pool shaded by palm trees – a true oasis in the middle of the outback.



The swimming pool is shaded by palm trees – a true oasis in the middle of the outback.



THE EXPERIENCE You could always read a book beside the pool, but here's your chance for a behind-the-scenes look at outback farm life. Take a helicopter ride to ancient Indigenous rock art, or an electric-powered boat down croc-infested rivers, and swim in isolated waterholes before returning for a gourmet dinner

under boab trees with the station manager (who'll stick around for drinks under the stars). **DON'T MISS** Check out the property's organic veggie garden to see where your next meal is coming from – it's next to the second-largest off-grid solar station in the Northern Territory. **FROM \$2900** a night; two-night minimum stay. *Craig Tansley*



28 Sep 2024
 Author: Emma Breheny
 Article type: Publication
 Page:
 Sydney Morning Herald, The
 Readership: 580000
 AVE: \$322583.77

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South Australia

52 WEEKENDS AWAY

Southern Ocean Lodge

Hanson Bay Rd, Kingscote,
 Kangaroo Island; (02) 9918 4355;
 southernoceanlodge.com.au

THE LOCATION The Lodge sits on a 41-hectare nature reserve atop limestone cliffs overlooking Hanson Bay. Fly 30 minutes from Adelaide to Kingscote Airport; a 50-minute transfer to the lodge is provided. Or take the 45-minute SeaLink ferry from the mainland with your vehicle and drive 90 minutes from Penneshaw.

THE PLACE In 2020, a devastating bushfire turned the much-awarded eco lodge to ash. Founders James and Hayley Baillie rebuilt it from scratch, adding improvements such as a glam spa and terrace pool. The vegetation has been replanted, the wildlife has returned, and the only reminders of the bushfire are the otherworldly branches of dead trees in the wild landscape.

THE EXPERIENCE With a ratio of 66 staff to 58 guests, this is high-end, laid-back luxury with a wonderful sense of place.

There's a welcome offering of home-baked lamingtons for guests who enjoy an all-inclusive stay with an open wine cellar, fine dining and a menu of experiences. The hub is the Great Room, a living room-restaurant-bar with a sensational view of the coast. The 21 serene ocean-view suites have fireplaces and deep baths. Leaning into local, any food and wine that can't be sourced from the island comes from South Australia or occasionally, further afield.

DON'T MISS Wildlife abounds here. Make sure you try the signature Kangas and Kanapes sunset drinks, where the rooftop spotting is superb.

FROM \$3400 a night. Minimum two-night stay. *Lee Tulloch*



O Quarters

150 Pfeiffer Rd, Woodside;
 (08) 8389 9488; birdinhand.com.au



THE LOCATION Less than an hour's drive east of Adelaide's CBD, Bird in Hand's family-owned vineyard and winery is near the Adelaide Hills town of Woodside.

THE PLACE The new accommodation at this acclaimed winery, O Quarters, bears several Bird in Hand signatures: a showcase for art and interesting design, a focus on good wine and food, and a celebration of family. The converted office has been cleverly remodelled as three

suites, which can be booked separately or together, sharing generously sized communal living spaces. The biggest – Sparkling Suite – has a king bed and freestanding bath. All rooms have private kitchen-garden views and walls of look-at-me contemporary art. A traffic-stopping canvas by artist Ben Quilty dominates the living room, alongside an open fire, handcrafted furniture and linen sofas.

THE EXPERIENCE It's all very insider-ish: O Quarters is for the exclusive use of guests who are dining at LVN Restaurant. Here chef Jacob Davey plans set-menu lunches of eight to 10 courses with produce from the three regions where Bird in Hand wines are grown: Adelaide Hills and Finnis in South Australia, and Tasmania's east coast. Lunch is bookended by a generous DIY breakfast. Take a post-prandial stroll of the estate, past sculptures by the likes of Lisa Roet and Lucas Grogan, and settle in for the night by the fire with another glass.

DON'T MISS Winemaker Sarah Burrill is good company – take a guided tasting at the cellar door. **FROM** \$450 a night. *Luke Slattery*

Camel Beach House

Lot 1, Camel Beach Rd, Venus Bay;
 camelbeachhouse.com.au

THE LOCATION It's a seven to eight-hour drive north-west of Adelaide, on the Eyre Peninsula's wild and remote Venus Bay.

THE PLACE Fresh from a winter refurb, and set on a 101-hectare private conservation sanctuary, Camel Beach House is hidden in the dunes, offering complete privacy. It's a simple yet luxurious stay with an open-plan living space decked out with potted Palm Springs-inspired cacti, colourful carved Aztec deities and stacks of books (there is no TV). Two double bedrooms bracket the living area and a deck stretches the full length of the house.

THE EXPERIENCE The place is designed as a sanctuary where people can recharge – and nature can take a breather, too. The harvested rainwater, solar panels

The place is designed as a sanctuary where people can recharge, and nature can take a breather, too.



and protection of the dunes leaves a minimal carbon footprint, and encourages threatened species, such as white-bellied sea eagles and sea lions. Weave down the path to the beach and just walk. At night, kill the lights and stargaze, then fall asleep to crashing waves, or play tunes on

the Marshall speaker – as loud as you like.

DON'T MISS Nearby Talia Caves is a 10-minute drive. Climb into the Woolshed Cave or peer down into The Tub, a crater decorated with wild wasp nests.

FROM \$490 a night; minimum three-night stay. *Paul Chai*



PHOTOGRAPHY BY GEORGE APOSTOLIDIS; MEAGHAN COLES



28 Sep 2024
 Author: Emma Breheny
 Article type: Publication
 Page:
 Sydney Morning Herald, The
 Readership: 580000
 AVE: \$322583.77

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Western Australia

52 WEEKENDS AWAY



Hidden Cabins – Henry
 Location given prior to check-in;
 Ferguson Valley;
hiddencabins.com.au

THE LOCATION Lesser known than near(ish) neighbour Margaret River, the Ferguson Valley is

15 minutes' drive from Bunbury (which is two hours south of Perth). It's an enclave of a dozen or so wineries, set idyllically amid bush, brooks and undulating livestock paddocks.

THE PLACE Hidden Cabins is a collection of secluded, tiny home stays, two of which are in the Ferguson Valley. The one called Henry is in the back blocks of a bucolic boutique winery. Follow signs set like breadcrumbs leading you across vineyards to reach this cabin, which is surrounded by tall trees and positioned for a painterly view of a dam.

THE EXPERIENCE Load your luggage into the pull cart to reach the front door, fuel up the wee wood burner inside if the weather dictates it, and get yourself back

outside onto the Adirondacks, positioned perfectly for a fire pit and sunset over the duck-filled dam. Inside is a super comfy bed on a platform by a big picture window, galley kitchenette, small bathroom with shower and drop dunny. There's no Wi-Fi though there is phone signal, no TV but there are games, and there's a barbecue on the deck (there are some "meal in a jar" options for purchase, otherwise bring supplies). But the real asset is that hiddenness.

DON'T MISS The family-owned Willow Bridge Estate is where you can sample award-winning, world-class drops.

FROM \$310 a night; two-night minimum stay, three over public holidays.

Julietta Jameson



Ampersand Estates
 9883 Vasse Hwy, Peerabeelup;
 0438 954 513;
ampersandestates.com.au



THE LOCATION On a bucolic bend in the Donnelly River edged by national parks, Ampersand Estates is 30 minutes' drive from Pemberton in WA's south-west.

THE PLACE Taking over a near-derelict winery in 2020, Melissa Bell and Corrie Scheepers called their business Ampersand as code for "having it all", then set about living up to the name. They renovated existing buildings to create a chic, destination cellar door, distillery and two wedding venues, plus three high-end holiday houses. The Settlers' Cottage dates from the 1870s and features two bedrooms and



cosy living. The Homestead is on the riverbank, and Vintner's Residence is on a rise overlooking the estate – each has five en suite bedrooms and incredible spaces for entertaining, including multiple large decks.

THE EXPERIENCE Kick off your shoes, light the fire and fill the bathtub. Immerse yourself in the tasteful leather sofas and natural woods amid impeccable decor that includes beautiful art, or settle outside and watch native birds and kangaroos pass as the light changes, all accompanied by an Ampersand drop, of course – which you can purchase in-house. Generous breakfast hampers are included, or you can book a private local chef experience (at extra cost).

DON'T MISS Hug a karri tree at nearby Beedelup Falls. They can grow to more than 80 metres over 300-plus years.

FROM \$895 a night.

Julietta Jameson



PHOTOGRAPHY BY RACHELCLARE@FIELDNOTES. SHOT BY THOM

Pan Pacific Perth
 207 Adelaide Tce, Perth;
 (08) 9224 7777; panpacific.com

THE LOCATION On a main thoroughfare of the Perth CBD and close to the Swan River, the Pan Pacific is as central as they come.

THE PLACE In 2011, the Singapore-based Pan Pacific Hotels Group launched its eponymous brand in Australia with a property in Perth, taking over the old Sheraton. About \$50 million has just been spent overhauling the five-star, making what was a good hotel into something great. The style of the new rooms references the colours and textures of WA's land and seascapes, with an overlay of glam in marbles and gorgeous lighting. It's supremely comfortable and interesting enough to make you forget its business-hotel roots. So too, the

views, if you get a room that looks out onto the Swan River through the expansive windows.

THE EXPERIENCE One of this hotel's key advantages is its location. You're close to much of what increasingly-fun Perth has to offer, including the WACA, and a concierge service can recommend the best of it. It also has easy access to the airport – a big plus for road-tripping out-of-towners who don't know the area. (There's restricted street and council parking if you don't want to pay for the hotel's.) Add in a fab outdoor heated pool, 24-hour gym and great breakfast, and Pan Pacific is the perfect pad for a Perth break.

DON'T MISS KARLA at Stories in Yagan Square mixes modern Asian cuisine with native Australian ingredients and flame and coal cooking – it's sizzling.

FROM \$319 a night.

Julietta Jameson

