



LUXURY LODGES OF AUSTRALIA

STORYTELLERS



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UP CLOSE AND PERSONAL

Luxury Lodges of Australia, meet our people.

El Questro Homestead,
Western Australia

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In some of the continent’s most astounding landscapes, Australia’s luxury lodges are defined by the experiences they offer that connect guests to place. Remote tented camps, exclusive island retreats, all in remarkable locations atop cliffs or edged by ocean: demonstrating Australia’s extraordinary diversity of awe-inspiring landscapes.

However, the secret sauce to these genuinely Australian experiences are the people. Passionate and knowledgeable custodians, these are the individuals who’ll share their local insider knowledge and stories with guests, effortlessly delivering uncommon adventures that showcase the very best of Australia’s experiential luxury experiences.

Lodge managers craft personalised experiences based around guest interests. Chefs take guests on culinary adventures connecting people,

produce and place. And well-informed guides uncover the fascinating life and adaptability of Australia’s unique wildlife - as diverse and dramatic as the environments they inhabit. Others offer profound insights into the deep connection between our ancient landscapes and First Nations cultures.

Guests also discover how these remote environments – locations like the Great Barrier Reef, the Red Centre, the rugged Kimberley, Lord Howe Island, Tasmania, the Barossa Valley wine region, the Outback, Kangaroo Island and the Daintree Rainforest – many World Heritage protected landscapes, are sustained through active conservation programs, a profound respect for local culture, and the delivery of economic benefits for local community.

Meet just a few of these individuals in the following pages, and discover how they are the key to getting under the skin of luxury Australia.



BRUCE LAWSON

Arkaba Conservancy, Flinders Ranges, South Australia



Bruce Lawson says he was left inspired and a little bit in awe when visiting Arkaba Conservancy for the first time in 2021. Tucked between the Elder and Chase Ranges and Rawnsley Bluff, some of the most magnificent parts of the grand scale ancient landscapes of the Flinders Ranges, some 500 kilometres north of Adelaide / Tarntanya, Arkaba Conservancy is the brainchild of Charlie Carlow.

“He’s an amazing philanthropist and conservationist,” says Bruce, the property’s conservation manager. “When Charlie purchased Arkaba Station, which had long been a pastoral station, he brought with him the mindset of rewilding – restoring the land to how it was before colonisation, when sheep and cattle were introduced and began to degrade the environment. He set up an environmental conservation plan, and

gradually destocked more than 3,500 sheep and 500 cattle.” That was just the tip of the iceberg.

Since Bruce has been on the property, he has managed and extended the property’s conservation programmes including soil erosion mitigation, revegetation and the removal of feral species, including rabbits, foxes, goats and wild cats.

“I have an ethos that if you plant something, look after it, help it to grow... it will look after you,” Bruce says.

Bruce trained field guides in South Africa’s Kruger National Park for some 15 years. He understands and is passionate about the role tourism can play in supporting conservation of land and wildlife in a really inspiring and enjoyable way.

Lodge guests are encouraged to get involved, if they want. “Guests learn simply by being on the property. The ecosystem looks hardy but in reality is fragile, but even the work done over the last decade or so means the changes are now visible.” Rare rock wallabies and small ground-dwelling birds have returned. The soil and vegetation are regenerating.”

Arkaba’s guides take guests to explore this magnificent landscape but they can also help check camera traps, plant trees and remove fences. “For me there’s an analogy there between removing fences and rewilding the human spirit. But at the end of the day, the biggest thing people can do to preserve this wilderness is just come here. Just knowing about this precious environment, connecting with it and caring about it is what truly protects it.”

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CATHERINE ATKINS

Bullo River Station, Northern Territory

It’s challenging to comprehend just how vast Bullo River Station really is – at 402,000 acres or 162,000 hectares, it’s more than double the size of Singapore. Yet, it covers just a fraction of the Northern Territory. Located around 800 kilometres south of the capital, Darwin / Garramilla, Bullo is a working station, home to more than 2,000 Brahman-cross cattle.

“But what really sets the property apart is our commitment to ensuring this land is preserved and improved for future generations,” says Catherine Atkins, who with husband Joe, manages the lodge and the station.

“When guests come to stay at Bullo River Station, they don’t spend much time in their rooms. There’s just too much to do,” says Catherine, who has lived in this part of the Northern Territory for 25 years.

Guests might explore how Bullo’s team is working with the Australian Wildlife Conservancy. Only 15 per cent of the land is used for pastoral activities, with the rest being rewilded to its original state. They can learn about fire management or the measures taken to prevent soil erosion. No matter what they are doing, they are always exposed to the humbling beauty of the rugged ranges, billabongs and rivers.

Bullo is wedged between rugged ranges with the Victoria River acting as a boundary to the northeast and Bullo River running through the middle of the station. “There is an incredible diversity of bird and wildlife,” says Catherine. “There’s so much here, from Gouldian finches and brolgas to eagles, kites and jabirus. Then there are wallabies, emus, lizards and crocodiles.

“We take guests on private 4WD safari to explore the station, the rivers, billabongs and varied ecosystems across the property. But the must-do here is a heli-safari to remote waterfalls, to deep red-rock gorges to see ancient Aboriginal art, and to a special sundowner spot perched high on rocks overlooking the river with 360-degree views of the station. Private guiding for every booking allows us to tailor everything to individual preferences.”

One place you’ll always find guests come sunset, after a day of exploring, is beside the pool, looking out over the property. “There’s a moment when the sky lights up as the sun sets. It’s like nature’s fireworks. Then we light our own fire and dine under the stars. It’s a true ‘pinch-me’ moment.”



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“We are so stuck in busy lives. Many people forget to look up. When they’re here stargazing at night, they’re blown away by the simple wonder of this place, so unpolluted and so unfiltered.”

Longitude 131°,
Northern Territory



VINCENT “VINNIE” ANTONY

El Questro Homestead, The Kimberley, Western Australia

Vincent Antony (or Vinnie, as he prefers to be known) is something of an Aussie Renaissance man. The surfer and boat coxswain, wildlife photographer and horticulturalist, who is also well schooled in the intricacies of Indigenous culture, offers fascinating private guided tours at El Questro, a vast wilderness property in the remote Kimberley region.

Vinnie loves to take guests on the four-hour Bush Culture, History and Nature tour, which intermingles geology, Indigenous culture and plant identification and use. “I’m fascinated by Aboriginal tool-making technology

and I love to tell guests about the pressure-flaked Kimberley spear points found nowhere else in Australia. In the process I can link rock types with what was made in certain areas and how different tools were traded across the country,” he says.

“I find this sort of cultural bridging particularly interesting because it opens up meaningful discussions with guests. I love to explain how intricate and sophisticated oldest living cultures on earth are, and have been. Here, I can actually show guests why the Aboriginal Kimberley culture was the most refined of all.”



“What is exceptional about the landscape at El Questro is that it is 1.8 billion years old. There are no fossils because the rocks predate animal life. There’s also such a range and diversity of environments, from savannah grasslands to escarpments to hidden red-rock gorges. Guests don’t realise how much water there is until I take them to discover the beautiful springs surrounded by palm trees in the gorges.”

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DR ANNE HOGGETT AM

Lizard Island & The House, Great Barrier Reef, Lizard Island, Queensland

“There’s something about Lizard Island that makes you want to linger,” says Dr Anne Hoggett, AM, co-manager of the Australian Museum Lizard Island Research Centre, alongside her husband, Dr Lyle Vail, AM. “We came here in 1990 as young scientists and waited ages for jobs to come up... we didn’t think we’d be here for 34 years.”

The Research Centre was established on the northern Great Barrier Reef island – now a National Park – some 50 years ago. Around the same time, Lizard Island resort was constructed. “It’s the most amazing place, and quite different to other tropical islands with its signature high granite ridges and white sand beaches.” And then there is the wonderment when you put your head beneath the surface of the Coral Sea.

“This marine environment draws researchers from all around the world – their work here results in up to 100 studies annually. We get up to 400 researchers each year. And it’s this extraordinary community and their passion for the Great Barrier Reef that has kept us here for so long.”

While guests of Lizard Island & The House aren’t directly involved in the research Anne and Lyle coordinate, they can visit the Centre to meet some of these highly motivated researchers and learn how their work contributes to our understanding of and the ongoing health of the reef.

“We’re really buoyed by the guests and their curiosity,” says Anne. “They can see crown-of-thorns starfish and learn about the damage they’re doing to the reef, as well as the other factors that

have impacted it, including cyclones and bleaching. There have been times when we thought we would never see the reef in good form again. But it has regenerated, and in some parts, it’s in the best condition it has ever been.”

“The experience of both small and large marine life here is humbling. I’ve been surrounded by a barrel of enormous trevally, seen minke and false killer whales up close, but appreciate the tiny shrimp and fish flitting in between gargantuan coral just as much.”



“Reef health is a complicated story, and really nuanced. Which is why sharing it with Lizard Island guests is so rewarding. It’s at once in great danger, but also very resilient. It’s my favourite place in the world.”

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ALLA WOLF-TASKER AM

Lake House & Dairy Flat Lodge, Daylesford, Victoria

In 1979, when Alla Wolf-Tasker and her husband Allan bought the land on which they would build the lauded Lake House boutique hotel in Daylesford, the then sleepy town in Victoria’s Macedon Ranges was surrounded by a monoculture of potato farms.

Now Daylesford, 110 kilometres (70 miles) northwest of Melbourne / Narm, is a thriving destination, drawing visitors to its mineral springs and its dynamic food scene. Whether you dine at Lake House’s acclaimed restaurant or at one of the many excellent eateries in town, you have Alla to thank for the incredible variety of sustainably grown local produce on offer.

From her time in France working in restaurants deeply connected to their rural communities, Alla had a vision

for the dining offering at Lake House: “My dream was to start a truly regional restaurant in Australia – one totally immersed in an ongoing relationship with producers, growers and eventually the makers of its community. There was no other like it in the country at the time,” she says.

“We may have been early adopters here at Lake House, but fortunately interest in food provenance, sustainability and the search for the best, most caring-grown small-scale artisan food continues to grow. Certainly savvy guests visiting us show increased evidence of that.”

Cue the creation of a community association to link local growers, chefs and retailers. “We started Daylesford Macedon Produce and it became

chicken-and-egg: the more we created demand, the more people started growing things. It’s a very productive food bowl now.”

Never ones to stand still, the Wolf-Taskers decided to walk the walk themselves and bought Dairy Flat Farm, a 10-minute drive from Lake House. Along with creating a six-room lodge and a sourdough bakery, substantial acreage provides fields, hop houses and facilities for regenerative farming. They’ve added fruit trees and an extensive vegetable garden to go with the existing olive grove and two hectares (five acres) of pinot and chardonnay vines.



“There’s been much said about the goodness of ‘local food’ over the past decade. We all have a lot to gain from being able to understand the provenance of our food. What I’ve helped build over the past 30-plus years is this sense of the farmer being really critical and important to the community – and visible.”

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LOUISE LANYON

Longitude 131°, Uluru, Northern Territory

Louise Lanyon has always lived and worked in remote parts of Australia. She met her husband, Ben, on Dunk Island on the Great Barrier Reef and the two of them have worked together in some of Australia’s most gorgeous places. After helping open Southern Ocean Lodge on Kangaroo Island, they now manage Longitude 131°, a luxury safari-style lodge overlooking World Heritage-listed Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park in Australia’s Red Centre.

“Staying at Longitude 131°, with its dress-circle view of Uluru (or Ayers Rock), is really an immersive experience,” says Louise. “From our guided walks around Uluru to the sundowner drinks at a waterhole and open-air bush-food-inspired dining

experience, complete with Dreamtime stories and stargazing, we seek to interpret the world’s oldest living cultures in one of the oldest landscapes on earth.”

Louise is particularly excited about Longitude’s partnership with Ernabella Arts, a remote Indigenous arts centre. “We finance their ceramics kilns, showcase artwork and sponsor an artist-in-residence program at the lodge,” she says. “I can even arrange for guests to fly out to Ernabella for a personal connection with the artists. We’re proud to help economically empower such a remote community, whose work we have now sold to guests from around the world.”



“I like to make guests feel like a trusted friend is helping them understand the rhythms and culture of perhaps the most iconic place in Australia. Indigenous artwork is on display throughout Longitude 131°, bush foods are seamlessly integrated into the dining experience, and the day spa incorporates local Indigenous healing products.”

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PIETER & ALICE VAN DER WOUDE

On Board, Port Davey, Tasmania

“Being out here in the incredible Tasmanian wilderness – it doesn’t feel like work,” says Pieter van der Woude, owner and skipper of On Board Expeditions. “The Port Davey region of Southwest Tasmania is true wilderness. There’s virtually no infrastructure here. It still feels untouched, as in pre-European settlement times. It’s just the wind, the weather, the tides and you.”

Pieter’s daughter Alice – On Board’s director of marketing and experience – agrees: “You lose all sense of time. There are no towns, no civilisation, no phone reception.”

Pieter has strong ties to this part of Tasmania, having worked as a commercial abalone diver here for 25 years. “I fell in love with the area, and when I finished diving, I used my boat for charters. There was nothing else like it in the area.”

Together with Alice and other family members, Pieter launched Odalisque III in January 2023. “We’ve gone all in,” he says, referencing the fact that the sleek 12-passenger expedition vessel is fully dedicated to delivering guests to this wilderness region in comfort – in the most sustainable way.

“The boat was constructed in Tasmania using 98 per cent local materials and suppliers. Every aspect of the fit out, and the delivery of hospitality on board, is procured locally. All the food, wine and most other beverages are Tasmanian, the artwork is from local creatives, the crockery from a local potter. Even the soaps are made here,” says Alice.

“The crew are all Tasmanian as well,” adds Pieter. “And they’re all great storytellers with deep knowledge and a passion for the area.” Which means they

know where to spot crayfish playing in rock pools, find an Aboriginal cultural living site thought to be the largest in the Southern Hemisphere, see azure kingfishers skimming the water, and glimpse nesting orange-bellied parrots – there are less than 100 adult parrots left in the wild. Guests can partake in citizen-science programs to track the wildlife and learn about the lengths the On Board team go to, to ensure the conservation of this fragile environment.

“Everything on the boat is beautiful,” says Alice. “But the real luxury is just being here. It begins the moment you board the seaplane to get here, leaving civilisation behind. You fly over the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area, with green forests fringing the azure ocean. Then you land like a rock star on the water. It really sets the scene for an amazing journey.”



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“Surrounded by these epic, distinctively Tasmanian landscapes, time on board gives guests levity to pause and connect with the little things – the bird calls, the colours of sea grasses, the constantly changing light.”

MICK QUILLIAM

Saffire Freycinet, Tasmania

Tasmanian Aboriginal artist and tour guide Mick Quilliam offers a fascinating Connection to Country tour from luxury lodge Saffire Freycinet on the stunning east coast of Tasmania.

Growing up in Hobart / nipaluna, Mick was lucky enough to have a grandfather who taught him about the bush. After his grandfather died, Mick “went off the rails” and found himself in jail – and that’s when he began to connect more deeply with his heritage.

“I started painting, and that helped connect me to my culture,” says Mick. “Now, through my tours at Saffire Freycinet, I have another powerful way to explain the importance of my connection to the land as a palawa man, respecting the past and moving forward.”

After connecting with his Tasmanian Aboriginal heritage, Mick did extensive historical research which informs and enlivens his two-hour Connection to Country walking tour. He explains to guests how his ancestors made string from bulrushes and rope from bark, how they built canoes and made fish traps and timber traps for ducks. And he shows them which plants are edible and which were used for soap, tea and insect repellent. He also tells stories about how Aboriginal Australians grew their own special wheat that only needed rain once a year and how they kept warm with hats and cloaks made from possum fur.

“Tasmanian Aboriginals certainly weren’t running around naked all the time, which is the popular misconception. It was too cold,” he says, laughing.



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“I am passionate about showing people what our traditional Tasmanian Aboriginal life was like and how sophisticated our culture was. It’s all about passing on that message and sharing the story of us. That’s also why I started painting – to tell our stories.”

BRIAN AND KARINA BARRY

Pretty Beach House, Sydney / Warrane Surrounds, New South Wales



As the operators of four-suite luxury lodge, Pretty Beach House, Brian and Karina Barry have created an intimate, private haven surrounded by the bushland of Bouddi National Park, 100 kilometres (62 miles) north of Sydney / Warrane.

“It’s a very nurturing environment; it’s like being in someone’s luxury home,” says Karina, who trained as a chef at the Savoy in London and Sydney’s iconic Rockpool Restaurant before running a resort in the nearby Hunter Valley wine region. “There’s a private chef and they’ll do whatever you want; it’s just that other layer of luxury.” Although trusting the chef to do what they do best is also a very safe call.

“You see guests in the lounge making another guest a drink,” adds Brian, who spent most of his career in wine sales and marketing, “and you suddenly realise, we’ve done our job, because they’re treating the place as their home, and that’s what we want.”

The couple also acknowledge the heritage of the region’s traditional landowners. “We became increasingly aware of the Aboriginal history of the land, and discovered this whole world we didn’t know about. We felt the need to create some communication there,” says Brian.

So they approached Kevin ‘Gavi’ Duncan, a Darkinjung Elder, who identified a series of ancient rock

carvings on the Pretty Beach House property as being culturally significant. Now Gavi regularly performs a Welcome to Country smoking ceremony for guests, before taking them up to see the art. It’s a source of fascination, and opportunity for personal connection with the Traditional Owners of the land, for everyone who visits.

“The record for fascination with this connection is held by a German honeymooning couple, who went to see the art and came back three-and-a-half hours later,” says Brian. “We thought we lost them: the sun set and it got darker and darker, but they kept asking questions, and Gavi kept sharing stories.”

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“We sit up on a sandstone escarpment away from everybody else, so you very much feel at one with Bouddi National Park. That becomes the theme of your stay, because you can’t help but commune with nature.” – Brian Barry

CHAD AVENELL

True North Adventure Cruises, Australia

“I always do what I love, because it makes a big difference to not only your own peace of mind, but also to the people around you,” says Chad Avenell, managing director of True North Adventure Cruises. This pioneering company began operations in Western Australian waters in 1987, nearly 40 years ago, when adventurer and founding director Craig Howson, OAM, started exploring the Kimberley coast with boatloads of avid fishermen, charting rivers and creeks, and ‘discovering’ far-flung waterfalls and swimming holes in the process.

While the quality of transportation has improved over the decades and now includes the luxurious ‘floating lodges’ True North and True North II, the essence of experience hasn’t changed. “It’s still about going

to places and doing things that no one else can do,” says Chad. “Although we’re constantly looking for ways to take things up a notch.”

Chad began his career with the company as a deckhand 20 years ago, became a captain, and is now part-owner. “My wife worked for True North before I did, and we think of all our staff as family,” he says. “They’re our greatest asset, and in a league of their own. They really do facilitate life-changing trips for our guests in some of the remotest wilderness areas on Earth.”

A large part of this is through what Chad calls True North’s ‘magical moments’: “Sometimes it is the simple things that have the biggest impact, like enjoying beers around

a bonfire on a remote beach. As well as extraordinary things, like flying in a helicopter to places only accessible by heli, to a billabong for a picnic and a swim, or clambering over boulders to a waterfall where few others have ever set foot before. These are the ‘wow’ moments of rare access our guests will talk about forever,” says Chad.

“True North is really changing travellers’ perceptions of luxury,” he says. “Guests are made to feel they are part of our family, and that the ship is theirs while they’re on board. It’s really comfortable, but it’s the exclusive access to location and experiences and the super personalised hospitality that guests remember long after they return home.”



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“The best part of being on True North is seeing guests leave a better version of themselves. The experience leaves people with a new sort of confidence and perspective. Life’s different after True North.”

MORE INFO

For more information on any of these experiences, including family opportunities, high-res imagery or to arrange interviews, reach out to:

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