

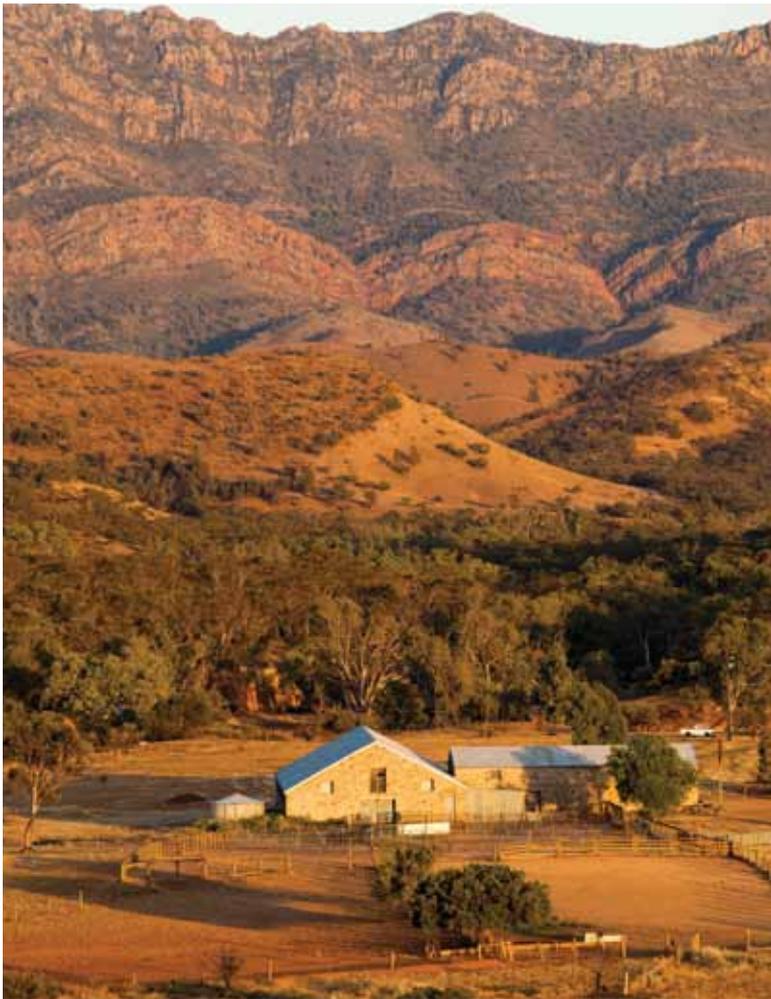
BAMURRU PLAINS, NORTHERN TERRITORIES

Celebrated by world wanderers in the know as one of Australia's best wildlife lodges, Bamurru showcases the best of the Top End's breath taking natural scenery, but in a setting that's akin to a luxury African safari. Located on the cusp of the world-famous Kakadu National Park and accessible from Darwin by helicopter or 4x4, it's not just the gourmet food – including plenty of local 'bush tucker' – and chic safari suite accommodation that draw affluent travellers to this far flung corner. The wildlife is always on show, especially during the wet season when the surrounding floodplains play home to herds of water buffalo, millions of magpie geese (for which the camp was named), wild Brumbie horses, wart hogs, and of course, salt water crocodiles. Guests can explore this awe inspiring landscape by air boat, picnic beside ancient billabongs, and learn about Aboriginal hunting methods by 4x4 Troopie, before gourmet dinners served under the stars. From US\$998 per person, min two nights; www.bamurruplains.com

GOING WILD

Beyond the lavish resorts and savvy urban hotels of Australia's beaten track lies some of the planet's most stunning scenery. Here, authentic lodges and camps showcase local produce, Aussie hospitality and the unique wildlife of Australia's furthest flung corners. But never fear, a spot of pampering is never far away.





ARKABA STATION, SOUTH AUSTRALIA

Nestled amongst the peaks and undulating hills of the Flinder's Ranges, home to some of Australia's most spectacular outback scenery, is Arkaba Station. A 24,000-hectare working sheep farm complete with a fully restored five-bedroom homestead, It dates from the 1850s. Arkaba offers the quintessential Aussie outback scene; craggy sandstone bluffs and dry creek beds lined with River Red gum trees, endless open spaces accessible by a stable of horses, classic home cooking and a cast of characters there to host, entertain and teach.

Book ahead for the Coachman's Cottage, which is separated from the main house and comes complete with 500-thread count linen, air conditioning and a spacious ensuite. You'll quickly forget modern distractions like telephones, televisions and minibars. Wake each morning to views across the Elder Range and the sing song of flocks of galahs, before spending a day exploring the outback by 4x4, horseback, or mountain bike, spying red and grey kangaroos, rock wallabies and emus along the way. Finish the evening with story telling over a gourmet meal, a swim in the infinity edge pool or a digestive in the library. From US\$847 per person, min two nights; www.arkabastation.com

SOUTHERN OCEAN LODGE, KANGAROO ISLAND

A pure expression of Australia's modern luxury lodge experience, Southern Ocean Lodge opened on Kangaroo Island in 2008. Set against a natural landscape often described as Australia's Galapagos, the Lodge provides a luxurious opportunity to delve into a stunning landscape populated by New Zealand fur seals, koalas, kangaroos, sea lions, ospreys, and echidnas.

Situated on the island's south west coast, between the Flinders Chase and Cape Bouguer/Kelly Hill National Parks, the Lodge's design blends man with nature seamlessly; twenty one suites command mesmerising views across the rugged Southern Ocean and feature lavish interiors, complete with king beds, glass-walled bathrooms, and outdoor terraces. Floors are sandblasted limestone, walls are made from recycled spotted gum, and bespoke furniture and art were created by Kangaroo Island artisans.

Dining plays an important role at the Lodge, with chef Tim Bourke taking guests on a unique culinary journey from produce to plate, capitalising on fresh, organic local ingredients, matched with boutique South Australian wines. Four night packages from US\$3,186 per night, twin share; Kangaroo Island, South Australia, Tel: +61 2 9918 4355; www.southernoceanlodge.com.au





SPICERS PEAK LODGE, QUEENSLAND

Located just two hours southwest of Brisbane, at the heart of the spectacular Scenic Rim, Spicers Peak Lodge is Queensland's highest mountain lodge and offers breath taking vistas from its ten luxurious rooms and two Private Lodges. Located at the peak of the ridge, on 3,200-hectares, the award-winning Lodge encompasses the spirit of Queensland's rural landscape but with a contemporary edge.

Rooms are elegant and blend with their natural surroundings thanks to the extensive use of stone, timber and glass. Modern technology, including iPod docking stations, LED televisions and wireless broadband prevail but for those looking to escape the rat race, this all-inclusive retreat offers a wide range of activities, including rainforest walks, mountain biking and wine tasting at the boutique wineries of the nearby Granite Belt region.

You can even trek across this ancient landscape on multi-day excursions, arriving at the Lodge in time for hot showers and one of chef Frank Meijer's acclaimed degustation dinners in the Spicers Peak Lodge Restaurant. From US\$1,277 per person, including meals, cocktails and mini bar; Queensland, Tel: 1300 253 103; www.spicersgroup.com.au





SAFFIRE FREYCINET, TASMANIA

A jewel on Tasmania's rugged east coast, this modern luxury lodge overlooks the Hazard Mountains and the pristine waters of Great Oyster Bay, showcasing some of Tasmania's most beautiful landscapes. Featuring just 20 luxury contemporary suites, each boasts stunning views, 1,000-thread count linens, customised mini bars, flatscreen televisions and furniture by Charles & Ray Eames and Herman Miller.

Guests are spoiled for choice whilst at Saffire. They can enjoy the best of local produce, including Tasmanian salmon, rock lobster and King Island cheese, in Hugh Whitehouse's *Palate restaurant*, indulge in exclusive spa treatments created by celebrity facialist Marianne De Candia, delve into the untouched wilderness which wreaths the lodge, or while away the afternoon in the bath tub, complete with views to postcard perfect Wineglass Bay.

A range of activities are included in the lodge's tariff, including visits to a Freycinet oyster farm, walks around Wineglass Bay, visits to local wineries, bird watching and kayaking through Pelican Bay, and even cooking classes with the lodge's culinary team. From US\$1,556 per night, twin share; Freycinet Bay, Tasmania, Tel: + 613 6256 7888; www.puretasmania.com.au



WOLGAN VALLEY RESORT & SPA, NEW SOUTH WALES

One of the most anticipated openings at the time, the Wolgan Valley Resort & Spa, built by the Emir Group, owners of Emirates airlines, has brought Australia's luxury lodge scene onto the international stage. Built in the heart of the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area, on the outskirts of Sydney, this luxurious retreat is only three hours by car or 45 minutes by helicopter from Sydney's international airport. Situated within its own private nature conservation reserve, the estate was the first carboNZero certified hotel in the world and has heralded in a new era in luxury eco-tourism.

The resort's 40 free standing luxury suites, each of which come with their own private terrace and swimming pool, are centered around a beautifully restored homestead, which acts as the social hub for the entire estate. The main building is also home to the resort's restaurants, including the

Country Kitchen, where executive chef Dwane Goodman serves up light snacks throughout the day, and the *Wolgan Dining Room*, where five course dinners show case the likes of Ormiston free-range pork, Mandagery Creek Venison and Oberon line trout, as well as a selection of delicious local cheeses.

But like other bush lodges throughout Australia, it's not so much about lying around poolside as it is about exploring the local surrounding wilderness. Wolgan's team of field guides lead guests into the depths of the Blue Mountains, from horse riding through the sandstone escarpments of Wolgan Valley to nature walks along ancient Aboriginal trails and mountain biking through forests of eucalyptus. There are safaris by luxury 4x4 and even historical tours which examine the lives of Aboriginal and colonial settlers. From US\$2,092 per night, twin share; Wolgan Valley, Blue Mountains, New South Wales, Tel: +61 2 6350 1800; www.wolganvalley

