

To mark Qantas's 95th birthday,
we considered bringing you 95 iconic
Australian destinations. But you
already know about those, right?



So, courtesy of our network of
clued-up correspondents, here are 95
exciting, fun, romantic, delicious and
family-friendly Australian experiences
you probably *haven't* heard about.



Experiences



WA
Injidup Spa
Retreat,
Yallingup

injidupsparetreat.
 com.au

On one side are the vineyards of the Margaret River region; on the other, the Indian Ocean, its waves crashing against a pristine Western Australian beach. In between the two is your villa – one of 10 at this retreat in Yallingup, about three hours south of Perth. Enjoy a swim in the private plunge pool or hike a section of the Cape to Cape Track – the resort is located right on the trail. And when it's time to kick back and relax, head to the on-site spa for a 90-minute Herbal Fusion massage.

AKASH ARORA

TAS

Pumphouse Point,
Lake St Clair

pumphousepoint.com.au

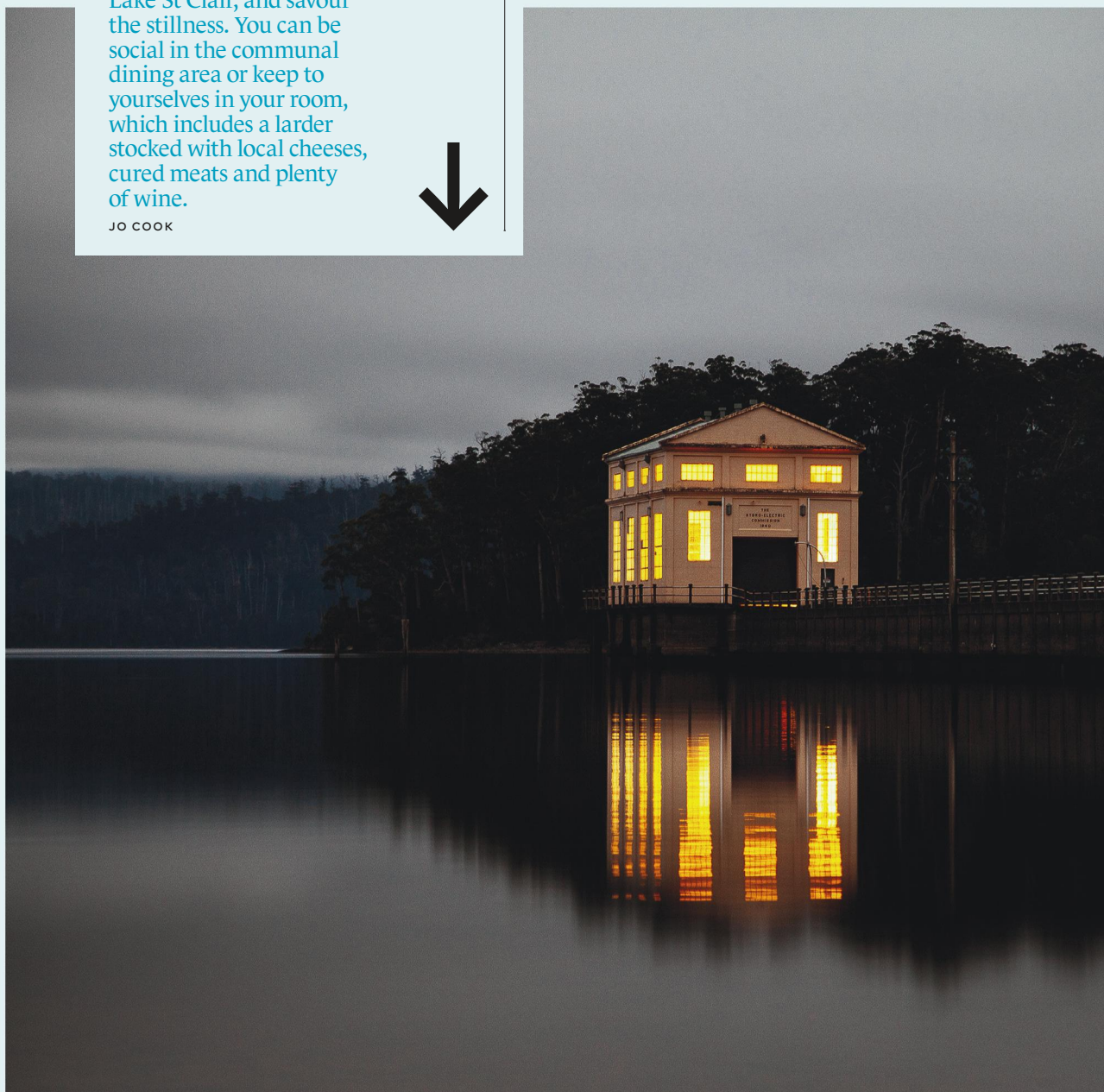
Think about a romantic place to stay and we bet a 1940s hydro-electric pumphouse doesn't come to mind... unless it's resting on an achingly serene, mirror-like lake amid World Heritage wilderness and has been transformed into a luxe hotel. Stay in the Pumphouse – suspended over the water and reached by a 250-metre concrete flume – or the Shorehouse, which sits on the edge of Lake St Clair, and savour the stillness. You can be social in the communal dining area or keep to yourselves in your room, which includes a larder stocked with local cheeses, cured meats and plenty of wine.

JO COOK



Romance

Remote getaways for couples.



SA

→ The Frames, Paringa

🌐 theframes.com.au

High on the banks of the Murray in South Australia's Riverland region, three light-filled residences – Pastiche, Montage and Collage – offer a sense of seclusion, with nothing but bird calls to break the silence. Each hideaway is wrapped in luxury and features its own pool and a balcony that looks across the Murray River. Take in sunset with a river cruise on a beautifully restored century-old wooden boat before returning home to a three-course meal, prepared in-room by your personal chef.

ELLIE SCHNEIDER



NSW

↑ Calabash Bay Lodge, Berowra Waters

🌐 calabashbaylodge.com.au

No roads lead to this waterfront lodge on a quiet tributary of the Hawkesbury; only waterways. Whether you glide to a stop in front of its pontoon in a seaplane (splurge option!) or pull up in a dinghy (if you've left your car at Berowra Waters, an hour's drive from the Sydney CBD), you'll feel the worries of your everyday life wash away. Go bushwalking in Ku-ring-gai Chase National Park, fish off the pontoon or explore the majestic sandstone cliffs of the Hawkesbury River from a kayak. And when it's time for dinner, settle for nothing less than a meal at the nearby Berowra Waters Inn restaurant. **AA**

VIC

Feathertop Château, Porepunkah

🌐 luxehouses.com.au

This retreat at the foot of Mount Buffalo is all about minimalist opulence. Feathertop Château comfortably sleeps 10 but couples can still enjoy an intimate escape; the Peggy Adelaide Suite has its own balcony, complete with an outdoor bath. The château's indulgences extend to a heated lap pool, stone pizza oven and fully stocked wine cellar – and then there's that dramatic view across the vineyards to the awe-inspiring Victorian Alps. **ES**

NT

Bamurru Plains, Point Stuart

🌐 bamurruplains.com

Head to the Mary River floodplains west of Kakadu for a night in a luxurious tent on stilts. With three walls made of mesh screen, there's no greater way to spend a night immersed in the wilderness of the Top End, where the buffalo roam, crocs lurk and wallabies play. For extra privacy, have lunch in The Hide – a six-metre-high platform with matchless views of the region's flora and fauna. And if you really like the high life, you can spend a night among the treetops in a deluxe swag. **AA**

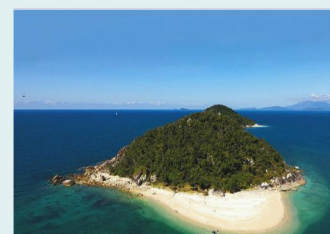
QLD

↓ Bedarra Island Resort, Great Barrier Reef

🌐 bedarra.com.au

Just 10 kilometres off Mission Beach, accessible by launch or chopper, Bedarra Island Resort is the go-to retreat for couples who want to take themselves off the grid. The eight-villa sustainable, luxury hideaway is low-key and that's why we like it. Spend the day snorkelling, playing tennis, deep-sea fishing or doing nothing at all as you laze by the pool with a drink in hand, looking out at the cerulean Coral Sea.

LAUREN QUAINANCE



12 SO

Victoria

The hidden gems of Melbourne's laneways.

BY KENDALL HILL

Cohen Place

chinesemuseum.com.au

This dogleg off Chinatown's main artery of Little Bourke Street houses the Chinese Museum, which doesn't get close to the attention it deserves. Five floors of exhibitions chronicle two centuries of Chinese immigration and culture in Victoria, from evocative displays on the 19th-century goldfields to the world's largest processional dragon.



↑ Meyers Place

meyersplace.com.au

It's a laneway but, crucially, also the name of a bar in the laneway that captures contemporary Melbourne history with its design (by cult firm Six Degrees) and the fact it pioneered the Victorian capital's thriving bar culture 22 boozy years ago. Neighbours include San Telmo, the city's best Argentine grill, and The Waiters Restaurant, famous for its Italian food and indifferent service.

Celestial Avenue

15 Celestial Avenue

Once a huddle of boarding houses for "celestials" (early Chinese migrants), this dead-end alley's most notorious tenant today is Supper Inn, a late-night Cantonese diner and hangover prevention centre. Don't be deterred by the dingy alley and shabby stairwell where diners mill while waiting for tables – tough it out for solid suckling pig, congee and pipis in XO sauce.



Somerset Place

captainsofindustry.com.au

Captains of Industry is proof that Melbourne has the Southern Hemisphere's most evolved café society. This daytime café takes its coffee seriously but also harbours an old-school barbershop (razor shaves a specialty) and a high-end cobbler – where custom footwear, handmade with kangaroo leather uppers, can be yours from \$1200 a pair.



Block Place

basementdiscs.com.au

Basement Discs is the soul – and the blues, jazz, folk and country – of Melbourne's underground music scene. A lifeline for fans of vinyl and rare tunes, it also stocks newfangled CDs and Blu-rays alongside a covetable selection of restored stereos, turntables and speakers. There are instore performances most Fridays.



South Australia

Wine experiences outside the ordinary.

BY MARK CHIPPERFIELD

↑ La Buvette Drinkery

labuvettedrinkery.com

It's not obligatory to wear a beret at this chic backstreet wine bar but one wouldn't go amiss. La Buvette is a loving recreation of a French drinking den, complete with blue tiles, French varietals (mostly organic or biodynamic) and plates of garlicky escargots. Signature drink: *pastis, naturellement*.

Hutton Vale Farm

huttonvale.com

The Angas family has been farming the country around the Barossa since 1843. Today, their property, Hutton Vale, produces fine wool, pork, cider, preserves, grass-fed lamb and small-batch wines. Guests can walk through the vineyards, enjoy farmhouse fare and sample elegant wines at their source.

↑ Mother Vine

mothervine.com.au

Are you an unashamed wine snob? Then hop on your fixed-gear bike and pedal over to Mother Vine, an über-cool wine shrine in Adelaide's fashionable East End. The 350-strong wine list ranges from affordable South Aussies to lush imports like the 2004 Domaine de la Romanée-Conti La Tâche – priced at \$3500 a bottle.

Longview

longviewvineyard.com.au

Sunday tapas at this idiosyncratic, wayward and entertaining Adelaide Hills winery is something of an institution among those in the know. The family-run operation has embraced fruit-driven wines, farmyard graffiti and seriously steep terrain, and the Longview wine portfolio – overseen by Barossa wunderkind Ben Glaetzer – covers the accessible and the baroque. Luxury accommodation and street-art exhibitions are also on offer.

Vineyard Safaris

vineyardsafaris.com

As far as viticultural bragging rights go, it's hard to imagine anything topping Icons of the Barossa – a small group tour led by wine expert Tim Wildman, an Englishman with a formidable knowledge of Australian wine. Guests meet iconic winemakers, such as Prue Henschke, and sample rare and exquisite vintages.



Culture

Excursions that open your eyes to another world.

NT Gay'Wu Dilly Bag Tour, Arnhem Land

lirrwi.com.au

Early-morning crying ceremonies at a beach in the Gulf of Carpentaria, weaving lessons, conversations about women's business: these are all part of the Lirrwi Tourism tour that gives women the rare opportunity to immerse themselves in Yolngu culture under the guidance of the Indigenous women whose people have lived on this land for eons.

CATHERINE MARSHALL

VIC TarraWarra Museum of Art, Healesville

twma.com.au

It's clear from its exterior that this gallery has serious artistic ambitions. Designed by architect Allan Powell, the building is magnificently sculpted into the landscape. The gallery focuses on Australian works from the mid-20th century onwards, with pieces by Brett Whiteley, Fred Williams, Rosalie Gascoigne and

Russell Drysdale. Visit for one of the seasonal exhibitions then enjoy a pinot noir at the estate's cellar door.

ELLIE SCHNEIDER

QLD First Coat, Toowoomba

firstcoat.com.au

Each May, the First Coat festival sees talented international and homegrown street artists transform Toowoomba, turning jaded brick and plaster façades into explosive, colourful murals. The First Coat website has a guide to the city's street art so you can tour the outdoor gallery whenever you visit.

GUY WILKINSON

WA The Odd Fellow, Perth

theoddfellow.com.au

Fun fact: before it became The Odd Fellow, the basement of Fremantle's Norfolk Hotel was where internationally lauded psych rockers Tame Impala cut their teeth. It's

ACT Lanyon Homestead, Tharwa

museumsandgalleries.act.gov.au/lanyon

If you've visited the usual Canberra haunts – the National Gallery, the National Library and Parliament House – it might be time to venture further afield. Enter Lanyon Homestead, a half-hour drive from the CBD, which offers wonderful insight into rural Australia in the 19th century. Buildings on this working sheep-and-cattle property date from the 1830s and are open to the public. There's also a café, which may have the most impressive backdrop for a latte that you'll find in the ACT, overlooking the Murrumbidgee River to the dramatic Tidbinbilla mountain range.

CHRIS SHEEDY

TAS The Golden Hour at MONA, Hobart

mona.net.au

Soak up the sunset and enjoy the spectacle of James Turrell's rooftop "skyspace", *Amarna* (2015), then retire to Wine bar for Heavy Metal Kitchen on Wednesdays and Thursdays. MONA's take on communal dining offers a three-course menu (\$79), matching wine (\$50) and banter with the stranger on your left (free).

JO COOK

the tantalising prospect of catching the next big thing that makes this unassuming local such a compelling live-music option. A focus on great drinks and even better service doesn't hurt, either.

MAX VEENHUYZEN

NSW Avoca Beach Picture Theatre, Avoca Beach

avocabeachpicturetheatre.com.au

Located right on the beach in stunning Avoca, this fourth-generation family-run theatre is a cinephile's dream. Decked out with a wonderfully retro feel, it has an emphasis on art-house, foreign and Australian films. The selection of wines and freshly made choc-top ice-creams only enhances the cinematic experience. GW



Western Australia

Perth's newest hotspots
(and, yes, four of them are in Northbridge).

BY MAX VEENHUYZEN



↑ Toastface Grillah

📍 toastfacegrillah.com

Say cheese: this low-key café in Perth's CBD gets the basics very right. In particular, it has toasted sandwiches of a higher order. Whether you make nice with the Danny Zuccho (brie, zucchini, prosciutto) or go classic Aussie with Vegemite and cheddar, count on great coffee, soulful tunes and warm, sincere service.

↓ Alabama Song

📍 Level 1, rear 232 William Street, Northbridge

Late nights are all about whiskey and country music. Or at least they are at Alabama Song, the new watering hole from serial publican Clint Nolan. Distressed surfaces and Americana galore form a nifty backdrop for an outing that's high on merriment but low on pretence.



Safari's Record Shack

📞 0403 707 499

What's better than a well-stocked record store? A well-stocked record store hidden behind a florist. Run by prolific local disc jockey John Safari, the Northbridge store hidden away in William Street's Arcade 189 houses one of Perth's finest vinyl stockpiles, taking in everything from funk and soul 45s to rare rock albums and other collectables.

Rooftop Movies

📍 rooftopmovies.com.au

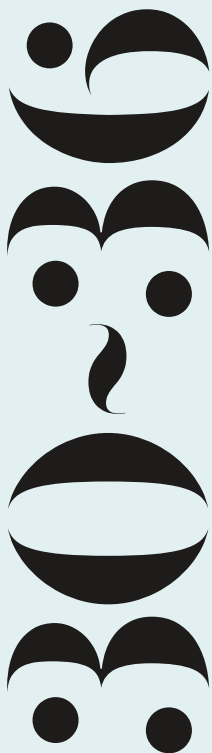


Cinema is dead? The funsters behind Rooftop Movies must have missed that memo. Popping up in late spring on the Roe Street car-park rooftop, in Northbridge, this seasonal open-air cinema combines cult, art-house and blockbuster movies with kitschy décor (plastic flamingos, anyone?), good drinks and even better views of the Perth skyline.

Francoforte Spaghetti Bar

📞 (08) 9227 9289

This cosy Northbridge bolthole, on William Street, serves spaghetti like Nonna used to make (if Nonna was a casual inner-city superstar who prized taste and value over bells, whistles and preciousness, that is). Kangaroo bolognese and kale pesto are typical of the fun house sauces, while the BYO policy suits Francoforte's loyal diners to a tee.



NSW Settle in at St Albans

🌐 settlersarms.com.au

St Albans isn't really on the road to anywhere. Which is probably why it's retained its charm and convict-built buildings, including the Settlers Arms Inn (1836). The inn offers dark ale, honest pub food and the opportunity to eat under a giant mulberry tree in the garden. Most of all: enjoy the journey. Cross the Hawkesbury at Wisemans Ferry and meander along the Macdonald River until you reach the early 19th century.

DI WEBSTER

ACT Dine in a farmhouse

🌐 thepialligoestate.com.au

Pialligo takes over where the capital's first market gardens once flourished and the estate is now focused on environmentally sustainable farming. Its beautifully landscaped farm and garden is host to a smokehouse producing award-winning bacon and the nine-month-old, timber-and-tiled Farmhouse Restaurant. The latter has also won accolades for its food (such as the hiramasa kingfish with fennel and Muscovy duck with Muscat grapes), not to mention its wine list (a mix of local heroes and international stars).

JOANNA SAVILL

Eat & drink

Treat your tastebuds somewhere different.



QLD Perk up on a coffee tour

🌐 skybury.com.au; jaquescoffee.com.au; nqgoldcoffee.com.au

The Atherton Tableland is known for its waterfalls, wildlife and gourmet food but it's also the coffee-producing capital of Australia. About 80 per cent of the local crop is grown in the red dirt of Mareeba, primarily Arabica for the boutique export market. Caffeine fans can taste-test at Skybury Farmgate or, for more in-depth tours, head to Jaques Australian Coffee and North Queensland Gold plantations.

PAUL ROBINSON

TAS Indulge at the Garden of Vegan

☎ 0421 928 041

Meat-lovers, stay with us here. This rustic Launceston oasis, lush with sunlight and potted plants, plates up the freshest of dishes full of colour, herbs, flowers, spices and flavour. Who doesn't love tom yum rice noodle soup? Or a breakfast of seasonal fruit with coconut yoghurt? If that hasn't convinced you, the raw desserts (choc peanut-butter cheesecake!), teas, coffee and kombucha almost certainly will.

JO COOK



WA ↑ Take a cooking class

🌐 foragers.com.au

Sophie Zalokar could be the most passionate local food advocate you haven't heard of. A champion of the produce of WA's Southern Forests region, Zalokar's zeal is evident at Foragers, her field kitchen/boutique hotel in Pemberton. Cooking classes bring guests closer to the land, while cosy eco-cottages prove you can enjoy your earth and save it, too.

MAX VEENHUYZEN

NT Shop and eat

🌐 pour.net.au

Located in Darwin's Rapid Creek Shopping Village, Pour is something of a local secret, where you can shop for interiors and enjoy organic coffee (Five Elements, in this case) and great food. Try the smashed avo on sourdough toast with eggs or freshly baked banana bread. Among myriad other temptations are wallpapers by These Walls and handcrafted cushions by Melbourne-based Cushionopoly.

AKASH ARORA

VIC Brunch on a rooftop

🌐 easeys.com.au

Melbourne prides itself on its eclectic eateries but Easey's takes the cake (well, doughnuts filled with milkshake-flavoured custard) for offbeat dining. It's set over four floors and the stand-out attraction is a rooftop train carriage reimagined as a burger café and bar. Brunch options include fried chicken crusted in Frosties and a bourbon-infused mac and cheese. All aboard.

KENDALL HILL



Garden Bar, Woolly Mammoth Alehouse

woollymammoth.com.au

If you've had your fill of the down-and-dirty pubs and bars for which Fortitude Valley is renowned, head upstairs to this lush little Hamptons-style haven. Enjoy some good clean fun, in the form of bocce or giant Jenga on the artificial lawn, and choose from a very civilised selection of beverages.



Miami Marketta

miamimarketta.com

Look beyond the bikini-clad meter maids and tourist traps on the main drag: there are cool bars on the Gold Coast to challenge the old clichés. With live music, food trucks and an up-beat vibe, this industrial car-park beer garden is more fun than a day at the beach.

Queensland

Drink in the atmosphere at these alfresco bars in the Sunshine State.

BY MORAG KOBEZ



↑ Tippler's Tap

tipplerstap.com.au

Blink and you'll miss it. This hip pint-sized deck is tucked away in a commercial complex in inner-city Newstead. The vibe is chilled and the abundant craft beer selection is an astonishing, ever-changing labour of love. You've discovered Brisbane's beery garden of Eden, smack-bang in the middle of the concrete jungle.

Merthyr Bowls Club

merthyrbowlsclub.com.au

The standard of bowls played here on a weekend is utter rubbish. It's just an excuse to enjoy well-priced frosty pints right on the Brisbane River. In a suburb of bars desperately vying to out-hipster one another, this place keeps it real. Skip the bowls and settle in for a session in the city's most relaxed beer garden.



↑ The Triffid

thetriffid.com.au

The sky-high wall of this large courtyard is adorned with graffiti art that reads like a who's who of the Brisbane music scene, one cool cassette tape at a time. If you're old enough to remember cassettes then chances are you'll love this inner-city haunt as much for the great music as its exceptional range of booze.

Get it?

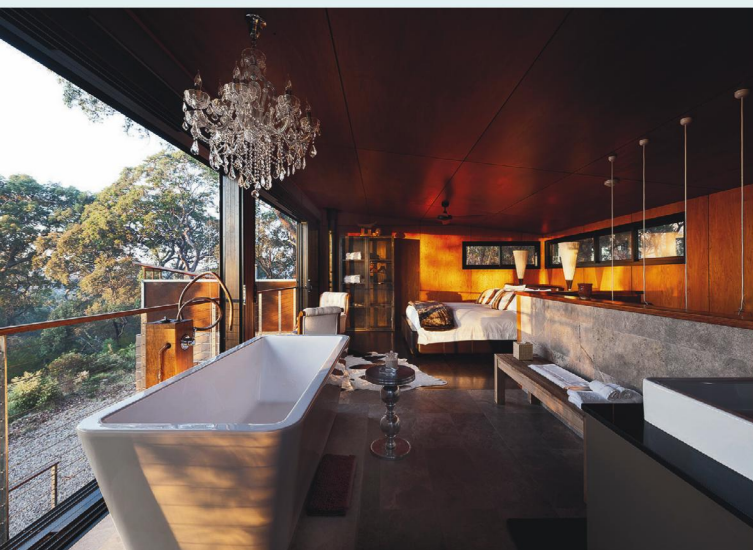
NSW

↓ Spicers Sangoma Retreat, Blue Mountains

spicersretreats.com

It's only an hour's drive from Sydney but this retreat – run by Spicers Group – feels like another world. It's surrounded by native bush, nestled on a hill with valley views and has just five suites. Our favourite? The African-themed Tent Suite with its Philippe Starck-designed two-person bathtub. There's also a heated pool on site – the ideal post-sunset spot to take in the surrounding cliffs' dramatic silhouette rising against the backdrop of a twilight-blue sky.

AKASH ARORA



Weekend escapes

Beat your retreat to these lesser-known stays.

QLD

Nightfall Wilderness Camp, Lamington National Park

nightfall.com.au

There are but three bespoke luxury tents secluded deep in the rainforest in the shadow of Lamington National Park. Explore the wilderness or chill out in a hammock, surrounded by pristine waterfalls and rock pools. Sunset drinks magically appear, followed by enticing aromas from the wood-fired oven, heralding the arrival of delicious organic meals served under a sea of stars.

MORAG KOBEZ



VIC

Ocean House, Great Ocean Road

oceanhouse.com.au

There are few secrets along the Great Ocean Road. Every beach, lookout and Apostle, it seems, has a busload of tourists hovering around it. But go off the main drag – sometimes as little as 100 metres – and it's full of surprises. A case in point? Ocean House, a beautifully designed timber-and-glass getaway with circular bedrooms and wraparound terraces. But nothing is as staggering here as the views – the boisterous blue ocean on one side, serene bush-clad hills on the other, with the winding Great Ocean Road splitting the two. Take it in from the outdoor bath on the house's rooftop area – your exclusive, tourist-free lookout. AA



Simon Kenny, Willem Rethmeier, Shannon McGrath, Kara Rosenlund



SA

A Barn in the Barossa, Kapunda

🌐 abarninthebarossa.com.au

Kapunda artist Jacqueline Coates has transformed this 19th-century coach house into a self-contained two-storey bed and breakfast with exposed-stone walls, pitched roofs, two oversized bedrooms and one sprawling garden. Coates calls this “the south of France in the Barossa” and, looking at the barn’s Provençal-inspired kitchen (flush with natural light and stocked with regional, seasonal goodies), we tend to agree.

Admire original artworks on the wall or – with a little help from Coates at her nearby Salon Rouge Gallery – make your own. **AA**

WA

Hidden Valley, Pickering Brook

🌐 hiddenvalleyneco.com.au

“We should do this more often” is one of the first things West Australians say when they get to the Perth Hills. The vistas. The wineries. That clean mountain air. There’s a lot to like about this easygoing part of the world, especially if you’re staying at Hidden Valley. While the on-site day spa and luxe trimmings fit the bill for style, eco-sensitive design and touches ensure these lodges want for nothing in substance.

MAX VEENHUYZEN

NT

Wildman Wilderness Lodge, Arnhem Land

🌐 wildmanwildernesslodge.com.au

Are you looking at wallabies through the window of your tent or are they gazing in at you? At Wildman Wilderness Lodge, it’s impossible to tell. Located two hours east of Darwin and a short drive to Kakadu National Park, this resort features 10 swank cabins and 15 luxury tents, all of them free-standing and with ensuites. Kick back and relax in a squatter’s chair with a book or join one of the lodge’s guided tours – an excellent way to explore the Mary River wetlands, a breeding ground for some of the NT’s most beautiful and diverse plants and animals. **AA**

ACT/NSW

↑ EcoCrackenback, Crackenback

🌐 ecocrackenback.com.au

Okay, technically it’s in NSW but EcoCrackenback’s proximity to Canberra makes it an ideal weekend getaway for those in the capital. Tucked off the Alpine Way between Jindabyne and Thredbo, it has family-friendly cabins with picture-perfect views from every window. Heated floors and ethanol fireplaces chase the chill, while activities include mountain biking, fishing, golf, tennis and sipping hearty Canberra reds on the balcony.

CHRIS SHEEDY



TAS

↑→ Satellite Island

🌐 satelliteisland.com.au

Just south of Hobart is this private island getaway that you will have to share with deer, sheep, pheasants and local wildlife. Relax in beautifully renovated summerhouse and boathouse accommodation, walk around the rock shelf circling the island, dangle your feet from the jetty or throw in a line. Bring supplies, order produce from Bruny Island (five minutes away by boat) or arrange for a chef to visit.

JO COOK





Tasmania

The Apple Isle walking tracks you didn't know about... until now.

BY **BARRY STONE**

Junee Cave Track, 1km

Approached on a 15-minute trail beneath towering ferns and swamp gums, the walk to the entrance of Junee Cave (90 kilometres north-west of Hobart) is a visual treat in its own right. Experienced cave divers, however, can explore subterranean delights beyond, including Australia's deepest limestone abyss.

→ The Needles, 3km

A jagged ridgeline on the fringes of Southwest National Park, The Needles is reached via a scrub-encroached trail, a 400-metre climb and a 30-minute ascent on natural steps to its 1020-metre summit. Why do it? For staggering views of mounts Mueller, Anne and Field West and lakes Pedder and Gordon.



↓ Cape Queen Elizabeth, 12km

If you're a Bruny Island resident, you'll know it – a trail that begins at its airstrip, bisects two lagoons then climbs to Mars Bluff with views over The Neck and far-off Fluted Cape before a descent to Miles Beach, previously deserted, now with a population of one.

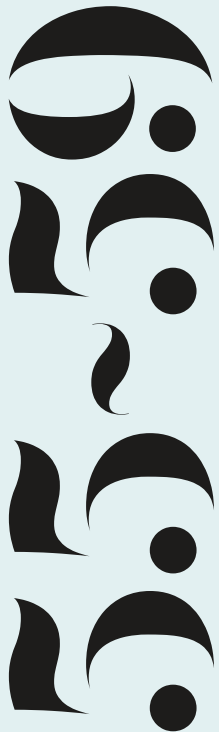


Three Capes Track, 46km

Better rug up for this brand-new track, which can be walked over three days with two nights' stay in cabins. Perched on Australia's tallest sea cliffs, taking in capes Raoul, Haüy and Pillar, this ambitious Tasman Peninsula trail is our most spectacular coastal walk; a chilling descent into the windswept latitudes of the Roaring Forties.

Hellfire Bluff, 13.8km

First you drive almost to Copping, then Kelleve, then 7.4 kilometres on a forestry road and park your vehicle in an old quarry. From there, it's a bash through scrub to a trail that dwindles to nothing as it ascends a 200-metre-high ridge overlooking Cockle Bay. Worried about crowds? You needn't be.



↓ The Hermitage Foreshore track and a picnic at Milk Beach

🌐 nationalparks.nsw.gov.au

Enjoy views of Shark Island, Strickland House and Sydney's Harbour Bridge on the gentle Hermitage Foreshore track from Bayview Hill Road, Rose Bay to Nielsen Park. Along the way, stop off at Milk Beach for a leisurely picnic with a view. Tucked away in leafy Vaucluse, you'll feel like you're the first person to discover this tranquil and secluded spot.



↑ Pier One bathtub overlooking Sydney Harbour Bridge

🌐 pieronesydneyharbour.com.au

Want the ultimate room with a view? This is it. You won't believe your eyes when you step into the Harbour View Suite at Walsh Bay's Pier One hotel. This luxury accommodation offers views of Luna Park, Sydney Harbour Bridge and the Opera House, which you can enjoy from a day bed or while dining on your balcony. But the best observation spot is the opulent bathroom, in a freestanding bath.

New South Wales

Five under-the-radar Sydney Harbour experiences.

BY GENEVIEVE ROSEN & ELLIE SCHNEIDER

Ballast Point Park

🌐 leichhardt.nsw.gov.au

Originally home to the Gadigal people, then a merchant's villa and an oil-storage facility, this attractive 2.6-hectare park is an urban oasis set on Birchgrove's picturesque peninsula. Bring a picnic, go for a cycle or wander around the park's numerous installations, which hint at the area's industrial past.

Brunch at Axil Coffee Co.

🌐 axilcoffeeco.com.au

This tiny café on Kirribilli Wharf is a pit stop for commuters grabbing their morning hit but those with more time should sit by its windows for a spectacular view and tasty fare. Brunch options include "Arabian-style" poached eggs and Bircher muesli. Wash it down with a rhubarb-and-vanilla milkshake.

Dinghy from Cockatoo Island to Greenwich Baths

🌐 cockatooisland.gov.au

In the western waters of the harbour lies Cockatoo Island, an old naval site that's now a platform for cultural events. Watch the sun go down with a cocktail at The Island Bar before a night at the waterfront camp site. When you wake, hire a dinghy to get to Greenwich Baths, a beautiful harbour enclave catering to lap swimmers and casual bathers alike.



Top End

Join the throng at Nightcliff Markets

🌐 nightcliffmarkets.com.au

They all compete for your attention as you walk through Darwin's Nightcliff Markets – the intoxicating aroma of Malaysian beef rendang, the rhythm of live music, artworks splashed with vibrant Northern Territory landscapes and even cotton skirts with oversized dragonfly prints. Don't rush the experience. Take your time, grab some rendang wrapped in flaky roti canai then find a spot under a tree for a front-row view of Sunday-afternoon Darwin at its most relaxed.



Northern Territory

Live it up in the Top End's great outdoors.

BY SAM McCUE



↑ Dine under the stars

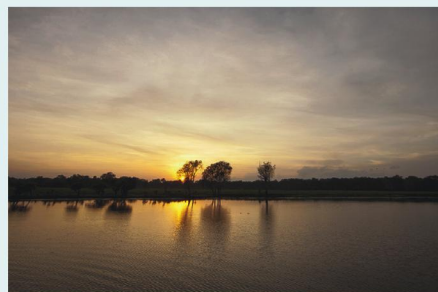
🌐 peewees.com.au; darwinskiclub.com.au

In the pantheon of romantic experiences, dining by the sea under the stars on a balmy tropical night has to be right up there. Throw in an oven-baked, wild-caught Northern Territory saltwater barramundi at the oceanfront Pee Wee's at the Point and life could barely be sweeter. A cheaper, noisier (ergo less romantic) version of the experience can be had at nearby Darwin Ski Club.

↓ Cruise Kakadu at night

🌐 kakadutourism.com

Sign up for a Yellow Water Billabong day cruise in Kakadu National Park and you'll see more crocodiles than your nightmares can handle. Do the cruise after dark and all you'll see are stars – millions of them. As you step aboard, there's an overwhelming sense of darkness until your eyes adjust to the heavenly lightshow. The only sounds you'll hear are the gently lapping waves and your guide explaining the Aboriginal connection to the night sky.



Explore Litchfield National Park

🌐 parksandwildlife.nt.gov.au

Kakadu may be bigger, more famous and internationally renowned for its rock art but locals flock to Litchfield for its proximity to Darwin, dramatic Magnetic Termite Mounds and shady monsoon forest walks. Worked up a sweat? Glide into sublime waterfall-fed pools at Florence Falls and Wangi Falls, where the word "secluded" is part of the local lexicon. Go for a day or camp out.

Find yourself at Rainbow Valley

🌐 parksandwildlife.nt.gov.au

If you think Uluru is the only place of staggering beauty in the Red Centre, you're wrong. About two hours south of Alice Springs is Rainbow Valley – a jagged sandstone outcrop with steep cliffs and bluffs. It's spectacular at any time of the day or night (the stars come into their own out here) but the best time to visit is around sunset when the light hits the rock face from behind you, making its rainbow-like bands even more dramatic. Don't forget the picnic rug and sundowners.

AKASH ARORA

WA Submerge yourself in a natural spa

🌐 beachsafe.org.au

A free, natural spa treatment in Australia's South West? Wyadup is proof that God loves us and wants us to be happy – or at least refreshed and energised after a trip to the beach. When the surf is up at Wyadup Beach (about 15 minutes from Yallingup), the combination of surf and rock fissures turns the pool there into Mother Nature's own bubble bath. BYO robe.

MAX VEENHUYZEN

Water worlds

Wonderful ways
to make a splash.

NSW ↓ Find a secret pool

🌐 nationalparks.nsw.gov.au

The Royal National Park is a glorious expanse of wilderness just under an hour's drive south of Sydney's CBD that stretches over 150 square kilometres.



The exact location of the Figure Eight Pool isn't clearly signposted so half the excitement is finding it in the park's southern precinct. Strike up a conversation with fellow hikers along the track and they'll be happy to point you in the right direction. Adventurers are rewarded with a perfectly formed double spherical rock pool inviting you to take a plunge in its crystal-clear ocean water. Plan to get there at low tide to see the pool in its full glory.

DAVID ROGERS

TAS Go on a brand- new cruise

🌐 coralexpeditions.com

Explore the rugged beauty of Tasmania's national parks and waterways as part of the newly launched Hobart to Hobart cruise. This immersing,





SA

Swim with sharks

🌐 rodneyfox.com.au

↑ Sure, swimming with sharks has been done – unsuccessfully by some – but cage diving with Rodney Fox Shark Expeditions is unusual in that it can take you to the ocean floor. You'll plunge 20 metres into the Southern Ocean, off South Australia's scenic Neptune Islands, "comforted" by the guarantee that you have a "99 per cent chance" of coming within arm's length of great white sharks. If you're not a hardcore diver, opt for the Surface Cage experience, where you strap on a snorkel, step into a cage off your boat and submerge just under the surface while nearby Jaws wannabes flash you their gruesome grins.

DAVID LEVELL

seven-day experience takes place on board the Coral Expeditions I catamaran and transports you to pristine spots such as Port Davey and Bathurst Harbour – normally only accessible by light aircraft or a seven-day hike. Best to book while you can, though, as there are only seven upcoming departures planned – in November and February – and, with a capacity of 46, places are strictly limited.

AKASH ARORA

NT

Plunge into a secluded rock hole

🌐 parksandwildlife.nt.gov.au

Renowned for its soaring quartzite cliffs, Trephina Gorge – about an hour's drive east of Alice Springs – is also home to shimmering bodies of water, including the ever-changing John Hayes Rock Hole. The cooler months, from May to September, are an ideal time to take a dip. But the place is just as splendid in summer, when the water evaporates, leaving behind a creek bed parched of life yet gloriously beautiful. Beware, though: the gorge is accessible only by 4WD – all the better if seclusion appeals. AA

QLD

Do yoga on a paddleboard

🌐 pilatesbythesea.com.au;
luxefitnessescapes.com.au

The rising sun bathes the Noosa River in a soft golden glow, the water is still and the only sound comes from chirping birds – perfect conditions for a bespoke yoga class. On a paddleboard. A guided two-hour session with Pilates by the Sea (also available as part of a Luxe Fitness Escapes package) takes you among the mangroves and ends with 15 minutes of meditation on your board. This could be the most relaxing way to explore Noosa.

SALLY WRIGHT

VIC

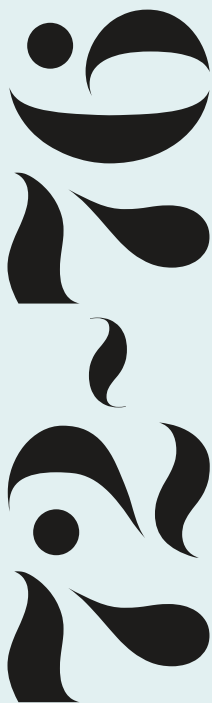
↓ Spot a platypus from a canoe

🌐 platypustours.net.au

The mirror-like Lake Elizabeth, in the Great Otway National Park, offers a rare audience with this elusive monotreme. A platypus colony inhabits the small lake so visitors are almost assured of encounters. The tour leaves from Forrest, a hamlet in the hinterland area of the Great Ocean Road, with operator Bruce Jackson guiding guests in four-person canoes and claiming a 95 per cent platypus-sighting success rate.

KENDALL HILL





Contemplate politics as art

🌐 moadoph.gov.au

The sharp end of politics is often at the tip of cartoonists' pens. The annual *Behind the Lines* exhibition at Old Parliament House, home to the Museum of Australian Democracy, is an artistic anthology, prompting an equal measure of laughter and despair at the state of politics. Stroll through on a spring afternoon, leaving enough time to appreciate the faded grandeur of the building and its intimate courtyards.



Power-dine

🌐 wild-duck.com.au



Deals are done and prime ministers deposed over dinner at Kingston's many Asian eateries. Newcomer Wild Duck (above), in the evolving foreshore precinct, hosted Malcolm Turnbull and Clive Palmer's curious dinner date last year (with the restaurant's decadent banana split becoming popular following Clive's endorsement). Still hungry? Bill Shorten tucked into Hoang Hau's reliable fare while working the numbers for Julia Gillard's coup against Kevin Rudd in 2010. Notable nosheries China Plate and Portia's Place are factional favourites, too.

Australian Capital Territory

How to *really* experience politics in Canberra.

BY MELISSA CLARKE

↓ Live like a prime minister

🌐 tfehotels.com/kurrajong; canberra.park.hyatt.com

Room 205 at the Hotel Kurrajong was the chosen residence of Ben Chifley, Australia's prime minister from 1945 to 1949. The hotel has been revitalised to its 1920s Pavilion-style glory, giving visitors an opportunity to sleep in one of its elegant Heritage suites. James Scullin and Kevin Rudd have both called the effortlessly elegant Hyatt Hotel (below) home. One can run the nation from the Park Suite at this Art Deco masterpiece then recline beneath the deep verandahs of the Speaker's Corner Bar.

Drink with the movers and shakers

🌐 cocu.com.au/public-bar

When the politicians are in town and Parliament rises early on Wednesday evenings, those in the know head to Public. The Manuka watering hole attracts staffers, journalists and ambitious backbenchers (Labor and Liberal), who let down their guard and exchange gossip. Mosey in after 8pm, prop yourself up at a high-bench with one of the many Australian beers on tap and watch the power plays.



Walk in Menzies' footsteps

🌐 nationalcapital.gov.au

Robert Menzies had a vision for Canberra, with Lake Burley Griffin the centrepiece. The R.G. Menzies Walk is a winding two-kilometre path that hugs the northern shore. Starting from the sentinel-esque National Carillon, it stretches westward, with views of the High Court and ASIO's glassy edifice. Near its western end, the weighty man himself is cast in bronze, mid-stride, surveying the city for which he became a self-described "apostle".



QLD Go kitesurfing at Moreton Bay

🌐 moretonbaykiting.com.au

Yes, you could go on a cruise on beautiful Moreton Bay but cruises are for wimps. Take kitesurfing lessons instead – all the fun of surfing without the monotonous paddling out; the buzz of soaring without jumping off a cliff; and the kind of adrenaline rush that usually can't be bought legally.

MORAG KOBEZ

VIC Hit the French Island trails

🌐 parkweb.vic.gov.au

You can spend your life in Melbourne and know nothing of French Island in Western Port Bay – 16,900 hectares with no sealed roads, no police, almost no people and accessible only by a passenger ferry. But if mudflats, mangroves, sea eagles, shearwaters and black swans are your thing, get over there and start exploring.

BARRY STONE



Thrills

Find your inner
adventurer.

WA Get wet at Horizontal Falls

🌐 horizontalfallsadventures.com.au

Horizontal Falls flows across the water's surface rather than onto it, courtesy of millions of litres of fast-moving seawater gushing and coursing into Talbot Bay through narrow breaks in the McLarty Range on the Kimberley Coast. Thrill-seekers can strap in for high-speed boat rides through the maelstrom-like water.

MAX VEENHUYZEN

NSW → Kayak to Store Beach

🌐 manlykayakcentre.com.au

Tucked away on Manly's North Head, Store Beach is a hidden harbourside haven that can only be reached by water. Hire a kayak from Manly Wharf and make your way to this flat (and often deserted) strip of sand for a romantic picnic, refreshing dip and, with no facilities in sight, a blissful – and convincing – illusion of seclusion.

GENEVIEVE ROSEN

ACT Explore an abandoned railway

High in the mountains of Canberra's Tuggeranong region is the abandoned (this section, at least) Bombala railway line, once running from Goulburn to the Victorian border. Bushwalk or mountain-bike as the line winds through hills, farms, ravines and horse paddocks. Begin by trekking up through the thrilling mountain bike trails of Tuggeranong Pines.

CHRIS SHEEDY



SA Stargaze in a swag

🌐 arkabawalk.com

The four-day Arkaba Walk showcases the natural wonders of South Australia's Flinders Ranges but the action after dark is just as memorable. Walkers are rewarded each day with a three-course meal, fine wines and the most opulent swags in the outback. Custom-made and set on raised platforms in the wilderness, stargazing has never felt so smug, er, snug.

KENDALL HILL



TAS Tour Machinery Creek Canyon

🌐 cradlemountaincanyons.com.au

For an adventure with such Instagram cred, you'd think you would need a bit of practice. But on this Cradle Mountain canyon tour, you can strap yourself in for a full day of abseiling six waterfalls with no experience required. Leap into deep pools from natural water slides in this World Heritage-listed wilderness. And while you shouldn't be put off by the final 30-metre challenge at Petrifying Falls, it probably isn't the best time for a selfie.

JO COOK



TAS
↑ Go to an old-school zoo

🌐 zoodoo.com.au
 In rural Richmond, a 25-minute drive from Hobart, Zoodoo is set on 32 hectares and features more than 70 species of native, agricultural and exotic animals. See rare African white lions, be chased by ostriches on a safari bus tour, feed the llamas, meet ridiculously cute Sassy the wombat or get up close to a wallaby eating out of your hands.
JO COOK



Family

Fresh ideas for treating Bored Kids Syndrome.

WA
Stay on a houseboat

🌐 houseboatsmandurah.com.au
 Navigating the Peel-Harvey Estuary by houseboat isn't quite *Pirates of the Caribbean* but the waterways of Mandurah have plenty of treasure to go around. The views, for starters, can be enjoyed by everyone from the young to the young at heart, while good crabbing and fishing make it possible to catch, cook and chew your way through dinner without setting foot on dry land.
MAX VEENHUYZEN

VIC
Do a farmstay

🌐 johanna.com.au
 At Johanna River Farm, a 115-hectare working sheep property and farmstay by the Southern Ocean, children are unlikely to tire of the neighbours. There are

goats, cows, miniature horses, alpacas, chooks and a donkey called Pickles to make friends with and feed, as well as bass and trout to fish from the pond. The accommodation is simple but has a few creature comforts, too, and all the Great Ocean Road attractions are nearby.
KENDALL HILL

NSW
Pick, pack and pay

🌐 hawkesburyharvest.com.au
 If your kids think fruit is magically made at supermarkets, bundle them into the car, pack a picnic and hit the Farm Gate Trails – a network of properties all within a few hours' drive of Sydney, where you can pick your own produce, including apples, stone fruit and chestnuts. Buy a bucket from the farmer, follow the signs and – you didn't hear this from us – sneak a taste along the way. And warn the kids: fruit will not be shiny or encased in cling wrap.
DI WEBSTER

SA
Kayak beside dolphins

🌐 adventurekayak.com.au
 Imagine the apocalyptic setting for a *Mad Max* movie and you are getting a picture of Garden

QLD
Take a beekeeping course

🌐 beeonethird.com
 If you believe the children are our future, think again. Honey bees are. Without those hard-working little buzzers, we'd face a pretty miserable existence without fresh fruit or veggies. Beginner beekeeper workshops at Bee One Third in Brisbane are a fun way to teach your kids not only about the birds and the bees but our planet, too.
MORAG KOBEZ

Island, an industrial landscape near Port Adelaide. Join this guided kayaking expedition to meet a colony of playful river dolphins. Kayakers also paddle through an ancient mangrove forest and a ship's atmospheric graveyard.
MARK CHIPPERFIELD

ACT
Picnic on an island

🌐 canberracruzises.net
 Springbank Island, on Lake Burley Griffin, is one of our capital's little-known gems. Accessible only by water, the weeping-willow-ringed islet is perfect for a private picnic, shady siesta, game of cricket or pirate adventure. There are taps, toilets, barbecues, picnic tables and plenty of friendly ducks.
CHRIS SHEEDY



Bondi Beach

Australia's most famous beach gives up its secrets.

BY GENEVIEVE ROSEN & ELLIE SCHNEIDER



→ Do free beach yoga

🌐 live-naturally.weebly.com

Don your fluoro apparel and salute Bondi's dawn with a rejuvenating – and free – yoga class on the first Friday of the month. The Sunrise Bender is run by Living Organic Co. with the OneWave surf community and aims to raise awareness of mental health. Meet at 6.30am by the ramp at south Bondi.



Have a coffee and a piadina at La Piadina

🌐 lapiadina.com.au

Don't be surprised if you can't find this hole in the wall. Its shopfront is painted every month, making it tricky for returning customers to spot, let alone first-timers. But follow the wafting aroma of piadine and you're there. Stuffed with cured meats and vegetables and oozing with mozzarella, these Italian flatbread pockets are well complemented with what locals consider the best coffee in Bondi and a slice of the tiny café's berry crostata.

↓ Do a DIY dessert crawl

🌐 speedoscafe.com.au;
gelatomessina.com/au;
ppapa.com.au;
healthemporium.com.au

Splurge on a cheeky dessert crawl around Sydney's superfood capital. Start in North Bondi at Speedo's Cafe with an intricately decorated cronut. Walk it off with a stroll to Hall Street to sample Gelato Messina's salted caramel and finish at Papa, where you'll find the irresistible bombe. Feeling guilty? Start fresh tomorrow with a nourishing smoothie at The Health Emporium on Bondi Road.



Tuck into delicious Taiwanese at Bondi Farmers' Market

🌐 bondimarkets.com.au

Hold the green juice and join the queue each Saturday for Mr Bao's Pan-Asian take on Taiwanese street food. Pillow-soft steamed buns are loaded with karaage chicken, crispy tofu and tempura prawns. But you'll have to get there early for the crackling pork belly with signature hoisin and lightly pickled cucumber – a favourite among the locals. ●

95

"As iconic as Bondi is, to me it still feels like a village – a beach village, you know? There's a real community. You can walk out your door with your shoes off, go for a surf and find great places to eat. Just put me here and I'm really happy."

Local resident
Hugh Jackman



Avoid the crowds at Ben Buckler

🌐 bondisbest.com.au

Avoid the tourist traps along the beachfront and make your way to Campbell Parade for Bondi's Best. The take-out fisherman's basket feeds two, with battered hoki, crumbed calamari, potato scallops and battered prawns. The northern headland, Ben Buckler (top of Ramsgate Avenue), has views across the beach and a rare slice of seclusion to roll out your picnic blanket.