

FIVE STAR

kids

TRAVEL + LIFESTYLE

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**BEST BEACH
GETAWAYS**

**WOW
FACTOR
CRUISES**

**MALDIVES
MOMENTS**

**101
PLACES**

THAT WILL CHANGE
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THAILAND TOP 10 • PRINCESS PEARLS
BEST BUSH RETREATS • LIVING OVERSEAS

BACK TO NATURE: AUSTRALIA

The world's most pristine wilderness is in our own backyard, so let's explore.

WORDS Lauren McGroder

In a world of towering skyscrapers that race to outgrow each other and hotel suites so large that little ones can feel rather lost, the most memorable journey is one that takes families back to nature. Vast skies, boundless bodies of water and ancient eucalypts are the star attractions at these wilderness retreats.

EMIRATES ONE&ONLY WOLGAN VALLEY RESORT & SPA

NEW SOUTH WALES

wolganvalley.oneandonlyresorts.com
Cradled between the Wollemi and the Gardens of Stone National Parks in the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area, Emirates One&Only Wolgan Valley is in equal measures a product of the 'back to basics' approach and the epitome of luxury. Children and parents are invited to explore the undulating and ancient eucalypt forest by foot, horseback or four-wheel drive on guided tours before returning to the comfort of the Homestead in what is the quintessential Australian bush experience, complete with friendly kangaroos on the doorstep.

ECO-KIDS' CHOICE:

Take a leaf from the book of Robin Hood and shoot a bow and arrow in the archery area.

PARENT INDULGENCE:

Bathe in the Japanese-style soaking tub in the private spa treatment room.

EAGLEREACH WILDERNESS RESORT

NEW SOUTH WALES

www.eaglereach.com.au

Couples have long flocked to the Hunter Valley for the region's wines, but the area is just as suited to families who stay at Eaglereach. A two-, three- or four-bedroom Spa Lodge affords views of Barrington Tops or the Pacific Ocean, while fishing, yabbing and stargazing offer an increasingly rare encounter with Australia's flora and fauna.

ECO-KIDS' CHOICE:

Kayak on Goonarook Lagoon.

PARENT INDULGENCE:

Enjoy a picnic with a hamper packed with fresh produce.

BANJO'S BUSHLAND RETREAT

NEW SOUTH WALES

www.banjosretreat.com.au

Bushland views from each room characterise the lodgings at Banjo's, also drawing families to the Hunter Valley. The retreat entertains with a tennis court and Adventure Playground as well as an Environmental Centre housing enough information about the local flora and fauna to impress any science teacher.

ECO-KIDS' CHOICE:

Little ones can practise their swing at the nine-hole mini-golf course.

PARENT INDULGENCE:

Experience a spa treatment in the privacy of your own lodge.



Wolgan Valley's complimentary mountain bikes are the ideal way to explore the bush.

CAPELLA LODGE

NEW SOUTH WALES

lordhowe.com

There's nothing quite like the contrast of Lord Howe Island's volcanic peaks, verdant forests and sheltered lagoons to mesmerise your family. Take your children to this UNESCO World Heritage Site and they are spoiled for choice, with glass-bottom kayaking on the coral reef guaranteed to delight.

ECO-KIDS' CHOICE:

Feed the hundreds of fish that group in the shallows of Neds Beach.

PARENT INDULGENCE:

Watch the sun set over evening drinks at Gowers Terrace.

BAMURRU PLAINS

NORTHERN TERRITORY

www.bamurruplains.com

This private buffalo station that borders Kakadu National Park was born from the concept of 'wild bush luxury' and its safari bungalows certainly reflect this. Set on stilts that overlook a floodplain, children will be enthralled when they realise that floor-to-ceiling mesh screens are the only barrier between them and the sights, smells and sounds of the surrounding wilderness. Open-top safari vehicles and airboats navigate the wetlands and savannah woodlands teeming with wallaroos, dingos, birdlife and the elusive crocodile, which, if spotted, makes for an unbeatable classroom tale.

ECO-KIDS' CHOICE:

Visit the rock art galleries of Kakadu and Arnhem Land.

PARENT INDULGENCE:

Take to the floodplains during wet season for fishing aboard an airboat.

SOUTHERN OCEAN LODGE

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

southernoceanlodge.com.au

It is South Australia's rugged coastline that makes Southern Ocean Lodge a nature-lover's paradise, but it's the flawless accommodation and service that guarantees you'll want to return. Flinders Chase National Park offers miniature zoologists the chance to encounter kangaroos, New Zealand fur seals, koalas and echidnas. Proclaimed as 'Australia's own Galapagos' this is certainly a property the kids will be enchanted by, and with guided island excursions updated daily, you will too.

ECO-KIDS' CHOICE:

Join a naturalist guide for a tour of Seal Bay, home to Australia's third-largest colony of Australian sea lions.

PARENT INDULGENCE:

Enjoy a body exfoliation, mud wrap and massage during a Southern Sojourn spa treatment.



Nature Facts

Arkaba was once a working sheep property in operation since 1851. The Woolshed was built five years later and still has the original corrugated iron roof.



Australian sea lions are a majestic sight on Seal Bay near Southern Ocean Lodge.

ARKABA STATION

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

www.arkabastation.com

The 540 million-year-old landscape of the Flinders Ranges tells the story of geological evolution, Aboriginal history and remote European settlers. Arkaba Station counts almost 25,000 hectares of South Australian outback as its own, introducing children to the environment with treasure hunts, cooking demonstrations and animal encounters. Experiences vary to best showcase the region, but meals are chef prepared and accommodation ranges from magical star beds to the 1850 Arkaba Homestead.

ECO-KIDS' CHOICE:

A scenic flight provides an aerial view of Wilpena Pound and the massive salt pans of Lake Torrens.

PARENT INDULGENCE:

Dine around an old wool-classing table on the outdoor terrace, sampling South Australian wines.



Appreciating the beauty of the Kimberley on horseback at Home Valley Station.

Nature Facts

Rainfall in the Kimberley can accumulate to 1,400mm during the wet season.



The picturesque surrounds that greet the guests of Berkeley River Lodge.

BERKELEY RIVER LODGE

WESTERN AUSTRALIA

www.berkeleyriver.com.au

A secluded retreat only accessible by air is already an intriguing notion in itself, but your first glimpse of Berkeley River Lodge upon your descent is enough to cement this piece of Western Australia into your mind forever. Poised atop coastal dunes between the Timor Sea and the Berkeley River, the villas are a comfortable base from which to spot sea turtles, tour the bush and beach via 4WD and cast a line into habitats teeming with diversity – and some of the finest barramundi.

ECO-KIDS' CHOICE:

Marvel at an evening sea turtle viewing.

PARENT INDULGENCE:

Jump aboard a luxurious Bell 407 helicopter and picnic at Eagle Falls.

HOME VALLEY STATION

WESTERN AUSTRALIA

www.hvstation.com.au

The scorched mud flats and gorges of the Kimberley are the ultimate symbol of Australia for some, and a retreat at the Home Valley Station, bordering the Cockburn Range, is an ideal way for families to connect with the surrounds. With accommodation ranging from Grass Castles to Eco Tents, your little outback rangers are ensured a peaceful night's sleep before taking to the land again.

ECO-KIDS' CHOICE:

Get hooked on horse-riding lessons designed specifically for miniature equestrians.

PARENT INDULGENCE:

Savour a gourmet cheese and fruit platter on a sunset tour of the Cockburn Ranges.

TRUE NORTH

WESTERN AUSTRALIA

www.northstarcruises.com.au

Those that have been to the Kimberley are aware of its pull, and to experience its landscape by sea is an altogether different encounter, equally worthy of your time. The boutique adventure vessel, *True North*, scours its coastline in search of the most magical waterfalls, gorges and rivers and passengers are treated nightly to some of the fieriest sunsets in the world.

ECO-KIDS' CHOICE:

The ship's resident helicopter will beckon kids to explore new heights.

PARENT INDULGENCE:

Learn about the art, culture, history, flora and fauna of the Kimberley region from the resident naturalist and onboard experts.

SAL SALIS

WESTERN AUSTRALIA

www.salsalis.com.au

This beachside safari camp is renowned for giving you the opportunity to swim with whale sharks. Nine wilderness tents are positioned on the shore of Ningaloo Reef in a secluded landscape both surreal and organic. Guests can hope to catch a glimpse of kangaroos in the morning, while in the water 500 species of fish make for spectacular viewing.

ECO-KIDS' CHOICE:

A partnership with Ocean Eco Adventures means you can count 12-metre-long giants of the deep among the local wildlife.

PARENT INDULGENCE:

Absorb the views of Ningaloo Reef as you relax on sun loungers by the beach.

PEPPERS CRADLE MOUNTAIN LODGE

TASMANIA

www.cradlemountainlodge.com.au

On the edge of Cradle Mountain-Lake St Clair National Park is a wilderness retreat that makes for year-round family adventure, with the natural outings on offer changing according to the season. As Tasmania basks in summer sun, canoe on Dove Lake or experience the thrill of canyoning before the winter chill settles and tobogganing becomes the preferred method of navigation. Family Spa Suites are cosy, furnished with Tasmanian wood and warmed by a log fire, allowing young guests to appreciate the natural environment in comfort.

ECO-KIDS' CHOICE:

Curfews are forgotten for one special night as little guests transform into eco-warriors and spot native animals under a starry sky.

PARENT INDULGENCE:

An Exotic Lime and Ginger Salt Glow at the Waldheim Alpine Spa.

SAFFIRE FREYCINET

TASMANIA

www.saffire-freycinet.com.au

If it's an authentic appreciation of nature's beauty that you want to foster in your children, Saffire Freycinet allows you to do so without distraction. The floor-to-ceiling glass windows that frame your view of Tasmania's Cole Bay immerse guests so entirely in the surrounds that the divide between outdoors and in becomes uncertain. There are a number of half- and full-day tours available to acquaint little guests with the wilderness, including the opportunity to (almost) come nose-to-snout with a Tasmanian devil.

ECO-KIDS' CHOICE:

Embark on a journey to Wineglass Bay and visit sandy beaches that are dotted around the Freycinet coastline.

PARENT INDULGENCE:

Sample prized Pacific oysters and champagne for breakfast as you stand knee-deep in a working oyster farm.



Indulge in a Private Pavilion at Saffire Freycinet.



Magnificent views as you walk the Scenic Rim at Spicers Peak Lodge.

SILKY OAKS LODGE

QUEENSLAND

www.silkyoakslodge.com.au

Every child has jungle-clad dreams in which they have a treehouse to call their own. Fantasies reveal themselves as a very luxurious reality at Silky Oaks Lodge, a rainforest retreat situated on the banks of the Mossman Gorge River in Tropical North Queensland. In the ecology lesson of a lifetime, families can take a full-day excursion to the Great Barrier Reef, spot crocodiles on the Daintree River and practise their riding style on Wonga Beach.

ECO-KIDS' CHOICE:

Cycle to Mossman Gorge on a mountain bike from the Porter's Shed.

PARENT INDULGENCE:

Enjoy private, candlelit riverside dining.

SPICERS PEAK LODGE

QUEENSLAND

spicersretreats.com/spicers-peak-lodge

Its position atop a mountain in Queensland's Scenic Rim means that families at Spicers Peak Lodge are afforded the ultimate vantage point to appreciate the rolling green hills below. Guided walks of the property are as brief as one hour so small guests can happily join and listen to the call of morning birds. Miniature gourmands may prefer to enjoy the pleasures of nature in a gentler manner with a picnic lunch.

ECO-KIDS' CHOICE:

Buckle up and go on a 4WD journey to remote lookouts on the property.

PARENT INDULGENCE:

Take a quiet moment to enjoy the range of books and board games available in the loft.