



# Travel



Meet the household names of tomorrow. In the fifth of our series highlighting young and globally focused innovators in design, fashion, wine and more, we present five Australians who are offering excitingly different travel experiences

Story **Catherine Caines**

RANDY LAROCHE



*“We might be the most passionate art lovers in the country”*

JULIAN KROKA

#### **James and Hayley Baillie**

In Australia's booming era of experiential, eco-conscious luxury tourism it's easy to forget that conspicuous, gilded resorts reigned barely a decade ago. But, fuelled by their belief in a different tourism future, that was the environment into which husband and wife James and Hayley Baillie (pictured left) launched Baillie Lodges in 2003. "Luxury was once defined by pink marble and gold taps at Hayman Island, that was the definition of a luxury resort," says James Baillie, "but we recognised the power of what we call 'the platinum nomad.'

"We wanted to create experiences for people who are travelling for enlightenment. These are people who are very well educated, who have been to amazing corners of the world and who want to travel in style yet are, at the same time, conscious of environmental sustainability."

In just eight years, the Baillies have gained an award-winning reputation for their portfolio of boutique properties, magnificent and scenic resorts, which include the Southern Ocean Lodge on Kangaroo Island, Capella Lodge on Lord Howe Island and the soon-to-open Remarkable Lodge at Safety Cove in Tasmania. They have attracted a generation of travellers seeking an indulgent wilderness adventure and, in the process, spearheaded a local luxury revolution that rivals our closest competitors, New Zealand and South Africa.

James, 44, cites Amanresorts as the inspiration behind his growing luxury lodge empire; Hayley, 38, foresaw the

rise of the platinum nomad. During her childhood Hayley travelled to incredible, conservationist-based places with her father, entrepreneur and adventurer Dick Smith. She then worked for 10 years on board the world's best expedition ships, creating programs to enhance guests' nature and adventure experiences.

"I think experiential travel is really where it's at globally now," says the mother of four boys. "People want a deep, deep sensory experience and understanding of what it is all about. We offer incredible luxury lodges but we also deliver them around experiences, so people are really gaining a lot from their stays."

#### **Will Deague**

Thanks to Will Deague (above) some of Australia's most exciting artworks can be experienced not in a gallery or museum but at one of the artist-themed hotels belonging to the Art Series Hotel Group. Inspired by leading artists, the Deague family has invested more than \$200 million on a collection of luxury, boutique hotels named in honour of impressive, local painters.

When his family's company, Asian Pacific Building Group [now Asian Pacific Group], began acquiring sites three years ago, it picked up on the international shift towards smaller, independent hotels. "Then," says Deague, "with our passions for the arts, we thought a great option would be to name hotels after artists and fill them with artworks and try to create a bit of education at

the same time." The 33-year-old thinks his family might be the most passionate art lovers in the country. "We didn't want to create a corporate mainstream hotel environment," says the property developer turned hotelier, who is chief executive officer of APG.

Guests staying at The Cullen, The Blackman or the The Olsen (all in Melbourne) don't just receive an education but also the exhilarating experience of getting up close and personal with some of the best original artwork that Adam Cullen, Charles Blackman and John Olsen have produced. "We are involved with art channels and we have art walks and we really want to stay ahead of the game and create something unique. We had Charles Blackman down to watch a documentary on himself. We have artists in residence; we are constantly trying to make the experience unique and authentic."

The hotels have also attracted attention overseas. "We've had an offer to manage a hotel in London under the Art Series brand," says Deague, "and we're also looking at the Chelsea Hotel in New York, which is up for sale. It's perfect for us because it has a whole history of artists living there." The next instalment in the Melbourne empire will be The Larwill, followed by The Whiteley and The Knight but Deague isn't stopping there.

"We want to create a legacy," he says. "We are very proud of the buildings we produce and would like to have a national presence with the Art Series. Over the next 10 years we intend to expand into every state as well as overseas."



FRANDY LAFOMBE



## *“Our whole mission is to get people inspired”*

### **Charlie Carlow**

“If people really want to get under the skin of the outback, we offer the most spectacular places and our whole mission is to get people inspired,” says Charlie Carlow, chief executive officer of Wild Bush Luxury, which he launched in 2008. Since then, Carlow has become a vital force in the booming, new category of luxury travel that provides entree to exhilarating bush adventure safaris and “deeply engaging wilderness experiences”.

Australian-born, English-educated Carlow worked in travel for many years in Asia and Africa and left corporate life in 1999 with “ideas” about nature tourism. He recognised a niche in the Australian luxury travel sector that would appeal “to a traveller who wants to connect with something authentic and get off the grid”.

“I always wondered why Australia had not got on to the exclusive remote experiences with a touch of style,” says Carlow. “I guess that’s what drove me to go beyond Sydney, the Barrier Reef and Ayres Rock, which is what people have traditionally known.” Passionate about environmental conservation, he has hand-picked what he describes as “highly inspirational and scenically spectacular destinations”. The newest addition to the award-winning Wild Bush Luxury portfolio of properties

and experiences, which include Bamurru Plains in the Northern Territory, Blue Mountains Private Safaris in NSW, and the tented safari camp hidden in the white sand dunes of Sal Salis Ningaloo Reef in Western Australia, is Arkaba Station in South Australia’s Flinders Ranges. The refurbished 1850s homestead, set on one of Australia’s most beautiful outback stations, made it on to *Conde Nast Traveller’s* Hot List 2010.

“I’ve always aspired to create nature experiences,” says Carlow. “Unlike other lodges, we are not going out to create purely luxury experiences. The reason people are going to come to us is because they are interested in nature and actually want a wilderness experience.”

### **Nicky Tindill**

Hamilton Island hasn’t been the same since Nicky Tindill (nee Oatley) became group special events manager for the famous tropical destination. No longer just a playground for sports enthusiasts, under Tindill’s direction the island has become known for staging some of the most inspired fashion, food and even dance events.

The 27-year-old Tindill has expanded Hamilton Island’s gourmet and cultural horizons by introducing such talents as Tetsuya Wakuda, Peter Gilmore, the Australian Ballet,

Graeme Murphy, Collette Dinnigan, Little Joe and Camilla Franks to its seasonal event’s calendar. For Tindill, it’s all part of a new and exciting chapter at the luxury escape. “A philosophy of ours is to create once-in-a-lifetime experiences and you can’t rest on your laurels; you have to keep reinvigorating what you do,” she says about what inspired her to initiate an open-air performance of *Pas de Deux in Paradise* by the Australian Ballet.

“I always focus on creating something that is really niche and bespoke and really in-depth and intimate,” says Tindill, who introduced celebrity chefs, Tetsuya and Gilmore, to the Great Barrier Feast Series. “We only have 120 guests and so they get a one-on-one experience with the chef. It’s more intimate.”

The Oatley family, whose empire extends across vineyards, wineries, cattle stations and thoroughbred stables, has transformed the Hamilton Island resort since acquiring it in 2003. “One of my biggest roles is ensuring the family vision on the island and making sure it is played out in the best possible way,” says Tindill. She is particularly delighted with the creation of Qualia, the island’s first truly upmarket resort. Its reputation was enhanced and expanded internationally when America’s queen of TV talk, Oprah Winfrey, stayed there during her Down Under tour.

“I love seeing the whole island come forward and evolve in such a short period of time,” says Tindill. “We’ve only had it for eight years and already there has been such a huge change. And that makes me pretty proud, too.”

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