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HONESTLY AUSTRALIAN

THE BIGGEST CHANGES IN  
TRAVEL IN THE LAST DECADE?

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Valley...  
*and you*

10<sup>th</sup>

*birthday issue*

+

**NEWCASTLE (FINALLY)  
GETS ITS GROOVE BACK**

INDULGENT STAYS  
YOU WILL ADORE

**INSIDE TASMANIA'S  
SECRET WILD HEART**

ONCE IN A LIFETIME  
IN ARNHEM LAND

ISSN 1832-5769



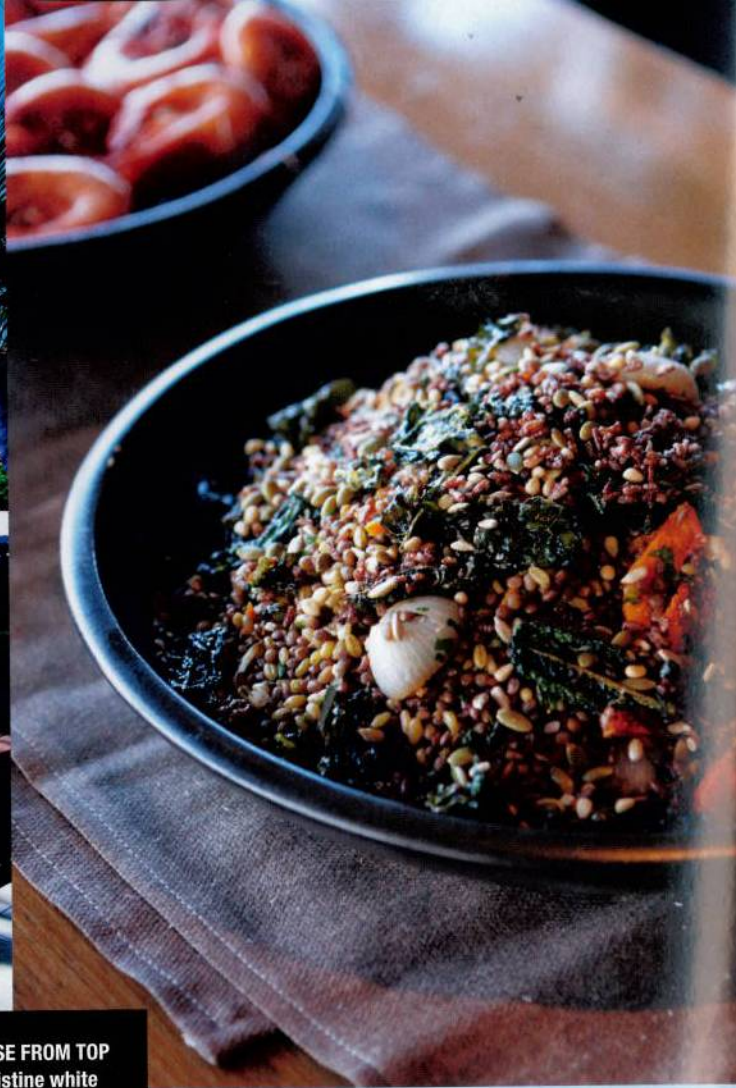
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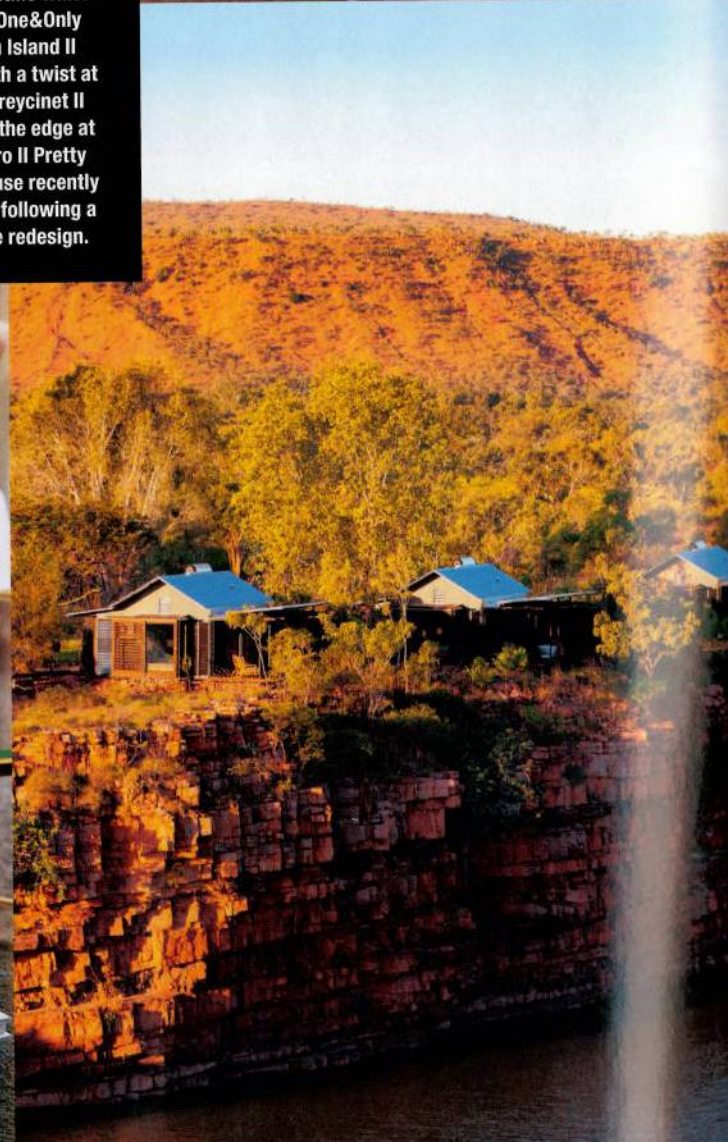
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CLOCKWISE FROM TOP  
LEFT: Pristine white  
sand at One&Only  
Hayman Island II  
Dinner with a twist at  
Saffire Freycinet II  
Living on the edge at  
El Questro II Pretty  
Beach House recently  
reopened following a  
complete redesign.



### ONE&ONLY HAYMAN ISLAND, HAYMAN ISLAND, QUEENSLAND

Hayman Island has been a much-loved holiday destination since the '50s and last year the iconic resort became an even better version of itself when it reopened as One&Only Hayman Island.

The international resort brand raised the luxe stakes after a complete overhaul of the Hayman Island experience, starting from the moment of arrival, with airport pick-up by luxury private launch (seaplane or helicopter options also available). The \$80-million refurbishment resulted in more spacious suites with a sophisticated new look (including beach villas with private plunge pools, pool suites with swim-out access and 'standard rooms' with views out to the Coral Sea) and reimagined dining options (such as teppanyaki, beachfront dining and a casually chic poolside café). There's also a 24-hour butler service to cater to guests' every whim at the touch of a button. Tough life, eh?



Nature and luxury combine perfectly at qualia (top); and Berkeley River Lodge's desert-side pool (above).

### SAFFIRE FREYCINET, COLES BAY, TASMANIA

Saffire Freycinet is a special-occasion-type place, where you go to completely escape (the only traffic you'll see is the occasional passing fisherman). Inspired by its stunning natural environment on the Freycinet Peninsula, the design is contemporary yet cosy, made from timber, stone and leather, while the panoramic floor-to-ceiling windows take advantage of the breathtaking views of Coles Bay and out to the Hazards.

Guests want for nothing, with the room tariff including (almost) everything: five-course degustations, local wines and premium spirits, wi-fi and a credit to the day spa. There's also a unique range of signature experiences: 'Connection to Country' walk, Tassie Devil encounter (as part of the Save the Tasmanian Devil program) and wine tours. But despite its plush villas, outstanding inclusions and world-class service, it's also homey and unpretentious – modern day luxury in a nutshell.

# More luxury LODGES

Opened in the last 10 years, these fine stays are flying the flag for the best in travel. Words by **MEGAN ARKINSTALL**.

### BERKELEY RIVER LODGE, BERKELEY RIVER, WA

For daily grinders, completely switching off is the ultimate luxury. And with no road access (guests arrive by air) and limited phone and internet reception, Berkeley River Lodge is the epitome of that. Located on the remote Kimberley coast, this stunning lodge is made up of 20 luxury free-standing villas, seemingly floating among rugged sand dunes 65 metres above the ocean, all command 180-degree views of Joseph Bonaparte Gulf or the Berkeley River and the rugged red gorges below.

Upon arrival, staff will tailor-make an itinerary of experiences for you: swim in crystal-clear pools under waterfalls, heli-fish in remote spots, cruise down the majestic Berkeley River, take gourmet picnics on Mt Casuarina, drive 4WDs along vast stretches of beach, watch sea turtles nest, or perhaps just lay back and enjoy the twilight cinema on the pool deck under the outback sky. Divine!

### QUALIA, HAMILTON ISLAND, QUEENSLAND

Voted numerous times as Australia's best resort by the readers of *AT* and several other publications, including *Condé Nast Traveler* who named it the World's Best Resort in 2012, you may have expected the idea of qualia as the crème de la crème of luxury lodges to have petered out by now. But with Gordon Ramsay, Oprah and Toni Collette counted as guests, a Relais & Châteaux stamp of approval, and a spot in the Luxury Lodges of Australia group, qualia has held its coveted crown as the darling of Australian luxury. Inside the looming gates is an exclusive collection of villas impeccably designed to let the jaw-dropping views and raw sensuality of nature take centre stage.

Beyond-the-norm activities include scenic helicopter flights, heligolf, luxury boat beach drop-offs with gourmet picnics, as well as an oasis of a day spa and exquisite dining with celebrity chef Alastair Waddell at the helm. qualia, darling, you can't put a foot wrong.



Cicada Lodge couples indigenous culture with a luxury experience.

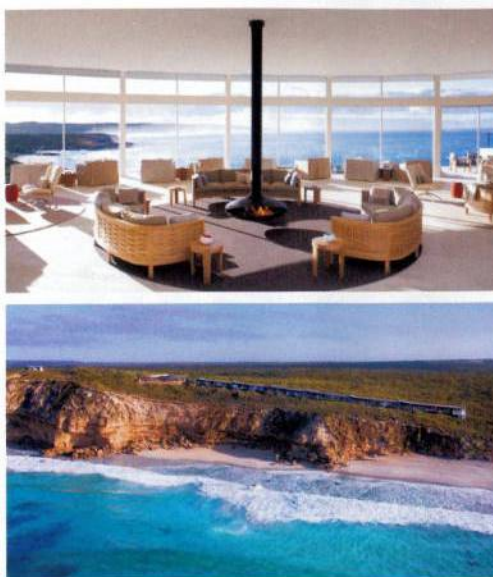
### CICADA LODGE, KATHERINE, NT

A remote oasis of luxury set in the Nitmiluk National Park, with a unique outlook overlooking Katherine Gorge, Cicada Lodge couples fine dining with first-class accommodation. But it's the lodge's connection to the indigenous community that sets it apart from other luxury lodges. Yes you'll find Bulgari toiletries and be offered Champagne on arrival, but it's also about gaining a true understanding of the local Jawoyn people's way of life through accompanying cultural experiences. There are helicopter flights to see ancient rock art that's otherwise inaccessible, some of which is thought to be over 30,000 years old, and classes in traditional weaving, weaponry and bush craft. And to cool off you can always take (another) helicopter to culturally-significant waterholes in the wilderness.

With a huge push to employ local people, this is a one-of-a-kind luxury outback experience that is well and truly part of the beautiful landscape it's in. >>

## SOUTHERN OCEAN LODGE, KANGAROO ISLAND, SA

Perched atop a secluded cliff on the south-west coast of Kangaroo Island, Southern Ocean Lodge is located in its own world of dramatic coastal vistas, craggy landscapes, sheer limestone cliffs and long stretches of icing-sugar-white sand. The lodge's design is contemporary eco-chic – think sandblasted limestone floors and recycled spotted gum feature walls, custom-made furnishings and artworks from local artists, and a light and airy coastal colour scheme, leaving the views (oh the views!) as the hero. Guests are spoilt with twice daily housekeeping, complimentary mini bar, a daily-changing restaurant menu, and included bespoke wildlife experiences – this is the 'Galapagos Downunder', after all.



The views at Southern Ocean Lodge are worth the price of admission alone.

## EL QUESTRO, KUNUNURRA, WA

Apparently the name El Questro doesn't have a meaning, but we think it should stand for 'wild luxury'. Located 110 kilometres west of Kununurra, in the middle of a colossal 405,000 hectares (most of which has never been explored!), guests travel 58 kilometres by highway and the rest on the famed 4WD adventure track, the Gibb River Road, to get here. And they're not disappointed when they finally arrive. Clinging to a cliff-top, El Questro Homestead has incredible vistas of the rugged Chamberlain River and Gorge, and boasts beautifully elegant rooms: our favourite feature is the outdoor baths (can you tell we have a thing for outdoor baths?), which are perfect to soak clean the red, red dirt of the outback. Staying here is all about the experiences – horse trekking, bird-watching, a day soaking in the Zebedee Thermal Springs, fishing tours, a Chamberlain Gorge cruise, tours to ancient caves or at one of the many waterfalls on the property that have only recently been discovered, photography excursions, or a helicopter ride to a remote waterhole... you name it and the El Questro staff can organise it for you.

Despite its final frontier location, the food and wine is plentiful and sophisticated, with superbly fresh and organic ingredients from the neighbouring Ord River Valley and the state's abundant coastlines and farmlands. Enjoyed on the verandah, as a gourmet picnic somewhere on the property, on the Homestead lawn, under the stars or by the roaring open fireplaces, meals here are just as much an occasion as the incredible experiences on offer.

## LONGITUDE 131°, ULURU, NT

This is a real bucket-list place. Not simply because it's located in the country's most spiritual of places, the inimitable World Heritage-listed Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park, but because Longitude 131° allows complete immersion in the place, with a healthy dose of luxury to boot. It is the closest accommodation to Uluru; 15 luxury tents, elevated atop rust-red dunes with unrivalled views of the majestic rock through the tents' glass walls.

Glamping at its finest, the tents pay homage to the pioneering history of Australia, mixing classical colonial and contemporary furniture as well as king-sized beds, complimentary mini bar, oversized rain showers, and all the techy things needed in this day and age.

But once again it's the exceptional experiences here – sunrise camel tours, Uluru by motorcycle, bush tucker tastings, alfresco fine dining – that really make this stay out-of-this-world special. ■

*Glamping at its finest, the tents pay homage to the pioneering history of Australia.*



Does El Questro have the best baths in the world? Probably.

### PRETTY BEACH HOUSE, CENTRAL COAST, NSW

During its two-and-a-half-year hiatus, the recently reopened Pretty Beach House has been restored to its former beauty, and then some. The house sits up high on an escarpment nestled among angophoras and gum trees, overlooking the pristine beaches of the Bouddi National Park. It is the epitome of understated luxury in all of its Australian coastal glory.

Its refurbishment has seen a complete rebuild of the main guest house and an additional pavilion was added; the house now sleeps an intimate number of eight guests. The interiors are simply lovely in earthy tones to reflect the tranquil location, with premium soft furnishings and bespoke pieces (multi-million dollar Australian art by the likes of Sidney Nolan, for instance). Three of the four pavilions have their own private plunge pools; the penthouse suite its own spacious verandah with a day bed and gas fireplace overlooking the escarpment.

Service is impeccable, but relaxed, with the aim to make guests feel like they're at home (a very plush home, that is). Meals are all taken care of by multi-award-winning chef Stefano Manfredi, with his signature modern Italian cuisine. Partake in a private cooking class, taste the rare and fine wine in the cellar, indulge in spa treatments, or leave the cosy cocoon of the house for a while and explore the surrounding Bouddi National Park with a guided hike, mountain bike or luxury yacht. You can even hop on a helicopter and head to the Hunter Valley for some wine tasting there. Because nothing feels more like home than a private helicopter tour, right?

### BAY OF FIRES LODGE, NORTH-EAST COAST, TASMANIA

Exclusively used by those partaking in the four-day guided Bay of Fires Lodge Walk (part of the Great Walks of Australia), the Bay of Fires Lodge is the exceptional alternate to camping. Set on a hilltop, 40 metres above the spectacular coastline of the Bay of Fires, the lodge is the only building for 20 kilometres, providing complete seclusion. Made up of two long timber and glass pavilions and local timber and pine, the lodge was built to ensure minimal impact on the environment and to blend into the landscape.

With a large lounge and open fire, a cosy library, a dining area where guests feast on fresh, local produce and fine Tasmanian wines, guest rooms with comfortable beds and – hooray! – showers with hot water, the Bay of Fires Lodge encompasses simple pleasures that are a real luxury when walking along this rugged stretch of coast.



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: An infinity pool par excellence at Pretty Beach House II Kingsford Homestead in the Barossa is a Georgian-style paradise II Spicers Clovelly brings French charm to the Sunshine Coast.

### SPICERS CLOVELLY, SUNSHINE COAST, QUEENSLAND

Spicers Clovelly, part of the Spicers Retreats group, is a French provincial country-style guest house hidden away in the Sunshine Coast hinterland town of Montville. This place oozes romance, from the suites with sweeping country views through cute bay windows, contemporary European décor and cosy soft furnishings, to the elegant Carrara marble bathrooms with Appelles products and heated floors.

But the pièce de résistance is The Long Apron, the intimate on-site restaurant awarded two chefs' hats in the 2015 Australian Good Food and Travel Guide Chef Hat awards for its inventive European-inspired cuisine. The dining room is inviting with French provincial-style chairs, a cosy fireplace and crisp, white tablecloths. But on warm days guests can sit out on the sun-drenched terrace and enjoy the beautiful gardens dotted with grand figs, jacarandas, and groves of magnolias and gardenias. A true love nest. (Turn to p52 for a chance to win a stay at its sister property.)

### KINGSFORD HOMESTEAD, BAROSSA VALLEY, SA

Located on a 91-hectare sheep station on the edge of the Barossa Valley, Kingsford Homestead has been the home of a wealthy 19th-century pastoralist, the set of *McLeod's Daughters* and since 2009 an ever-so-elegant but oh-so-Australian boutique getaway. Listed on the State Heritage Register and Register of the National Estate, the building has been wonderfully preserved. It has a Georgian-style sandstone exterior, thought to be made from stone brought over from Edinburgh, Gothic-style cedar staircase and stone cellar housing a Gothic timber buffet.

This exclusive stay caters to just 14 guests in seven individually styled suites, all of which boast plush beds with fine linen and L'Occitane bathroom products. The food is a highlight here, too, with a menu of good ol' country flavours alongside matching local wines, which you can also taste in the historic cellar. But our favourite feature is the glorious outdoor clawfoot bush bath, which sits in a secluded corner of the property. And it fits two... wink, wink.