



14 MAR, 2020

# HOT 50 2020 PLACES TO STAY

Weekend Australian, Australia



# HOT 50 2020

## PLACES TO STAY

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Prices are a guide only.  
While correct at time of publication, they are subject to change due to seasonal and other factors

### VICTORIA

#### MOUNT OPHIR ESTATE Rutherglen

Among six unique places to sleep on this historic winemaking estate in northern Victoria, the jewel in the crown is the French provincial-style Tower. It houses a chic three-storey suite with a sitting room in the middle floor and an idyllic bedroom and marble bathroom at the top. A small fridge is stocked with free temptations including gourmet cheeses and sparkling wine. Eliza, Angela and Nick Brown, fourth-generation siblings from the Brown Brothers wine dynasty, bought the 57ha property in 2016 and are planning to release its first vintage in more than 60 years in 2021. From \$160 a night in The Winemakers Cottage; from \$550 a night in The Tower.  
[mountophirestate.com.au](http://mountophirestate.com.au)

#### UNITED PLACES Botanic Gardens, Melbourne

The Patricia Urquiola sofas and Le Labo bathroom products, the rough rendered concrete walls and modernist Scape chairs, the hand crafted lamps and black sunken baths.... This is a place built by style obsessives that will appeal to the aesthetes among us. Even if you're not, you'll sink into that velvet lounge or slip into that bath overlooking Melbourne's Botanic Gardens with a silent thanks for the highly curated attention to detail in this 12-suite (one or two-bed) hotel in South Yarra. There's no front lobby; your own butler will settle you in and serve breakfast in your room. Downstairs is the acclaimed fire-and-smoke Matilda 159 restaurant; a pleasant walk through the Botanic Gardens will get you to



Melbourne's arts precinct and CBD. The rooms come with kitchens and well stocked minibars. One bedroom suites from \$650 per night.  
[unitedplaces.com.au](http://unitedplaces.com.au)

#### ZAGAME'S HOUSE Carlton, Melbourne

Sitting boldly on the corner of Lygon and Queensberry streets in the Little Italy quarter of Carlton, this 97-room hotel, unveiled in 2019, could well become a landmark thanks to the dark grey building's zigzag facade feature with turquoise accents. Inside, expect an ultra-contemporary unified concept of commissioned artworks, on-trend furniture and fittings. A lack of corporate-style facilities is compensated for with thoughtful extras such as a pet-friendly policy, organic Cowshed toiletries and a minibar with inclusions well beyond the ordinary. The food, at onsite cafe 1851 Coffee + Kitchen and wine bar Lord Lygon, is exceptional, courtesy of chef Chris Bonello, ex Vue de Monde,



14 MAR, 2020  
HOT 50 2020 PLACES TO STAY

Weekend Australian, Australia



and there's room service too. From about \$200 for a House Room. [zagameshouse.com.au](http://zagameshouse.com.au)

JACKALOPE  
Mornington Peninsula

Thanks to its knowing-wink design and fortuitous position on the Willow Creek Winery estate, the 46-room Jackalope has been a resounding hit since its 2017 launch. The name refers to a mythical creature, a jackrabbit with antlers, and the interiors are fantastical, too, thanks to the vision of owner Louis Li, clearly a fan of film noir and flamboyance. It's imperative to approach the hotel with the expectation of fun. The bar, for example, is Flaggerdoot, the collective noun for jackalopes, the restaurant is Doot Doot Doot, and accommodation categories include Lairs. All too much? Rest your eyes across the forecourt at Rare Hare, the diner at Willow Creek's tasting room and barrel hall. Rooms from \$540 per night including breakfast. [jackalopehotels.com](http://jackalopehotels.com)



Landmarks: from top, Zagame's; Jackalope; Ross Farm; Lake House



LAKE HOUSE  
Daylesford

Ever evolving with fresh ideas and revamps, this family-owned classic north-west of Melbourne has recently opened Dairy Flat Farm, 10 minutes from Lake House. Guests can visit the estate's vegetable gardens, small vineyard, orchard, olive grove and glasshouse and get involved in sourdough baking classes and workshops. The farm's produce and daily bakes pop up on the acclaimed menus and at its nearby Wombat Hill Cafe, set in botanic gardens. Lake House's accommodation categories include the recently refurbished Waterfront Pool Studios with lake shore or solar-heated infinity pool views (from \$846 per night for two, including breakfast) or sumptuous Villa Retreats (from \$1584, as above). Group bookings available for the upscale six-bedroom Lodge at Dairy Flat Farm, which sleeps up to 12. [lakehouse.com.au](http://lakehouse.com.au); [dairyflatfarmdaylesford.com.au](http://dairyflatfarmdaylesford.com.au)

ROSS FARM  
Meeniyen

Any preconceived notions of country style – rustic, old-fashioned, chintzy – are turned on their head at Ross Farm, newly opened outside the tiny South Gippsland town of Meeniyen. Guests stay in three reimagined old buildings – a one-bedroom cottage, a three-bedroom dairy and a two-bedroom barn with unexpected wow factor: a spiral staircase leading to a loft bedroom and Japanese-style tub made of local Cyprus; windows with views of the Tarwin Valley hills; a woodfire heater and sliding glass wall opening to a courtyard, firepit, second bedroom and huge onsen-style bathroom. Much of the furniture was crafted locally; a breakfast hamper has local bread and cultured butter, fresh eggs and herbs from the farm garden. From \$330 per couple per night. [rossfarm.com.au](http://rossfarm.com.au)

LON RETREAT & SPA  
Bellarine Peninsula

Claire Gemes welcomes guests with just one suggestion: "Slow down and enjoy the beauty in simplicity." The 80ha farm on which the Australian contemporary-style retreat is built has been worked by Claire's family for well over a century and sits on the western headland where Bass Strait meets Port Phillip Bay. There are seven luxury suites in the sleekly styled sandstone retreat, each named after a cloud formation. The balconied Alto suite (from \$925 a night), with panoramic views over paddocks to ships entering the bay, has a tub connected to mineral springs below that also feed the retreat's pool and therapy pavilion. A Blissful Marma Massage conquers all stress. [lonretreat.com.au](http://lonretreat.com.au)





14 MAR, 2020

# HOT 50 2020 PLACES TO STAY

Weekend Australian, Australia



QT  
Falls Creek

It's not just the ski-fields location that makes the strikingly architectural QT hotel and resort complex a winner – though the ability to slide straight off the slopes to the boot room or Stingray bar puts it way up there in our good books. Many of the hotel's 38 hygge-chic apartments (up to three bedrooms) have balcony hot-tubs with mountain views, and in-house SpaQ offers a brilliant menu of treatments – we highly recommend the Snow Princess facial and massage. Apartments are set up for serious self-catering, but after a day on the piste you'll appreciate the ground-floor Bazaar restaurant and village restaurants including the excellent Elk in Slalom St. From \$459 per night (winter rate). [qthotelsandresorts.com](http://qthotelsandresorts.com)

ROYAL MAIL HOTEL  
Dunkeld

The scene – a panorama of river gums in the foothills of the starkly volcanic Mount Sturgeon and Mount Abrupt at the south end of the Grampians – is so essentially Australian it could have been painted by master impressionist Arthur Streeton. And it was. It's the ideal setting for the two-hat glass-walled restaurant, Wickens, in the grounds of the Royal Mail Hotel in Dunkeld, which has been going strong for two decades as a foodie destination. Chef Robin Wickens draws on produce from his Kitchen Garden and the Dunkeld Pastoral Company. Then there's the hotel's 28,000-bottle cellar to explore. A Deluxe Mountain View Room (about \$470) assures the view, with luxury. There is less formal dining at the hotel's



Parker Street Project and Dunkeld is the gateway to a hikers' paradise in the Grampians. [royalmail.com.au](http://royalmail.com.au)

NORTHERN TERRITORY

LONGITUDE 131  
Uluru

Uluru from one window, the many heads of Kata Tjuta from another... is there a better view from any room anywhere in Australia? We doubt it. The Dune Room, with generous living spaces and its own plunge pool, is the top of the range accommodation (and priced from \$6000 for two per night). But the other tented rooms, all nestled in the desert 19km from Uluru, don't hold back on outback comfort. You'll never forget the experience of stargazing from a swag on your own deck but if that doesn't lull you to sleep, crawl back to your king bed and watch the rising sun illuminate Uluru. Prise yourself from your room for the guided tours that help explain the wonder of this place. Fine dining and premium bar are included in the rate, along with

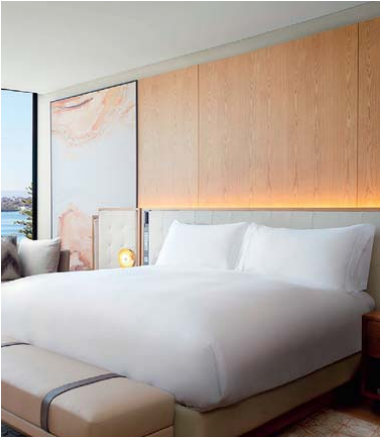


Striking:  
from top, QT  
Falls Creek;  
Bamurru Plains;  
Longitude 131;  
Ritz-Carlton;  
Sal Salis



14 MAR, 2020  
HOT 50 2020 PLACES TO STAY

Weekend Australian, Australia



tours and transfers from Ayers Rock airport. From \$1700 per person per night (minimum two nights stay). [longitude131.com.au](http://longitude131.com.au)

BAMURRU PLAINS

This safari lodge on the northern edge of Australia near Kakadu National Park overlooks the magnificent Mary River floodplain, and as the waters begin to recede each dry season a lush green world appears. Like a giant ark, first come the buffaloes and their babies, right past your mesh-walled bungalow each morning and night. Then the thump-thump of wallabies. Keep watching, there are 236 species of birds along with brumbies, wild pigs, dingoes and, yes, crocodiles. The 10 bungalows, infinity pool and main lodge overlook the floodplain and the guided activities are a must, in particular a croc-spotting aeroboot tour of the wetlands. Meals and a help-yourself bar are included in the tariff. From \$680 per person per night (minimum two nights). [bamurruplains.com](http://bamurruplains.com)

WESTERN AUSTRALIA

EL QUESTRO  
WILDERNESS PARK  
East Kimberley

Mention you're going to El Questro and the inevitable response is an envious gasp. A stay at the exclusive nine-room homestead in a suite perched on a red cliff overlooking Chamberlain Gorge? Surely you've joined the ranks of those for whom \$2000 a night is a mere trifle. But luxury digs in a film-set landscape complete with croc-infested river are only part of the picture. From April to October, this place in the ancient reaches of WA's north-east is also about adventure – think hikes to waterfalls, boat rides, 4WD trips, horse-riding and heli-flights – and there's a range of more budget-friendly accommodation on the 280,000ha property, from permanent tents at park hub The Station to glamping (from \$316) at Emma Gorge. [elquestro.com.au](http://elquestro.com.au)

THE RITZ-CARLTON  
Perth

With theatrical flourish, a giant door slides open revealing the 13m-high lobby inspired by the Karijini Gorges in the Pilbara. Some 10,000 pieces of Kimberley sandstone in 12 colour groupings have been used in the building and the towering lobby is enhanced by a chandelier with 275 lights capturing the look of cascading water. There are 205 guestrooms, including 19 suites, in this new pride of the golden West, located on Elizabeth Quay within easy reach of the CBD and Kings Park. At Hearth Restaurant and Lounge, executive chef Jed Gerrard oversees a menu that uses local and sustainable produce. But save the big wow for sunset over the Swan River and cocktails at the Songbird Bar. Rooms from \$349 a night. [ritzcarlton.com](http://ritzcarlton.com)

SAL SALIS  
Ningaloo Reef

Nestled in pristine sand dunes, this luxury retreat an hour's drive south of Exmouth is a study in eco-elegance, with unfettered access to the World Heritage-listed Ningaloo Reef. Drift from your bed on its elevated tented platform down to the Blue Lagoon and snorkel over the corals of a natural aquarium, or maybe join a guided swim with whale sharks, the reef's gentle giants (now until July 31). Fifteen tents sleep two in a bed and a third in a swag; a larger "honeymoon tent" has a canopy over the bed. From \$849 per person per night, including sunset canapes and three-course meals on the sea-facing dining deck, a select open bar, watersports equipment and guided bushwalks. Open mid-March to the end of October. [salsalis.com.au](http://salsalis.com.au)







14 MAR, 2020

HOT 50 2020 PLACES TO STAY

Weekend Australian, Australia

THE TRAVEL ISSUE

NORTHERN TERRITORY

HOT 50 2020

PLACES TO STAY

PREMIER MILL HOTEL  
Katanning

In the remote town of Katanning, a bit over three hours' drive south-east of Perth, businessman Nigel Oakey has transformed a derelict 129-year-old flour mill into a luxury boutique hotel that celebrates its industrial bones. Opened in 2018, it's testament to the timeless beauty of timber and brick, cast iron and leather, with 22 rooms in a range of spaces including the old grain silo. Every room is different, each with a little or a lot of the mill's original equipment restored and maintained. All of it, including the bespoke furniture, is handsome. Street-level Dome Cafe is open all day and from 3pm, the basement Cordial Bar serves snacks with a Great Southern wine list. Rooms from \$265. [premiermillhotel.com](http://premiermillhotel.com)

PULLMAN BUNKER BAY RESORT  
Margaret River

In the 16 years since it arrived on the awe-inspiring Margaret River surf coast, Bunker Bay has more than proved that a sizeable resort can coexist companionably with nature. The 150 villas (from \$279) are nestled discreetly in the bush around the main lodge; each is equipped for self-catering but the restaurant is too good to miss. The lodge overlooking dunes and ocean hums with couples and family groups, with tables spilling out to the olive-tree shaded terrace, beyond which is a heated infinity-edge pool. Kids are welcome; for those who prefer adult company there's the day spa, beach, Cape Leeuwin lighthouse or any of the region's 200-odd wineries. [pullmanbunkerbayresort.com.au](http://pullmanbunkerbayresort.com.au)



Natural fit:  
Pullman Bunker Bay; Kimo Estate; Premier Mill Hotel



THE WESTIN  
Perth

Starwood's Westin template is big and businesslike but with clear emphasis on comfort and wellness. In this 2018 new-build, there's a fifth-floor leisure precinct of fitness studio Bodhi J Spa, pool, daybeds and plant-filled indoor-outdoor terraces. Westin's Heavenly Bed is an industry leader; another trademark is an internal window with modesty screen between bathtub and bedroom to harness views and light. This art-filled, 28-storey property in the East End quarter has 386 spacious guestrooms (from \$244 per night) with city and district views, ground-floor osteria by Guy Grossi in a heritage annexe, and direct access to Hibernian Place for lively cafes and bars. [starwoodhotels.com](http://starwoodhotels.com)

NEW SOUTH WALES

WILDLIFE RETREAT  
Taronga, Sydney

Opened last October, this eco-smart lodge is a satellite of Taronga Zoo, with guests offered ranger-led excursions before the gates open to Wollemi Aviary and selected animal enclosures. Four accommodation



styles offer bushland, harbour or treetop views or an outlook to the property's exclusive habitat for native wildlife. Me-Gal restaurant includes botanical motifs, Australian flavours and panoramas of the city skyline and Harbour Bridge. The 62 guestrooms and open-plan suites are spread across five lodges linked by energy-efficient external passageways; all the expected creature comforts are present and correct. Rooms from \$320. [taronga.org.au/sydney-zoo](http://taronga.org.au/sydney-zoo)

PIER ONE SYDNEY HARBOUR  
Sydney

Part of the Marriott group's boutique Autograph Collection, Pier One wears its heritage with pride, its



14 MAR, 2020

# HOT 50 2020 PLACES TO STAY

Weekend Australian, Australia



corridors lined with the 1912 pier's original timber pylons. It is fresh from a five-year, \$15 million revamp of all 189 rooms and suites; pick of the bunch is the Admiral Suite, with jaw-dropping views of Sydney Harbour and the bridge; the sleeping quarters with king bed is bookended by a living area and a bathroom with decadent egg-shaped tub. It is tempting to sit for hours on the balcony soaking up that vista but downstairs head chef Thom Gorringer is dishing up acclaimed fare at The Gantry restaurant. Rooms from \$289 a night; Admiral Suite from \$1059. [marriott.com](#)

## RAES ON WATEGOS Byron Bay

Raes was sold in 2014 but there was no new signage or apparent operational disruption. Last November it celebrated 25 years of seaside success since Brisbane entrepreneur Vincent Rae opened the Spanish Mission-style building above Wategos Beach. The seven guestrooms, all recently refreshed with a splash of boho-chic, feature tiled floors and archways; the latest indulgences are Florence's Santa Maria Novella products and treatments in the petite Moorish-inspired spa. The arrival of executive chef Jason Saxby, ex Pilu at Freshwater, Sydney, who oversees Raes Dining Room, is

still the talk of the town. Suites from about \$650 per night. [raes.com.au](#)

## KIMO ESTATE Gundagai

Kilometres separate the three eco-huts on this 1200ha sheep and cattle farm 10 minutes' drive from Gundagai. The off-grid A-frame huts, each perched on its own hill, are immaculately designed and offer stunning Riverina views. Lie in bed looking at the stars and wake to a magnificent sunrise; cook your breakfast of local produce – bacon and eggs, home-made baked beans and other goodies – and enjoy the silence. For a more sociable getaway, opt for the six-bedroom Shearers' Quarters or one of two cottages; check the website for craft and photography workshops. Eco-huts from \$350 per night. [kimoestate.com](#)

## BELLS AT KILLCARE Central Coast

This well-established getaway, set on an acreage of lawns above Killcare Beach, has relaunched its restaurant as Wild Flower Bar + Dining. With chef Sean Connolly at the helm, the new look is pared-back and beachy with natural timbers and locally created design elements, including botanical wallpaper and bell-shaped woven light fittings. Connolly dubs the seafood-focused fare "cuisine of the sun", based on ingredients of the parish. Sleep it off in cottages or suites furnished in maritime hues; there's a pool, day spa, and the village of Hardys Bay and sister property Pretty Beach House are about a 10-minute drive away. Bed and breakfast from \$380 for two. [bellsatkillcare.com.au](#)



14 MAR, 2020

# HOT 50 2020 PLACES TO STAY

Weekend Australian, Australia

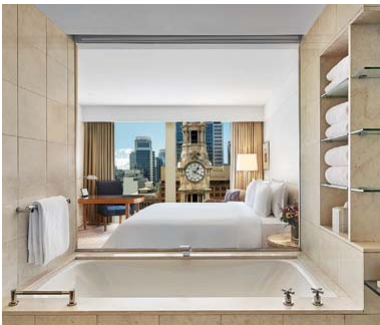


**Stylish:**  
Halcyon House;  
Capella Lodge;  
Fullerton Hotel

## THE FULLERTON HOTEL Sydney

It's been a long time since Sydney's grand sandstone GPO at 1 Martin Place abandoned its old postal and telephonic duties and was parcelled up as boutique stores, restaurants and, across a glass-covered courtyard, a hotel tower in time for the 2000 Olympics. That hotel, the Westin, is now the Fullerton, the first international outpost of a Singapore-based brand with a history of nurturing heritage properties. First up has been a "toothbrush" clean of the GPO's façade, giving fresh life to stone figures both classical and comical. Guests and the general public are offered history tours. The Place restaurant under the atrium serves mod Oz cuisine with South-East Asian flavours, and the breakfast buffet is up there with the best. Guestrooms (from about \$266 a night) are spacious with views of sensational Sydney all around.

[fullertonhotels.com](http://fullertonhotels.com)



## HALCYON HOUSE Cabarita Beach

Half an hour north of Byron Bay, this award-winning boutique hotel has elevated the notion of a seaside motor inn to something altogether more chic and stylish. The Brisbane owners were clever to retain the breeze blocks, Spanish arches, arcades and surfer vibe of a 1960s property and engage designer Anna Spiro to transform the interiors with rich fabrics, eclectic treasures and patterned tiles; each of the 21 guestrooms has a unique look, the

public areas splashed in blue and white with a sunny yellow twist that looks more Capri than Cabarita. Chef Jason Barratt, formerly of Raes on Wategos, has the reins at poolside Paper Daisy restaurant, as popular with locals and passing travellers as with guests. Rooms from \$585 per night.

[halcyonhouse.com.au](http://halcyonhouse.com.au)

## CAPELLA LODGE Lord Howe Island

This treasured island off the NSW mid north coast has more wood hens than residents and daily tourist numbers are capped at 400 – more or less Lord Howe's population. Best base camp is Capella Lodge with its row of nine suites set amid groves of endemic kentia palms and cooled by ceiling fans. A recent design tweak has refreshed the sea-meets-shore décor of all facilities but the look is timeless beachside chic in a palette of coastal colours. With full-frontal views angled towards Mounts Lidgbird and Gower, guests are immersed in nature in their cosy bowers. Top choice is the Lidgbird Pavilion (from \$1700pp, including food, drinks and transfers), with its own electric golf cart, plunge pool and alfresco bathtub.

[capellalodge.com.au](http://capellalodge.com.au)





14 MAR, 2020  
HOT 50 2020 PLACES TO STAY

Weekend Australian, Australia



EMIRATES ONE&ONLY  
Wolgan Valley

Cushioned between the sandstone escarpments of the Gardens of Stone and Wollemi national parks, three hours’ drive from Sydney, this luxurious, conservation-based resort comprises a cluster of luxury villas, each with private pool and fireplace. The one-bedroom Heritage cottages are like mini-homesteads, with tongue-and-groove timber walls, fly-screened patio and rocking chairs with views – all very rustic but chic, too. An award-winning spa is a short stroll away and fine dining takes place in the elegant Wolgan dining room. Go wildlife spotting, mountain biking or horse riding, plant some trees, explore the original 1832 farmhouse... and keep a lookout for wandering wombats at night. From \$2850 per night for a one-bedroom Heritage King Villa, including all meals, wine and beer and activities. Adventure and spa packages available.  
[oneandonlyresorts.com/wolgan-valley](http://oneandonlyresorts.com/wolgan-valley)

CIRCA 1936  
Corowa

Our \$600-plus West Suite package seemed absurdly high for a “micro-luxury” hotel in a Murray River border town three hours’ drive north of Melbourne, until we saw the inclusions: a night in a lavish suite, two hours of treatments in the onsite spa, take-home slippers and kimonos, breakfast, morning and afternoon tea, pre-dinner drinks and canapes, minibar, wine, beer and soft drinks, bicycle hire and full butler service (shoe shine, candlelit baths, ironing and laundry). This remarkable three-suite art deco hotel, housed in a former Rural Bank



of NSW building, is the equal of any capital city boutique offering. Room and breakfast from \$400 a night.  
[circahotels.com](http://circahotels.com)

ACT

OVOLO NISHI  
Canberra

Ovolo Nishi, in the hip New Acton precinct, is hotel as art. Named a World Interior of the Year, the lobby’s standout feature is its atrium and staircase created with 2150 pieces of recycled timber. It’s at once space-age and shack-chic. The hotel’s public areas are inviting, with large contemporary fireplaces to combat Canberra chills. But what is most notable is the Ovolo’s sense of fun, down to the Loot bags of snacks alongside the complimentary mini-bar. And the place is dog-friendly. Room categories range from Snug Sun (from \$229) for the overnight traveller, to Meandering Atrium, with space to get lost in.  
[ovolohotels.com](http://ovolohotels.com)

EAST HOTEL  
Canberra

Siblings Dan and Dion Bisa raised the bar for the apartment-hotel when they opened 140-room East in 2012. The suites – studio to two-bed with connecting “Kids Cubby” – are kitted out for longer stays, but the real magic lies in the hospitality and great aesthetic. Staff are warm and engaging, and the lobby, with its funky lounge area, fleet of bikes and media bench, feels welcoming in the dramatic atrium space. East pitches to business travellers and families, and somehow caters to the whims of both. Breakfast at Muse Food, Wine







14 MAR, 2020

# HOT 50 2020 PLACES TO STAY

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& Books downstairs is a delight and there's also Joe's Bar and Agostinis restaurant, which offers room service. From \$189 for a studio. [easthotel.com.au](http://easthotel.com.au)

QUEENSLAND

## THE FANTAUZZO Brisbane

The nation's eighth Art Series hotel is a full-on feast for the senses, thanks to the setting: cliffside on a sharp bend of the Brisbane River, the Story Bridge overhead and amid the buzzing new Howard Smith Wharves precinct. The Australian artist celebrated here is the photo-realist painter Vincent Fantauzzo; up to 300 of his works and digital prints are on display in the lobby, halls and 166 guest rooms at any one time. Some of the six-storey hotel's cliff-facing suites are undoubtedly "moody" but it all works with the art gallery aesthetic. In-house restaurant Polpetta riffs on Italian classics and the intimate rooftop bar and pool area boast one of the best views over the CBD and river. Rooms from \$223. [artserieshotels.com.au/fantauzzo](http://artserieshotels.com.au/fantauzzo)

## LIZARD ISLAND Great Barrier Reef

You might think it's the hospitality that makes the reef's northernmost resort worth every cent. The tray of cool hand towels as you alight from the small plane after a one-hour flight from Cairns. The luxe touches in the 40 lovely rooms, suites or villas, some with a wet-edge plunge pool. The excellent food, wine and service in the airy pavilion housing reception, bar and Salt



## RILEY Cairns

There's something splendid about the languor of life in the tropics, especially when enjoyed from a sun lounge around the lagoon pool at Riley or a guestroom balcony with views across the Esplanade to the ocean. Riley is the \$170 million recreation of the old Rydges Tradewinds with the addition of a 12-storey glass tower that houses Mediterranean restaurant Rocco; its top-floor location is perfect for sundowners. The five-star resort, with 311 guestrooms and suites (from about \$240), is a huge act of faith in far north Queensland by hospitality group Crystalbrook. A thong throw's away, sibling hotel Bailey has just opened and Flynn, the "wild child", debuts on March 31. [crystalbrookcollection.com](http://crystalbrookcollection.com)



**Dramatic:**  
The Fantauzzo;  
Riley's pool;  
opposite, Ovolo  
Nishi room;  
private villa  
pool, Emirates  
One&Only

## MOUNT MULLIGAN LODGE Mount Mulligan

The dramatic setting for this outback retreat, a three-hour drive from Cairns (or 35 minutes by chopper), will stay in your memory long after your visit. It's the vastness of the 28,000ha working cattle station, certainly, but mostly it's moody Mount Mulligan – an 18km-long sandstone escarpment – that will capture your heart, along with the simple luxury of your pavilion, all timber and glass with a veranda with its own deep bath. A pool and a large waterhole offer swimming, kayaking and stand-up paddle-boarding, while guided tours give you a taste of cattle station life, particularly when you take the wheel of an ATV for a bit of bush-bashing. Rooms, including meals and beverages, from \$1700 per night. [mountmulligan.com](http://mountmulligan.com)

Water restaurant. But the nature? Priceless. Visit one of 24 pristine beaches, snorkel with the turtles, or take a hike up to Cook's Look. Join a fishing or scuba diving expedition, or just drift in Clam Gardens. The world is your delicious oyster. After three days we found it very, very hard to leave. From \$1969 per night for two (food, drinks and more included). [lizardisland.com.au](http://lizardisland.com.au)

## SALTBUSH RETREAT Longreach

The saddles draped over ledges, the bridles decorating your walls

and the upturned horseshoes holding your bath towels will tell you you're in stockman country. Visit the Australian Stockmans Hall of Fame just down the road, then retire to the bath terrace at this retreat – three clawfoot tubs lined up on an open-air timber deck. There's a range of accommodation; rooms in the homestead stables feature kitchens, queen and bunk beds and a generous ensuite – all artfully decorated to reference this retreat's setting in a region crammed with pioneering history. Comfortable and memorable, it's the sort of place every country town should have. Cabins from \$150 per night, homestead stables from \$210. [saltbushretreat.com.au](http://saltbushretreat.com.au)



14 MAR, 2020

# HOT 50 2020 PLACES TO STAY

Weekend Australian, Australia

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THE CALILE HOTEL  
Brisbane

Once part of an industrial area in the shadow of more prosperous precincts, James Street in Brisbane's Fortitude Valley is a kind of anti-mall with a blend of more than 130 boutiques, salons, galleries and eateries along its shaded blocks. Its star resident is The Calile Hotel, opened in 2018, which has 175 guestrooms and suites and the feel of an urban resort. There's a Miami-style pool bordered by cabanas and a tropical plantation vibe. The accommodation is sleek, making use of cork, sisal and brushed brass in three pastel colour themes. The hotel's popular restaurant Hellenika serves mod Greek fare and robust cocktails such as an Ari Onassis with slugs of mastiha, Tanqueray, elderflower, lemon and cucumber. Rooms from \$216 per night.

[thecalilehotel.com](http://thecalilehotel.com)

HAYMAN ISLAND RESORT  
Whitsundays

Long lauded as the jewel of the Coral Sea, the resort was magnificently restored after the devastation of Cyclone Debbie in 2017. As well as a stylish redesign of all 166 rooms it now boasts five top-class restaurants and bars, plus a spa and fitness centre. It's a beautiful, serene place to unwind, but equally welcoming to the more active holidaymaker. You can swim and snorkel over dazzling reefs from secluded bays around the island, or use the complimentary watercraft. There are also paid activities, from scuba diving tours to game fishing and yacht cruises; helicopter and seaplane trips are only a credit card away. Rooms are

\$750 a night, going up to \$6500 for the super-luxury three-suite beach house.

[haymanisland.intercontinental.com](http://haymanisland.intercontinental.com)

SPICERS HIDDEN VALE  
Grandchester

It's never looked greener in the Scenic Rim region, an hour's drive south-west of Brisbane, and destination restaurant Homage at Spicers Hidden Vale is celebrating a new start. The original Homage was housed in a heritage homestead that was destroyed in a blaze two years ago; the new one on the same site is pavilion-style, all country comfort, with wide verandas overlooking the retreat's 4850ha working farm. Executive chef Ash Martin adheres to the principles of respect for the land, the people and the produce, and it shows in his sublime dishes. Accommodation is in Queensland-style cottages, some original to the property, others relocated, and all restyled in a luxury

manner under the decor-savvy eye of Spicers co-founder Jude Turner. From \$379 a night.

[spicersretreats.com](http://spicersretreats.com)

ELYSIAN RETREAT  
Whitsundays

You leave all worldly worries behind when you board a helicopter for the brief flight to Long Island, about 20km south-east of Airlie Beach. Boat access is limited due to the

Luxe: clockwise, The Calile; Pumphouse Point; Freycinet Lodge; Hayman Island Resort







14 MAR, 2020  
HOT 50 2020 PLACES TO STAY

Weekend Australian, Australia

tides (hence the chopper transfers), adding to the sense of seclusion at this off-the-grid resort of 10 barefoot-luxe style villas wedged between the mountains and the ocean. Outdoor hammocks and daybeds around a mineral water pool, a day spa and yoga sessions encourage a relaxed vibe, but there's also kayaking and activities on nearby islands for anyone in search of a little adventure. Rates include three gourmet meals; alcohol is extra. From \$605 per person per night. [elysianretreat.com.au](http://elysianretreat.com.au)



**TASMANIA**

**MOSS HOTEL**  
Hobart

The handsome Georgian terraces fronting Hobart's Salamanca Place were once warehouses frequented by "traders, whalers, publicans, gentlemen and convicts", according to Moss Hotel. These days they play host to inviting bars, restaurants – and this new boutique hotel from the family-owned Behrakis Group. Moss offers 41 rooms in two neighbouring buildings (25 and 39 Salamanca Place), with prices starting at \$180 per night. Inside, the aesthetic is one of bare stone and timbers offset with designer furniture and Tasmanian artworks; dazzling natural touches include a three-level living wall of native plants in the lobby. It's the perfect spot for a weekend break, in a dress-circle location beside the harbour, with options galore for eating, drinking and culture. [mosshotel.com.au](http://mosshotel.com.au)



**PUMPHOUSE POINT**  
Lake St Clair

The drive to this magical spot in the heart of the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area really is half the fun. Once here, you'll be drawn to the 250m-long pier that leads out across Australia's deepest lake to the old Pumphouse containing beautifully appointed rooms and relaxing lounges. When the weather is wild, you can always snuggle up in front of a roaring fire. Other accommodation options include rooms in the original hydro substation, the Shorehouse, or the newer standalone Retreat hidden on the shore of the lake. Rooms in the Pumphouse from \$495 per night; the Retreat from \$1550 per night including breakfast and dinner. [pumpphousepoint.com.au](http://pumpphousepoint.com.au)

**THE CRAY SHACK**  
Flinders Island

It's a three-bedroom beach shack, nicely fitted out, with a maritime-rustic theme and an outside loo. Neat and comfortable. But this location, overlooking a wild-and-then-calm bay that turns every shade of blue, feels raw and untamed. Located in Bass Strait off the north-east of Tasmania, the island is a natural wonderland. Come here for the fishing, or the beachcombing on your pick of 120 beaches, or the hike up the two mountains that bookend the island. Call into the stylish Flinders Wharf cafe/restaurant and distillery at Whitemark for food showcasing the island's bounty and a slice of the infectious enthusiasm of owners Tom and Jo Youl. Look out for the monthly guest chef program and the island's crayfish festival held in April. From \$360 per night. [theflinderswharf.com.au](http://theflinderswharf.com.au)

**STILLWATER SEVEN**  
Launceston

The pre-arrival email should tell you that you're in for something special. White, red or bubbles? Gin or whisky? Favourite music and magazines? Then check in to find an experience tailored just for you. The ground floor of this 1830s former flour mill is a much-awarded restaurant that showcases local produce, a theme continued in the carefully curated rooms: nearly everything is hand carved, handmade or hand thrown. Scarred timber beams and gadgetry from the mill days paired with richly coloured soft furnishings create an industrial-luxe feel to the rooms with the sexiest bathrooms this side of Bass Strait. Add the riverfront location out front and Cataract Gorge out back and you have one of our favourite hotels of the year. King rooms from \$495 per night. [stillwater.com.au/seven](http://stillwater.com.au/seven)

**FREYCINET LODGE**  
Freycinet National Park

With its pink granite mountains, clear turquoise waters and white-sand coastline, it's no surprise that Freycinet on the east coast is the most popular national park in Tasmania. Nestled within it is this luxury lodge with its newish coastal pavilions – architectural timber-and-glass pods with private decks sporting outdoor tubs from which to ogle that view. There are separate living areas and king-size beds heaped with luxe linen. Dining options include The Bay Restaurant, which specialises in seafood, and the casual Richardson's Bistro. Rooms range from one-room cabins, from \$269 per night, to the coastal pavilions at \$699 per night. [freycinetlodge.com.au](http://freycinetlodge.com.au)



14 MAR, 2020

HOT 50 2020 PLACES TO STAY

Weekend Australian, Australia

THE TRAVEL ISSUE

NORTHERN TERRITORY

HOT 50 2020

PLACES TO STAY

MACQ 01  
Hobart

This award-winning “storytelling hotel”, opened in 2017, is a modernist vision in Tasmanian oak, white cypress and glass, all designed to replicate the giant shipping shed it replaced on Macquarie Wharf. Each of the 87 rooms (from \$260 per night) and 27 suites references a different local character – their potted biography is affixed to the door – and “master storytellers” conduct history tours of the district. The rooms are all about informal luxury (low lighting, deep tub, well-stocked minibar, cosy throw rugs, board games) and in-house restaurant The Old Wharf has unbeatable harbour views. The 20-minute ferry ride upriver to Mona is a must.

macq01.com.au

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

ORCHARD HOUSE  
Barossa Valley

Australia’s much-loved champion of country cooking may not actually be in the house, but Maggie Beer’s personal touches and generous gestures are in abundance at her Orchard House. The two-bedroom cottage sits in a working orchard close to where Maggie and Colin Beer moved in 1973, when she set about putting Barossa produce on the map. Expect a chef’s kitchen, deeply comfortable quarters and breakfast provisions. “You are more than welcome to wander... and pick any fruit that takes your fancy,” says a welcome note. For self-catering supplies or a light lunch, set off cross-country to Maggie Beer’s Farm Shop and Cafe.

orchardhouse.com.au

THE MAYFAIR HOTEL  
Adelaide

An unbeatable location makes the 170-room Mayfair a great choice for a weekend in the city – but it’s the old-fashioned sense of hospitality that really chimes. The five-year-old hotel in a 1930s former bank building on King William Street is a popular bolthole for visiting artists and performers. Make a beeline for cocktails in the Hennessy Rooftop Bar, one of the best sunset possies in town. In the basement Mayflower Restaurant, executive chef Bethany Finn works magic with local produce (including honey from her rooftop hives) and celebrates the golden era of hotel dining with a menu of French classics. Each of the guestrooms (from \$179) features an enormous TV, super comfy bed, coffee machine, French teas and a minibar stocked with local goodies.

mayfairhotel.com.au

ARKABA HOMESTEAD  
Flinders Ranges

You might recognise the ancient Wilpena Pound and jagged Elder Range from the paintings of Hans Heysen and as a cinematic backdrop to countless movies. Five hours by road from Adelaide, this stunning landscape surrounds Wild Bush Luxury’s private Arkaba Conservancy, a 24,000ha former sheep station that’s now a wildlife haven. After a walk or hike with an expert field guide, 4WD tour or heli adventure, retire to the handsome 1850s homestead for a hot shower and restaurant-quality dining, an open bar and sofas for stargazing by the pool. There are only five rooms, and a maximum of 10 guests. From \$1070 per person per night, including meals, drinks and safaris.

arkabaconservancy.com



Handsome: Mount Lofty House; MACq 01



THE LOUISE  
Barossa Valley

Straddling a hilltop with long, lovely views across grapevines, the Louise’s low-rise limestone building with tinkling fountains and clipped rosemary contributes to the relaxed Mediterranean vibe. Each of the 15 five-star suites features a private courtyard and top-notch interiors including a fireplace and a small library, plus homemade biscuits, carafes of rainwater and a regional minibar. Appellation restaurant offers fine dining, while Three75 Bar + Kitchen has casual meals and cocktails. There’s a small gym and alluring pool but we take our cue from fellow guests dozing poolside, fully clothed, in the late afternoon sun. Wine tasting is exhausting; you’ve been warned. From \$639 per couple, including breakfast.

thelouise.com.au





14 MAR, 2020

# HOT 50 2020 PLACES TO STAY

Weekend Australian, Australia

THE FRAMES  
Riverland

Take a guided birding tour, hire a canoe, travel up the Murray River by dinghy or gondola, complete with a pit-stop at a local micro-brewery... or simply recline on the balcony of your villa, one of three perched on cliffs above a riverbend near Renmark. The architect-designed villas, with all mod cons including plunge pools, are the creation of Rick and Cathy Edmonds, who go out of their way to create the perfect bespoke getaway in this magical region about three hours' drive from Adelaide. The star of the show is the century-old gondola, the vessel for several sunset proposals. From \$950 per night for two (2-3 night rate); packages include catering and excursions.  
[theframesluxuryaccommodation.com.au](http://theframesluxuryaccommodation.com.au)

MOUNT LOFTY HOUSE  
Adelaide Hills

To arrive at this stately pile poised on the lip of the Piccadilly Valley with views across a folded, Arcadian landscape is to shake off the 21st century in a moment. Built in 1852 by the Hardy family, the property today has more than 30 guestrooms and suites, plus four cottages; a new ultra-luxe 14-suite lodge, Sequoia, is due to open in September. Bring the walking shoes: 97ha Mount Lofty Botanic Garden is a minute's walk from the front gate, and the hotel's 12ha grounds feature towering redwoods and a small vineyard. There's a wine cellar, a day spa in the former stables, casual meals in the bar and refined, Asian-influenced fare at Hardy's Verandah Restaurant. From \$379 per night for a Classic Room.  
[mtloftyhouse.com.au](http://mtloftyhouse.com.au)

## OPEN FOR BUSINESS

**T**he bushfires that ravaged Australia over summer led to the loss of an estimated 5.8 million hectares of broadleaf forest in NSW and Victoria alone, roughly 21 per cent of the entire country's forested area. Also hard hit were the ACT and South Australia, particularly the Adelaide Hills and Kangaroo Island. But even in regions outside the firegrounds, road closures and mass evacuations meant that tourism operators lost up to 90 per cent of their income during their busiest season.

Grassroots campaigns have come to the rescue, mapping (some literally) the ways that tourists can help these communities get back on their feet. They include RoadtripforGood.org.au, the brainchild of Alpaca Travel co-founder Zoe Manderson, who built a website on which tourism businesses that survived the fires can reach out to potential visitors. Her map of Australia quickly filled with accommodation, restaurants, bars, tours and events in bushfire-affected areas, giving people confidence that existing holidays need not be cancelled, as well as new ideas for destinations and delights to be discovered. The selection of itineraries for weekends away and longer holidays is growing, and a list of farm gates and regional farmers' markets is coming, too.

Another initiative, EmptyEsky.com.au, urges travellers to head to bushfire-affected areas and gives them mouthwatering reasons to do just that. Instagram initiatives include the self-explanatory @StayWithThemAU and @SpendWithThem, revealing hitherto unthought of destinations and surprising accommodation gems.

Tourism Australia's #HolidayHereThisYear campaign includes links via its website (australia.com) to state initiatives, including South Australia's #BookthemOut. This one focuses on the Adelaide Hills and Kangaroo Island, where the Southern Ocean Lodge was among the properties lost to the fires. The lodge's founders, James and Hayley Baillie, intend to rebuild but in the meantime their statement reassuring visitors that much of Kangaroo Island remains open for business captures the spirit of the bushfire recovery: "Many of us have seen footage of bushfires in regional Australia this summer; the bigger picture is that we need now to rally together to support the many small tourism operators and discover this incredible country and all it has to offer." JANE NICHOLLS