



Local heroes

These unique *LUXURY OFFERINGS* across the country are reason enough to *put away the passport* this HOLIDAY SEASON.

I HALCYON HOUSE, NSW

Directly behind the sand dunes in the small surf town of Cabarita Beach, between the Gold Coast and Byron Bay, sits a 1960s motel that was converted into the chic Halcyon House earlier this year. The white stucco and painted Besser brick exterior hides an interior by Anna Spiro that feels less Australian coastal stopover and more international design hotel. Each of the 21 individually designed rooms features fabric-covered bedheads, antique and handmade furniture and fittings and upholstered walls covered with a selection of artworks sourced from estate sales and markets around the world. At the in-house restaurant Paper Daisy, Noma alumnus Ben Devlin serves fancied-up summery Aussie classics such as grilled red-claw yabbies with mayonnaise and pippies with potatoes and peas. This nostalgic slice of hotel heaven on the New South Wales coast is set to be the base for many long summer days of memory-making. *21 Cypress Crescent, Cabarita Beach; halcyonhouse.com.au.*



Night falls at Sal Salis, on the North West Cape of Western Australia.

2 SAL SALIS, WA

With just 16 safari tents connected by boardwalks above the dunes in Cape Range National Park, on the North West Cape of Western Australia, Sal Salis is as laidback as it is spectacular. Ningaloo Reef, a 280-kilometre-long fringing coral reef, starts a few metres offshore from the sandy beach of the campsite, so a day's entertainment at Sal Salis revolves around snorkelling to spot the vividly coloured fish, stingrays and turtles of this part of the Indian Ocean, and venturing further out to sea to spy filter-feeding whale sharks and humpback whales in season. While the tents are comfortable and excellent Western Australian wines complement the Australian bush cuisine prepared by the lodge's resident chef, you should note that all fresh water is transported to the site and you'll have a daily allocation of 20 litres for showering and washing – so there's no need to pack that Bumble & bumble sea salt spray. *Cape Range National Park; www.salsalis.com.au.*



Hotel Hotel's Monster Kitchen and Bar.

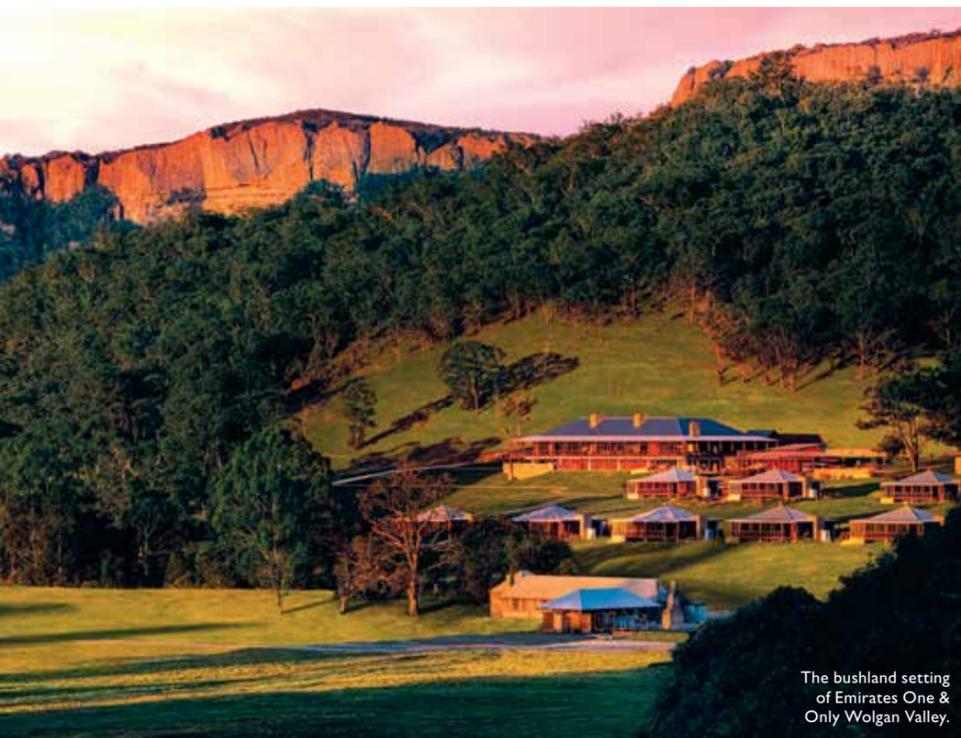
3 HOTEL HOTEL, ACT

In 2014, Canberra's Hotel Hotel revived the sleepy parliamentary city with its creative and a quirky "home away from home" approach. The design-focused hotel's 68 cocooning rooms include reclaimed oak beds and walls made from a mix of concrete, cork, earthen clay and natural fibre wallpapers. Combine that with colourful handmade throws, locally made ceramics and mid-century Australian furnishings and it's like staying in the home of your most stylish hipster friend. Plus there's the enormous concrete

bathtubs complete with more Aesop than you could use in a year-long stay to help you relax. Once you've visited the National Gallery and the Australian War Memorial, head right back to base to the carefully curated shared library filled with art, architecture and design tomes, and dine at the adjoining 50s bohemian Monster Kitchen and Bar. Come for Sean McConnell's yabby jaffle and return in the morning for heavenly house-made crumpets and honey. *25 Edinburgh Avenue, Canberra; hotel-hotel.com.au.*

4 EMIRATES ONE & ONLY WOLGAN VALLEY, NSW

On nearly 3,000 hectares of wildlife reserve in the Blue Mountains region sits Emirates One and Only Wolgan Valley. With hiking trails, horseback riding, guided tours and forest bike rides, the resort is a launch pad for exploring the surrounding fauna and flora. If pampering is on your agenda, unwind with a spa treatment using Australian-made, chemical-free products by Sodashi. While there is an outdoor pool, each of the 40 freestanding suites comes with a private glass-walled indoor pool. For the winter months, a double-sided fireplace serves the suite's bedroom and lounge area. And even though there is 24-hour room service, the dedicated cheese room in the main homestead is a dessert experience not to be missed. No matter where you find yourself on the resort, there is always a spectacular view of the rugged landscape to take in. *Wolgan Valley, New South Wales; wolganvalley.oneandonlyresorts.com.*



The bushland setting of Emirates One & Only Wolgan Valley.

5 PUMPHOUSE POINT, TAS

Although only two and a half hours' drive from Hobart or Launceston, Pumphouse Point feels very, very remote. But that's the allure of this pristine location on Tasmania's Lake Saint Clair surrounded by arctic rainforest and mountains. This 18-room wilderness lodge, which opened in January 2015, is housed in two 1930s hydroelectric buildings and there's a strong sense of the past in the restoration. The Shorehouse is the heart of the retreat, with a dining room and lounge, and rooms offering lake and mountain views above. Guests staying at the Pumphouse, perched at the end of a long jetty, hear little more than the lapping of the lake and birdsong. All rooms have larders chock-full of delicious Tasmanian produce, and a generous breakfast and nourishing shared-table dinner is served in the dining space. *Lake Saint Clair, Tasmania; www.pumphousepoint.com.au.*



Pumphouse Point's Pumphouse and Shorehouse on Lake Saint Clair.



The Postal Hall at Como The Treasury in Perth.

6 COMO THE TREASURY, WA

In October Perth became home to the Singapore-based Como group's first foray into Australia. A trio of the city's Victorian stone and brick buildings, formerly used as the state treasury, land titles office and post office, have been interconnected and restored to form Como The Treasury. The 48-room property might well be called "boutique" if not for the grand proportions of the buildings – the cavernous former postal hall, with its majestic glass skylights, makes for a spectacular public space, while

the serene interiors, cantilevered balconies, dormer windows and free-standing bathtubs on travertine stone floors create a welcome sense of retreat. With Como's signature treatments at the Treasury's Shambhala Urban Escape and the pick of the finest West Australian ingredients showcased at Wildflower restaurant, which has sweeping views over the Swan River, Perth now has a hotel that puts it firmly on the world map. *1 Cathedral Avenue, Perth; www.comohotels.com/thetreasury.*

7 QUALIA, QLD

Qualia is that rare combination of pure luxury in a sublime setting. With rooms featuring private plunge pools and drink-me-in views of the Coral Sea and the surrounding eucalyptus bushland through louvres that invite in the sea breeze to cool and soothe you, this is the ultimate retreat for the world-weary or the loved-up. The Pebble Beach waterfront terrace is the place to haunt for lunch, with its expansive views of the sailboat-dotted waterways between the neighbouring tree-clad islands – it's tempting to linger here for a dip in the infinity pool, followed by the regular afternoon drinks session. And then, well, it's almost time for those pre-dinner cocktails, which also happen to be served down at Pebble Beach ... *Hamilton Island, Queensland; www.qualia.com.au.*



The Pebble Beach pool at Qualia.

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Drift House, a former sea captain's home in Victoria's Port Fairy.

8 DRIFT HOUSE, VIC

In April this year a four-suite boutique hotel in a tiny town on the south-west Victorian coast won the best luxury accommodation gong in the Qantas Australian Tourism Awards, beating out stiff competition from much larger and more established properties around the country. Drift House, at the end of the Great Ocean Road in Port Fairy, opened its doors less than two years ago but has already won plaudits both for its imaginative conversion of a former sea captain's house and its commitment to creating a sumptuous

and serene retreat. Two self-contained suites take up the entire ground and first floors of the original bluestone house, with another two suites housed in the contemporary metal-skinned addition at the back of the building. With opulent interiors and a "maxi-bar" in each room that offers a wide range of fine local fare at reasonable (that is, not mini-bar) prices, it's no wonder Drift House has already made such a splash. *98 Gipps Street, Port Fairy, Victoria; drifthouse.com.au. Go to www.mrandmrsmith.com for extras when booking.*



The main lodge at Bamurru Plains.

9 BAMURRU PLAINS, NT

There's no WiFi, no mobile phone reception and no TV here at Bamurru Plains, a bush lodge on the floodplains of Northern Territory's Mary River, on the coast just outside Kakadu National Park. There are, however, plenty of buffalo, magpie geese (that's *bamurru* to you) and other water birds, and crocodiles, wild horses and wallabies to distract you from the lack of 21st-century distractions as you embark on a four-wheel-drive safari or take an airboat – those flat-bottomed boats with the giant fan propeller at the back – around the wetlands of this working buffalo station. The lodge, which is a three-hour drive or a 30-minute charter flight from Darwin, makes the most of its incredible surroundings with bungalows built on stilts at the water's edge, and serves up local fare such as kangaroo and barramundi with panache. *Swim Creek Station, Northern Territory; www.bamurruplains.com.*

10 SOUTHERN OCEAN LODGE, SA

There is something uniquely special about Southern Ocean Lodge, a place where serenity and stillness takes priority. The resort is designed to cater for luxury travellers in need of a quiet retreat. Each of the 21 suites jut out on the jagged cliff top just so, affording every guest a private view of the ocean (and the odd kangaroo or eagle passing by). The striking architecture juxtaposes the remote, rugged environment, and the design is remarkable – the suites all have their own sunken lounges, warm crackling fires and a deep bathtub in the open plan bathroom with 180-degree views south to Antarctica. Soaking in the divine tub looking out to the ocean wilderness will leave you feeling like you're in your own private modern eco retreat. *Kangaroo Island, South Australia; southernoceanlodge.com.au*

Sweeping views from Kangaroo Island's Southern Ocean Lodge.



WORDS: MARK SARIBAN, SOPHIE TEDMAN/SONO