

# The Best of Australia

by Marc Llewellyn & Lee Mylne

**M**aybe we're biased because we live here, but Australia has a lot of bests—world bests, that is. It has some of the best natural scenery, the weirdest wildlife, the most brilliant scuba diving and snorkeling, the best beaches (shut up, California), the oldest rainforest (110 million years and counting), the oldest human civilization (some archaeologists say 40,000 years, some say 120,000; whatever—it's old), the best wines (come see what we mean), the best weather (give or take the odd Wet season in the north), the most innovative East-meets-West-meets-someplace-else cuisine—all bathed in sunlight that brings everything up in Technicolor.

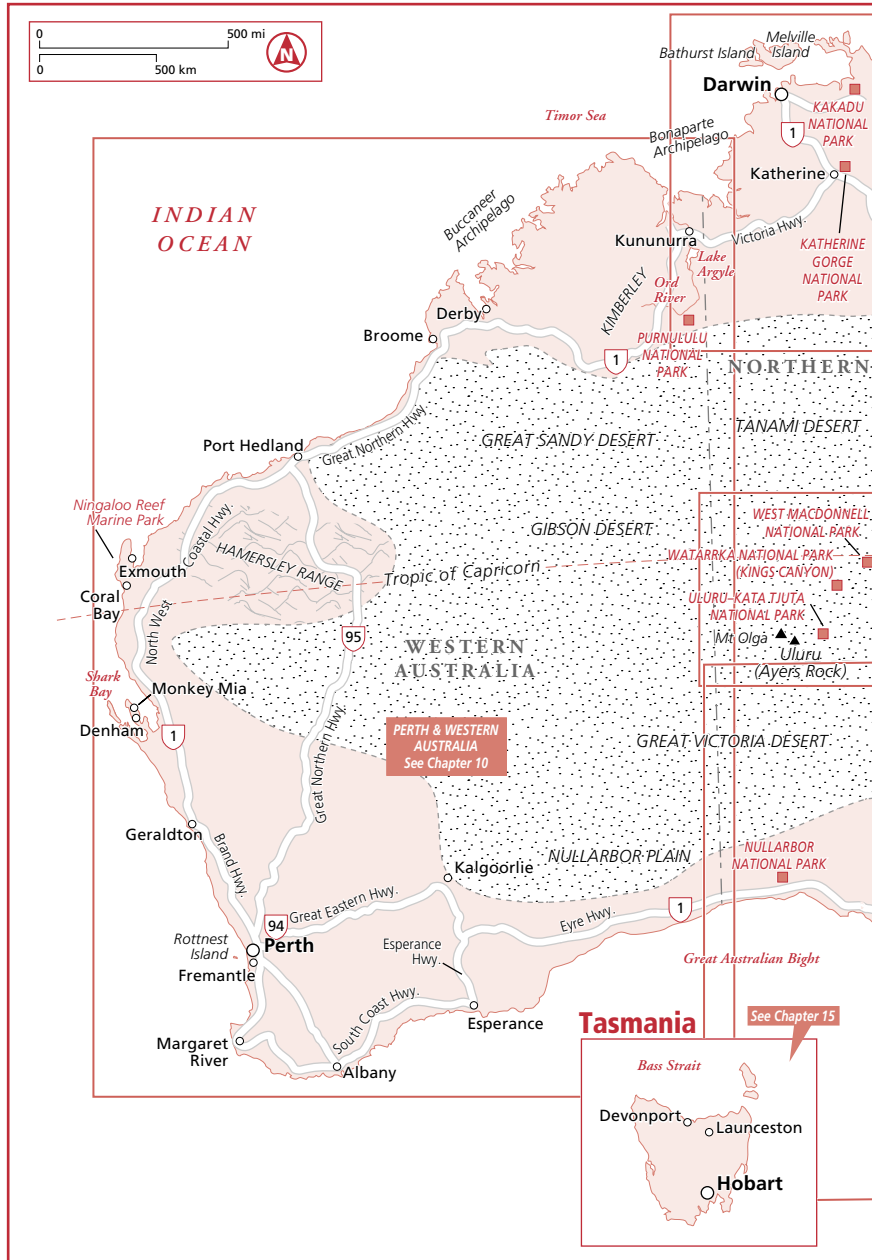
"Best" means different things to different people, but scarcely a visitor lands on these shores without having the Great Barrier Reef at the top of the "Things to See" list. So they should, because it really is a glorious natural masterpiece. Also high on most folks' lists is Ayers Rock. This monolith must have some kind of magnet inside it designed to attract planeloads of tourists. We're not saying the Rock isn't special, but we think the vast Australian desert all around it is even more so. The third attraction on most visitors' lists is Sydney, the Emerald City that glitters in the antipodean sunshine on—here we go with the "bests" again—the best harbor, spanned by the best bridge in the world (yes it is, San Francisco).

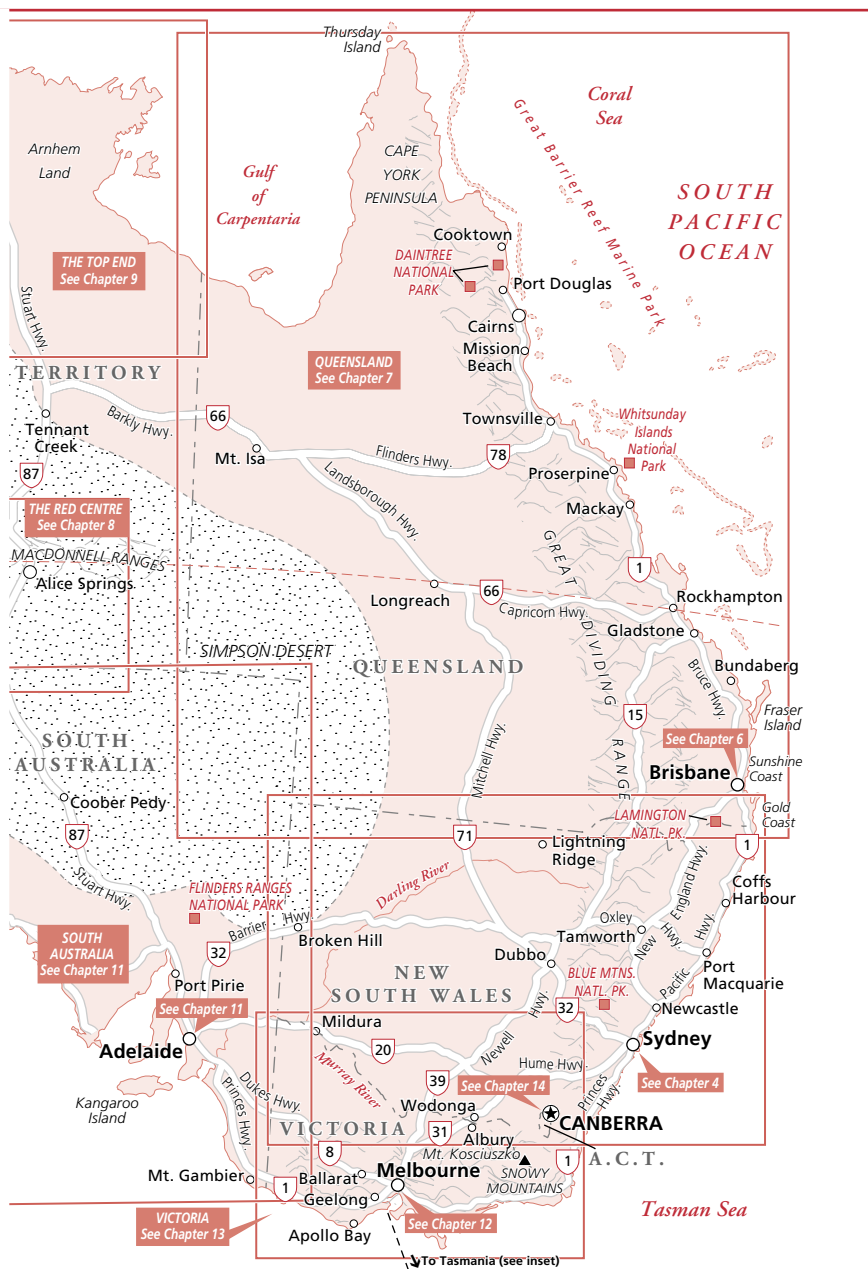
But as planes zoom overhead delivering visitors to the big three attractions, Aussies in charming country towns, on far-flung beaches, on rustic sheep stations, in rainforest villages, and in mountain lodges shake their heads and say sadly, "They don't know what they're missin'." Well, that's the aim of this chapter—to show you what you're missin'. Read on, and consider taking the road less traveled.

## 1 The Top Travel Experiences

- **Hitting the Rails on the *Indian Pacific Train*:** This 3-day journey across the Outback regularly makes it onto travel magazines' "Top Rail Journeys in the World" lists. The desert scenery ain't all that magnificent—it's the unspoiled, empty vastness that passengers appreciate. It includes the longest straight stretch of track in the world, 478km (296 miles) across the treeless Nullarbor Plain. Start in Sydney and end in Perth, or vice versa, or just do a section. See "Getting Around Australia" in chapter 2.
- **Experiencing Sydney (NSW):** Sydney is more than just the magnificent Harbour Bridge and Opera House. No other city has beaches in such abundance, and few have such a magnificently scenic harbor. Our advice is to board a ferry, walk from one side of the bridge to the other, and try to spend a week here, because you're going to need it. See chapter 4, "Sydney."

## Australia





### **Tips A Note on Abbreviations**

In the listings below, NSW stands for New South Wales, QLD for Queensland, NT for the Northern Territory, WA for Western Australia, SA for South Australia, VIC for Victoria, TAS for Tasmania, and ACT for the Australian Capital Territory.

- **Seeing the Great Barrier Reef** (QLD): It's a glorious 2,000km-long (1,240-mile) underwater coral fairyland with electric colors and bizarre fish life—and it comes complete with warm water and year-round sunshine. This is what you came to Australia to see. When you're not snorkeling over coral and giant clams almost as big as you, scuba diving, calling at tropical towns, or lying on deserted island beaches, you'll be trying out the sun lounges or enjoying the first-rate food. See chapter 7, "Queensland & the Great Barrier Reef."
- **Exploring the Wet Tropics Rainforest** (QLD): Folks who come from skyscraper cities like Manhattan and Los Angeles can't get over the moisture-dripping ferns, the neon-blue butterflies, and the primeval peace of this World Heritage rainforest stretching north, south, and west from Cairns. Hike it, four-wheel-drive it, or glide over the treetops in the Skyrail gondola. See "Cairns" in chapter 7.
- **Bareboat Sailing in the Whitsundays** (QLD): Bareboat means unskipped—that's right, even if you think port is an after-dinner drink, you can charter a yacht, pay for a day's instruction from a skipper, and then take over the helm yourself and explore these 74 island gems. It's easy. Anchor in deserted bays, snorkel over dazzling reefs, fish for coral trout, and feel the wind in your sails. See "The Whitsunday Coast & Islands" in chapter 7.
- **Exploring Kata Tjuta (the Olgas) & Uluru (Ayers Rock)** (NT): Just why everyone comes thousands of miles to see the big red stone of Ayers Rock is a mystery, and that's probably why they come—because the Rock is a mystery. Just 50km (31 miles) from Ayers Rock are the round red heads of the Olgas, a second rock formation more significant to Aborigines and more intriguing to many visitors. See "Uluru—Kata Tjuta National Park (Ayers Rock/The Olgas)" in chapter 8.
- **Taking an Aboriginal Culture Tour** (Alice Springs, NT): Eating female wasps, contemplating a hill as a giant resting caterpillar, and imagining that the stars are your grandmother smiling down at you will give you a new perspective on Aboriginal culture. See what we mean on a half-day tour from the Aboriginal Art & Culture Centre. See p. 385.
- **Discovering the Kimberley** (WA): Australia's last frontier, the Kimberley is a romantic cocktail of South Sea pearls, red mountain ranges, aqua seas, deadly crocodiles, Aboriginal rock art, and million-acre farms in a never-ending wilderness. Cross it by four-wheel-drive, stay in safari tents on a cattle ranch, swim under waterfalls, ride a camel along the beach in Broome, and more. See chapter 9, "The Top End."
- **Rolling in Wildflowers** (WA): Imagine Texas three times over and covered in wildflowers. That's what much of Western Australia looks like every spring, from around August through October, when pink, mauve,

red, white, yellow, and blue wildflowers bloom. Aussies flock here for this spectacle, so book ahead. See the box “Tiptoeing through the Wildflowers” in chapter 10.

- **Drinking in the Barossa Valley (SA):** One of Australia’s four largest wine-producing areas, this German-speaking region less than an hour’s drive from Adelaide is also the prettiest. Adelaide’s restaurants happen to be some of the country’s best, too, so test out your wine purchases with the city’s terrific food. See “Side Trips from Adelaide” in chapter 11.
- **Getting Dusty in the Desert (SA):** Head inland from Adelaide to the

Outback to visit remote pubs and settlements, the craggy ridges of the Flinders Ranges, dry salt lakes, and deserts. See chapter 11, “Adelaide & South Australia.”

- **Seeing the Sights along the Great Ocean Road (VIC):** This 106km (66-mile) coastal road carries you past wild and stunning beaches, forests, and dramatic cliff-top scenery—including the Twelve Apostles, a dozen pillars of red rock standing in isolation in the foaming Southern Ocean. See “The Great Ocean Road: One of the World’s Most Scenic Drives” in chapter 13.

## 2 The Best Outdoor Adventures

- **Sea Kayaking:** Kayaking is a great way to explore Queensland’s Whitsunday Islands as well as Dunk Island off Mission Beach in Queensland. **Rivergods** (☎ 08/9259 0749; [www.rivergods.com.au](http://www.rivergods.com.au)) in Perth even takes you on a sea-kayaking day trip to snorkel with wild sea lions and watch penguins feeding. This Western Australian company also runs multiday expeditions past whales, dolphins, and sharks in Shark Bay, and over coral at Ningaloo Reef on the Northwest Cape. For details on the Whitsunday Islands and Dunk Island, see chapter 7. For information about Perth and Western Australia, see chapter 10.
- **Horse Trekking in the Snowy Mountains (NSW):** Ride the ranges like the man from Snowy River, staying in bush lodges or camping beneath the stars. See “In the Footsteps of the Man from Snowy River” in chapter 5.
- **Abseiling (Rappelling) in the Blue Mountains (NSW):** Careering backward down a cliff face with the smell

of eucalyptus in your nostrils is not everyone’s idea of fun, but you sure know you’re alive. Several operators welcome both novices and the more experienced. See “The Blue Mountains” in chapter 5.

- **White-Water Rafting on the Tully River (Mission Beach, QLD):** The Class III to IV rapids of the Tully River swoosh between lush, rainforested banks. The guides are professional, and the rapids are just hairy enough to be fun. It’s a good choice for first-time rafters. See “The North Coast: Mission Beach, Townsville & the Islands” in chapter 7.
- **Four-Wheel-Driving on Fraser Island (QLD):** Burning down 75-mile Beach in a 4x4 on the biggest sand island in the world is liberating, if not great for the environment. Paradoxically, the island is ecologically important and popular with nature lovers. Hike its eucalyptus forests and rainforests, swim its clear lakes, and fish off the beach. See “Fraser Island: Ecoadventures & Four-Wheel-Drive Fun” in chapter 7.

- **Game Fishing:** Battle a black marlin off Cairns and you might snare the world record; that's how big they get down there. Marlin and other game catches run around much of the Australian coastline—Exmouth on the Northwest Cape in Western Australia (see chapter 10), and Broome and Darwin in the Top End (see chapter 9) are two other hotspots.
- **Canoeing the Top End (NT):** Paddling between the sun-drenched outer walls of Katherine Gorge sharpens the senses, especially when a (harmless) freshwater crocodile pops up! **Gecko Canoeing** (☎ 1800/634 319 in Australia, or 08/8972 2224; [www.geckocanoeing.com.au](http://www.geckocanoeing.com.au)) will take you downriver to the rarely explored Flora and Daly River systems to visit

Aboriginal communities, shower under waterfalls, hike virgin bushland, and camp in swags on the banks. See “Katherine” in chapter 9.

- **Surfing in Margaret River (WA):** A 90-minute surf lesson with four-time Western Australia surf champ Josh Palmateer is a great introduction to the sport—if only to hear Josh's Aussie accent! In July and August, Josh shifts his classes to Cable Beach in Broome. See chapter 10.
- **Skiing in the Victorian Alps (VIC):** Skiing in Australia? Sure. When you've had enough coral and sand, you can hit the slopes in Victoria. Where else can you swish down the mountain between gum trees? See “The High Country” in chapter 13.

### 3 The Best Places to View Wildlife

- **Pebbly Beach (NSW):** The eastern gray kangaroos that inhabit Murramarang National Park, 20 minutes south of Ulladulla on the south coast of New South Wales, tend to congregate along this beach and the adjoining dunes. See “South of Sydney along the Princes Highway” in chapter 5.
- **Montague Island (Narooma, NSW):** This little island just offshore from the seaside town of Narooma, on the south coast, is a haven for nesting seabirds, but the water around it is home to the main attractions. Dolphins are common; fairy penguins, too. In whale-watching season, you're sure to spot southern right and humpback whales. See “South of Sydney along the Princes Highway” in chapter 5.
- **Jervis Bay (NSW):** This is probably the closest place to Sydney where you're certain to see kangaroos in the wild—and where you can pet them, too. The national park here is home

to hundreds of bird species, including black cockatoos, as well as plenty of possums. See “South of Sydney along the Princes Highway” in chapter 5.

- **Lone Pine Koala Sanctuary (Brisbane, QLD):** Cuddle a koala (and have your photo taken doing it) at this park, the world's first and largest koala sanctuary. Apart from some 130 koalas, lots of other Aussie wildlife—including wombats, Tasmanian devils, 'roos (which you can hand-feed), and colorful parakeets—are on show. See p. 254.
- **Hervey Bay (QLD):** The warm waters off Hervey Bay, and in particular the lovely Platypus Bay, on the Queensland coast, are where the humpback whales come each year between June and October in increasing numbers to give birth. The long journey from Antarctica brings them up the coast to frolic with their young for several months before making the return trip. Hervey Bay's many cruises can bring you closer to these

gentle giants than you'll ever come elsewhere. See "Fraser Island: Ecoadventures & Four-Wheel-Drive Fun" in chapter 7.

- **Australian Butterfly Sanctuary** (Kuranda, near Cairns, QLD): Walk through the biggest butterfly "aviary" in Australia and see some of Australia's most gorgeous butterflies, including the electric-blue Ulysses. See many species of butterfly feed, lay eggs, and mate, and inspect caterpillars and pupae. Wearing pink, red, or white encourages the butterflies to land on you. See p. 293.
- **Wait-a-While Rainforest Tours** (QLD): Head into the World Heritage-listed Wet Tropics Rainforest behind Cairns or Port Douglas with this ecotour operator to spotlight possums, lizards, pythons, even a platypus, so shy that most Aussies have never seen one in the wild. About once a month, a group will spot the rare, bizarre Lumholtz's tree kangaroo. See "Cairns" in chapter 7.
- **Heron Island** (off Gladstone, QLD): There's wonderful wildlife on this "jewel in the Reef" any time of year, but the best time to visit is November to March, when the life cycle of giant green loggerhead and hawksbill turtles is in full swing. From November to January, the turtles come ashore to lay their eggs. From late January to March, the hatchlings emerge and head for the water. You can see it all by strolling down to the beach, or join a university researcher to get the full story. See "The Capricorn Coast & the Southern Reef Islands" in chapter 7. Mon Repos Turtle Rookery, near Bundaberg in Queensland (see "Up Close & Personal with a Turtle," p. 348) and the Northwest Cape in Western Australia (see "The Midwest & the Northwest: Where the Outback Meets the Sea" in chapter 10) are two other good turtle-watching sites.
- **Currumbin Wildlife Sanctuary** (The Gold Coast, QLD): Tens of thousands of unbelievably pretty red, blue, green, and yellow rainbow lorikeets have been screeching into this park for generations to be hand-fed by delighted visitors every morning and afternoon. The sanctuary has 'roos and other Australian animals, too, but the birds steal the show. See p. 369.
- **Kakadu National Park** (NT): One-third of Australia's bird species live in Kakadu; so do lots of saltwater crocs. A cruise on the Yellow Water Billabong, or aboard the Original Jumping Crocodiles cruise en route to the park, are some of the best ways to see them in the wild. See "Kakadu National Park" in chapter 9.
- **The Northwest Cape** (WA): For the thrill of a lifetime, go snorkeling with a whale shark. No one knows where they come from, but these mysterious monsters (up to 18m/60 ft. long) surface in the Outback waters off Western Australia every year from March to early June. A mini-industry takes snorkelers out to swim alongside the sharks as they feed (on plankton, not snorkelers). See "The Midwest & the Northwest: Where the Outback Meets the Sea" in chapter 10.
- **Tangalooma** (QLD), **Bunbury** (WA) & **Monkey Mia** (WA): In several places, you can see, hand-feed, or swim with wild dolphins. At Bunbury, south of Perth, you can swim with them or join cruises to see them (they come right up to the boat). If you want an almost guaranteed dolphin sighting, head to Tangalooma Wild Dolphin Resort on Moreton Island, off Brisbane, where you can hand-feed them, or to Monkey Mia on the lonely Outback coast, where they cruise past your legs. Even better is a cruise on the *Shotover* catamaran to see some of the area's 10,000

dugongs (manatees), plus turtles, sea snakes, sharks—and more. See chapters 6 and 10.

- **Kangaroo Island (SA):** You're sure to see more native animals here—including koalas, wallabies, birds, echidnas, reptiles, seals, and sea

lions—than anywhere else in the country, apart from a wildlife park. Another plus: The distances between major points of interest are not great, so you won't spend half the day just getting from place to place. See "Kangaroo Island" in chapter 11.

## 4 The Best Places to Experience the Outback

- **Broken Hill (NSW):** There's no better place to experience real Outback life than in Broken Hill. There's the city itself, with its thriving art scene and the Royal Flying Doctor service; a historic ghost town on its outskirts; a national park with Aboriginal wall paintings; an opal mining town nearby; and plenty of kangaroos, emus, and giant wedge-tailed eagles. See "Outback New South Wales" in chapter 5.
- **Lightning Ridge (NSW):** This opal-mining town is as rough-and-ready as the stones the miners pull out of the ground. Meet amazing characters, share in the eccentricity of the place, and visit opal-rush areas with mole-hill scenery made by the old sun-bleached mine tailings. See "Outback New South Wales" in chapter 5.
- **Uluru–Kata Tjuta National Park (Ayers Rock, NT):** Sure, Ayers Rock will enthrall you with its eerie beauty, but the nearby Olgas are more soothing, more interesting, and taller than the Rock, so make the time to wander through them, too. Hike the Rock's base, burn around it on a Harley-Davidson, saunter up to it on a camel, climb it if you must. Don't go home until you've felt the powerful heartbeat of the desert. See "Uluru–Kata Tjuta National Park (Ayers Rock/The Olgas)" in chapter 8.
- **The MacDonnell Ranges (NT):** The Aborigines say these red rocky hills were formed by the Aboriginal "Caterpillar Dreaming" that wriggled

from the earth here. To the west of Alice Springs are dramatic gorges, idyllic (and bloody cold) water holes, and cute wallabies. To the east are Aboriginal rock carvings and the Ross River Homestead, where you can crack a cattle whip, throw a boomerang, feast on damper and billy tea, and ride a horse or camel in the bush. See "Road Trips from Alice Springs" in chapter 8.

- **Kings Canyon (NT):** Anyone who saw the cult flick *The Adventures of Priscilla, Queen of the Desert* will remember the scene in which the transvestites climb a soaring orange cliff and survey the desert floor. That was Kings Canyon, about 320km (198 miles) from Alice Springs in one direction, with Ayers Rock in the other. Trek the dramatic rim or take the easier shady route along the bottom. Don't forget your lipstick, guys. See "Kings Canyon" in chapter 8.
- **The Northwest Cape (WA):** This treeless moonscape of red anthills, spiky spinifex, and blazing heat seems to go on forever, so it's all the more amazing to find a beautiful coral reef offshore. Drive the rugged hills in a four-wheel-drive vehicle, dodging kangaroos on the way; swim with giant manta rays; snorkel right off the beach; scuba dive coral outcroppings; and laze on blindingly white beaches. This is where the Outback meets the sea. See "The Midwest & the Northwest: Where the Outback Meets the Sea" in chapter 10.



- **Coober Pedy** (SA): It may be hot and dusty, but you'll get a true taste of the Outback when you tag along with the local mail carrier as he makes his rounds to the area's remote cattle

stations (ranches). It's a 12-hour, 600km (372-mile) journey along sun-baked dirt roads. See "Outback South Australia" in chapter 11.

## 5 The Best Beaches

- **Palm Beach** (Sydney): At the end of a string of beaches stretching north from Sydney, Palm Beach is long and white, with good surfing and a golf course. See chapter 4, "Sydney."
- **Hyams Beach** (Jervis Bay, NSW): This beach in off-the-beaten-path Jervis Bay is said to be the whitest in the world. You need to wear sunblock if you decide to stroll along it, because the reflection from the sun, even on a cloudy day, can give you a nasty sunburn. The beach squeaks as you walk. See "South of Sydney along the Princes Highway" in chapter 5.
- **Four Mile Beach** (Port Douglas, QLD): The sea is turquoise, the sun is warm, the palms sway, and the low-rise hotels starting to line this country beach can't spoil the feeling that it is a million miles from anywhere. But isn't there always a serpent in paradise? In this case the "serpents" are north Queensland's seasonal, potentially deadly marine stingers. Come from June through September to avoid them, or confine your swimming to the stinger net the rest of the year. See "Port Douglas, Daintree & the Cape Tribulation Area" in chapter 7.
- **Mission Beach** (QLD): Azure water, islands dotting the horizon, and white sand edged by vine forests make this beach a real winner. The bonus is that hardly anyone comes here. Cassowaries (giant emulike birds) hide in the rainforest, and the tiny town of Mission Beach makes itself invisible behind the leaves. Visit from June

through September to avoid marine stingers. See "The North Coast: Mission Beach, Townsville & the Islands" in chapter 7.

- **Whitehaven Beach** (Whitsunday Island, QLD): It's not a surf beach, but this 6km (3¾-mile) stretch of white silica sand on uninhabited Whitsunday Island is pristine and peaceful. Bring a book, curl up under the rainforest lining its edge, and fantasize that the cruise boat is going to leave without you. See "The Whitsunday Coast & Islands" in chapter 7.
- **Surfers Paradise Beach** (Gold Coast, QLD): Actually, all 35 of the beaches on the 30km (19-mile) Gold Coast strip in south Queensland are worthy of inclusion here. Every one has sand so clean it squeaks, great surf, and fresh breezes—ignore the tacky high-rises. Surfers will like Burleigh Heads. See "The Gold Coast" in chapter 7.
- **Cable Beach** (Broome, WA): Is it the South Sea pearls pulled out of the Indian Ocean, the camels loping along the sand, the sunsets, the surf, or the red earth meeting the green sea that gives this beach its exotic appeal? Maybe it's the 26km (16 miles) of white sand. The only time to swim here is June through September, when deadly marine stingers aren't around. See "The Kimberley: A Far-Flung Wilderness" in chapter 10.
- **Cottesloe Beach** (Perth, WA): Perth has 19 great beaches, but this petite crescent is the prettiest. After you've checked out the scene, join the

fashionable set for brunch in the Indiana Tea House, a mock-Edwardian bathhouse fronting the sea. Surfers

head to Scarborough and Trigg. See chapter 10, “Perth & Western Australia.”

## 6 The Best Diving & Snorkeling Sites

- **Port Douglas** (QLD): Among the fabulous dive sites off Port Douglas, north of Cairns, are Split-Bommie, with its delicate fan corals and schools of fusiliers; Barracuda Pass, with its coral gardens and giant clams; and the swim-through coral spires of the Cathedrals. Snorkelers can glide over the coral and reef fish life of Agincourt Reef. See “Port Douglas, Daintree & the Cape Tribulation Area” in chapter 7.
- **Lizard Island** (QLD): Snorkel over 150-year-old giant clams—as well as gorgeous underwater coral—in the Clam Garden, off this exclusive resort island northeast of Cairns. Nearby is the famous Cod Hole, where divers can hand-feed giant potato cod. See p. 299.
- **Cairns** (QLD): Moore, Norman, Hardy, Saxon, and Arlington reefs and Michaelmas and Upolu cays—all about 90 minutes off Cairns—offer great snorkeling and endless dive sites. Explore on a day trip from Cairns or join a live-aboard adventure. See “Cairns” in chapter 7.
- **Coral Sea** (QLD): In this sea east of the Great Barrier Reef off north Queensland, you’ll see sharks feeding at Predator’s Playground; 1,000m (3,280 ft.) drop-offs in the Abyss; reefs covering hundreds of square miles; and tropical species not found on the Great Barrier Reef. This is not a day-trip destination; many dive operators run multiday trips on live-aboard vessels. Visibility is excellent—up to 100m (328 ft.). See “The North Coast: Mission Beach, Townsville & the Islands” in chapter 7.
- **Yongala wreck** (QLD): Sunk by a cyclone in 1911, the 120m (394-ft.) SS *Yongala* lies in the Coral Sea off Townsville. Schools of trevally, kingfish, barracuda, and batfish surround the wreckage; giant Queensland grouper live under the bow, lionfish hide under the stern, turtles graze on the hull, and hard and soft corals make their home on it. It’s too far for a day trip; live-aboard trips run from Townsville and Cairns. See “The North Coast: Mission Beach, Townsville & the Islands” in chapter 7.
- **The Whitsunday Islands** (QLD): As well as Blue Pearl Bay, these 74 breathtaking islands offer countless dive sites both among the islands and on the Outer Great Barrier Reef, 90 minutes away. Bait Reef on the Outer Reef is popular for its drop-offs. Snorkelers can explore not just the Outer Reef, but also patch reefs among the islands and rarely visited fringing reefs around many islands. See “The Whitsunday Coast & Islands” in chapter 7.
- **Heron Island** (QLD): Easily the number-one snorkel and dive site in Australia. If you stayed in the water for a week, you couldn’t snorkel all the acres of coral stretching from shore. Take your pick of 22 dive sites: the Coral Cascades, with football trout and anemones; the Blue Pools, favored by octopus, turtles, and sharks; Heron Bommie, with its rays, eels, and Spanish dancers; and more. Absolute magic. See “The Capricorn Coast & the Southern Reef Islands” in chapter 7.

- **Lady Elliot Island** (QLD): Gorgeous coral lagoons, perfect for snorkeling, line this coral cay island off the town of Bundaberg. Boats take you farther out to snorkel above manta rays, plate coral, and big fish. Divers can swim through the blowhole, 16m (52 ft.) down, and see gorgonian fans, soft and hard corals, sharks, barracudas, and reef fish. See “The Capricorn Coast & the Southern Reef Islands” in chapter 7.
- **Rottnest Island** (WA): Just 19km (12 miles) off Perth, this former prison island has excellent snorkeling and more than 100 dive sites. Wrecks, limestone overhangs, and myriad fish will keep divers entertained. There are no cars, so snorkelers should rent a bike and snorkel gear, buy a visitor-center map of suggested snorkel trails, and head off to find their own private coral garden. The sunken grotto of Fishhook Bay is great for fish life. See “Side Trips from Perth” in chapter 10.
- **Ningaloo Reef** (WA): A well-kept secret is how we’d describe Australia’s second great barrier reef, stretching 260km (161 miles) along the Northwest Cape halfway up Western Australia. Coral starts right on shore, not 90 minutes out to sea as at the Great Barrier Reef. You can snorkel or dive with manta rays, and dive to see sharks, angelfish, turtles, eels, grouper, potato cod, and much more. Snorkel with whale sharks up to 18m (59 ft.) long from March to early June. See “The Midwest & the Northwest: Where the Outback Meets the Sea” in chapter 10.

## 7 The Best Places to Bushwalk (Hike)

- **Blue Mountains** (NSW): Many bushwalks in the Blue Mountains National Park offer awesome views of valleys, waterfalls, cliffs, and forest. All are easy to reach from Sydney. See “The Blue Mountains” in chapter 5.
- **Whitsunday Islands** (QLD): Most people think of snorkeling and watersports when they come to these subtropical national-park islands clad in dense rainforest and bush, but every resort island we recommend has hiking trails. Some are flat, some hilly. Wallabies and butterflies are common sights. South Molle has the best network of trails and 360-degree island views from its peak. See “The Whitsunday Coast & Islands” in chapter 7.
- **Lamington National Park** (QLD): Few other national parks in Australia have such a well-marked network of trails (160km/99 miles in all) as this one, just 90 minutes from the Gold Coast. Revel in dense subtropical rainforest, marvel at mossy 2,000-year-old Antarctic beech trees, delight in the prolific wallabies and birds, and soak up the cool mountain air. See “The Gold Coast Hinterland: Back to Nature” in chapter 7.
- **Larapinta Trail** (The Red Centre, NT): You can start from Alice Springs and walk the entire 250km (155-mile) semidesert trail, which winds through the stark crimson McDonnell Ranges. You don’t have to walk the entire length—plenty of day-length and multiday sections are possible. This one’s for the cooler months only (Apr–Oct). See “Alice Springs” in chapter 8.
- **Kakadu National Park** (NT): Whether a wetlands stroll or an overnight hike in virgin bushland, you can find it in this World Heritage-listed park. You’ll see red cliffs, cycads, waterfalls, lily-filled lagoons hiding man-eating crocodiles, what

sometimes looks like Australia's entire bird population, and Aboriginal rock art. See "Kakadu National Park" in chapter 9.

- **Cape-to-Cape** (WA): Rugged sea cliffs, a china-blue sea, eucalyptus forest, white beaches, and coastal heath are what you will find as you hike between Cape Naturaliste and Cape Leeuwin, in the southwest corner of Western Australia. In season, you'll see whales and wildflowers. See "Margaret River & the Southwest: Wine Tasting in the Forests" in chapter 10.
- **Freycinet National Park** (TAS): The trek to Wine Glass Bay passes pink-granite outcrops, with views over an ocean sliced by a crescent of icy sand. It's prehistorically beautiful. See "Freycinet National Park" in chapter 15.

- **Cradle Mountain & Lake St. Clair National Park** (TAS): The 80km (50-mile) Overland Track is the best hike in Australia. The trek, from Cradle Mountain to Lake St. Clair, takes 5 to 10 days, depending on your fitness level. Shorter walks, some lasting just half an hour, are also accessible. See "Cradle Mountain & Lake St. Clair National Park" in chapter 15.
- **The Great Ocean Walk** (VIC): This is a newly opened 91km (56-mile) trail from Apollo Bay to Glenample Homestead (near the Twelve Apostles) on Victoria's Great Ocean Road. The trail is designed so walkers can "step on—step off" at a number of places, completing short walks of around 2 hours, or day or overnight hikes. And the views are to die for. See "Great Ocean Walk" in chapter 13.

## 8 The Best Places to Learn about Aboriginal Culture

- **Umbarra Aboriginal Cultural Centre** (Wallaga Lake, near Narooma, NSW): This center offers boomerang- and spear-throwing instruction, painting with natural ochers, discussions on Aboriginal culture, and guided walking tours of Aboriginal sacred sites. See p. 228.
- **Tjapukai Aboriginal Cultural Park** (Cairns, QLD): This multimillion-dollar center showcases the history of the Tjapukai people—their Dreamtime creation history and their often-harrowing experiences since the white man arrived—using a film, superb theatrical work, and a dance performance. Its Aboriginal art and crafts gift shop is one of the country's best. See p. 287.
- **Aboriginal Art & Culture Centre** (Alice Springs, NT): You'll taste bush food, see a dance, throw boomerangs and spears, and learn about Aboriginal family values in one half-day tour

of this Aborigine-owned center in Alice Springs. Be sure to hang around for the 1-hour didgeridoo lesson at the end. See p. 385.

- **Anangu Tours** (Ayers Rock, NT): The Anangu are the owners of Ayers Rock or, in their native tongue, Uluru. Join them for walks around the Rock as you learn about the poisonous "snake men" who fought battles here, pick bush food off the trees, throw spears, visit rock paintings, and watch the sun set over the monolith. Their Cultural Centre near the base of the Rock has displays about the Aboriginal Dreamtime. See "Uluru—Kata Tjuta National Park (Ayers Rock/The Olgas)" in chapter 8.
- **Manyallaluk: The Dreaming Place** (Katherine, NT): This Aboriginal community welcomes visitors and teaches them to paint, weave, throw boomerangs, and perform other tasks of daily life. A low-key day and the

chance to chat one-on-one with Aboriginal people in their bush home. See “Katherine” in chapter 9.

- **Mangarrayi People** (Katherine, NT): Mike Keighley of **Far Out Adventures** (☎ 0427/152 288; www.farout.com.au) takes tours to beautiful Elsey Station (a ranch) near Katherine, where you visit with the children of the local Mangarrayi people. Sample bush tucker, learn a little bush medicine, and swim in a natural “spa-pool” in the Roper River. See “Katherine” in chapter 9.
- **Yamatji Bitja Aboriginal Bush Tours** (Kalgoorlie, WA): Geoffrey Stokes (☎ 08/9021 5862 or 0407/378 602), brought up the traditional

Aboriginal way in the bush, takes you out to track emus, forage for bush food, and maybe even hunt a ‘roo for dinner (with a gun, not a boomerang!). Explore the bush, learn about Aboriginal Dreamtime creation myths, and find out more about his childhood. See “The Goldfields” in chapter 10.

- **Tandanya Aboriginal Cultural Institute** (Adelaide, SA): This is a great place to experience life through Aboriginal eyes. You might catch one of the dances or other performances, and you’ll have plenty of other opportunities to find out more about Aboriginal culture. See p. 516.

## 9 The Best of Small-Town Australia

- **Central Tilba** (NSW): Just inland from Narooma on the south coast, this historic hamlet is one of the cutest you’ll see, complete with blacksmiths and leatherwork outlets. The ABC Cheese Factory offers free tastings, and you can spend hours browsing antiques stalls or admiring the period buildings. See “South of Sydney along the Princes Highway” in chapter 5.
- **Broken Hill** (NSW): Known for its silver mines, the quirky town of Broken Hill has more pubs per capita than just about anywhere else. It’s the home of the School of the Air—a “classroom” that transmits lessons by radio to communities spread over thousands of miles of Outback. Here you’ll also find the Palace Hotel, made famous in *The Adventures of Priscilla, Queen of the Desert*, as well as plenty of colonial mansions and heritage homes. See “Outback New South Wales” in chapter 5.
- **Port Douglas** (QLD): What happens when Sydneysiders and Melbournians discover a one-street fishing

village in tropical north Queensland? Come to Port Douglas and find out. A strip of groovy restaurants and a championship golf course have not diminished “Port’s” old-fashioned air. Four Mile Beach is at the end of the street, and boats depart daily for the Great Barrier Reef. See “Port Douglas, Daintree & the Cape Tribulation Area” in chapter 7.

- **Mission Beach** (QLD): You’d never know this tidy village existed (it’s hidden in lush rainforest off the highway) if you weren’t well informed. Aussies know it’s here, but few bother to patronize its dazzling beach, offshore islands, and rainforest trails, so you’ll have the place to yourself. There’s great white-water rafting on the nearby Tully River, too. See “The North Coast: Mission Beach, Townsville & the Islands” in chapter 7.
- **Broome** (WA): This romantic pearling port on the far-flung Kimberley coast on the Indian Ocean blends Aussie corrugated-iron architecture with red pagoda roofs left by Chinese pearl divers. The town fuses a sophisticated

international ambience with Outback attitude. Play on Cable Beach (see “The Best Beaches,” earlier in this chapter) and stay at glamorous Cable Beach Club Resort. This is the place to add to your South Sea pearl collection. See “The Kimberley: A Far-Flung Wilderness” in chapter 10.

- **Kalgoorlie** (WA): This is it, the iconic Australian country town. Vibrant Kalgoorlie sits on what used to be the richest square mile of gold-bearing earth ever. It still pumps around 2,000 ounces *a day* out of the ground. Have a beer in one of the gracious 19th-century pubs, peer into the world’s biggest open-cut gold mine, and wander the ghost-town streets of its sister town, Coolgardie. See “The Goldfields” in chapter 10.
- **Hahndorf** (SA): A group of Lutheran settlers founded this German-style town in the Adelaide Hills in the 1830s. You’ll love the churches, the wool factory and crafts shops, and the

delicious German food at the local cafes, restaurants, and bakeries. See “Side Trips from Adelaide” in chapter 11.

- **Coober Pedy** (SA): For an Outback experience that’s fair-dinkum (genuine), few places are as weird and wonderful as this opal-mining town in the middle of nowhere. Visit mines, see wacky museums, and stay in a hotel underground—not all that unusual, considering that the locals live like moles anyway. See “Outback South Australia” in chapter 11.
- **Launceston** (TAS): Tasmania’s second city is not much larger than your average European or American small town, but it’s packed with Victorian and Georgian architecture and remnants of Australia’s convict past. Spend a few days and discover the scenery; splurge a little on a stay in a historic hotel. See “Launceston” in chapter 15.

## 10 The Best Museums

- **Australian National Maritime Museum** (Sydney, NSW): The best things about this museum are the ships and submarines often docked in the harbor out front. You can climb aboard and experience what it’s like to be a sailor. Inside are some fascinating displays relating to Australia’s dependence on the oceans. See p. 157.
- **Alice Springs Telegraph Station Historical Reserve** (NT): It’s not called a museum, but that’s what this restored telegraph-repeater station out in the picturesque hills by a spring—Alice Springs—really is. From the hot biscuits turned out of the wood-fired oven to the old telegraph equipment, this 1870s settlement is as real as history can get. See p. 386.
- **Australian Aviation Heritage Centre** (Darwin, NT): The pride of this hangar is a B-52 bomber on permanent loan from the U.S. But there’s loads more, and not just planes, engines, and other aviation paraphernalia—there are stories, jokes, and anecdotes associated with the exhibits that will appeal even if you don’t have avgas (aviation fuel) running in your veins. See “Darwin” in chapter 9.
- **Warradjan Aboriginal Cultural Centre** (NT): “Memorable and moving” were the words used by one reader to describe her visit to this small, stylish museum in Kakadu National Park. Learn about Dreamtime myths and daily life of Aboriginal people in Kakadu. See “Kakadu National Park” in chapter 9.

- **Western Australian Maritime Museum** and the adjacent **Shipwreck Galleries** (Perth, WA): Housed in the historic port precinct of Fremantle, Perth, this museum tells tales of the harsh Western Australian coastline since the Dutch first bumped into it and abandoned it as useless in the 1600s. Anyone who ever dreamed of finding a shipwreck laden with pieces of eight will relish the displays of treasure recovered from the deep. See p. 457.
- **New Norcia Museum and Art Gallery** (New Norcia, WA): This tiny museum in the Spanish Benedictine monastery town of New Norcia holds a mind-boggling collection of European Renaissance art. The museum has all kinds of memorabilia: the monks' manuscripts, clothing, instruments, and gifts from Queen Isabella of Spain. See "Side Trips from Perth" in chapter 10.
- **The Migration Museum** (Adelaide, SA): This museum gives visitors insight into the people who came to Australia, how and where they settled, and how many suffered getting here. Don't expect a lot of musty displays—this museum is full of hands-on activities. See p. 515.
- **Australian War Memorial** (Canberra, ACT): Given its name, you might think this museum is a bleak place, but you'd be wrong. It gives important insight into the Anzac (Australian and New Zealand Army Corps) spirit, including an exhibit on the tragic battle of Gallipoli. There's also a pretty good art collection. See p. 625.
- **National Museum of Australia** (ACT): Using state-of-the-art technology and hands-on exhibits, Australia's newest and most impressive museum concentrates on Australian society and its history since 1788, the interaction of people with the Australian environment, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and histories. See p. 626.

## 11 The Best Luxury Accommodations

- **Park Hyatt Sydney** (NSW; ☎ 800/633-7313 in the U.S. and Canada, or 02/9241 1234 in Australia): You'll have to book well in advance to snag a room at Sydney's best-situated property, at the edge of the city's historic Rocks district. Many rooms have fabulous views across the harbor to the Sydney Opera House. See p. 120.
- **The Sebel Reef House & Spa Palm Cove** (Cairns, QLD; ☎ 1800/079 052 in Australia, or 07/4055 3633): Everyone who stays here says the same thing: "It feels like home." Airy rooms look into tropical gardens, waterfalls cascade into the pools, mosquito nets drape over the beds, and you could swear pith-helmeted colonial officers will be back any minute to finish their gin-and-tonics in the Brigadier Bar. Idyllic Palm Cove Beach is just across the road. See p. 297.
- **Lizard Island** (off Cairns, QLD; ☎ 1300/134 044 in Australia, or 02/8296 8010): Lizard Island has long been popular with Americans for its game fishing, wonderful coral and diving, smart food, and simple upscale lodge accommodations. See p. 299.
- **Bedarra Island** (off Mission Beach, QLD; ☎ 1300/134 044 in Australia, or 02/8296 8010): Presidents and princesses in need of a little time out come to this small rainforest island ringed by beaches. The timber villas are cozy, and the discreet staff assures

privacy. Best of all, though, is the extravagant 24-hour open bar. See p. 319.

- **Orpheus Island Resort** (off Townsville or Cairns, QLD; ☎ 07/4777 7377 in Australia): Beloved of film stars and others who relish privacy, this resort has simple, attractive rooms; good food; a marvelous sense of seclusion; and a beautiful location in the curve of a palm-lined bay. The only way in is by seaplane. See p. 326.
- **Hayman** (Whitsunday Islands, QLD; ☎ 1800/075 175 in Australia, or Leading Hotels of the World, 800/745-8883 in the U.S. and Canada, 0800/1010-1111 in the U.K. and Ireland, or 0800/44 1016 in New Zealand): On Hayman Island in the Whitsundays, this is Australia's most glamorous resort. It has classy rooms, excellent restaurants, a staff that's keen to please, a superb hexagonal swimming pool, and a fleet of charter boats waiting to spirit you off to the Reef or your own deserted isle. See p. 338.
- **Longitude 131** (Uluru/Ayers Rock, Red Centre, NT; ☎ 08/8957 7888): A newcomer to the Ayers Rock resort scene, Longitude 131 is an African-style luxury safari camp set in the sand dunes, with great views of Uluru (Ayers Rock). It's very exclusive and very expensive, but you experience the Outback in style. See p. 405.
- **El Questro Homestead** (The Kimberley, WA; ☎ 1300/656 565 in Australia, 800/221-4542 in the U.S. and Canada, 020/8283 4500 in the U.K., 0800/44 4422 in New Zealand, or 08/9169 1777): Charming country decor spiced up with Indonesian antiques, good cooking, and a dramatic gorge location make this glamorous homestead on a million-acre cattle station popular with jet-setters. Cruise wild gorges, heli-fish for barramundi, and hike to Aboriginal rock art while you're here. See p. 491.
- **Cable Beach Club Resort Broome** (Broome, WA; ☎ 1800/099 199 in Australia, or 08/9192 0400): Chinatown meets the Outback at this elegant corrugated-iron-and-pagoda-studded resort lying low along glorious Cable Beach in the romantic pearling port of Broome. Three to-die-for suites are decorated with superb Asian antiques and paintings by luminaries of the Australian art world. See p. 497.
- **The Como Melbourne** (Melbourne, VIC; ☎ 1800/033 400 in Australia, or 03/9825 2222): Great service, nice rooms, and free plastic ducks make this one of our favorite top-flight Australian hotels. See p. 560.
- **Hyatt Hotel Canberra** (Canberra, ACT; ☎ 800/233-1234 in the U.S. and Canada, or 02/6270 1234): Visiting heads of state and pop stars make this their residence when staying in Canberra. It's a 2-minute drive from the central shopping district, and a stone's throw from Lake Burley Griffin and the Parliamentary Triangle. See p. 620.

## 12 The Best Moderately Priced Accommodations

- **Explorers Inn Hotel** (☎ 1800/623 288 in Australia, or 07/3211 3488) and **Hotel George Williams** (☎ 1800/064 858 in Australia, or 07/3308 0700), both in Brisbane, QLD: These two hotels around the corner from each other are shining examples of what affordable hotels should be—trendy, clean, and bright, with useful facilities like a 24-hour



front desk, hair dryers, helpful staff, and a pleasant, inexpensive restaurant attached. See p. 250.

- **The Reef Retreat** (Cairns, QLD; ☎ 07/4059 1744): It's not often you find so much decorating taste—wooden blinds, teak furniture, and colorful upholstery—at a price you want to pay, but that's what you get at the apartments in trendy Palm Cove, one of Cairns's most desirable beachfront suburbs. There's a pool on the lovely landscaped grounds, but the beach is just a block away. See p. 298.
- **Archipelago Studio Apartments** (Port Douglas, QLD; ☎ 07/4099 5387): They may be tiny, but these pretty apartments have a homey atmosphere and are seconds from Four Mile Beach. Some units have sea views. The solicitous proprietor is a font of advice on things to see and do. See p. 309.
- **Miss Maud Swedish Hotel** (Perth, WA; ☎ 1800/998 022 in Australia): Staying here is like staying at Grandma's—just as she's finished a

major redecoration job. You're right in the heart of Perth, and the friendly staff and huge buffet breakfasts (included in the room rate) complete the picture. See p. 446.

- **North Adelaide Heritage Group** (Adelaide, SA; ☎ 08/8272 1355): These accommodations consist of 18 fabulous properties in North Adelaide and Eastwood. The former Friendly Meeting Chapel Hall resembles a small church stocked with Victorian antiques. Another memorable place is the George Lowe Esq. Apartment, done in the style of a 19th-century gentleman's bachelor pad. See p. 511.
- **York Mansions** (Launceston, TAS; ☎ 03/6334 2933): If you feel that where you stay is as important to your visit as what you see, then don't miss on a night or two here. This National Trust–classified building has five spacious apartments, each with a distinct character. It's like living the high life in the Victorian age. See p. 653.

### 13 The Best Alternative Accommodations

- **Underground Motel** (White Cliffs, NSW; ☎ 1800/021 154 in Australia, or 08/8091 6677): All but two of this motel's rooms are underground. Rooms are reached by a maze of spacious tunnels dug out of the rock beneath this opal-mining town. See p. 236.
- **South Long Island Nature Lodge** (The Whitsunday Islands, QLD; ☎ 07/4946 9777): You'll be one of only a maximum of 14 guests staying in the 10 comfy and recently refurbished beachfront cabins at this island ecoretreat. Sea kayak, snorkel, swim, hike rainforest trails, dine with other guests outside under the Milky Way, and take sailing trips—every day if you like—on the lodge's own

yacht. Considering you'll only shell out for wine and maybe a seaplane trip to the Reef, this is a great value for its exclusivity. See p. 339.

- **Kingfisher Bay Resort** (Fraser Island, QLD; ☎ 1800/072 555 in Australia, or 07/4120 3333): If it weren't for the ranger station and natural-history videos in the lobby, the wildlife walks, the guided four-wheel-drive safaris, and the other ecoactivities, you'd hardly know that this comfortable, modern hotel is an ecoresort. See p. 354.
- **Binna Burra Mountain Lodge** (☎ 1800/074 260 in Australia, or 07/5533 3622) & **O'Reilly's Rainforest Guesthouse** (☎ 1800/688 722 in Australia, or 07/5502 4911),

both in the Gold Coast Hinterland, QLD: Tucked almost 1,000m (3,280 ft.) up on rainforested ridges, these cozy retreats offer fresh mountain air, activities, and instant access to the hiking trails of Lamington National Park. At O'Reilly's you can hand-feed brilliantly colored rainforest birds every morning. See p. 376–377.

- **Emma Gorge Resort** (The Kimberley, WA; ☎ 800/221-4542 in the U.S. and Canada, or 08/9169 1777): At this spick-and-span little safari camp on the 400,000-hectare (1-million-acre) El Questro cattle station, guests stay in cute tents with wooden floors and electric lights, eat at a rustic gourmet restaurant, and join in the many hikes, bird-watching tours, river cruises, and more. See p. 491.
- **Prairie Hotel** (Flinders Ranges, SA; ☎ 08/8648 4844): This remarkable

tin-roofed, stone-walled Outback pub in the Flinders Ranges has quaint rooms, a great bar out front where you can meet the locals, and some of the best food in Australia. See p. 539.

- **Freycinet Lodge** (Freycinet National Park, Coles Bay, TAS; ☎ 03/6257 0101): These ecofriendly bush cabins are right next to one of the nation's best walking trails. The ocean views from the magnificent restaurant and the surrounding balconies are spectacular. See p. 649.
- **Cradle Mountain Lodge** (Cradle Mountain, TAS; ☎ 13 24 69 in Australia, or 03/6492 1303): Just minutes from your comfortable cabin are 1,500-year-old trees, moss forests, craggy mountain ridges, limpid pools and lakes, and hordes of scampering marsupials. See p. 656.

## 14 The Best Bed & Breakfasts & Guesthouses

- **The Russell** (The Rocks, Sydney; ☎ 02/9241 3543): This B&B, wonderfully positioned in the city's old quarter, is the coziest place to stay in Sydney. It has creaky floorboards, a ramshackle feel, brightly painted corridors, and rooms with immense character. See p. 122.
- **Echoes Hotel & Restaurant, Blue Mountains** (Katoomba, NSW; ☎ 02/4782 1966): Echoes is right on the edge of a dramatic drop into the Jamison Valley. The views from the balconies are breathtaking. See p. 196.
- **Barrington Guest House** (Barrington Tops National Park, The Hunter, NSW; ☎ 02/4995 3212): Nestled in a valley just outside the Barrington Tops National Park, this charming guesthouse and luxury cabin property offers magnificent rainforest walks, plenty of native animals, and excellent activities, such as horseback riding through the bush. See p. 208.
- **Ulladulla Guest House** (Ulladulla, NSW; ☎ 02/4455 1796): Works of art on the walls, fabulous food, and a lagoonlike pool among the palm trees—all this and lovely rooms, with hosts who can't do enough for you. See p. 226.
- **Waverley** (Brisbane, QLD; ☎ 07/3369 8973): This gorgeous old timber Queenslander house has pretty rooms and a cool deck within earshot of rainbow lorikeets chirping in the mango trees. And the cute shops and galleries of fashionable Paddington are right outside your door. See p. 250.
- **Lilybank Bed & Breakfast** (Cairns, QLD; ☎ 07/4055 1123): This rambling 1890s homestead used to be the Cairns mayor's residence. Today, owners Pat and Mike Woolford welcome guests to its comfy rooms, wide verandas, and blooming gardens. You

can also stay in the renovated gardener's cottage. See p. 296.

- **Marac** (near Port Douglas, QLD; ☎ 07/4098 4900): Lush bushland full of butterflies and birds is the setting for this gorgeous contemporary Queenslander house with hip rooms and an outdoor plunge pool. Owners John and Pam Burden promise a warm welcome and a wonderful breakfast. See p. 310.
- **Hansons Swan Valley** (near Perth, WA; ☎ 08/9296 3366): Goodbye faded lace, hello Art Deco—here is a B&B with cutting-edge style for young sophisticates. Jon and Selina Hanson have created a stylish retreat nestled among the Swan Valley vineyards, an easy drive from Perth. See p. 465.

- **Heritage Trail Lodge** (Margaret River, WA; ☎ 08/9757 9595): How many B&Bs do you know that provide a double Jacuzzi in every room? These salmon-pink cabins abut tall karri forest where parrots flit. 'Roos hop into the parking lot on occasion, and the fabulous Margaret River wineries surround you. See p. 473.
- **Collingrove Homestead** (Angaston, the Barossa Valley, SA; ☎ 08/8564 2061): This country house, built in 1856, has an air of colonial manor farm living, with hunting trophies, rifles, and oil paintings festooning the walls, and plenty of oak paneling and antiques scattered about. See p. 523.

## 15 The Best Restaurants

- **Rockpool** (Sydney, NSW; ☎ 02/9252 1888): With the chefs on view and designer chairs to sit on, Rockpool is a consistent favorite, not least for its fabulous, inventive food. See p. 139.
- **Mezzaluna** (Sydney, NSW; ☎ 02/9357 1988): Come here for exquisite food, flawless service, and a great view across the city's western skyline. The main dining room opens onto an all-weather terrace kept warm in winter by giant, overhead fan heaters. Don't miss it. See p. 145.
- **Quay** (Sydney, NSW; ☎ 02/9251 5600): Sydney's best seafood restaurant offers perhaps the loveliest view in town. Gaze through the large windows toward the Opera House, the city skyline, the North Shore suburbs, and the Harbour Bridge. See p. 138.
- **Tetsuya's** (Sydney, NSW; ☎ 02/9267 2900): Chef Tetsuya Wakuda is arguably Sydney's most famous chef, and his nouveau Japanese creations

are imaginative enough to guarantee that this hip eatery is a constant number one in Australia. See p. 143.

- **e'cco bistro** (Brisbane, QLD; ☎ 07/3831 8344): Simple food, elegantly done, has won this small but elegant bistro a stack of awards, and you'll soon see why. Not least among its titles is Australia's top restaurant award, the Remy Martin Cognac/Gourmet Traveller Restaurant of the Year. Booking ahead is essential. See p. 251.
- **Fishlips Bar & Bistro** (Cairns, QLD; ☎ 07/4041 1700): Clever ways with fresh seafood and other Aussie ingredients—think crocodile—make this cheerful blue beach house a real winner, the pick of the bunch in Cairns. See p. 300.
- **Fraser's** (Perth, WA; ☎ 08/9481 7100): The city center and Swan River sparkling in the sunshine seem so close that you can almost reach out and touch them from the terrace of this parkland restaurant. Come here

for sensationally good Modern Australian food turned out with flair and flavor; seafood is a specialty. See p. 449.

- **Newtown House** (Vasse, near Margaret River, WA; ☎ 08/9755 4485): Chef Stephen Reagan makes intelligent, flavorsome food that beautifully partners with premium Margaret River wines. Stay in his homestead B&B overnight and explore the wineries the next day. See p. 474.
- **Prairie Hotel** (Flinders Ranges, SA; ☎ 08/8648 4844): Chef Darren (“Bart”) Brooks serves high-class cuisine in the middle of nowhere. His “feral” food, such as kangaroo tail

soup and a mixed grill of emu sausages, camel steak, and kangaroo, is remarkable. See p. 539.

- **Flower Drum** (Melbourne, VIC; ☎ 03/9662 3655): Praise pours in for this upscale eatery serving Cantonese food. The food is exquisite and the service impeccable. See p. 562.
- **The Tryst** (Canberra, ACT; ☎ 02/6239 4422): Canberra has far grander and more expensive restaurants, but this place has found a spot in our hearts for its constantly delicious food. It’s also relaxed, feeling almost communal on busy nights. See p. 624.

## 16 The Best Reasonably Priced Restaurants

- **Phillip’s Foote** (Sydney, NSW; ☎ 02/9241 1485): In the heart of the historic neighborhood known as The Rocks, this barbecue restaurant serves fish, meat, and poultry. Pick your own protein and throw it on the “barbie” in the courtyard behind a historic pub. See p. 140.
- **Green Papaya** (East Brisbane, QLD; ☎ 07/3217 3599): Owner and chef Lien Yeoman offers flavorful North Vietnamese cuisine in a cheerful setting—a simple formula that draws enthusiastic crowds. If you need advice as you contemplate the menu, the helpful staff will offer as much guidance as you need. See p. 253.
- **Salsa Bar & Grill** (Port Douglas, QLD; ☎ 07/4099 4922): The animated atmosphere and attractive surroundings set the scene for an excellent dining experience. Appetizers and main courses run the gamut from simple fare to sophisticated tropical creations; desserts are fantastic. See p. 312.
- **Zouí Alto** (Townsville, QLD; ☎ 07/4721 4700): The reasonable prices

belie the quality of the Modern Australian food at this 14th-floor establishment. The husband-and-wife team of Mark and Eleni Edwards (he’s the chef) presides over one of the best restaurants in the country. See p. 323.

- **Season** (Sunshine Coast, QLD; ☎ 07/5447 3747): A great location right on the beach, a chef who made a name for himself in Sydney, and flavorful Modern Australian cuisine combine to make Season one of the area’s most popular restaurants. See p. 362.
- **Red Ochre Grill** (Alice Springs, NT; ☎ 08/8950 6666): “Gourmet bush tucker” might sound like a contradiction, but this restaurant (part of an upscale chain) pulls it off. The kitchen combines native ingredients and international techniques to exceptionally good effect. See p. 393.
- **Hansons** (Henley Brook, WA; ☎ 08/9296 3366): In the wine country just outside Perth, Hansons serves Modern Australian dishes indoors and outdoors. The elegant restaurant is

part of Hansons Swan Valley, a sleek, contemporary B&B. See p. 466.

- **Bamboo House** (Melbourne, VIC; ☎ 03/9662 1565): A favorite with both local businesspeople and the Chinese community, Bamboo House offers superb service as well as excellent Cantonese and northern Chinese cuisine. Top choices on the extensive menu include duck in plum sauce, chicken with shallot sauce, and the signature Szechuan smoked duck. See p. 564.
- **Mures Upper Deck** (Hobart, TAS; ☎ 03/6231 2121): Views of the water make a perfect backdrop for ultrafresh seafood and scrumptious

desserts. The menu relies heavily on the catch that comes in on the restaurant's own fishing boat. Lower Deck, in the same complex, is a reasonably priced self-service family restaurant. See p. 643.

- **Spirit House** (Sunshine Coast, QLD; ☎ 07/5446 8994): Winding jungle paths lead to tables set around a lagoon, illuminated at night by torches and discreet lighting. The flavors from the kitchen are mainly Thai but with other Asian influences, and there's nowhere else quite like this in Queensland for atmosphere and terrific food. See p. 363.