

# The Best of Australia

Maybe 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, 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, 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 Uluru. This monolith must have some kind of magnet inside it designed to attract hordes 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.

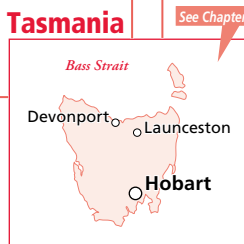
But as planes zoom overhead delivering visitors to the big three attractions, Aussies in charming country towns, on far-flung beaches, on rustic sheep stations, in rainforest villages, and in mountain lodges shake their heads and say sadly, "They don't know what they're missin'." Well, that's the aim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

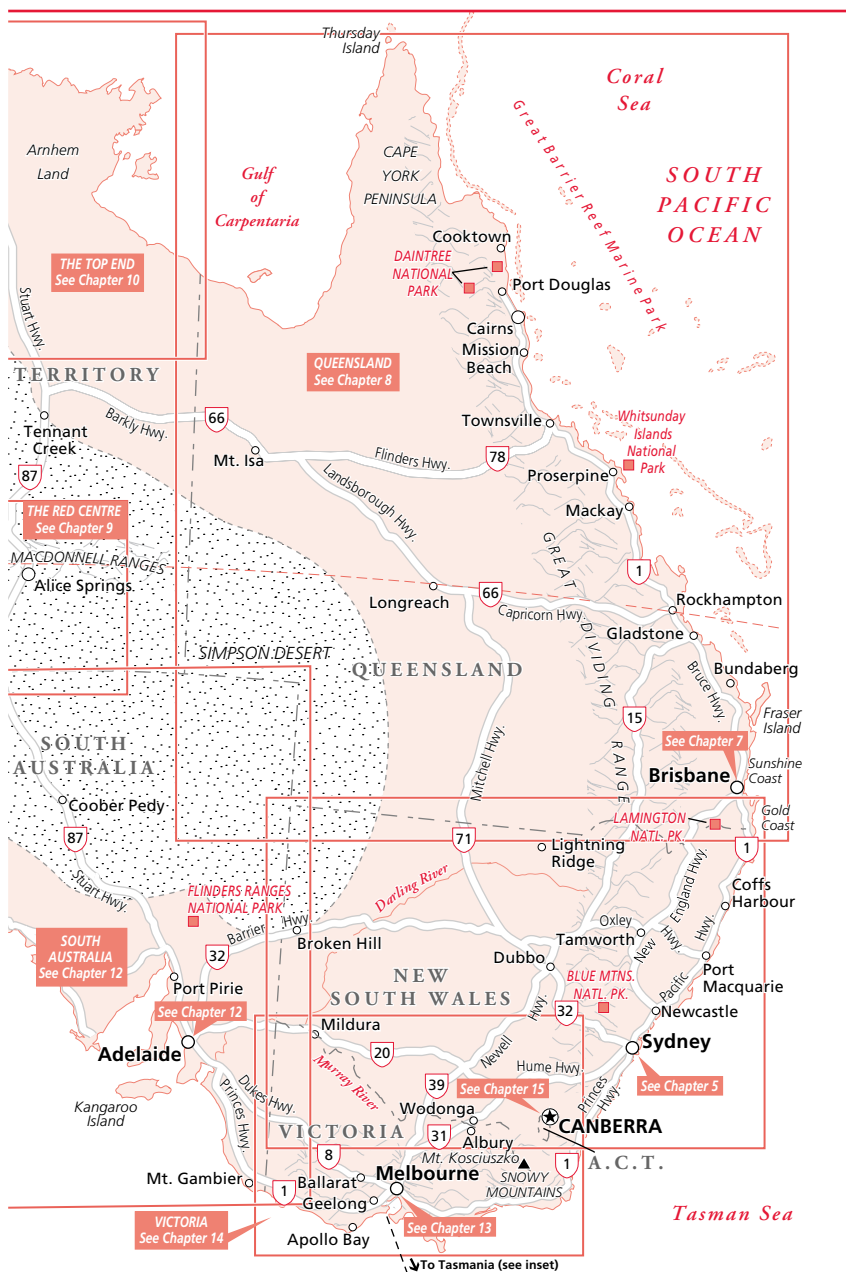
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## 1 THE TOP TRAVEL EXPERIENCES

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- **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 There & Getting Around" in chapter 3.
- **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 5, "Sydney."
- **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. 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 8, "Queensland & the Great Barrier Reef."

- **Exploring the Wet Tropics Rainforest (QLD):** Folks who come from such skyscraper cities as New York 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 8.
- **Bareboat Sailing (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 the 74 island gems of the Whitsundays. 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" and "The North Coast," in chapter 8.
- **Exploring Kata Tjuta (the Olgas) & Uluru (NT):** This sacred, mysterious, and utterly unforgettable landscape may well be the highlight of your time in Australia. Uluru and Kata Tjuta demand at least 3 days to see everything there is to offer. See "Uluru–Kata Tjuta National Park," in chapter 9.
- **Taking an Aboriginal Culture Tour in 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. 446.
- **Discovering the Kimberley (WA):** Australia's last frontier, the Kimberley is

a sometimes romantic, sometimes rough and ready cocktail of South Sea pearls, red mountain ranges, aqua seas, deadly crocodiles, Aboriginal rock art, and million-acre ranches in a never-ending wilderness. Cross it by four-wheel-drive, swim under waterfalls, ride a camel along the beach in Broome, be besotted by the awesome striped splendor of the Bungle Bungle, and more. See chapter 11, "Perth & Western Australia."

- **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 11.
- **Drinking Some of Australia's Best Wines (SA):** Despite its larger-than-life reputation in the wine world, the Barossa Valley is a snug collection of country towns surrounded by vineyards that is very easy to explore on a day trip from Adelaide. See chapter 12, "Adelaide & South Australia."
- **Getting Dusty in the Desert (SA):** Get a taste of what life is like in the Outback in the vast arid plains, salt lakes, and underground mining towns north of Adelaide; and see some of the world's oldest mountains in the dramatically beautiful Flinders Ranges. See chapter 12, "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 scattering of pillars of red rock standing in isolation in the foaming Southern Ocean. See "The Great Ocean Road," in chapter 14.

## **Tips** A Note on Abbreviations

In the listings below and throughout the book, **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.

## 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**, in Perth (☎ 08/9259 0749; [www.rivergods.com.au](http://www.rivergods.com.au)), even takes you on a sea-kayaking day trip to snorkel with wild sea lions and to 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 8. For information about Perth and Western Australia, see chapter 11.
- **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 6.
- **Abseiling (Rappelling) in the Blue Mountains** (NSW): Careening 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 novices and the more experienced. See "The Blue Mountains," in chapter 6.
- **White-Water Rafting on the Tully River** (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," in chapter 8.
- **Four-Wheel-Driving on Fraser Island** (QLD): All roads here are sand, and even spectacular 75-Mile Beach is a designated road. Getting around by 4x4 on the biggest sand island in the world is quite an experience. 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 8.
- **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—Broome and Exmouth, in Western Australia (see chapter 11), and Darwin in the Top End (see chapter 10) are also hot spots.
- **Canoeing the Top End** (NT): Paddling between the sun-drenched ocher 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 10.

- **Surfing:** No visit to Oz could really be considered complete without checking out one of the iconic Aussie activities—surfing. It's not just the rush of the waves that pulls people in, it's the ethos and everything that goes with surfing. Every state has its special spots where the surf can be especially challenging. Some of the best breaks are in Margaret River in Western Australia (see chapter 11), and Bells Beach in Victoria (see chapter 14),

which both host tournaments where the world's best come to pit their skills against the waves and other surfers.

- **Skiing in the Victorian Alps (VIC):** When you've had enough coral and sand—and if it's winter—you can hit the slopes in Victoria. Where else can you swish down the mountain between gum trees? See “The High Country,” in chapter 14.

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### 3 THE BEST PLACES TO VIEW WILDLIFE

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- **Pebbly Beach (NSW):** The eastern gray kangaroos that inhabit Murrumbidgee 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 Along the Princes Highway,” in chapter 6.
- **Montague Island (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 Along the Princes Highway,” in chapter 6.
- **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 Along the Princes Highway,” in chapter 6.
- **Lone Pine Koala Sanctuary (QLD):** Cuddle a koala (and have your photo taken doing it) at this park in Brisbane, 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 8.
- **Australian Butterfly Sanctuary (QLD):** Walk through the biggest butterfly “aviary” in Australia, in Kuranda, near Cairns, and you'll spot some of the most gorgeous butterflies on the continent, 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 spot possums, lizards, pythons, and 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 8.

- **Heron Island (QLD):** There's wonderful wildlife on this "jewel in the reef" off Gladstone 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," in chapter 8. Mon Repos Turtle Rookery, near Bundaberg in Queensland (see "Up Close & Personal with a Turtle," p. 349) and the Northwest Cape in Western Australia (see "The Coral Coast" in chapter 11) are two other good turtle-watching sites.
- **Currumbin Wildlife Sanctuary (QLD):** Tens of thousands of unbelievably pretty red, blue, green, and yellow rainbow lorikeets have been screeching into this park on the Gold Coast 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. 368.
- **Kakadu National Park (NT):** A third of Australia's bird species live in Kakadu; so do lots of saltwater crocs. A cruise on the Yellow Water Billabong, and 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 10.
- **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 June. A mini-industry takes snorkelers out to swim alongside the sharks as they feed (on plankton, not snorkelers). See "The Coral Coast," in chapter 11.
- **Tangalooma (QLD), Bunbury and Rockingham (WA), and Monkey Mia (WA):** In several places, you can see, hand-feed, or swim with wild dolphins. At Bunbury and Rockingham, 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 7 and 11.
- **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 12.
- **Eyre Peninsula (SA):** Swimming with wild sea lions in the waters off Baird Bay and Port Lincoln on the Eyre Peninsula is a truly amazing experience and one not to be missed. See "Swimming with Sea Creatures," in chapter 12.

## 4 THE BEST OUTBACK EXPERIENCES

- **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 6.

- **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 molehill scenery made by the old sun-bleached mine tailings. See “Outback New South Wales,” in chapter 6.
- **Uluru–Kata Tjuta National Park** (NT): Uluru will enthrall you with its eerie beauty. Nearby Kata Tjuta is equally interesting, so make the time to wander through the Valley of the Winds. Hike around Uluru’s base, burn around it on a Harley-Davidson, saunter up to it on a camel . . . but don’t climb it. Don’t go home until you’ve felt the powerful heartbeat of the desert. See “Uluru–Kata Tjuta National Park,” in chapter 9.
- **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 9.
- **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, in Watarrka National Park, about 320km (198 miles) from Alice Springs in one direction, with Uluru in the other. Trek the dramatic rim or take the easier shady route along the bottom. See “Kings Canyon,” in chapter 9.

- **“Inside Australia”** (WA): “Inside Australia” provides a modern take on the Outback, with 51 metal figures scattered across Lake Ballard, a broad, dry salt lake set in rough desert country. About 55km (34 miles) west of Menzies along a gravel road, British sculptor Antony Gormley (of “Angel of the North” fame) created this unique installation based on computer scans of the Menzies residents. See “The Goldfields” in chapter 11.
- **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 12.
- **The Gibb River Road** (WA): The Kimberley is remote, rough, and rugged, and this bone-shaker is its only road. Driving here takes you through dramatic red ranges and past gloriously cool and welcoming falls and waterholes. Facilities are few and far between, other than outlying Aboriginal communities and million-acre-plus cattle stations. See “The Kimberley: A Far-Flung Wilderness,” in chapter 11.

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## 5 THE BEST BEACHES

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- **Palm Beach** (NSW): 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 5, “Sydney.”



- **Hyams Beach** (NSW): This beach in off-the-beaten-path Jervis Bay is said to be the whitest in the world. You need to wear sun block 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 Along the Princes Highway,” in chapter 6.
- **Four Mile Beach** (QLD): The sea is turquoise, the sun is warm, the palms sway, and the low-rise hotels starting to line this country beach in Port Douglas 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 sting-ers. Come from June through September to avoid them, or confine your swim-ming to the stinger net the rest of the year. See “Port Douglas,” in chapter 8.
- **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 rain-forest, and the tiny town of Mission Beach makes itself invisible behind the leaves. Visit from June through Sep-tember to avoid marine sting-ers. See “The North Coast,” in chapter 8.
- **Whitehaven Beach** (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 fanta-size that the cruise boat is going to leave without you. See “The Whitsunday Coast & Islands” in chapter 8.
- **Surfers Paradise Beach** (QLD): Actu-ally, 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 that it squeaks, great surf, and fresh breezes—turn your back on the tacky high-rises. Surfers will like Burleigh Heads. See “The Gold Coast,” in chapter 8.
- **Cable Beach** (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 meet-ing the green sea that gives this Broome beach its exotic appeal? Maybe it’s the 26km (16 miles) of white sand. The only recommended time to swim here is June through September, when deadly marine sting-ers are largely absent. See “The Kimberley,” in chapter 11.
- **Cottesloe Beach** (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 11, “Perth & Western Australia.”
- **Wineglass Bay** (TAS): This spectacular crescent of pristine beach in Freycinet National Park regularly makes lists of the world’s top beaches. Find out why. See chapter 16, “Tasmania.”

## 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,” in chapter 8.
- **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 8.
- **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,” in chapter 8.
- **The *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,” in chapter 8.
- **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 8.
- **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,” in chapter 8.
- **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,” in chapter 8.
- **Rottneest 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 sea garden. The sunken grotto of Fishhook Bay is great for fish life. See “Side Trips from Perth,” in chapter 11.
- **Ningaloo Reef (WA):** A well-kept secret is how we’d describe Australia’s second great coral reef, which stretches 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 June. See “The Coral Coast,” in chapter 11.

## 7 THE BEST PLACES TO BUSHWALK

- **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 6.
- **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. The new **Ngaro Sea Trail** allows active travelers to combine kayaking sea routes with walks on Hook, Whitsunday, and South Molle islands. See “The Whitsunday Coast & Islands,” in chapter 8.
- **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 8.
- **Larapinta Trail (NT):** You can start from Alice Springs in the Red Centre 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 9.
- **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 10.
- **The Bibbulmun Track (WA):** Australia’s answer to the great Appalachian Trail, the Bibbulmun weaves its way through almost 1,000km (625 miles) of some of WA’s finest scenery. It starts in the hills outside Perth and then swirls through granite hills and jarrah forests, south to the great karri forests of the southwest, and then along the dramatic south coast before reaching WA’s oldest town, Albany. The walk can be done in bits, connecting where it crosses major roads, or in much longer stretches, utilizing the many timber shelters built 1 day’s walking apart. There are also “Walking Break” packages, based on the towns through which the track passes. See “The South Coast” in chapter 11.
- **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,” in chapter 11.
- **The Great Ocean Walk (VIC):** This 91km (56-mile) trail from Apollo Bay to Glenample Homestead (near the Twelve Apostles) on Victoria’s Great Ocean Road is designed so walkers can step on and 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 “The Great Ocean Walk,” in chapter 14.

- **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 16.
- **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," in chapter 16.

- **Maria Island (TAS):** Whether you take a 4-day guided walk or a day trip by ferry, Maria Island National Park has it all: abundant wildlife, convict ruins, untouched sandy beaches, mountains, and fossil cliffs. The park covers 11,550 hectares (28,541 acres), including 1,878 hectares (4,641 acres) of marine reserve and the 7.4-hectare (18-acre) Ile des Phoques. See "Walking Maria Island" in chapter 16.

## 8 THE BEST PLACES FOR ABORIGINAL CULTURE

- **Umbarra Aboriginal Cultural Centre (NSW):** This center in Wallaga Lake, near Narooma, offers boomerang- and spear-throwing instruction, painting with natural ochers, discussions on Aboriginal culture, and guided walking tours of Aboriginal sacred sites. See p. 227.
- **Tjapukai Aboriginal Cultural Park (QLD):** This multimillion-dollar center near Cairnes showcases the history of the Tjapukai people—with their Dreamtime creation history and their often-harrowing experiences since the white man arrived—using film, superb theatrical work, and dance performance. Its Aboriginal art-and-crafts gift shop is one of the country's best. See p. 288.
- **Anangu Tours (NT):** The Anangu are the owners of 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," in chapter 9.
- **Manyallaluk—The Dreaming Place (NT):** This Aboriginal community near

Katherine 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 10.

- **Mangarrayi People (NT):** Mike Keighley of **Far Out Adventures** (☎ 0427/152 288; [www.farout.com.au](http://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 10.
- **Injalak Arts and Crafts Centre (NT):** This nonprofit community arts center at Gunbalanya (Oenpelli) in Arnhem Land draws its inspiration from Injalak Hill, a site rich in rock paintings. Watch the artists work; buy fine indigenous contemporary art, carvings, and weavings at their source; or take a guided tour and learn about the Dreaming stories of this amazing place. See p. 439.
- **Kings Park Indigenous Heritage Tour (WA):** Greg Nannup's descriptions of the traditional use of the park, as well as

local Aboriginal myths and beliefs, add another dimension to one's understanding and enjoyment of Kings Park in

Perth. His telling of the "Creation" story is superb. See p. 471.

## 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 Along the Princes Highway" in chapter 6.
- **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 6.
- **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," in chapter 8.
- **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," in chapter 8.
- **Broome** (WA): This romantic pearling port on the remote Kimberley coast on the Indian Ocean blends Aussie corrugated-iron architecture with the red pagoda roofs of Chinatown. 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," in chapter 11.
- **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 check out the operations of the Royal Flying Doctor Service. See "The Goldfields," in chapter 11.
- **Goolwa** (SA): At the mouth of Australia's longest river, the Murray, this historic port is full of beautiful sandstone buildings, many of them now art galleries and restaurants. Take a walk along the river's edge, past historic boatsheds and slipways, where paddle steamers once docked, or head out to the sand dune boardwalk for great coastal views. The wineries of McLaren Vale are a short drive away. See "The Fleurieu Peninsula," in chapter 12.

- **Coober Pedy** (SA): Because of the intense summer heat, and because the inhabitants who've spent their lives excavating opal mines are pretty handy when it comes to digging out underground passages, the townsfolk here have created a subterranean town—the biggest in Australia. Even the churches are underground. See “Outback South Australia,” in chapter 12.
- **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 16.

## 10 THE BEST MUSEUMS

- **Australian National Maritime Museum** (NSW): The best things about this Sydney 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. 152.
- **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. 394.
- **Australian Aviation Heritage Centre** (NT): The pride of this hangar in Darwin 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 10.
- **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 10.
- **Western Australian Maritime Museum & Shipwreck Galleries** (WA): Housed in the historic port precinct of Fremantle, this museum, and its adjacent galleries, 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. 478.
- **New Norcia Museum and Art Gallery** (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 “New Norcia: A Touch of Spain in Australia,” in chapter 11.
- **The Migration Museum** (SA): Just like the U.S., Australia is a land of immigrants, and this Adelaide museum tells their stories. It's an innovative museum that doesn't pull any punches, letting firsthand stories (many written by visitors and posted on notice boards) tell the history without the gloss of hindsight or political agendas. See p. 559.

- **National Museum of Australia** (ACT): Australia's national museum is housed in an innovative, purpose-built building and profiles 50,000 years of indigenous heritage, settlement since 1788, and key events including Federation and the 2000 Sydney Olympics. There are five permanent galleries and changing exhibitions. See p. 690.
- **Old Melbourne Gaol** (VIC): This historic prison, with its tiny cells and spooky collection of death masks and artifacts of 19th-century prison life, was the scene of 135 hangings, including that of notorious bushranger (and Australian folk hero) Ned Kelly, in 1880. You can also visit the former City Watch House and the old Magistrate's Court. See chapter 13.
- **National Sports Museum** (VIC): This outstanding museum inside the Melbourne Cricket Ground (p. 627) tells Australia's sporting story from its early beginnings to the present, celebrating Australian sporting heroes, memorable moments, and achievements. It includes the Australian Cricket Hall of Fame and the Sport Australia Hall of Fame, and has a large interactive area popular with all ages. See p. 623.

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## 11 THE BEST LUXURY ACCOMMODATIONS

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- **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. 116.
- **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 bar. See p. 318.
- **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): 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. 340.
- **Longitude 131°** (Uluru, 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. It's very exclusive and very expensive, but you experience the Outback in style. See p. 414.



- **El Questro Homestead** (The Kimberley, WA; ☎ 1300/134 044 in Australia, or 08/9169 1777): Charming country decor spiced up with Indonesian antiques, great cuisine, strict privacy, 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. 536.
- **Cable Beach Club Resort Broome** (WA; ☎ 1800/199 099 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. 542.
- **The Como 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. 611.
- **Hyatt Hotel 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. 684.
- **The Islington** (Hobart, TAS; ☎ 1800/703 006 in Australia, or 03/6220 2123): This Regency-style house, built in Hobart's "dress circle" in 1847, may well be the most beautiful, personal, and exclusive small hotel in Australia. A modern extension has a soaring ceiling and glass walls, with views of Mt. Wellington. See p. 705.
- **Southern Ocean Lodge** (Kangaroo Island, SA; ☎ 02/9918 4355): Australia's only super luxury wilderness lodge sits high on the cliff tops overlooking a wild and windswept bay. If you can drag yourself away from the view and resist the spa, the wilderness safaris offer some of the best wildlife viewing opportunities in Australia. See p. 581.

## 12 THE BEST MODERATE ACCOMMODATIONS

- **Hotel George Williams** (Brisbane, QLD; ☎ 1800/064 858 in Australia, or 07/3308 0700): It's hard to believe that this trendy, clean, and bright hotel is a Y. This is what an affordable hotel should be like, with helpful staff, a pleasant, inexpensive restaurant, and the kind of services you'd expect to be paying more for. See p. 249.
- **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. 308.
- **Miss Maud Swedish Hotel** (Perth, WA; ☎ 1800/998 022 in Australia, or 08/9325 3900): 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. 462.

- **North Adelaide Heritage Group** (Adelaide, SA; ☎ 08/8272 1355): The very elegant Bishop's Garden, on Molesworth Street, is just one of 18 beautifully restored historic properties in the portfolio. Originally the house and gardens of Bishop Nutter Thomas, the fourth Anglican Bishop of Adelaide, it's full of gorgeous antiques and artwork

collected by the current owners, Rodney and Regina Twiss. See p. 556.

- **York Mansions** (Launceston, TAS; ☎ 03/6334 2933): If where you stay is as important to your visit as what you see, don't miss staying here for a night or two. 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. 721.

### 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. 235.
- **Paradise Bay Eco Escape** (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 (formerly South Long Island Nature Lodge). Sea kayak, snorkel, swim, hike rainforest trails, dine with other guests outside under the Milky Way, and take sailing trips 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. 340.
- **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) and **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.
- **Emma Gorge Resort** (The Kimberley, WA; ☎ 1300/134 044 in Australia, 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. 536.
- **Prairie Hotel** (Flinders Ranges, SA; ☎ 08/8648 4844): From the outside, it looks like any other Outback pub, but the guest book is full of Hollywood's A-list. The restaurant is most well-known for its feral food (camel, kangaroo, emu, and bush herbs and

native spices); keep an eye out for the distinctive road signs advertising the menu on the way into the town. The rooms in the historic hotel have also become a favorite with visiting movie stars, as Flinders is often the backdrop for films. See p. 592.

- **Freycinet Lodge** (Freycinet National Park, Coles Bay, TAS; ☎ 1800/420 155 or 03/6225 7000): 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. 717.
- **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. 724.

- **Sal Salis**, previously Ningaloo Reef Retreat (Coral Coast, WA; ☎ 02/9571 6677): Hidden within the sand dunes, just meters from the Indian Ocean and the magical Ningaloo Reef, is this tiny ecoretreat. The large safari tents are set up on raised timber floors, the sunsets are superb and kangaroos bound past. It's privacy and peace par excellence. See p. 529.
- **Bamurru Plains** (Kakadu, NT; ☎ 1300/790 561 in Australia, or 02/9571 6677): Set on a working buffalo station on the edge of the Mary River floodplains, just west of Kakadu National Park, this stylish luxury lodge offers a rich array of wildlife encounters and an ecofriendly environment. Accommodation is in luxury tents with one-way screens to ensure the stupendous views aren't obstructed. See p. 442.

## 14 THE BEST BED & BREAKFASTS

- **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. 118.
- **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. 190.
- **Casuarina Estate** (Pokolbin, Hunter Valley, NSW; ☎ 02/4998 7888): Each suite here has an unusual theme, like the Moulin Rouge, the Oriental, Casanova's Loft, the Mariners Suite, Out of Africa, Palais Royale, and Romeo's Retreat. The most popular is the Bordello, with a pedestal king-size bed, voluptuous pink curtains, and strategically placed mirrors. See p. 204.
- **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. 224.
- **Cotterville** (Melbourne, VIC; ☎ 1300/301 630 in Australia, or 03/9826 9105): A beautifully and lovingly restored terrace house with elegant courtyard gardens, where you will be surrounded with art and music and entertained by gregarious hosts and their friendly dogs. A home away from home in every sense. See p. 612.
- **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. 297.

- **Marae** (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. Owners John and Pam Burden promise a warm welcome and a wonderful breakfast. See p. 309.
- **Fothergills of Fremantle** (Perth, WA; ☎ 08/9335 6784): Two lovely old terrace houses have been converted into a classy B&B, within walking distance of the delights of Fremantle. The balconies are great for sundowners, and the place is filled with owner David Cooke's wonderful art collection. See p. 464.
- **The Rocks Albany** (Albany, WA; ☎ 08/9842 5969): The Rocks is a superbly

sited and furnished heritage mansion. The double-story stone building, enclosed by broad timber balconies, is set within a .8-hectare (2-acre) garden with sweeping views across Albany's harbor. It was built in 1882 and later became the summer residence of WA's governors; it has since been restored to that level of luxury with facilities such as billiard and piano rooms, and reopened in 2006 as an exclusive B&B. See p. 506.

- **Collingrove Homestead** (Angaston, the Barossa Valley, SA; ☎ 08/8564 2061): This grand homestead was built for the original Angaston patriarch, John Howard Angas, in 1856. The house is full of original family furnishings and memorabilia. It's open as a museum during the day, but you can stay in one of two rooms within the historic homestead or several en-suite rooms in former maids' quarters. See p. 569.

## 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. 133.
- **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. 140.
- **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. 133.
- **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. In 2007, the restaurant ranked no. 5 in the world! See p. 138.
- **e'cco bistro** (Brisbane, QLD; ☎ 07/3831 8344): Simple food elegantly done has won this small but stylish bistro a stack of awards, and you'll 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.
- **Donovans** (Melbourne, VIC; ☎ 03/9534 8221): A glass in hand while the

sun goes down over St. Kilda beach, watched from the veranda at Donovans, is a perfect way to end the day. This 1920s bathing pavilion has been transformed into a welcoming beach-house-style restaurant, complete with views across the sand and a seafood-rich menu. See p. 618.

- **Star Anise** (Subiaco, Perth, WA; ☎ 08/9381 9811): This small restaurant tucked away on a leafy suburban street serves up tasty, innovative, Asian-influenced food. The menu is kept simple, with just five courses in each section, but each dish is a gem. See p. 467.
- **Voyager Estate** (Margaret River, WA; ☎ 08/9757 6354): Everything about this winery and restaurant reeks of class. Superb Cape Dutch architecture, impeccable gardens, and imaginative cuisine make this a top dining spot.

Recommended wines available by the glass. See p. 502.

- **Prairie Hotel** (Flinders Ranges, SA; ☎ 08/8648 4844): While you may be tempted to dismiss the hotel's signature dish, a "feral mixed grill" (camel sausage, goat chop, kangaroo filet, and wallaby kabob on mashed potatoes with gravy), as a tourist gimmick, the Prairie's food is definitely worth going out of your way for. Aside from a few other novelty dishes (roo burger or wallaby stir-fry), the entrees are a blend of different tastes and textures combining native foods with more contemporary ingredients. See p. 592.
- **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. 613.

## 16 THE BEST LOWER-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. 135.
- **Green Papaya** (East Brisbane, QLD; ☎ 07/3217 3599): 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. New owners promise the same standard of service regulars are used to, and they have retained the same chef. 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.

- **Red Ochre Grill** (Alice Springs, NT; ☎ 08/8952 9614): "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. 401.
- **Romany Restaurant** (Northbridge, Perth, WA; ☎ 08/9328 8042): A full house on a Tuesday night speaks volumes. Good hearty Italian meals are served quickly, in a companionable atmosphere. Food and wine prices are eminently reasonable. See p. 466.
- **MoVida** (Melbourne, VIC; ☎ 03/9663 3038): This little corner of Spain is relaxed and fun, with seriously good

food and good wine. Melbournians flock here, for the choice of tapas or *raciones*. See p. 616.

- **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. 709.
- **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; there's nowhere else quite like this in Queensland for atmosphere and terrific food. See p. 362.

- **Star of Greece Café** (Port Willunga, SA; ☎ 08/8557 7420): Don't let appearances fool you. This little 1950s kiosk perched high on the cliff top overlooking the coastline of Port Willunga, around an hour's drive from Adelaide, serves up some of the best seafood you'll find in the country. And the views are pretty spectacular, too. See p. 574.