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Capella Lodge, Lord Howe Island

Capella's biggest drawing card is the only one that matters on this World Heritage Site island 485 miles east of Sydney: location. Situated on Lord Howe's stunning southern end, the nine-room Capella is the island's only luxury lodge with beach, lagoon, and mountain views. What it lacks in opulence (bathrooms are merely functional), it more than makes up for in superb service, loads of beach-shack chic, and an air of absolute privacy. Visitors, who arrive on a Dash-8 twin-propeller plane, will find themselves catapulted back in time: no cell phone reception, no traffic lights, no cats (the scourge of Australasia's birds), a speed limit of 15 miles per hour, and a cap of 393 tourists at a time. This 50-square-mile crescent in the Pacific boasts the southernmost coral reef in the world and a wealth of wilderness walks that include everything from primeval banyan forests to endangered ground-dwelling birds. **When to go:** December through February. **Which room to book:** The Lidgbird Suite, for its deck and plunge pool (800-441-6880; lordhowe.com; doubles, \$288-\$423; ☎).