

AUSTRALIAN ISSUE

AUSTRALIA

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50

**PAGES OF
GREAT KITCHEN &
BATHROOM IDEAS**

**DESIGN
STARS**
YOUNG CREATIVES
IN THE CLASS OF 2011

**MELBOURNE'S COOL NEW
RESTAURANT MAESTROS**

AUSTRALIA'S MOST
LUXURIOUS RESORTS

LOCAL HEROES

- Brian Hess
- Gene Sherman
- Hannah Tribe
- Michael Robilliard
- Telly Theodore
- Rod Smith
- Marco Meneguzzi
- Matt Gibson
- Stephen Jolson
- Rob Mills

OPEN FOR INSPECTION

An Iain Halliday interior welcomes spring's arrival

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THIS PAGE Hayley and James Baillie bring new standards of luxury to Lord Howe Island with the Lidgbird Pavilion at Capella Lodge. OPPOSITE PAGE Palate Restaurant at Pure Tasmania's Saffire Freycinet, owned by the Farrell family.

HOLIDAY MAKERS

When a pristine environment hosts a sensitive tourism venture, the result is invariably a victory for good sense and the guests willing to pay for the experience. Eight Australian operators are leading the way.

WORDS PAUL MYERS

PASSENGER



JAMES AND HAYLEY BAILLIE

BAILLIE LODGES In tourism terms, theirs may be the perfect marriage. Having been founding managing director of P&O Australian Resorts, James Baillie understands the ingredients needed for successful, exclusive tourism projects in special locations. Hayley, as Dick Smith's daughter and with a background in expedition travel, appreciates the sense of discovery that occurs in remarkable natural environments.

So when the Baillies [2] decided in 2002 to build Capella Lodge on Lord Howe Island, after Hayley had urged James to pay the place a visit, they embarked on their own business adventure that has since propelled Baillie Lodges to the summit of style in pristine, unique places.

Indeed, James says that the more difficult the project in terms of access, approval and environmental consideration, the more appealing it is as a challenge. This was certainly so on Lord Howe Island, where owning land is difficult and environmental constraints are stringent. Opened in 2004, Capella Lodge [5] blends perfectly into the World Heritage-listed island's environment without compromising luxury. So too on Kangaroo Island, where Southern Ocean Lodge [3, 3 and 4], now in its fourth year, complements a remarkable landscape and has won global acclaim.

James believes the two properties – with their individuality, small scale and sensitive design – represent the future of Australian tourism. "Just as New Zealand did well with luxury lodges, so can we in our own way. Australia has so much amazing open space and wilderness. The key is to establish great properties, while ensuring the environment isn't trashed."

For now, another project – Remarkable Lodge, on the Tasman Peninsula – is on hold until the economy improves. But not so a new luxury lodge in Sydney's The Rocks, aimed largely at the international market. James is in final negotiations to combine three heritage sites in the historic area and develop what he says will be a six-star B&B with 30 to 32 suites, like Hobart's Islington Hotel and Queenstown's Eichardt Private Hotel in New Zealand. Opening is expected in 18 to 24 months.

The Baillies are also discussing with the Victorian government the idea of developing a property on the Great Ocean Road in the style of Southern Ocean Lodge. "We're seriously looking at it – it's on the cards," James says.

As for their own preferences, it's the wow factor that catches their eye. "We're looking for that jaw-dropping view when we arrive – that special experience when you turn a corner," he explains. "We're coastal people, so for us the wildness of the ocean has a special appeal." baillielodges.com.au



CHARLES CARLOW

WILD BUSH LUXURY Inspired by the luxury tented safari camps of Africa, where he spent two years in the mid-90s, Charles Carlow [7] has adapted that idea into a unique, eye-opening Australian experience.

The products he markets under his Wild Bush Luxury brand are world leaders in nature-based tourism. They include Bamurru Plains on the Mary River floodplain, near Kakadu National Park in the Northern Territory; Sal Salis on the Ningaloo Coast – a new World Heritage area – near Exmouth, Western Australia; Arkaba Station in South Australia's Flinders Ranges; and Blue Mountains Private Safaris [8] to the west of Sydney.

Early next year he will introduce Windayl River Camp on the Ord River, in the far north of Western Australia, its fishing theme adding another dimension to an already broad portfolio.

Each of the experiences is based on wildlife and has a strong conservation link, coupled with creature comforts that go well beyond outdoor camping basics – but which aren't, in Charles's own words, "gold-plated" [6]. Nevertheless, there is little lacking at each remote location and although they are aimed at a well-heeled, well-travelled and knowledgeable market, there is nothing pretentious or artificial.

"Our guests eat well, drink well and sleep well, but there's no resemblance to a five-star hotel," Charles explains.

And while he has hosted English landed gentry and high-flying international executives at all his properties, most guests are Australians keen to go off the beaten track and learn more about their own country and the host of natural wonders on their doorstep.

"We want to open people's eyes and minds and give them some basic knowledge about wildlife and conservation," says Charles. "Our guides are the key. They have a real passion for the region and for what they do. They're almost ecologists." wildbushluxury.com



PASSENGER



THE OATLEY FAMILY

HAMILTON ISLAND As the third generation of the Oatley family involved in Hamilton Island since it bought the Whitsunday property in 2003, Nicky Tindill [10] has helped create and foster a new refined, upscale persona for the tourist haven. Nicky is the daughter of Hamilton Island Enterprises chairman Sandy Oatley [10] and granddaughter of owner Bob Oatley (of Rosemount Wines fame) and, as the island's brand and events manager, has been actively involved in several developments that have repositioned it in the market.

Key among these has been Qualia [9 and 11], a 60-villa complex with accompanying spa on the island's northern peninsula that has introduced prestige standards of accommodation, food and exclusivity. It was followed by 34 recently completed Yacht Club Villas designed by Walter Borda near the central marina. Then there was an acclaimed golf course (designed by five-times British Open champion Peter Thomson), which opened on adjacent Dent Island in 2009.

Bob Oatley became acquainted with Hamilton Island through sailing (he owns the racing yacht Wild Oats XI) and, in particular, the island's race week – held each August – that attracts yachts, skippers and crew from all over Australia. Nicky says her grandfather, now in his 80s, became bored after he sold Rosemount Wines. Restrained from returning to the wine industry after the sale, he found in Hamilton Island an investment that has more than maintained his focus and business-development skills.

Qualia's architect, Chris Beckingham, blended the project into the bushland environment while preserving views, and interior designer George Freedman ensured a simple, elegant and understated appeal. About 20 per cent of Qualia's guests are now international.

The island's Reef View Hotel and Palm Bungalows, which opened in 1990, have just been refurbished, and next on the extensive upgrade list is the Beach Club. Change is in the air. hamiltonisland.com.au



TERRY KALJO

CONTEMPORARY HOTELS Trying to take a luxury holiday with young children can prove problematic, with some prestige hotels and resorts differentiating themselves by excluding youngsters under 12. Terry Kaljo's Contemporary Hotels portfolio, however, is happy for guests to bring their children, whatever their age. Terry owns about half the 25 properties in the ever-expanding group, including her first tourism venture, the edgy Medusa Hotel in Sydney's inner-city Darlinghurst.

The original principle was to create stylish, contemporary accommodation that matches the highest international standards. But when the global financial crisis created problems in the market for luxury serviced accommodation, Terry [13] decided to branch into private boutique properties – beach houses and villas in prime coastal locations and inner-city or near-city houses and apartments. One exception is The Seidler House in NSW's Southern Highlands, designed by the late Harry Seidler [12], but this unique property's iconic styling and unparalleled wilderness views set it apart anyway.

"There isn't always a lot of choice for families in luxury accommodation, but children are welcome in all our properties," Terry says. "It means guests can have privacy and style, bring in their own food or services and in doing so create their own resort."

This applies especially in the dozen beach houses – including Rockridge, Byron Bay Villa [14 and 15] and Pacific Road House at Palm Beach on Sydney's northern beaches, nearby Clarendon Boat House on Pittwater and Ocean Muse at Port Stephens, north of Newcastle.

Catering mostly for the local market, Terry has created a niche that prospers by word of mouth without the need to advertise. Her city properties – including Sky Loft, Apartment One and Apartment Two at Darlinghurst and others in Potts Point and Darling Point – are in areas with a good choice of restaurants and other amenities. "Position and aspect are very important," she says. "We want our guests to feel as though they're truly on holiday." contemporaryhotels.com.au



THE FARRELL FAMILY

PURE TASMANIA Pure Tasmania, the tourism brand developed by the Farrell family, owners of Australia's oldest and the world's second oldest hotel chain, is a virtual metaphor for a string of boutique developments in their considerable business collection.

Headed by the latest venture, Saffire Freycinet, Pure Tasmania also operates nearby Freycinet Lodge, the Henry Jones Art Hotel [19] and West Point in Hobart, Cradle Mountain Chateau, Strahan Village, the Country Club in Launceston, and Gordon River Cruises.

"Saffire [20, 21 and 22] has become the lighthouse," says managing director Greg Farrell [23] of the property, which opened last year to rave reviews. He's one of five family members – including brother John, as well as sisters Julia, Deborah and Jane – who sit on the company board. "Saffire is about indulgence. The architect's brief was to develop a building that would be internationally recognisable in a short time and organic in form"

Architect Robert Morris-Nunn achieved both in the manta-ray shape of the main building and in the unobtrusive style of the 20 adjacent suites that follow a natural contour towards the shore of Great Oyster Bay. Greg Farrell says that Saffire, aimed primarily at couples, has helped create a new level of tourism awareness in Tasmania.

But rather than rest on their laurels, the Farrells have another bold project on the horizon: a boutique heritage-style property within the Port Arthur Historic Site on the Tasman Peninsula.

"We're working closely with the site's management authority to ensure the development doesn't compete in any way with the historic buildings that are there," Greg explains. "It's going to have a very strong cultural and heritage connection and will reflect how the Australian character was formed. We're also working with the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery to ensure authenticity at the property, and we've even acquired some farms off-site, where we're planning to grow vegetables and fruits of the kind that were produced in the 1800s."

There is no launch date yet for the project, nor a name. But Peter Walker of Circa Architecture (formerly Morris-Nunn & Associates) will lead the project. "We're just waiting for the economy to improve and to meet all the regulatory requirements," Greg adds. puretasmania.com.au



SARINA BRATTON

ORION EXPEDITION CRUISES More than 30 years in the cruise industry have instilled in Sarina Bratton an unyielding belief in stretching the boundaries for her passengers. Before launching Orion Expedition Cruises in 2004, Sarina [16] had run Cunard Lines in Asia Pacific for 14 years and launched Norwegian Capricorn Line in 1998, but these were restricted to mainstream cruising grounds in the Pacific, Caribbean and Mediterranean.

However, remote locations such as Australia's north-west coast, Papua New Guinea, Antarctica and Micronesia beckoned. Today, Orion's two 100-passenger vessels [17] have made the company the leader in Asia-Pacific expedition by cruising to places not served by mainstream lines. After Norwegian Capricorn Line was dissolved in 2000, Sarina began researching new opportunities. "I realised we had to go niche, with the ability to take people in comfort and style to amazing destinations," she says.

Starting with cruises around Australia's spectacular Kimberley coast [18], Orion's itineraries have expanded to the Russian Far East, Borneo, Japan, Vietnam, Cambodia, China, New Zealand and Antarctica. The use of small luxury ships capable of accessing remote areas, spending three weeks at sea without having to refuel and using Zodiac landing craft [18], enables Orion's passengers to venture beyond common ports of call. Engaging with communities in cultural villages, participating in orang-utan rehabilitation programs in Borneo and investigating ancient trade routes of the Spice Islands are now among Orion's varied offerings.

The Kimberley coast remains Sarina's favourite. "To cruise a coastline of 1300 kilometres, with vast wilderness and no infrastructure, is breathtaking," she says. "It's a region where it's difficult for the mind to accept what the eyes are seeing. It's just so amazing." orionexpeditions.com





24



26



THE COWLEY FAMILY

TOWER ESTATE NSW's premier winegrowing region, the Hunter Valley, has long been a favourite of Sydney's Cowley family, so much so that Matt Cowley, the CEO of Tower Estate and two other tourism ventures in the area, has now settled there with his wife and two young children. Matt's father, Ken, the former chief executive of News Limited and the owner and chairman of bush clothing company RM Williams, has long been associated with the Hunter through a grazing property he owns there and from his friendship with late wine entrepreneur Len Evans, who founded Rothbury Estate in 1968 and, 30 years later, Tower Estate.

The Cowleys, who had been involved with Tower from the outset, became its majority shareholder after Len's death in 2006. They've since added Peppers Convent retreat in Pokolbin and nearby Roberts Restaurant to their tourism portfolio. "We've always loved the Hunter," says Matt [25]. "We've loved visiting for a long time and enjoy both the region and its wine, so it's a real privilege now to be able to live here."

The estate's Tower Lodge [24] has 12 individually styled rooms [26], as well as the popular Nine restaurant, and is widely regarded as the best accommodation in the region. Matt believes Tower Estate appeals to people "who want to escape and be pampered". "Most visitors rarely leave the property," he says.

The estate's winemaker, Samantha Connew, formerly of Wirra Wirra in South Australia's McLaren Vale, gives guests an informal insight into winemaking, and Nine's chef, Daniel Hunt serves a nine-course degustation meal in Len Evans's former cellar. An additional complex of 12 villas, each with its own swimming pool, is on the drawing board. Construction is yet to begin, but when complete, it's sure to be yet another drawcard to this perfect location for a getaway. towerestate.com.au

MARILYNNE PASPALEY

PINCTADA HOTELS & RESORTS You can't be as intimately involved in a town as the Paspaley family has been in Broome and not be inspired by it when you launch a new tourism venture. That was the case in 2009 when Marilynne Paspaley added Pinctada Cable Beach to her bespoke local collection, which also comprises McAlpine House and Captain Kennedy House in the famous pearling town and the Kimberley Grande at Kununurra.

Although she grew up in Darwin, Marilynne [27] has long been captivated by the beauty and beguiling nature of Broome, where her family settled after moving from Port Hedland before World War II. "I wanted to capture the essence of Broome in Pinctada," she says.

The architectural inspiration came from her eight-bedroom McAlpine House [29], which was built in 1910 for pearling master Herbert Kennedy and became the Australian home of England's Lord McAlpine in the 80s. Marilynne bought the property in the late 90s and transformed it into a luxury boutique hotel. She liked the way the house allowed people to get to know each other and relax in public areas, so she translated those features into Pinctada. "Guests can put up their feet and unwind without having to go back to their room, and there's a sense of feeling protected and secure," Marilynne explains.

Aimed at what she says are "self-assured experienced travellers with an adventurous spirit", the 72-room Pinctada Cable Beach [28] has become a favourite of east coast visitors to Broome, especially during the cooler months.

Captain Kennedy House, her five-bedroom boutique guesthouse in Broome, and the Kimberley Grande – which Marilynne describes as "a really good country pub" – may be joined by a 120-room hotel and spa on Rottnest Island that is currently in the planning stage. pinctada.com.au



28



29