



Homes for the holidays

The best hideaways across Australia

EAST HOTEL, CANBERRA: This privately owned hotel in Kingston opened its lobby-level Joe's Bar this year, named for the Bisa family patriarch and with a discernible nod to the clan's Italian heritage. It has become a neighbourhood favourite, much loved for its inclusive feel and hearty fare, and with frequent drop-ins from nearby Capital Hill when parliament is sitting. This must please the owners enormously as sociability is everything at East Hotel, which caters well to families with spacious guestrooms equipped with kitchenettes, cleverly concealed laundry facilities and all-white bathrooms stocked with organic Appelles toiletries in apothecary-style packaging. The monochromatic decor is brightened with bursts of mulberry and orange, teal and mustard, and retro chairs and couches have buttoned backs and Scandinavian lines. There's maximum storage and facilities without sacrificing a sense of space across 140 guestrooms and studios, which even include connecting kids' cubbies with bunks and beanbags, junior-sized furniture and Xbox 360s. The long foyer, too, is well conceived and welcoming, with clusters of seating, rugs patterned with big discs of colour and cruiser-bikes lined up for guests' use. Perhaps a leisurely cycle beside Lake Burley Griffin and then settle back at Joe's Bar with a sunshine-coloured aperitivo? More: easthotel.com.au.

SUSAN KUROSAWA

THE RETREAT, LAKE HOUSE, DAYLESFORD: It's hard to imagine how the Wolf-Taskers — chef Alla, artist Allan and their daughter and hotel marketing whiz Larissa — could improve on this consummate Victorian lakefront hotel and restaurant, but they have. The residential Retreat operates as a hotel within a hotel; it's a snug country house (sleeping two couples) that's perfect for a mid-winter escape with al fresco hot tub, and a courtyard garden where the fire pit seems magically to be always blazing. After a private check-in, cocktails and canapés are delivered to The Retreat where the elegant living areas are kitted out with comfy sofas and open fires and stocked with wine, magazines and books. Take a stroll down to the Lake House Salus Spa for a massage or peruse the restaurant's outstanding wine list, perhaps pop up to the delightful Wombat Hill Botanic Gardens where lunch at Alla's garden-to-plate cafe is about as far from



The Retreat as most guests will care to wander. More: lakehouse.com.au.

CHRISTINE McCABE

ARTHOUSE, HOBART: Almost a third of Hobart's holiday-makers visit MONA, the groundbreaking private museum on the banks of the Derwent River, but few will know of Hobart's other hillside art house. Arthouse Salamanca is a 19th-century Marine Board cottage in beautiful Battery Point, a stroll from the weekend markets and MONA ferry. The quaint exterior conceals a canvas of convict-hewn sandstone and brick that artist Genevieve De Couvreur has transformed into a captivating pied-à-terre. The two and a half levels contain two queen-sized bedrooms, two indulgent bathrooms, an entertainer's kitchen (complete with pantry essentials and el Bulli cookbook) and secluded terrace with sparkling river glimpses. There is art everywhere courtesy of De Couvreur, former wife of Charles Blackman and a celebrated artist in her own right, and her collection. It's an exclusive address but babies and children over 12 are welcome, giving families the option of full immersion in the city's cultural life.

More: arthousehobart.com.au.

KENDALL HILL

THE BILLI RESORT, BROOME: A little bit of Africa arrived in Broome in 2011 with the opening of The Billi Resort. Amanda and Dave Treleaven's boutique prop-



erty includes swish safari-style eco-tents with cow hides on the floor, faux-fur throws draped across beds with crisp white linens, ensuites with a freestanding tub, and a kitchenette out the back. Fast-forward a few years and the three kingsize tents now boast aircon (with the three queen-size tents to follow in 2016). The lush landscaped grounds also include eight two-bedroom villas and a studio. The tents and villas, connected via raised timber walkways, encircle an attractive pool. Guests can jump onto bicycles (included in the rate) to explore Broome. The Treleavens also run a car-hire business and it's possible to rent a vehicle by the hour to pop out to the shops. Just remember to give way to Cable Beach's famous camel trains, which lope past the driveway four times a day. More: thebilli.com.au.

KATRINA LOBLEY

B & B WANULLA, TOOWOOMBA: This southeast Queensland city preserves old-fashioned city parks amid streets named for World War I battlefields in its Scottish-heritage Caledonian Estate district. Here, beside Queen's Park, B & B Wanulla is a gracious family home offering two guestrooms, both with ensuite bathrooms (one has a bath that accommodates two, with space to rest champagne flutes). Owners Margaret and Steve Savage have thought of every detail for aesthetics and comfort — excellent linen and bedding, Yves Delorme robes from Paris, vases overflowing with garden roses, polished wood, antiques and artworks. Guests use the traditionally furnished sitting and dining rooms, iron-lace veranda overlooking the roses and glassed-in breakfast room where the morning repast is perfection in preparation, generosity and attention to detail. There's a heated terracotta warmer beneath pastries folded in linen, quality mueslis, beautiful fruits, preserves and hot dishes, such as eggs with smoked salmon or eggs benedict, cooked to order by Steve. More: bandbwanulla.com.au.

JUDITH ELLEN

SATELLITE ISLAND, TASMANIA: Tucked in the D'Entrecasteaux Channel, ringed by wild oyster beds and only 40 minutes from Hobart, this magical island is just the ticket for an old-fashioned adventure, the sort that involves bracing cliff walks, beach fires, star gazing or just kicking back with a good book while admiring stunning views across to the snow-capped Hartz mountains. You'll have the island all to yourself but manager Richard Roe is on call for chauffeured tinnie transfers from Bruny and shucking lessons where necessary. Accommodation for up to 12 guests is low key but stylish (think squishy sofas, Belgian linen and Tassie merino throws) in the charming Summer House set high, with long views, or the magical Boathouse opening directly onto the water.



You can do a Robinson Crusoe and collect your own oysters, and snorkel for abalone and sea urchin; or put your hand up and ask Richard to stock the pantry or even dial up a chef. More: satelliteisland.com.au.

CHRISTINE McCABE

CREMORNE POINT MANOR, SYDNEY: The star accommodation at this lower North Shore guesthouse is a chic two-bedroom penthouse with splendid harbour views. It's eight minutes by ferry from Circular Quay to Cremorne Point and then a five-minute walk from the wharf to this refurbished colonial mansion where king and queen-bedded guestrooms are also available. But splurge, please, on the penthouse, which occupies the entire top floor and features a full kitchen equipped with quality appliances, laundry, funky reproduction retro furniture, two bathrooms, entertaining and television-viewing area and a terrace. Isolated from the throngs of tourists across the famous waterway, this homely residence is within cooee of attractions including Maccallum Saltwater Pool, Cremorne Reserve and Taronga Zoo. A stroll up through Cremorne gets you to the Military Road thoroughfare with its myriad shops and dining choices, or pick up supplies for self-catering back at that penthouse, which comes with a privately keyed lift and the



sense of being in a private eyrie towering above the harbour. More: cremornepointmanor.com.au.

JODYS PRATT

SECRET GARDEN COTTAGE, KATOOMBA: The Blue Mountains region west of Sydney is all about cosy guesthouses and rentals, and Katoomba's Secret Garden Cottage is a prime example of the latter. Stepping inside one chilly winter morning, my family and I find a house so warm and welcoming, it feels as if we are moving in. A jazz CD is playing on arrival, wood is stacked by the fireplace; there's sumptuous bedding, plump lounges, extensive movie library, claw-foot bath and gorgeous parterre-style garden. The well-stocked kitchen, with vintage crockery and retro appliances, features a farmhouse table set for tea. This dog-friendly property is not just for winter jaunts, like ours. In summer, explore the mountain villages of Leura, Blackheath and Wentworth Falls, check out the latest exhibition at the Blue Mountains Cultural Centre, visit lovely picnic spots, or escape the heat with high tea at the historic Hydro Majestic Hotel in nearby Medlow Bath. More: secretgarden-cottage.com.au.

SHARON FOWLER

THE FRAMES, SOUTH AUSTRALIA: Rick and Cathy Edmonds grow fruit and wine grapes in South Australia's sun-drenched Riverland; 18 months ago they took a gamble and opened three luxurious riverfront villas near Renmark. In a region dominated by unremarkable shacks, the cubist Frames has become an instant landmark, muscling out above the Murray alongside the old Paringa Bridge. Configured to frame the view upriver, where broad waters wend past red gum-fringed billabongs, the three enormous villas represent the last word in push-button modernity. There are oversized bathtubs boasting needle spray and waterfall settings, infra-red saunas, smart TVs, state-of-the-art kitchens and Hollywood-glam courtyards with swimming pools and cascading curtains of water. Even the bed has a remote control. Yet the real charm here is more down-home: roses from

Clockwise from above, Boathouse, Satellite Island, Tasmania; Arthouse Salamanca, Hobart; Wanulla B & B, Toowoomba

Be warned, at least in the lion's lair, there will be no sleeping in



Cathy's garden, a fridge stocked with local wines and excursions aboard a classic wooden boat. More: theframes.com.au.

CHRISTINE McCABE

JAMALA WILDLIFE LODGE, CANBERRA: Wake up to a lion's roar just metres from your pillow at Jamala Wildlife Lodge housed in the privately owned National Zoo & Aquarium. Choose to share your surrounds with a bear, giraffe, lions, primates or, if preferred, sleep with the fish — there's a Grand Suite with private access to the shark tank and a Reef Room with a view of Maori wrasse and flowery cod. Inspired by multiple trips to African lodges, zoo owners Richard and Maureen Tindale have furnished the accommodation with artworks, mosaics and canopied kingsize beds. But the main attraction is what's just outside the window, with reinforced glass separating guest from beast. It's a very comfortable five-star offering. But be warned, at least in the lion's lair, there will be no sleeping in. More: jamalawildlifelodge.com.au.

ANDREA BLACK

OCEAN HOUSE, LORNE: When esteemed Melbourne architect Rob Mills acquired a block beside Victoria's Great Ocean Road at Lorne he set about creating a handsome retreat to accommodate his family as well as catering to the needs of guests renting the property when the clan wasn't in residence. The result is a modern but relaxed tri-level dwelling between beach and bush that not only defines barefoot chic but has been designed to be cool in summer, warm in winter, and comfortable all year round, tempting guests to kick back and drop out, spending tranquil hours staring at the sea. During winter a slow-combustion fire warms the house; comfy couches can be arranged in front of floor-to-ceiling windows framing the vista, while warm-season occupants should open sliding doors to let the sounds of the bush and crashing surf echo through the breezy living space. More: oceanhouse.com.au.

SARAH NICHOLSON

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