

UP CLOSE AND PERSONAL

Meet the guides from Luxury Lodges of Australia



Experience genuine privilege of place in Australia's remote landscapes, accompanied by the people who know them best.

Enwreathed in some of the continent's most astounding landscapes, Australia's luxury lodges offer truly remarkable experiences of place. Remote tented camps, exclusive countryside retreats, remarkable locations atop cliffs or edged by ocean: united by difference, each property offers unique insight and experience of Australia's most awe-inspiring landscapes.

But it's the people based at each of these locations who make these stays so extraordinary. Passionate and knowledgeable custodians, these are the individuals who'll share their local knowledge and secrets with you, engineering uncommon adventures that showcase the very best of what Australia has to offer along the way.

Lodge managers craft personalised experiences based around your interests. Chefs introduce you to new ingredients and flavours, some not found

anywhere else on Earth. And well-informed guides explain how Australia's unique wildlife adapts to its diverse and dramatic environments, while offering profound insights into our ancient landscapes and indigenous culture.

You'll also discover how these remote environments – locations like the Great Barrier Reef, the Red Centre, the rugged Kimberley, Lord Howe Island, Tasmania, the Barossa Valley wine region, the Outback, Kangaroo Island and the Daintree Rainforest – are sustained through active conservation programs, a profound respect for local culture, and the delivery of economic benefits for local community.

Meet a few of these individuals, and discover they are the glue that binds the Luxury Lodges of Australia to their remote and remarkable locations.



MARK GODBEER

Silky Oaks Lodge, Queensland



After training in a Michelin-starred restaurant in England, and years spent travelling the world as a chef on luxury yachts and at Uluru's Longitude 131°, South African-born Mark Godbeer fell in love with Tropical North Queensland. Today, the Executive Chef of Silky Oaks Lodge channels the resourcefulness he developed cooking in remote locations into delivering guests a dining experience that's as extraordinary as the environment it is created in.

Mark is a self-described "mad scientist", with a reputation for experimental use of native Australian ingredients (many of which his guests have never tasted before). Fostering

strong ties with surrounding communities, Mark makes use of local produce: a remarkable Mt Uncle gin from the nearby Atherton Tablelands, for example, stars in a beetroot and gin-cured salmon, which is paired with salmon caviar, yuzu gel and coconut aioli.

Mark's passion for sharing these native flavours extends beyond the kitchen. His next project, he says, is an ambitious kitchen garden, where guests can familiarise themselves with uniquely Australian flavours such as Davidson's plums and lemon myrtle, and see tropical ingredients such as vanilla, cocoa beans, papaya and finger limes grown at the source.

"I love the lushness here. Even driving the Captain Cook Highway, with the sheer mountains on one side and the multi-hued blue ocean on the other, is incredible. Then you get to Silky Oaks Lodge, immersed in the rainforest beside the Mossman River, right next to the Daintree World Heritage Wilderness Area. There's such an overload of beauty it all inspires me to cook something magical."

Contact Information:

✉ reservations@silkyoaks.com.au
🌐 silkyoakslodge.com.au



MICK QUILLIAM

Saffire Freycinet, Tasmania

Tasmanian Aboriginal artist and tour guide Mick Quilliam offers a fascinating Connection to Country tour from luxury lodge Saffire Freycinet on the stunning east coast of Tasmania.

Growing up in Hobart, Mick was lucky enough to have a grandfather who taught him about the bush. After his grandfather died, Mick “went off the rails” and found himself in jail – and that’s when he began to connect more deeply with his heritage.

“I started painting, and that helped connect me to my culture,” says Mick. “Now, through my tours at Saffire Freycinet, I have another powerful way to explain the importance of my connection to the land as a Palawa man, respecting the past and moving forward.”

After connecting with his Tasmanian Aboriginal heritage, Mick did extensive historical research which informs and enlivens his two-hour Connection to Country walking tour. He explains to guests how his ancestors made string from bulrushes and rope from bark, how they built canoes and made fish traps and timber traps for ducks. And he shows them which plants are edible and which were used for soap, tea and insect repellent. He also tells stories about how Aboriginal Australians grew their own special wheat that only needed rain once a year and how they kept warm with hats and cloaks made from possum fur.

“Tasmanian Aboriginals certainly weren’t running around naked all the time, which is the popular misconception. It was too cold,” he says, laughing.



“I am passionate about showing people what our traditional Tasmanian Aboriginal life was like and how sophisticated our culture was. It’s all about passing on that message and sharing the story of us. That’s also why I started painting – to tell our stories.”

Contact Information:

✉ stay@saffire-freycinet.com.au
🌐 saffire-freycinet.com.au

VINCENT “VINNIE” ANTONY

El Questro Homestead, Western Australia



Vincent Antony (or Vinnie, as he prefers to be known) is something of an Aussie Renaissance man. The surfer and boat coxswain, wildlife photographer and horticulturalist, who is also well schooled in the intricacies of Indigenous culture, offers fascinating private guided tours at El Questro, a vast wilderness property in the remote Kimberley region.

Vinnie loves to take guests on the four-hour Bush Culture, History and Nature tour, which intermingles geology, Indigenous culture and plant identification and use. “I’m fascinated by Aboriginal tool-making technology and I love to tell guests

about the pressure-flaked Kimberley spear points found nowhere else in Australia. In the process I can link rock types with what was made in certain areas and how different tools were traded across the country,” he says.

“I find this sort of cultural bridging particularly interesting because it opens up meaningful discussions with guests. I love to explain how intricate and sophisticated the oldest living culture on earth is, and has been. Here, I can actually show guests why the Aboriginal Kimberley culture was the most refined of all.”

“What is exceptional about the landscape at El Questro is that it is 1.8 billion years old. There are no fossils because the rocks predate animal life. There’s also such a range and diversity of environments, from savannah grasslands to escarpments to hidden red-rock gorges. Guests don’t realise how much water there is until I take them to discover the beautiful springs surrounded by palm trees in the gorges.”

Contact Information:

✉ Luxury-AUS@delawarenorth.com
🌐 elquestro.com.au/the-homestead



SIMONE BROOKS

Emirates One&Only Wolgan Valley, New South Wales

Former professional horsewoman Simone Brooks has always been a nature-lover. For a one-time student in environmental education, her role as Activities and Conservation Manager at the world's first carbon-neutral resort and leader in sustainable tourism a natural fit.

of activities for guests including hikes, horserides and safaris, as well as mountain biking, birdwatching and stargazing. Guests have the rare opportunity to work alongside Simone and other guides on bush regeneration, wildlife surveys, tree planting and seed collection.

"This is the quintessential Australian bush," she says. "There's the imposing sandstone escarpment, the space and the completely different soundscape. And guests can't believe how close they get to the wildlife. There are often grazing kangaroos to walk past, on the way to the main lodge. We're so proud to have played a role in returning a former cattle property to native bush."

"It's not just what we do but how we do it," she says. "Our guides really focus on wildlife interpretation. For instance, during a nocturnal spotlighting tour, male kangaroos might be sparring after rain. The guides will explain that the rain triggers breeding, when fresh feed is around; the sparring is a means of determining which animal is the alpha male."

During almost 10 years in the job, Simone has introduced a wide range



"My overriding passion is to inspire a deeper sense of connection with the environment. It's important to immerse both adults and children in nature, which is exactly what we do here. Once people have developed a love and connection with the natural world, then they become stewards."

Contact Information:

✉ reservations@oneandonlywolganvalley.com
🌐 oneandonlywolganvalley.com

LOUISE LANYON

Longitude 131°, Northern Territory



Louise Lanyon has always lived and worked in remote parts of Australia. She met her husband, Ben, on Dunk Island on the Great Barrier Reef and the two of them have worked together in some of Australia's most gorgeous places. After helping open Southern Ocean Lodge on Kangaroo Island, they now manage Longitude 131°, a luxury safari-style lodge overlooking World Heritage-listed Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park in Australia's Red Centre.

dining experience, complete with Dreamtime stories and stargazing, we seek to interpret the world's oldest living culture in one of the oldest landscapes on earth."

Louise is particularly excited about Longitude's partnership with Ernabella Arts, a remote Indigenous arts centre. "We finance their ceramics kilns, showcase artwork and sponsor an artist-in-residence program at the lodge," she says. "I can even arrange for guests to fly out to Ernabella for a personal connection with the artists. We're proud to help economically empower such a remote community, whose work we have now sold to guests from around the world."

"Staying at Longitude 131°, with its dress-circle view of Uluru (or Ayers Rock), is really an immersive experience," says Louise. "From our guided walks around Uluru to the sundowner drinks at a waterhole and open-air bush-food-inspired

"I like to make guests feel like a trusted friend is helping them understand the rhythms and culture of perhaps the most iconic place in Australia. Indigenous artwork is on display throughout Longitude 131°, bush foods are seamlessly integrated into the dining experience, and the day spa incorporates local indigenous healing products."

Contact Information:

✉ reserve@baillielodges.com.au
🌐 longitude131.com.au





RHYS BADCOCK

True North Adventure Cruises

As Head Chef on luxury expedition cruise ship True North, Rhys Badcock can't think of a better place in the world to cook. The 2013 winner of Masterchef Australia: The Professionals has worked in many traditional fine-dining restaurants but says nothing compares to the flexibility of being able to cook "whatever I want", often using ingredients pulled straight from the ocean for the enjoyment of the 36 guests on board.

"When we are cruising the remote Kimberley region, our guests will go fishing and bring back all sorts of treats: barramundi, golden snapper, fingermark bream, Spanish mackerel, mud crabs. We sometimes even find cherabin, which are giant freshwater shrimp. I have the delight of creating

dishes that showcase just how spectacular the seafood is," he says. Rhys also loves True North's expedition cruise along the South Australian coastline, for similar reasons. "I can source some of Australia's finest oysters, tuna and whiting when we cruise the remote Eyre Peninsula," he says.

The small cruise ship also has a ring-side seat in Sydney Harbour for the city's legendary New Year's Eve fireworks each year. You can be sure that Rhys creates a spectacular meal to celebrate the occasion.



"One of the highlights of working on a ship that cruises pristine waters around Australia is that I'm able to work with an incredible variety of just-caught seafood. Sometimes I might even catch it myself. It goes straight on ice and gets cooked or served sashimi style that night. It doesn't get much better than that."

Contact Information:

✉ cruise@truenorth.com.au
🌐 truenorth.com.au

ANDREW "MACKA" MCEWEN

Bamurru Plains, Northern Territory



Andrew McEwen, or Macka as he's more commonly known, first came to the Northern Territory to work on a cattle property. After falling in love with barramundi fishing, he went on to run his own fishing camp in the nearby Kimberley for 17 years. Today, his love of the region and his fishing expertise have been put to good use in his role as manager of Bamurru Plains safari lodge on the Mary River floodplain (adjacent to Kakadu National Park).

According to Macka, there is nothing like Bamurru Plains in Australia. Perched on the edge of a vast floodplain, the lodge offers uninterrupted views of lily-pad wetlands teeming with wildlife.

It's an immersive experience for guests as they sleep in luxury safari bungalows.

"My role is all about opening up this landscape to visitors on our safaris," he says. "My passion is to take people into the wild, to not only show them how beautiful it is but also to peel back the layers and make connections. In the process, I can hopefully generate more environmental awareness and show how we all have a role to play in preservation."

"I love the opportunity to paint a picture of how the 'boom and bust' wet season works, how the wetlands and tidal environments are so interconnected, and how they impact the freshwater billabongs and the surrounding savannah. This vast expanse across the north of the Northern Territory is so rich and productive because these ecosystems are so robust."

Contact Information:

✉ bamurru@wildbushluxury.com
🌐 bamurruplains.com



JIM CARREKER The Louise, South Australia

American-Australian Jim Carreker enjoyed a 30-year career in engineering and software development in the United States before changing course to become a hotelier with his interior-designer wife, Helen. After spending 10 years looking at wine regions around the world, they decided upon South Australia's Barossa Valley, where they established gourmet luxury lodge The Louise. Their vision was to create a 'restaurant with rooms'. But no ordinary restaurant, and no ordinary rooms. A Luxury, culinary, retreat.

Jim is justly proud of the lodge's spacious guest suites and its restaurant, Appellation, which offers fine and seasonally diverse menus devised around the Barossa's exceptional produce, and wines.

Jim says, "What really wows international visitors, and showcases Australia as an exceptional wine and food destination, are the bespoke gourmet adventures we have curated. We nurture lots of insider contacts so our guests can go behind the scenes to meet the winemakers, food producers and chefs and really delve into the essence of Australia's most iconic wine region." On a private tour of one of the Barossa's finest wineries, for instance, guests are driven to five sites within the vineyard to taste the wines in situ so they can both see and savour the impact of different terroirs.



Contact Information:

✉ stay@thelouise.com.au
🌐 thelouise.com.au

"We offer an exceptional luxury lodge in one of the finest winemaking regions in the world. As such, we've become a popular starting point for visitors to get over jetlag and relax with memorable food and wine, and even have breakfast with the kangaroos, in a beautiful peaceful locale."

LIBBY GRANT Capella Lodge, Lord Howe Island, New South Wales



Libby Grant's passion for the marine world saw her work her way around the Great Barrier Reef – first as divemaster on Heron Island, then food-and-beverage manager on Dunk Island and finally assistant manager at Lizard Island – before moving to World Heritage-listed Lord Howe Island, with her engineer husband Mark, to manage Capella Lodge.

"I first came here in 1988 to assist a National Geographic underwater photographer and we've now been managing Capella Lodge for 15 years," says Libby. "I'll never get bored with the beauty of the volcanic mountains and I love that it has the world's most southerly coral reef, which compares really well with the Great Barrier Reef."

Libby believes that much of the appeal of Lord Howe revolves around its

slower pace of life. Just 400 visitors are allowed on the island at a time. The most common mode of transport here is bicycle, nobody locks their doors and the locals have decided not to permit any mobile phone towers to be built – which means there's a blessed lack of phone reception here.

"Since Capella is only a nine-room property, it feels like I've invited guests to my house," she says. "I organise local guides and experiences to suit each guest's interests and personality; there's something here for everyone. You can stroll from the hotel to the base of Mt Lidgbird or take a guided climb up Mt Gower, one of the world's great day hikes. You can snorkel above coral right off the beach or go scuba diving off spectacular Ball's Pyramid."

"Lord Howe Island is nature personified. It's so beautiful and there are lots of adventures but it's also important to spend time doing nothing at all. Take time out and sit under a tree with a book and look out to sea."

Contact Information:

✉ reserve@baillielodges.com.au
🌐 capellalodge.com.au



MORE INFO

For more information on any of these experiences, including family opportunities, high-res imagery or to arrange interviews, reach out to:

Penny Rafferty

Executive Officer

Luxury Lodges of Australia

✉ penny@luxurylodgesofaustralia.com.au

🌐 luxurylodgesofaustralia.com.au

