



# THE AUSTRALIAN

March 02, 2009 02:19pm AEDT

## The Perfect 10

March 02, 2009

Article from: [The Australian](#)

**From soulful retreats in the natural world to romantic getaways and resorts that take style to a new level, these places get top marks from Susan Kurosawa and Michelle Rowe.**

### 10 Natural Escapes

#### 1 Silky Oaks Lodge

*Daintree, Far North QLD*

So close and dense is the ancient rainforest at this premium lodge north of Cairns that the feel in its snug timber cabins (each named for bird or bush creature, from lorikeet to pademelon) is of being in a secret cubbyhouse. Sulphur-crested cockatoos whirl in formation; bright blue Ulysses butterflies flutter through tall trees. Guests gather for early-morning yoga by the river, take rainforest walks or go on nocturnal animal-spotting expeditions led by rangers. Others bathe in a glass-clear billabong by the Mossman River or take a fishing tour to hook barramundi or mangrove jack. Beckoning persuasively is the lodge's Healing Waters Spa, where lemon myrtle oils infuse the air and therapies are based on the healing practices of the Kuku Yalanji people, traditional custodians of Mossman Gorge. [www.silkyoakslodge.com.au](http://www.silkyoakslodge.com.au)

#### 2 Peppers Spicers Peak Lodge

*Scenic Rim, Southeast Qld*

This lodge is the region's best redoubt, without contest. It all but hangs from the sky above Main Range National Park and, in less enlightened realms, access would be via cable car. Happily, this is not the case; from the property gates, cars must weave up 12km of unsealed track, past looming kangaroos and black angus cows. The 3600ha domain is 1130m above sea level and such is the sense of removal that lodge staff call it "the rock". Within, it's all pitched ceilings and baronial dimensions, Scottish bluestone and 10 deeply comfortable suites. Guests start to feel like Weather Channel presenters, talking of nothing but mist and the passage of clouds. There are walks to Bellbird Gully and Brumby Mountain, then it's back to the lodge for a seven-course degustation dinner and rivers of local Granite Belt wine. [www.peppers.com.au/spicers](http://www.peppers.com.au/spicers)

#### 3 Sal Salis

*Ningaloo Reef, WA*

South of Exmouth, nestled in protected coastal dunes, Sal Salis features just five tents; this is heaven for "glampers", as the industry now dubs glamour-loving campers who are intent on exclusive safari experiences. You are accommodated 50m from the water's edge and beyond lies the fringing coastal reef of Ningaloo. As a kind of bookend backdrop, behind the camp looms the gorge-riven Cape Range National Park. Early April to the end of June is the season for spotting whale sharks, manta rays, humpbacks, dugongs and turtles. As with sister property Bamurru Plains in the Northern Territory, the motto is "wild bush luxury" and firm ecological principles ensure minimal human impact. Sal Salis is being revamped and reopens on March 10. [www.salsalis.com.au](http://www.salsalis.com.au)

#### 4 Seven Spirit Bay

*Arnhem Land, NT*

In terms of wild and wonderful, it doesn't get much better than this remote retreat on Coral Bay at the tip of the Cobourgh Peninsula. This was one of the first of the wilderness-lodge genre and still attracts attention. Guests are housed in 24 free-standing hexagonal habitats totally attuned to their surroundings. Louvred walls on several sides open to the bush, giving the illusion of camping out. Guests are coaxed from sleep by the myriad sounds of birds and rustling critters. There are walks to contemplate, safari tours, a lagoon pool and a day spa. But no swimming in the sea: there be crocs. [www.peppers.com.au/seven-spirit-bay](http://www.peppers.com.au/seven-spirit-bay)

## 5 Japanese Mountain Retreat

*Montrose, Vic*

The Dandenong Ranges is hardly the place you'd expect to find a traditional ryokan, complete with tatami mats, shoji screens and hot-tubs overlooking private Japanese gardens, but this is a very different kind of accommodation offer. The simplicity of the retreat's three guest rooms – with light flooding through the translucent sliding screens – provides the perfect contrast to the surrounding landscape. Extra flourishes, to keep with the Oriental theme, include Japanese cuisine, spa treatments and a traditional tea ceremony. [www.japanesemountainretreat.com.au](http://www.japanesemountainretreat.com.au)

## 6 Calabash Bay Lodge

*Hawkesbury River, NSW*

There's something special about gazing out at the misty Hawkesbury River and its stunning backdrop of eucalyptus-clad cliffs. And Calabash Bay Lodge, a three-level, water-accessonly escape set in bushland bordering Berowra Waters, is the perfect vantage point from which to take it all in. With four bedrooms and three bathrooms, it's a great weekender for a family or a group of friends who want to escape city life for a while; Calabash Bay is just a 40minute drive from Sydney. A private runabout, moored at the lodge's private pontoon, is offered to guests for the duration of the stay; non-boating types can take in the views from the beautifully appointed lodge's sundrenched terrace. [www.calabashbaylodge.com.au](http://www.calabashbaylodge.com.au)

## 7 Freycinet Lodge

*Freycinet Peninsula, Tas*

This eco-friendly, 60-cabin lodge at the foot of the Hazards Mountains, on the shores of Great Oyster Bay on Tasmania's rugged east coast, is the perfect back-to-nature retreat. Boardwalks link the one and tworoom cabins to Freycinet's main lodge, which houses two restaurants, a lounge and bar, plus a deck with marvellous sea views. No phones or TVs are provided in guestrooms, meaning enthusiastic nature lovers can bide their time doing more worthy things such as sea kayaking, 4WD drive tours and walks to beautiful Wineglass Bay nearby. [www.freycinetlodge.com.au](http://www.freycinetlodge.com.au)

## 8 Capella Lodge

*Lord Howe Island, NSW*

This World Heritage-listed island presents an exercise in time-travelling, and let's make that half a century, at least. Just 400 tourists (no campers) are allowed at any period to swell the tiny population. Get about, at a slow clip, by bikes or on foot; attractions include snorkelling, scaling 875m Mt Gower, and walking through corridors of colossal banyans, pandanus and kentia palms. At day's end, Capella Lodge is a cool and calm hideout of ceiling fans and contemporary style, its colour palette a soft echo of sand and sky, its water views the best of any accommodation on the island. [www.lordhowe.com](http://www.lordhowe.com)

## 9 Injidup Spa Retreat

*Injidup, WA*

Surrounded by national park and with direct frontage to a secluded beach a stone's throw from the Margaret River wine region, this boutique, 10-villa spa retreat is the perfect place for some peace and pampering. Melaleuca trees and wildflowers provide a stunning backdrop as guests wander along the boardwalk that links the nine twobedroom, two-bathroom villas and the luxury honeymoon suite. Big-game fishing, night nature tours and visits to the famous Margaret River vineyards are all on offer here, as is a thorough work-over in the onsite spa. [www.injidupsparetreat.com.au](http://www.injidupsparetreat.com.au)

## 10 Bothfeet Walking Lodge

*Great Ocean Road, Vic*

This newly opened eco-lodge, run by Bothfeet – the outfit that conducts guided walks along this stunning coastal stretch – is for the exclusive use of Great Ocean Walk guests. With its bush location (it's set back 1km from the coast, in 4ha of rainforest), regional food and minimal environmental footprint, the lodge can cater for 10 people in five double bedrooms. For weary walkers, the on-site foot spa will be a sight for sore feet. Five extra bedrooms are expected to be complete by July, as well as a spring-fed pool, massage room and expanded dining area. [www.bothfeet.com.au](http://www.bothfeet.com.au)