

THE AUSTRALIAN

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All in this together

Local collaborations are the cornerstones of our best lodgings.

By ALEX CARLTON



Tasting oysters fresh from the sea at Freycinet Marine Farm. Picture: Tourism Tasmania.

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What lifts a lodge or resort into luxury? Is it breathtaking views, attentive service or the thread count on the sheets? All those elements are critical, and guests would notice if any fell short of expectations, but there are subtle touches, too. Locally grown produce, ceramics handmade by a regional artist and bespoke amenities inspired by the environment can all combine to create a patchwork of perfection.

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The partnerships such producers have with luxury lodgings are usually symbiotic, enabling guests to immerse themselves in the bounty of a place, and regional suppliers to secure steady business from collaborating properties.

“The positive impact a relatively small property can have on entire communities is part of what [travellers] appreciate,” says Penny Rafferty, executive officer of [Luxury Lodges of Australia](#), which has 19 private properties in its portfolio, including Longitude 131 at Uluru, The Lake House in Victoria and The Louise in the Barossa Valley. “There’s a greater level of sustainability through that kind of travel. It helps create empathy and cultural understanding. There’s a richness and a realness to it.”

Julia Fisher, Freycinet Marine Farm, Coles Bay, Tasmania

“Oysters are like wine, they have a terroir,” says Julia Fisher who, with husband Giles, has been farming these briny bivalves near Coles Bay on Tasmania’s east coast since 2005. The farm exists in splendid isolation, with no nearby industry to taint the pristine waters where oysters fatten. The couple harvest daily, which is why their product tastes as fresh, salty and wild as the waves. Visitors can sample the day’s catch at the farm shop beside the road, while guests staying at nearby Saffire Freycinet will find oysters on the menu year round, or can book an exclusive tasting tour that includes dining straight from the sea at a white-clothed table set up in the water.

Where: freycinetmarinefarm.com
saffire-freycinet.com.au

The JamFactory, Adelaide and Barossa Valley, SA



Brendan Scott French vases on display at The Louise in the Barossa. Picture: John Montesi

Established by the Dunstan government of the 1970s, the JamFactory is one of the most respected centres of independent craft and design in the world. Its two locations, in Adelaide and at Seppeltsfield Winery in the Barossa Valley, have supported more than 400 artists and makers specialising in craft, ceramics, furniture and jewellery since inception. When passionate glass collectors Jim and Helen Carreker were looking for a place to establish their luxury property The Louise, the Barossa Valley's connection to the JamFactory was a top consideration. "They already knew a number of our artists and much about the glass community when they arrived," says JamFactory chief executive Brian Parkes. Today, JamFactory work can be found all around The Louise, including a brightly coloured wall feature and collection of vases by celebrated glass artist Brenden Scott French.

Where: jamfactory.com.au

thelouise.com.au

Chris Bolton Fishing, Kurrimine Beach, Queensland



Fisher Chris Bolton with a fresh catch and his daughter Evie. Picture: Brian Cassey

“When customers get our fish it looks like it’s just come out of the water,” says Chris Bolton of the daily catch he brings in from his small-scale premium fishing business. That would be because it pretty much has. It’s not unusual for Bolton to pull a red emperor or coral trout from the clear waters around the Great Barrier Reef overnight and have it delivered to a chef in Sydney or Brisbane by lunchtime. Sometimes he’ll even fish in the waters around Orpheus Island and get his catch into the resort kitchen within the hour. Bolton’s method is simple: one fish at a time, hook, sinker and bait, which is “just like people have done forever”, he says. And it’s not just the big-name fish that find their way to his customers’ plates; Bolton elevates lesser-known and historically shunned fish, such as the saddle-tail snapper, which gained a poor reputation from the way it was treated by bulk trawler fishers. “I don’t think there’s a bad fish in the ocean,” Bolton says. “It’s all to do with how it’s handled and caught.”

Where: cbfishing.com.au

orpheus.com.au



Stillwater restaurant in Launceston stocks Joe Holyman's wines.

Joe Holyman, Stoney Rise and Holyman wines, Tamar Valley, Tasmania

Winemaker Joe Holyman makes a point of avoiding his wines when he eats out. "Never," he says. "There are thousands of other wines, and that's an opportunity to try what other people are up to." If he did want to sip one of his own creations from his premium Holyman label, Stoney Rise brand or his biodynamic "No Clothes", he'd have little trouble finding choices on some of the most exclusive wine lists in the state, plus in the minibars at Stillwater Seven in Launceston, the boutique accommodation adjacent to the elegant Stillwater restaurant that sits on the banks of the Tamar River. It's a point of pride for Holyman. "I think every winemaker would be proud to be stocked somewhere like Stillwater and Stillwater Seven," Holyman says. "It makes you feel like you must be doing something right."

Where: stoneyrise.com

stillwater.com.au



Ernabella Arts creations adorn the accommodation at Longitude 131, Uluru. Picture: Luxury Lodges of Australia

Ernabella Arts, outback South Australia

Ernabella Arts is the oldest arts centre in Australia, a locally owned and operated business on Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (APY) land in the far northwest of South Australia. It has produced some of Australia's most celebrated indigenous artists, including National Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Art Awards winner Dickie Minyintiri and 2020 Red Ochre Award recipient Alison Milyika Carroll. However, centre manager Mel George emphasises that community and transition of knowledge from one generation to the next are the values at its core. Four times a year, Ernabella artists travel to Longitude 131 at Uluru as part of an established artist-in-residence program where guests can watch the creative process. "The artists love it," George says. "They're not on show; they're just seamlessly part of the surroundings and people can ask questions and hear their stories."

Where: ernabellaarts.com.au
longitude131.com.au



Paul Righetti with some of his Honest Eggs Co free-range chooks. Picture: Chloe Smith

Paul Righetti, Honest Eggs Co, Daylesford, Victoria

“One of the most enjoyable parts of what I do is watching animals in a low-stress environment that are really happy,” says Paul Righetti. His 20,000 chooks spend their lives plucking at grass and scratching around for grubs, before being moved to new pastures every week to start afresh. “We never lock them up or close the sheds,” says Righetti, adding that his flock is watched over by loyal Maremma guard dogs to keep predators away. The result is right there in the name: an “honest egg” that’s packed with nutrients and flavour, something that makes this brand a permanent fixture on the locally focused menus of the Lake House in Daylesford as well as independent stores and restaurants across the country.

Where: honesteggsc.com.au
lakehouse.com.au

Amanda Cochrane, Grampians Goods Co, Victoria



Grampians Goods Co candle.

Amanda Cochrane began her Grampians-based homewares business when she struggled to find candles made from pure essential oils, rather than the synthetic scents that gave her a headache. This year she partnered with The Royal Mail hotel to design its guest amenities, which are built from a base of olive oil from Grampians Olive Co and hemp oil from nearby Waltanna Farms. The fragrance for the range incorporates culinary herbs such as rosemary from Glenelg River Herbs, plus spearmint and lemongrass found in the property's own kitchen garden along with native botanicals, like wattleseed and lemon myrtle, which echo the scents of the surrounding national park. Cochrane's hair products, body lather and body cream are supplied in The Royal Mail's guestrooms. "It's like a sensory postcard," she says.

Where: grampiansgoodsco.com.au
royalmail.com.au

Rum from Hoochery Distillery, Kununurra, WA



Kalyn Fletcher, right, at the Hoochery in Kununurra, WA.

The outback of Western Australia doesn't sound like an obvious place to create tropical rum, but the town of Kununurra, in the East Kimberley, sits at the same latitude as the Caribbean. "Our warm days and cool nights make it perfect," says Kalyn Fletcher, whose late father Raymond "Spike" Dessert founded Hoochery Rum in 1993. "When you're ageing the product, it seeps out of the barrel in the heat of the day and contracts back into it at night. This movement is what makes a really smooth product with an oaky finish that you don't normally find in rum." Such unique characteristics have seen Hoochery rums win gold at the Australian Distilled Spirits Awards for five of the past six years, be stocked at the exclusive El Questro homestead in the Kimberley, and even earn a place on the menu at Noma in Denmark, an honour the wry and earthy Spike apparently took with a grain of salt. Fletcher laughs as she remembers him commenting: "Noma was nice but I like my rum with fish and chips."

Where: hoochery.com.au
elquestro.com.au