

Green and glam!

Energy-saving lightbulbs and recycling bins are not enough to cut it in the world of 'green' accommodation. **Philippa Jacks** discovers some innovative eco resorts in the Antipodes who are scaling new heights in environmental awareness...

Above Locally-sourced food is the order of the day at Daintree Eco Lodge & Spa



1 SOUTHERN OCEAN LODGE

KANGAROO ISLAND, SOUTH AUSTRALIA

With glass-walled rooms and chic designer furniture, Southern Ocean Lodge may not look like an eco-lodge at first glance. But this new resort on Kangaroo Island, off South Australia, shows that hotels can be high-tech and plush, as well as being green.

Over 200 solar panels generate half of the resort's energy needs, and waste water and sewage are passed through a filter system which uses worms and other organisms to make clean water for watering plants.

"We brief guests about our eco-credentials on arrival and many are so interested that they ask for a back-of-house tour," says founder James Baillie.

The lodge sits in 102 hectares of forested wilderness but only a tiny proportion of the land was cleared to make way for the lodge. Recycled wooden timbers and local limestone were used to build the 21 suites, spa and main lodge, and furniture and artwork was made using local materials, by local artisans.

To limit the 'food miles' generated by importing produce, the chef sources as many ingredients as possible from Kangaroo Island. At the Spa Retreat, all-natural products like lavender, eucalyptus, Ligurian honey and sea salt from Kangaroo Island are used.

Described as a 'zoo without fences', Kangaroo Island is home to fur seals, koalas, kangaroos, sea lions, echidnas and more. The lodge offers wildlife tours, as well as those with a gourmet, art or history focus.

Rates are steep – from A\$900 (£559) per person per night, but include meals and drinks, guided tours and a transfer from Kangaroo Island's Kingscote airport.

www.southernoceanlodge.com.au



Top left An inviting fireplace awaits guests at stylish Southern Ocean Lodge

Top centre Dine on locally-sourced food al fresco at Southern Ocean Lodge



Below centre
Couran Cove
Island offers
plenty of peaceful
seclusion

Bottom left
Couran Cove
Island Resort
nurtures its
eucalyptus forests

Bottom right
Luxury safari-style
accommodation is
on offer at
Paperbark Camp

2 COURAN COVE ISLAND RESORT

GOLD COAST, QUEENSLAND

Before Australia was colonised by Europeans, the country was home to several million koalas, but it is estimated that populations may now be as low as 43,000. They were hunted for their fur, but are now threatened by the clearance of their forest habitat.

Couran Cove Island Resort on Australia's Gold Coast has taken matters into its own hands, creating a Koala Haven Experience to educate visitors about the koalas' plight and to raise money for the Australian Koala Foundation. Not everyone agrees with such koala attractions, but in this case, visitors do not hold or cuddle the koalas themselves, and the tour focuses on habitat preservation and what you can do to help.

But conserving eucalyptus forests doesn't just help koalas: these trees also act as 'carbon sinks', absorbing and storing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere, helping in the fight against climate change. Couran Cove Island Resort also has some clever methods of pest control. Instead of ultraviolet 'zappers', which kill indiscriminately, the resort uses a carbon-dioxide trap (mosquitoes are attracted to carbon dioxide, not light) to trap the specific mosquito species.

Guests stay in hotel-style rooms, two-bedroom lodges or four-bedroom villas, sited around the marina or overlooking the wetland. Sustainable timber and natural materials like hemp and maize matting have been used wherever possible, and solar panels on the roof reduce reliance on fossil fuels.

Rates start from A\$265 (£164) per night including accommodation, ferry transfers and bike hire.

www.couran.com



3 PAPERBARK CAMP

JERVIS BAY, NEW SOUTH WALES

Building a camp in a protected wetland area is not without its challenges; the owners of Paperbark Camp in New South Wales had to wait four years to gain permission for its safari-style tented camp.

The camp is in Jervis Bay, a two-and-a-half hour drive south of Sydney, with three national parks on its doorstep. The 12-tent camp is surrounded by paperbark and gum tree forest, but no large trees were removed to make way for it – they simply built around them.

Special care is taken of the surrounding bush; hotel staff even go as far as removing non-native plant species like asparagus fern that interfere with the balance of the local ecosystem. No fences mean that wildlife can move freely between territories and all tents are raised several feet off the ground on a wooden platform so the habitats below remain intact.

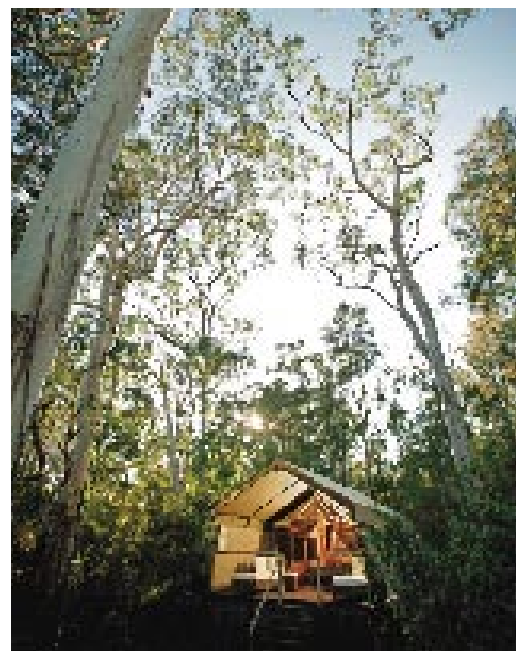
Despite operating for 11 years, Paperbark Camp continues to find new ways to reduce its ecological impact. This year, timers were installed in the showers to encourage guests to limit themselves to four minutes of hot water instead of the average eight.

Eco-conscious travellers who prefer to use public transport can reach Paperbark Camp by train if they wish from Sydney Central. The camp will come and pick you up, and can provide bikes, canoes and kayaks so you can explore the local area without the need for a car.

Rates are from A\$350 (£217) per night for two adults, which includes breakfast.

www.paperbarkcamp.com.au

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Right Mod-cons are given a wide berth in the canvas guest tents at Sal Salis

Below centre Stonefly Lodge is surrounded by beautiful National Parks

Bottom The guest rooms at Stonefly Lodge are warm and well-appointed



4 STONEFLY LODGE

NELSON, NEW ZEALAND

Many eco lodges use solar panels to generate 'clean' electricity and minimise the use of fossil fuels, but few choose to disconnect from the national grid entirely. At Stonefly Lodge, energy is generated not only by solar panels but also a wind turbine and a hydro turbine driven by water from an onsite spring.

"Most guests are fascinated that we can run on batteries with energy from just nature," says owner John Kerr. "It's such a nice feeling to know that on a rainy day, the hydro system is working well; on a sunny day the solar panels take over as the main provider of energy; and during a storm the wind turbine is storing energy into the battery banks."

Extra-thick insulation of the walls and floors mean the lodge needs little heating, and high-tech LED lights use a tiny fraction of the energy of a normal light bulb. Overall, Stonefly Lodge uses less than half the energy of a small New Zealand home. It uses natural stone and wood taken almost exclusively from the lodge's own 150 acres of land. It has four guest rooms, a library, an open-plan kitchen and dining area and a sun-room which 'traps' heat from the sun.

The lodge is renowned for its fly-fishing tours, but other activities include guided walks, horse-riding, and white-water-rafting in the nearby Abel Tasman, Nelson Lakes and Kahurangi National Parks.

Rates are from A\$250 (£120) per person per night, with breakfast and three-course dinner included.

www.stoneflylodge.co.nz





5 SAL SALIS NINGALOO REEF

NINGALOO REEF, WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Having no mains water supply means guests at Sal Salis Ningaloo Reef have no choice but to watch their water use. Every guest is given an allocation of 20 litres a day, which means no leaving the tap on while you brush your teeth! The camp is 50 metres back from the beach in Cape Range National Park on Australia's west coast, and water is brought in from Exmouth, an hour's drive north, in giant containers.

The nine canvas guest tents have comfortable wooden beds and en-suite bathrooms but you should be prepared for a real 'back to nature' experience: the tents have no electricity or air-conditioning, and there is no internet access or phone signal, so don't stay here if you like to be surgically-attached to your mobile. Composting toilets turn waste into compost that can be used to fertilise soil, and every tent is raised off the ground so as not to interfere with the flora and fauna.

Swimming and snorkelling with the super-size whale sharks which visit Ningaloo Reef are one of the main attractions in this area, and guests can also go sea-kayaking or fishing, and take a guided walk into the Mandu Mandu limestone gorge. There's a chance to spot species like Red Kangaroos, wallaroos, kestrels and Zebra Finches in the Cape Range National Park, and for every guest that stays, a donation is made to the Australian Wildlife Conservancy charity.

A tent costs A\$730 (£454) per person per night, including meals, drinks, tours and park entrance fees.

www.salsalis.com.au

6 SHEARWATER LODGE KAIKOURA

KAIKOURA, NEW ZEALAND

With one of the world's last two colonies of Hutton's Shearwater in their backyard, the team at Shearwater Lodge in Kaikoura, a two hour's drive north of Christchurch, have become heavily involved in trying to protect this endangered seabird.

The bird is found only in the Kaikoura region, and nests in cliff-faces 1,200 to 1,800 metres above sea level, making it one of the highest-breeding seabirds in the world. Shearwater Lodge is run by Kaikoura Wilderness Walks, which offers walking trips through the Puhi Peaks Nature Reserve.

Owner Nicky McArthur and her staff help the Department of Conservation by monitoring the Shearwater colony, and actively trap and remove predator species like red deer and stoats. Recently, the Huttons Shearwater Charitable Trust, of which Nicky is a trustee, raised enough money to install a predator-proof fence around a third colony to which chicks have been translocated.

As well as viewing the Hutton's Shearwater colony, guests at the lodge can hope to see kea, along with smaller birds like South Island robins, Rifleman, Bellbirds, Pippets, Grey Warblers, and occasionally New Zealand falcons. Red deer, Chamois, Pacific goats and free-roaming Arapawa sheep may also be spotted in the Puhi Peaks Nature Reserve.

It takes walkers around six hours to reach the six-roomed lodge, where they are greeted with afternoon tea, followed by dinner. Hydroelectricity generates all of the lodge's power, and guests are encouraged to be mindful of energy and water consumption at all times.

A three-day, two-night walk costs NZ\$1,395 (£673) per person and a two-day, one-night walk costs NZ\$995 (£480) per person, based on two adults sharing a room. Walkers pass through three eco-zones, climbing as high as 5,000 feet above sea level.

www.kaikourawilderness.co.nz



Below Tired walkers are greeted with a cup of afternoon tea at Shearwater Lodge



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7 BAMURRU PLAINS

BAMURRU PLAINS, NORTHERN TERRITORY

If you love the feel of freshly-pressed, pure-white sheets on a hotel bed, you're not alone. But few of us stop to think how many chemicals and how much energy it takes to keep them like that.

Bamurru Plains in Australia's Northern Territory uses only organic cotton sheets and towels. The sheets are a sand colour, instead of having been bleached to an unnatural white, and the cotton fibres do not crease so easily, so they can simply be hung out to dry.

Three-quarters of the camp's electricity is generated by solar power, though with no TVs, telephones or CD players, guests really use very little.

Mesh walls on the nine 'safari bungalows' allow natural breezes to do the job of air-conditioning – except in the wet season when three rooms have air-con available. You can watch the wildlife of the Mary River floodplains from the comfort of your own bed, with buffalo, Northern Brushtail Possums, Estuarine crocodiles and birds, from blue-winged kookaburras to magpie geese visiting at various times of the year.

Rates are from A\$930 (£579) per person when two adults share a bungalow.

www.bamurruplains.com

Top Buffalo is among the wildlife you'll spot in the Bamurru Plains

Centre left Guest rooms at Bamurru Plains are stylish and practical

Left Mesh walls let the air in and enable guests to enjoy the views



8 BAY OF FIRES LODGE

MOUNT WILLIAM NATIONAL PARK, TASMANIA

Guests at Tasmania's Bay of Fires Lodge don't happen upon it by chance. The remote lodge is the only building on a 20 kilometre stretch of coast, and the majority of guests only reach it after a 23 kilometre hike along windswept coastline and heathland.

Access is so limited that when the lodge was built in 1999, many of the materials were carried in by hand, or were airlifted by helicopter. Tasmanian hardwood and sustainably-grown pine was used throughout the lodge's two long pavilions, and solar panels on the roof of the lodge generate the power for the lighting. The lodge features compost-toilets, and also puts wastewater through a complex filtration system.

For the last four years, the lodge's parent company has sponsored a Park Ranger in Mount William National Park, in which the lodge is located. Rangers are on hand to help visitors better appreciate the flora and fauna of the park. Guests may be lucky enough to spot grey kangaroos, echidnas, brush-tail possums, wombats, and even Tasmanian devils, plus more than 100 species of bird.

The four-day Bay of Fires Walk costs from A\$2,050 (£1,275) when two adults share. Bay of Fires Lodge can also be hired privately, in the off-walking summer months, from A\$450 (£280) per person per day.

www.bayoffireslodge.com.au



Left Bay of Fires Lodge enjoys an idyllic position on the Abbotsbury Peninsula

Below far left The Bay of Fires Lodge generates its own power

Below centre The Milking Shed boasts original barn doors at the Old Leura Dairy

Below right The comfortable lounge of Moo Manor at Old Leura Dairy

9 OLD LEURA DAIRY

BLUE MOUNTAINS, NEW SOUTH WALES

Recycling is at the very heart of Old Leura Dairy in the Blue Mountains of New South Wales. Instead of building from scratch, the owners converted a run-down old dairy and its outhouses into six very different places to stay.

Around 80 per cent of the materials used to renovate the dairy were recycled, from reclaimed timber and corrugated iron to antique cast-iron bathtubs. In the three-bedroomed Worker's Cottage, you'll find reclaimed fence palings on the walls and rescued stained-glass windows, while the Milking Shed still has the original barn doors. The *pièce de résistance* is the giant, stainless steel milk vat on wooden decking that has been turned into a hot tub for all six houses to share.



Quirky features of the five-bedroomed Straw Bale House include timbers from an old jetty on the Parramatta River, and the luggage rack off a car from the 1920s. The walls of the house are made from bales of straw: the straw acts as an excellent heat insulator. Energy-efficient slow-combustion heaters help keep fuel usage down, and the property makes contributions to a carbon management company.

The Studio sleeps two and starts from A\$175 (£108) per night for two; Moo Manor sleeps four and costs from A\$380 (£236) per night for four; and the Straw Bale House sleeps 11 and costs from A\$990 (£616) per night for 11.

www.oldleurdairy.com.au

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10 DAINTREE ECO LODGE & SPA

DAINTREE RAINFOREST, QUEENSLAND

Respecting your local environment is second nature to the indigenous Kuku Yalanji people of Tropical North Queensland. This Aboriginal tribe, known also as the 'Rainforest People', has lived in harmony with the flora and fauna of the forest for thousands of years.

So when Daintree Eco Lodge & Spa was built 15 years ago, developers went to great lengths to ensure the indigenous people approved of the project, and made Kuku Yalanji culture a central feature of the lodge. The lodge also funded the training of more than 50 local Aboriginal people in hospitality.

"Any enhancements, or construction are carried out only after consultation with the local Kuku Yalanji people. The rainforest is our livelihood and we take that very seriously," says owner Terry Maloney.

Foods from the Kuku Yalanji's daily diet, such as aniseed myrtle, riberry, blue quandongs and native ginger, are used extensively in the menus at Julaymba restaurant. The Daintree Wellness Spa, meanwhile, draws upon Aboriginal healing wisdom, using local ingredients like bush honey and aloe vera in treatments inspired by ancient tradition.

Daintree Eco Lodge & Spa has 15 rainforest houses or 'Bayans' on stilts, costing from A\$550 (£342) per night for two adults sharing.

www.daintree-ecolodge.com.au

Above Daintree Eco Lodge & Spa sets out to protect its surrounding environment

Far right The Daintree Wellness Spa specializes in Aboriginal healing techniques

For more information

■ To find other eco-friendly places to stay in New Zealand, you can search the Qualmark site for accommodation which has a bronze, silver or gold Enviro-rating. Qualmark is the New Zealand tourist board's stamp of quality. www.qualmark.co.nz

■ For green accommodation in Australia, visit Ecotourism Australia: www.ecotourism.org.au

WIN A LUXURY
STAY AT
DAINTREE
ECO-LODGE
& SPA!

WORTH
£2,800!



Nestled amongst the world's oldest living rainforest, facilities at the exotically remote Daintree Eco Lodge and Spa include a restaurant, Wellness Spa, swimming pool and sun deck.

Voted 'the world's leading eco lodge' at the prestigious World Travel Awards and known as the most pampering eco lodge in the world, the Daintree Eco-Lodge and Spa offers 15 individual fully-equipped Bayans (rainforest houses) which include an en-suite bathroom and a balcony.

We're offering the chance for one lucky *Australia and New Zealand* magazine reader, and a friend or partner, to stay at this luxury resort!

The £2,800 prize for the lucky pair will include transfers (if required) from Cairns Airport, five nights accommodation, daily breakfasts, a Julma massage treatment, a seafood platter and a river cruise. The prize does not include flights and is valid for 12 months, subject to availability.

All you have to do to be in with a chance of winning, is to answer this question: What do you call the rainforest houses at Daintree Eco-Lodge & Spa? Email your answer, along with your name and address to competitions@australiamagazine.co.uk before 15 February 2011.