

# Debuts Down Under

With hot hotel openings and improved access to wilderness areas, the Australian Tourism Exchange trade show highlighted a host of new ways to sell Australia. **Clare Vooght** reports

**S**ydney is a hotbed for swanky new hotels, day trips from Darwin are making the remote wilds of Arnhem Land a lot more accessible, Kangaroo Island's bounceback after the 2020 wildfires has been an example of sustainable travel in action and new domestic flights are making it easier to create multi-centre itineraries that take in even more of this incredible country – and that's just for starters.

With so much going on Down Under, we round up a host of new trade-friendly product from this year's Australian Tourism Exchange to help you sell the Aussie trip your clients have always dreamed of.

## NORTHERN TERRITORY

**Explore amazing Arnhem Land:** Visitors to remote Arnhem Land, an expanse of unspoilt Aboriginal land, usually require a permit if visiting for more than a day. But new small-group tours with Davidsons Arnhemland Safaris and Kakadu Air make day trips easier, flying clients in from Darwin to explore Arnhem Land's bushland and rock art. They'll reach the sacred site Mount Borradaile by boat from the pristine Cooper Creek. Australian tour operator Ethical Adventures, which pays commission to UK agents, can book these as part of a four-day package (with Kakadu and Litchfield) from around £3,868. Abercrombie & Kent, Exsus Travel and Audley Travel also feature Davidsons Arnhemland Safaris. **Or try:** Sunrise Journeys, a new two-and-a-half-hour Indigenous art experience and light show

that takes place just before the sun rises over Uluru. Available to guests staying at Ayers Rock Resort (sold by operators including Inspiring Travel and Audley Travel), from about £64 for adults, £39 for children, including breakfast.

## QUEENSLAND

**Step into Bluey's World:** The new immersive Bluey's World experience – opening in November in the cartoon pooch's hometown, Brisbane – is sure to delight families. Kids can meet the characters, explore Bluey and Bingo's bedroom and play under the backyard poinciana tree in a life-sized replica of the Heeler family's Queensland house. Tickets from about £26; babies go free. **Or try:** A family adventure on the sands of the tropical Whitsundays. The Sundays is a new 59-room family-friendly hotel on Hamilton Island – an ideal base for exploring the Great Barrier Reef – and starts taking bookings this autumn ahead of its 2025 opening with rates from £461 per night.

## SOUTH AUSTRALIA

**Return to Kangaroo Island:** This south Australian isle was badly hit by the 2019-20 bushfires, but its tourism industry is bouncing back, particularly with the lauded reopening of the sleek, cliff-top Southern Ocean Lodge following a £28 million rebuild that had conservation at its heart. The wild, windswept isle's native animals – birds, koalas and, of course, kangaroos – are flourishing again, proving it's still worthy of the 'Galapagos of Australia' moniker. Carrier has a five-night package staying at ➤

Cooper Creek, one of the locations explored by Davidsons Arnhemland Safaris

PICTURE: Tourism NT/Shoana McNaught

# DESTINATIONS

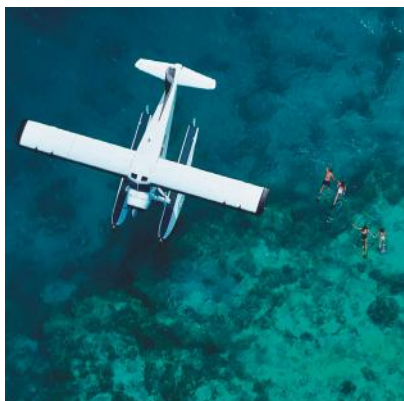
## AUSTRALASIA | WHAT'S NEW



🌿 **Treetops Adventure** has opened in Canberra's Majura Pines, with 90 obstacles suspended as high as 15 metres above the ground, including 16 ziplines. Anzco offers tailor-made holiday packages to the region, which can add hot-air balloon rides and nature tours to the mix.

🌿 **Intrepid Travel** has added two Tasmania tours this year: the four-day Best of Hobart & Southern Tasmania (£872 per person) visits the Tasman Peninsula and historic Port Arthur, with a bush tucker and palawa cultural experience at Risdon Cove. A six-day Best of Tasmania Tarkine & Cradle Mountain tour (£1,197 per person) offers rural hikes and stargazing in remote areas.

🌿 It's all about sport in Australia for the next few years with the British and Irish Lions Tour in 2025, Rugby World Cup in 2027 and Brisbane Olympics in 2032. The Ashes returns in November 2025, but to keep cricket enthusiasts entertained in the meantime, Cultural Attractions of Australia has a new Keepers Collection Tour – a private, VIP walk-through of the Australian Sports Museum, home to 25,000 pieces of treasured sporting memorabilia, at Melbourne Cricket Ground (£90).



**CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT:** Southern Ocean Lodge, Kangaroo Island, South Australia; Bluey's World experience, Brisbane; Seaplane and snorkelling tour, The Sundays, Hamilton Island

PICTURES: George Apostolidis; Nick Leary

### top tip

Sign up to Tourism Western Australia's upcoming agent roadshows and you could win a holiday for two – including Emirates flights – to explore the state for yourself. The events take place in Glasgow, Manchester and Birmingham from November 13-15, with a holiday, sports tickets and other prizes to be won at each roadshow.

[waroadshow.com](http://waroadshow.com)

Southern Ocean Lodge and The Louise Lodge in the Barossa Valley, from £5,675 based on two sharing, including flights departing March 6, 2025. Plus, the return of Emirates' Adelaide flights in October will make South Australia that much easier to get to.

**Or try:** Going off-grid in the Adelaide Hills to CABN, which opened at The Cedars – the former homestead of Australian artist Sir Hans Heysen – this month. Expect nature, quaint villages, local wineries and access to nearby Mount Lofty. From £162 per night.

### NEW SOUTH WALES

**Book a hot new hotel:** Sydney's recent openings include W Sydney in Darling Harbour, Hotel Indigo in Potts Point, Accor's Hotel Morris in the Central Business District (CBD), Hotel Woolstore 1888 in Darling Harbour and MGallery's Manly Pacific. Things are showing no sign of slowing down, either, with a Moxy opening in the CBD in 2025 and Australia's first Waldorf Astoria slated for Circular Quay in 2026.

**Or try:** A stay at arty, design-focused Adge Hotel & Residences, which opened last year in Sydney's cool Surry Hills area. Gold Medal has a nine-night package, including five nights here, from £2,789 including flights departing November 6, transfers and an Art of Sydney Tour with Ultimately Sydney. Cultural Attractions of Australia has also launched a new commissionable Become the Artist drawing class experience at The Art Gallery of New South Wales (£510, including a three-course lunch and wine).

### WESTERN AUSTRALIA

**Head out west:** Western Australia is flying high with a host of new flights and a jump in the number of first-time visitors who include the state in their trips – rising to 32% from April 2023-March 2024, up from 27% the year before. The UK is the state's biggest and highest-spending source market, with 115,000 British arrivals in the same period – 81% of its 2019 figures. New international flights to WA include Paris-Perth with Qantas (three times a week), Emirates' Dubai-Perth (a second daily service, from December 1), Jetstar's Singapore-Broome route (twice a week from April-October) and Thai Airways' Bangkok-Perth (daily). There are also more domestic services including routes from Nexus Airlines, which launched in 2023, Airnorth's Perth-Alice Springs (three times a week) and Jetstar's Sydney to Busselton. Busselton is the gateway to Margaret River region, a biodiverse expanse of unspoilt forests, ancient caves and a serene Indian Ocean coastline, plus the area's Busselton Jetty also has a new underwater sculpture trail for divers and snorkellers. A 15-day tailor-made trip with Audley Travel costs from £4,995 per person, including flights and car hire, with three nights in Margaret River plus time in Perth, Esperance, Albany, Pemberton and Fremantle.

**Or try:** Pilbara, home to the greatest density of rock art on Earth. The site is under consideration for Unesco World Heritage status as early as next year and is particularly special as, if approved, it would be the only Australian site other than Uluru to be listed for its First Nations cultural heritage. **TW**