

*I love a sunburnt country,
A land of sweeping plains,
Of ragged mountain ranges,
Of droughts and flooding rains.*

*I love her far horizons,
I love her jewel-sea,
Her beauty and her terror -
The wide brown land for me!*

- Dorothea Mackellar, My Country

Introducing
HOLIDAY AT HOME

It has been a harrowing summer in Australia. With much of the country already suffering under crippling drought, raging bushfires tore through community after community, leaving devastation in their wake. And then, as if to reiterate her power, Mother Nature brought flooding to the table.

As passionate travellers, we have gained so much from this country.
We want to return the favour.

For every full price subscription of *Luxury Travel Magazine* purchased this year, we will be donating \$10 to BlazeAid.

Plus, starting with our Winter 2020 cover story, *Luxury Travel Magazine* and luxurytravlmag.com.au are launching *Holiday at Home*, a new section dedicated to celebrating regional and rural Australia. The initiative is designed to complement Tourism Australia's 'Holiday Here This Year' campaign, and we hope it will inspire readers to do just that.

After all, despite the heartache, we believe we are still the Lucky Country.



IN THE LINE OF FIRE

TWO INCREDIBLE DESTINATIONS.
TWO CELEBRATED PROPERTIES.
AND TWO VERY DIFFERENT STORIES
OF RESILIENCE. BY **KATE SYMONS**

PAPERBARK CAMP

New South Wales

IF YOU'VE BEEN TO PAPERBARK CAMP, YOU'LL KNOW the magic. Set among 40 hectares of otherwise untouched bushland, the tented camp is an icon of Australia's luxury travel market. The site is surrounded by beautiful casuarinas, spotted gums and, of course, paperbarks. It is home to Eastern grey kangaroos, brushtail possums, king parrots, crimson rosellas and sugar gliders. It is a launchpad for the natural wonders of Jervis Bay. It is a genuine sanctuary and an incredible showcase of our Great Southern Land.

In early January, powerful and unrelenting fires tore through many parts of the Shoalhaven. Paperbark Camp was spared.

"We've had fires before, but we really felt this could be it this time," recalls Director Camilla Hamilford, whose parents opened Paperbark in 1998. "We know Paperbark is not defensible... so we just made sure everyone was out."

Although Paperbark survived physically unscathed, it did take a hit. January is "peak, peak" season for Paperbark yet occupancy for the month fell to 36 per cent, down from last year's January figure of 98. But it was staff who suffered most, says Hamilford, with many going without shifts for weeks. Still, Hamilford says there is a genuine sense of survivor's guilt knowing others, so many of them Shoalhaven neighbours,

have a much tougher recovery ahead. She has thrown her support behind initiatives such as Turia Pitt's 'Spend With Them' and Tourism Australia's 'Holiday Here This Year', and hopes others will do the same.

"[The situation is] making everybody much more cognisant of the impact of tourism and how it really is the lifeblood for so many of these communities that no longer have their old traditional industries," says Hamilford. "Tourism is everything to them.

"It's not just the Paperbarks or the more well-known places, [small businesses] bring people into the communities and draw a focus on these areas and then create so many jobs and opportunities. It's vitally

important [we support them]."

A significant groundswell of support has already been seen across the country, and from further afield, particularly by way of financial donations. The display of community spirit has been heartening, though perhaps not surprising. It bodes well for recovery.

"It's been amazing watching [locals support each other and] even the whole of Australia," says Hamilford. "It's pretty incredible what we can do when the chips are really down.

"We're stronger together." ✨

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SOUTHERN OCEAN LODGE

South Australia

IF YOU'VE BEEN TO SOUTHERN OCEAN LODGE, YOU'LL know the magic. Set next to the thundering Southern Ocean on Kangaroo Island, the wilderness lodge is an icon of Australia's luxury travel market. The site is surrounded by expansive heathland and mallee scrub, and wonderfully fresh sea air. It is home to seals, dolphins, whales, koalas and, of course, kangaroos. It is a launchpad for the natural wonders of Kangaroo Island. It is a genuine sanctuary and an incredible showcase of our Great Southern Land.

In early January, powerful and unrelenting fires tore through the western end of Kangaroo Island. Southern Ocean Lodge was destroyed.

"When you put your heart and soul into the creation of something and then to see it just disintegrate... there's just nothing. It is such a feeling of loss," says Hayley Baillie who, together with her husband James, opened Southern Ocean Lodge under the renowned Baillie Lodges portfolio in 2008.

A visit to ground zero four weeks after the fire was a chance for the Baillies to assess the destruction and, although it was difficult to comprehend the blackened rubble, there were promising signs of life. Two wallabies grazing where the staff village once stood, currawongs sharing their distinguishable birdsong, and the resident echidna still meandering like a boss. Vegetation was also on the move.

"We've been dealt a blow but we'll get through. Tourism people are resilient. We just get on with it."

"[It was] only four weeks after the fire and there [were] already low-lying green and red succulent-type coastal plants," says Baillie. "Some of them [were] just little buds coming out and others [were] a metre-by-metre square patches, already after just four weeks.

"You realise it's nature's way. The bush will all regenerate and within a couple of years it will all be green and bushy again."

It's hard to ignore the metaphor. New life is already sprouting, just as new life will be injected into Southern Ocean Lodge. The Baillies have committed to rebuilding the property and clock the "best case scenario" at two and a half years. There are no plans for dramatic change. The Baillies remain fond of Max Pritchard's timeless design and want returning guests to walk into a familiar, beloved space.

Meanwhile, Kangaroo Island remains open for business. Although about 40 per cent of the island was reached by January's bushfires, around 250,000 hectares in the east remain unaffected, including Seal Bay, Raptor Domain and the KI Wildlife Park. Like Paperbark's Hamilford, the Baillies are throwing their weight behind the 'Holiday Here This Year' message. And while you're busy exploring home turf, Southern Ocean Lodge will be reborn.

"We've been dealt a blow but we'll get through," says Baillie. "Tourism people are resilient. We just get on with it." ✨