



Eden Health Retreat
in Currumbin Valley,
Queensland

ESCAPE ROUTE

RE-ENERGISE, REHABILITATE AND RECHARGE AT AUSTRALIA'S BEST WELLNESS RETREATS.

Best for massages

Gaia Retreat & Spa

Spread over 10 lush hectares in the subtropical Byron Bay hinterland, Gaia Retreat & Spa attracts international celebrities while remaining unpretentious and chilled. It's "Barefoot meets Armani", in the words of its founder, Olivia Newton-John. You can do your morning yoga on scenic Samira Lookout, take clay-modelling workshops, train at the gym, do organic food cooking classes with the resort's award-winning chefs or simply bliss-out at the day spa with its fabulous array of pampering and massage treatments. Try the divine Royal Kahuna, a Hawaiian healing ritual involving breath work and a rhythmic deep-tissue massage. Or go for the recently added Crystal journey—it is Byron Bay, after all. **LINDA JAVIN**

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WHERE Brooklet, NSW, about 30 minutes' drive from Byron Bay.
PACKAGES Two-, three-, five- and seven-night "revive", "restore" and "refresh" packages, inclusive of

gourmet organic meals, activities and spa treatments, plus specialty honeymoon and couples' packages and mother-and-daughter retreats.
ACCOMMODATION 16 semidetached bungalows and six standalone villas.
INTENSITY Relaxed or intense, active or indulgent—it's your choice.
BEST PROGRAM Try a signature spa massage package or curate your own. Massages range from remedial to shamanic.
SURPRISE FACTOR Spot the celebrities in their bathrobes over breakfast.
RATES From \$145 for two nights.
@gaiaretreat.com.au

Best for mineral springs

Hepburn Bathhouse & Spa

The wellness seekers of 1895 flocked to Hepburn Bathhouse when it first opened and the mineral-rich waters of central Victoria continue to exert a magnetic pull. The retreat now boasts the accoutrements of the modern age with a raft of spa treatment options (rose quartz facial, anyone?) but the two-hour Sanctuary bathing experience remains the core proposition. Laze your way through the warm waters, from the soothing saltwater pool to the invigorating jets of the spa lounge pool, before a visit to the steamy Turkish-style hammam. Staying for the night? The 10 villas are each equipped with a giant marble bathtub and mineral bathing salts to continue the aquatic vibes, along with a gas log fire and sumptuous faux fur throws. **LARISSA DUBECKI**

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WHERE Hepburn Springs, Victoria, about 90 minutes' drive from Melbourne.

PACKAGES One-, two- and three-night wellness programs incorporating mineral bathing and spa treatments.

ACCOMMODATION Ten one-bedroom villas, nestled among mature gardens, a short walk from the bathhouse.

INTENSITY Relaxed; the bathhouse embraces the unhurried refinement of the Victorian era.

BEST PROGRAM A two-hour excursion around the pools and steam rooms of the Bathhouse Sanctuary, the premium retreat area, features private mineral wellness baths and access to body treatments and therapies.

SURPRISE FACTOR The hydrotherapy pod, where wet steam therapy, aromatherapy and the precision jets of the wet table will leave you detoxed and rejuvenated.

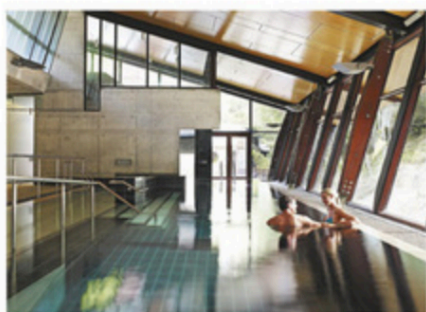
RATES From \$895 for two nights.
@hepburnbathhouse.com

Best for yoga

Billabong Retreat

It's hard to imagine a more ideal setting than the yoga studio at Billabong Retreat for winding down and connecting with nature. This spacious bamboo-floored building has a soaring vaulted ceiling and one entire side is sliding glass doors showcasing a glorious bush panorama. Relaxation is guaranteed as you cycle through your asanas or learn the calming techniques of pranayama breathing to a soundtrack of wind in the trees and the melodic trill of an estimated 40 species of native birds. Prime your body for the next session with a visit to the onsite spa or by relaxing in the soothing magnesium pool. **SANDRA BRIDGECIRK**

The expansive pools at Hepburn Bathhouse & Spa



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WHERE Maraylya, NSW, about 60 minutes' drive from Sydney.
PACKAGES Two- and three-night yoga, mindfulness, meditation, gut-health or stress-management programs, plus day retreats that include a massage, facial or private yoga class.
ACCOMMODATION There are 19 rooms, ranging from deluxe cabins that overlook the billabong, with indoor and outdoor baths, to simple private rooms, with a shared bathroom, and a four-bed female dormitory.
INTENSITY Moderate; participation is encouraged but not mandatory.
BEST PROGRAM The weekend Deeper Yoga program, including twice-daily yoga (from 7am), meditation and daily workshops on topics such as breathing techniques and mindfulness.
SURPRISE FACTOR The buffet-style food is organic, vegetarian and free of refined sugar (with the majority also vegan and gluten-free) but it's delicious and plentiful.
RATES From \$200 per person for a day retreat; \$500 for a weekend program.
 @billabongretreat.com.au

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Best for weight loss
Golden Door Elysia Health Retreat & Spa
 Located as it is amid green hills dotted with vineyards and cellar doors in NSW's Hunter Valley, the Golden Door Elysia Health Retreat & Spa seems at odds with the notion of a health overhaul. But from the moment you arrive at this picturesque resort, temptation seems far away. Regardless of which program you choose, a typical day might include group yoga, meditation, deep-water running, a stretching class, personal training and health and wellness seminars led by experts who arm you with the knowledge to make long-lasting positive changes to your lifestyle. It's not all hard work, though—the onsite Spa Elysia is one of the largest in the country, with 26 wet and dry rooms and an exhaustive treatment menu. Step out of

your comfort zone with the signature Watsu treatment, where a therapist guides you through the water in a private pool, stretching your body out in ways that are impossible on dry land. **VANESSA LAWRENCE**
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WHERE Pokolbin, NSW, a 2.5-hour drive from Sydney.
PACKAGES Two-, three-, five- and seven-night wellness programs, plus specialty events such as the annual Men's Wellness Retreat with life coach David Ball.
ACCOMMODATION Seventy-four standalone villas (one, two or three bedrooms) overlooking vineyards and the Brokenback Mountain range.
INTENSITY Depends on the program; if you're only there for a weekend, no-one will stop you leaving the premises for a quick coffee but for longer programs, rules such as no caffeine and no alcohol are enforced.
BEST PROGRAM The seven-night Weight Management Program, which includes specialty health and wellness cuisine, a consultation with a nutritionist and a personal training session.
SURPRISE FACTOR The retreat offers a spate of programs tailored to businesses, from the three-night Motivate for Change Program to the seven-night Corporate Health Enhancement Retreat.
RATES From \$115 (twin-share) for the two-night Petite Retreat Weekend Program.
 @goldendoor.com.au

Best for body detox
Kangaroo Island Health Retreat

Sue McCarthy's program has been honed over some 40 years and she's an intrinsic part of its continued success. Her practical, no-nonsense manner means there's no freewheeling—but she's encouraging and warm. Days start with a series of cleansing rituals followed by yoga, body brushing and sweating in the infrared sauna. There's also walking—lots of it. You'll trek up to 20 kilometres a day on the stunning coastal trails and beaches of Kangaroo Island. Meals are minimal but nourishing. Don't expect any luxuries or glamorous distractions but be prepared for serious results—weight loss, of course, but also a deeper sense of wellbeing. This retreat is designed to thoroughly detox body and mind, schooling you in mindful eating, sensible exercise and steady thought patterns. **JO MCKAY**

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WHERE Emu Bay, Kangaroo Island, South Australia, a 40-minute flight from Adelaide or about four hours by car and ferry.
PACKAGES There's only one program: the seven-night Dynamic Detox. It's held twice a month and is often booked out months in advance.

ACCOMMODATION This purpose-built retreat is set on a small rural property with views of Emu Bay in the distance. There are four single bedrooms, plus one double (twin beds), each with a private adjacent bathroom. It's simple, clean and unpretentious.
INTENSITY Hardcore; you'll hike about 100 kilometres during the week and drink between five and eight litres of water daily.
BEST PROGRAM The Dynamic Detox includes nutritional guidance, daily walking, yoga, ocean swimming, sauna and massage.
SURPRISE FACTOR The sauna is the truth room, where souls are bared and deep friendships forged.
RATES From \$2999 per person for the seven-night program.
 @kihealthretreat.com

Best for meditation
Samadhi Health and Wellness Retreat & Spa

Serene gardens designed for contemplation, artfully healthy meals delivered to the upmarket suites and a smorgasbord of bespoke treatments targeting body and mind means Samadhi has Zen on speed dial. An East-meets-West sanctuary on the outskirts of pretty Glenlyon, near Melbourne, this award-winning boutique retreat is all about helping you find the antidote to the stresses of city living. Mindfulness is at the core of one-on-one sessions covering life shaping, qi gong, yoga and meditation, while the spa is all about pure indulgence. Sign up for a retreat package or design your own with the expertise of hosts Wayne and Annah Mirananda—either way, this unique wellness retreat delivers results. **LO**

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WHERE Glenlyon, Victoria, about 90 minutes' drive from Melbourne.
PACKAGES Bespoke wellness programs, including day retreats, plus specialty retreats focusing on areas such as detoxing and relationship renewal.
ACCOMMODATION Two self-contained luxury suites, each containing two bedrooms, set in private, manicured grounds.
INTENSITY Moderate; it's all about balance here.



Coconut pancakes and pureed pear at Golden Door Elysia Health Retreat & Spa



The Treetop Yoga Room at Billabong Retreat has views of the bush with a soundtrack of birds

BEST PROGRAM The four-night meditation retreat features a daily menu of three hours of spa therapies, personal workshops, meditation and private yoga tuition.

SURPRISE FACTOR Professional burnout retreats are custom-made for managing stress and anxiety in the workplace.

RATES From \$900 per person for an overnight retreat with relaxation massage.

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Best for digital detox

Eden Health Retreat

The loss of phone service as you wend along Currumbin Creek Road towards the gates to Eden Health Retreat is a good indication of what lies ahead. There are no TVs, computers, wi-fi or mobile reception at this lush Hamptons-country-club-style estate. Stress and cravings are soothed by the blanket of green outside your room and a daily timetable of activities (revealed only the night before) and spa treatments. For some, morning qi gong then a day spent reading by the saltwater pool will suffice. Others will opt in to everything from boxing to life-skills training after slathering themselves in therapeutic New Zealand mud. Meals are gluten-free and satisfying, if a little on the light side. **CELESTE MITCHELL**

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WHERE Currumbin Valley, Queensland, 30 minutes' drive from Gold Coast Airport.

PACKAGES There's only one seven-day program available, with check-in every Sunday.

ACCOMMODATION Twenty-eight recently refurbished cabins set on a slope that reaches up the escarpment of a lush valley. Rooms 27 and 28 have the best views but expect a thigh-burning walk to get to them.

INTENSITY Moderate; be prepared to part with coffee, booze, sugar and mobile phone coverage.

BEST PROGRAM The core package includes healthy spa cuisine, all activities and up to \$400 in therapies but the retreat also occasionally offers special one-off packages.

SURPRISE FACTOR The range of New-Age rituals – think Hawaiian hula dance through to didgeridoo sound therapy.

RATES From \$3050 per person twin-share in an Eden Superior Room.

©edenhealthretreat.com.au

Best for emotional wellbeing

Living Valley Health Retreat

The first thing you realise on checking in at this 29-year-old retreat is that your health – physical and mental – is the top priority. It's also why some are back for their 10th, 15th, even 20th stay. After a consultation with a naturopath to set your personal road map, you have permission to put yourself first. While guidelines frame everything (for instance, you'll be advised when to drink water before and after meals) and twice-daily steam baths are prescribed to sweat out toxins, it's your choice whether you subsist on juice and broth for a three-day cleanse or opt to enjoy the onsite walking trails, pool and massages. The focus is on education with cooking demonstrations and nightly

lectures ranging from nutrition to alkalising. The food is a highlight – makrut-lime panna cotta with grass-fed gelatin is just one of the options. **EM**

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WHERE Noosa hinterland, Queensland, about two hours' drive from Brisbane.

PACKAGES Seven-, 14- and 21-day or longer programs, plus speciality retreats such as Flourish Women's, Weight Management, Men's Ultimate Health and Mental Wellness.

ACCOMMODATION The 27 rooms (single, double and queen) are basic but comfortable. Most have private bathrooms and balconies to take in views of the 59-hectare property, where rabbits and pink galahs nibble the lawn.

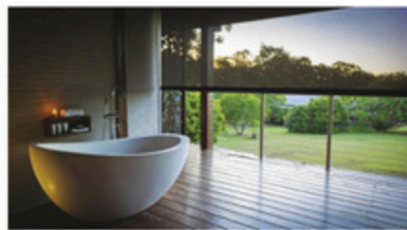
INTENSITY Flexible; you can opt for hardcore cleanses or just make the most of the spa.

BEST PROGRAM The seven-day Mental Wellness Retreat, directed by a clinical psychologist and a team of naturopaths and therapists, includes one-on-one counselling, mindfulness training and remedial treatments.

SURPRISE FACTOR You become comfortable quickly; expect other guests to share stories about their colonic experience over lunch.

RATES From \$1550 per person for the three-day Rejuvenator package.

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The outdoor bath in an Orchard Suite at Gwinganna

The lush surroundings of Gaia Retreat & Spa



Best for stress management

Gwinganna Lifestyle Retreat

In 2005, the team at Gwinganna (many of whom are still there) created a highly successful formula: encourage guests to exercise in the morning, whether that's a guided bushwalk on one of the property's 16 tracks, a boxing class, Pilates or deep-water running, then give them the afternoon off to "restore". That could mean having a nap in your suite, swimming in one of two infinity pools or visiting the largest spa in the Southern Hemisphere, which offers a dizzying array of stress-relief treatments. By all means, do all three – and be sure to work up an appetite for the organic, locally produced food, which leaves traditional spa cuisine for dead. You'll leave feeling more balanced and, thanks to the inspiring information sessions, ready to make major lifestyle changes. **KIRSTEN GALLIOTT**

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WHERE Tallebudgera Valley, Queensland, about 30 minutes' drive from Gold Coast Airport.

PACKAGES Two-, three-, four-, five- and seven-night programs, including the Gwinganna Detox, Optimum Wellbeing 50 Plus, The Yoga Retreat and Triple S – Sleep, Sugar, Stress.

ACCOMMODATION Sixty rooms in various styles – with the Orchard Suites featuring outdoor baths – in the spectacular Gold Coast hinterland.

INTENSITY It depends on the program you pick. The Detox programs are exactly that but there are always yin (gentle) and yang (dynamic) exercise options available.

BEST PROGRAM To really make a change, opt for the five- or seven-night Detox. You'll move more, learn about nutrition and digestion (chew slowly!) and improve your sleep.

SURPRISE FACTOR Former 100-metre hurdler Ellice De Giovanni is a trainer at the retreat and her joint-mobility class – which focuses on moving the joints in unusual ways and increasing the synovial fluid within – tops most guests' lists as the best class. Sexy? No. Effective? You bet. Expect to walk out feeling a centimetre taller and with no aches and pains.

RATES From \$1045 per person for two-night Gwinganna Wellness Weekend.

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