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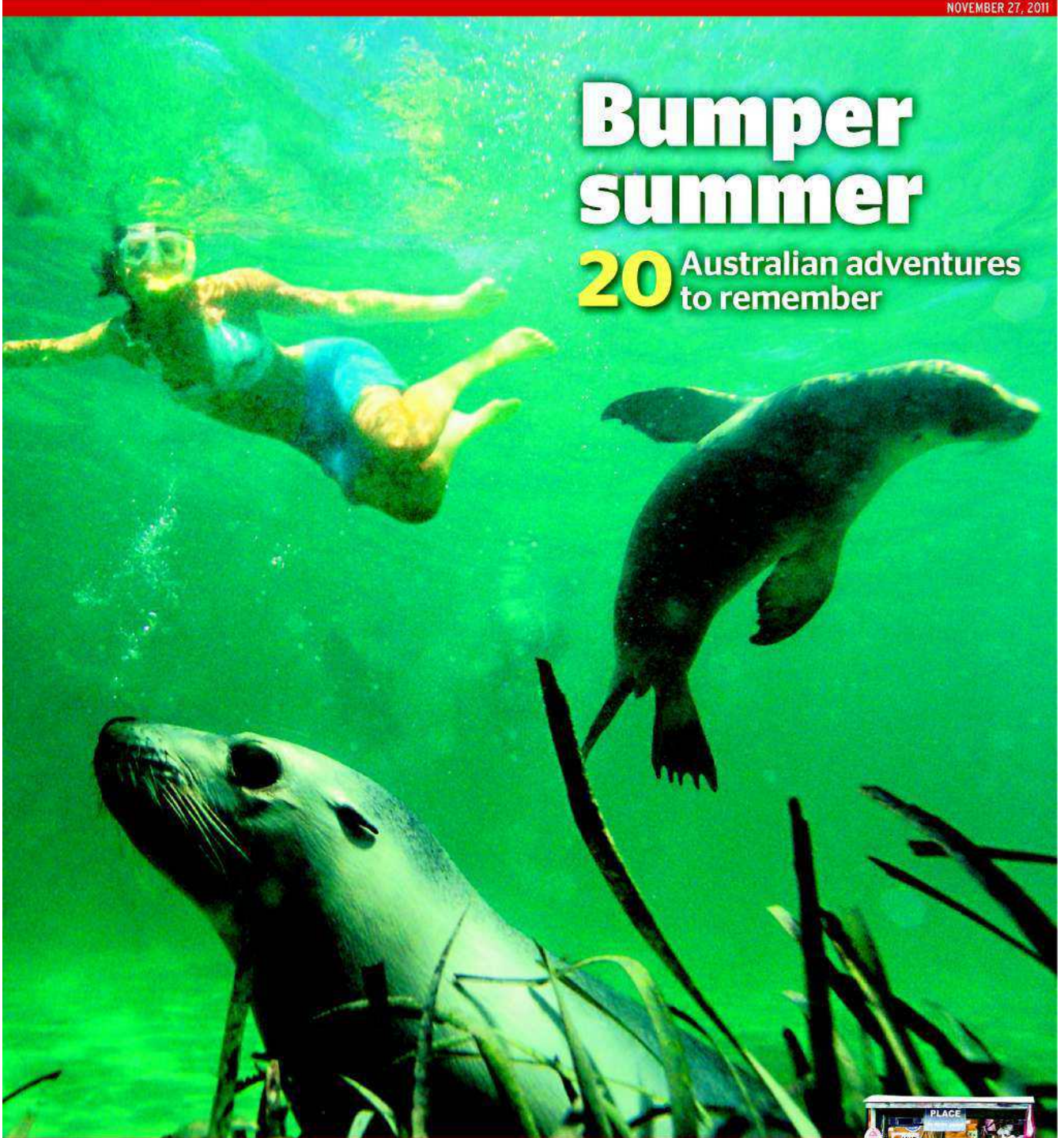


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NOVEMBER 27, 2011



Bumper summer

20 Australian adventures to remember





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Hot and happening

The carefree days of summer are coming - **Lee Atkinson** compiles a wish-list of some of the country's best new adventures

LOOKING for something new to do this summer? Here are 20 great ideas – places to go, things to see and do – in no particular order, around the country.

1 Climb the mast in Sydney
 Get a bird's-eye view of Sydney Harbour from the crow's nest at the top of a tall ship. A cruise around Sydney Harbour on a tall ship is always a special day out but if you've got a good head for heights, you can now hop into a special safety harness and climb the mast of the Southern Swan, a three-masted barquentine built in 1922. Previously a thrill reserved just for working crew, it's the only tall ship mast-climbing adventure available to the public in Australia. Those that don't want to climb can help haul the ropes or just enjoy the two-hour cruise. \$59 online/\$79 on the day.
1800 825 574, sydneytallships.com.au.

2 Explore Goat Island, Sydney
 A new harbour cruise brings alive the convict history of Sydney on a guided tour of Goat Island. It is home to Sydney's oldest water police station – it was the filming location of the TV series *Water Rats* – and several convict-built structures, including a soldier's barracks and military gunpowder magazine. Legend has it that one convict was kept chained to a rock for two years during construction. Previously off limits, guided tours of the island now depart several times daily and include a cruise past the "castles" of Kirribilli, barbecue lunch and a glass of bubbly. \$89 adults; \$39 kids. **1300 266 842, uniqueharbourcruises.com.au.**

3 Royal Escape, Sydney
 You don't have to travel too far to escape the city this summer. The eco-adventure company, Royal Coast Walks, has launched a new two-day kayak and hiking tour to Weemalah. The tour includes kayaking into the Royal National Park, staying overnight in a rustic National Parks hut and then hiking out the next day. Tour price includes guides, all equipment, luggage transportation, meals and accommodation, a vintage tram ride from the Royal National Park to Loftus and a ride on the historic ferry from Cronulla to Bundeena. \$399 an adult.
(02) 8521 7423, royalcoastwalks.com.au.

4 Rediscover Newcastle
 If you haven't been to Newcastle for a while, you've been missing out. Named by Lonely Planet as Australia's most underrated city earlier this year, there's plenty happening with swish new restaurants, quirky boutique shopping – especially if you like designer and vintage wear – and an exploding creative arts scene, thanks to the Renew Newcastle program that allows artists and emerging designers to set up galleries and pop-up shops in empty buildings across the city. Just opened is the new Newcastle Museum at Honeysuckle Wharf, which includes an interactive science centre, Supernova, as well as exhibitions on World War II (Newcastle was attacked by Japanese submarines in 1942), the region's Aboriginal heritage and the settlement of the area by Europeans.
visitnewcastle.com.au.

5 Thirlmere for trainspotting
 The collection of steam trains at Thirlmere, in the Southern Highlands about an hour's drive south-west of Sydney, has always been a magnet for train buffs but now a new museum-cum-theme park means you don't have to be a dedicated trainspotter to have fun. On display is the biggest collection of rolling stock in Australia and there are several children's areas, including interactive video displays, a Thomas the Tank Engine model railway and an outdoor play area. Steam train rides take place four times every Sunday, heading from Thirlmere to the village of Buxton and back. 10 Barbour Road, Thirlmere, open daily.
(02) 4681 8001, trainworks.com.au.

6 Snowy Mountain Segways
 Billed as the highest segway experience in Australia, Lake Crackenback Resort near Thredbo has just taken delivery of a fleet of Segway x2 all-terrain personal transportation vehicles and are offering guided eco-tours for adults and kids alike. The machines have zero emissions and are whisper quiet, so the wildlife won't even see you coming. A one-hour tour is \$50.
lakecrackenback.com.au.

7 Follow an underwater trail on the south coast
 The waters off the beaches and rocks of the Batemans Bay and

Eurobodalla region on the NSW south coast are like one big aquarium with masses of coloured fish, unusual underwater rock formations, jellyfish, turtles, big cruising rays, waving sponge beds, lush green kelp forests and even seals around Montague Island. Explore this underwater world on one of seven new snorkelling trails. BYO flippers and mask.
eurobodalla.com.au/diving-snorkelling.

8 Action on the Gold Coast
 Every summer the theme parks of the Gold Coast do their best to outdo each other by staging the biggest, best or most thrilling new ride or show – and this year's no exception. There's a terrifying new thrill ride at Dreamworld called BuzzSaw, which they are claiming is the highest inversion ride experience in the southern hemisphere. Not for the timid, it involves being flipped upside down 15 storeys in the air, plummeting down again at speeds of up to 105km/h and a giant stomach-churning loop. New attractions at Sea World include the world's first SpongeBob SquarePants parade and, for the grown-ups, a jet ski stunt show. The VIP pass provides 14 consecutive days of unlimited entry to Sea World, Movie World and Wet 'n' Wild Water World, available until June 30, 2012 for \$109.99.
dreamworld.com.au; myfun.com.au.

9 Your own island paradise, Noosa
 Make like Robinson Crusoe on your own private island – or bring along a few of your very best friends. Virgin's Sir Richard Branson has opened the doors to his home at Makepeace Island, a heart-shaped land mass just a few minutes downstream from Noosa Heads in the middle of the Noosa River. The island, which can accommodate and entertain up to 22 castaways, features a four-bedroom guest house, several two-bedroom villas, a boat house, a lagoon pool with a lap lane and a 15-person spa. Exclusive use of the island doesn't come cheap though, with costs starting from \$7990 for eight guests a day, so better make sure they're your very best cashed-up friends.
makepeaceisland.com.

10 Say hello again to Hayman, FNQ
 Luxury resort Hayman Island on the Great Barrier Reef has just reopened following the double

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whammy of cyclones Larry and Yasi last summer and is back even better than before. As well as undergoing required repairs, the closure allowed the resort to flourish with a Jamie Durie-designed botanical garden sprouting to life, a new restaurant and new floodlit tennis courts, in addition to other extensive sports facilities. For special packages:

1800 122 339, hayman.com.au.

11 Hang (on) a line in Brisbane
 Brisbane's Story Bridge has long been one of the only three (legal) bridge climbs in the world (the other two are Sydney and Auckland) but from mid-October on it will be the only bridge in the world that you can (legally) abseil. The brand new bridge abseil climb involves an 80-metre ascent to the top of the bridge and then a 30-metre abseil of the pillar into the park below. Abseil climbs cost \$119 an adult.
storybridgeadventureclimb.com.au.

12 Get on your bike in the Victorian Alps
 The Victorian High Country is the best place to go wild on two wheels and it's going to be better than ever this summer with the December opening of a new mountain bike trail, named Copperhead, at Mount Buller. The trail is a mix of downhill and cross-country and, according to the trail makers, the only one like it in the country. For those that like their bike riding a little less hardcore, the pedal-to-produce trails around Beechworth, Bright, Rutherglen and Wangaratta mean you can work up an appetite while cycling, indulge in some of Victoria's best regional food, then work it all off again. If you don't have a bike, you can borrow one for free at Brown Brothers winery in Milawa. **mtbuller.com.au; www.pedaltoproduce.com.au.**

13 Great Ocean Road by land and sea
 The Queenscliff to Sorrento ferry in Victoria has had a multimillion dollar facelift just in time for summer and new features include a much-improved lounge and wine and beer tastings as well as live music and an on-board cafe. It's a great way to avoid driving in traffic-choked Melbourne: the coastal drive trip from Phillip Island to Sorrento, catching the ferry to Queenscliff and travelling on through the Bellarine and along the Surf Coast and the Great Ocean Road, makes a fabulous all-day outing.
searoad.com.au.

14 Find an empty beach on the

14 Eyre Peninsula
 One of the best-kept beach secrets in the country is the Eyre Peninsula, the triangle of land jutting into the sea between Adelaide and the Great Australian Bight. If you like empty beaches, this is the place to go. Take a three- to four-day drive from Whyalla to Ceduna via Port Lincoln and you'll find beach after beach, visited only by the occasional fisherman and screeching seagulls. Campsites are right on the edge of the sand and often there's nobody else staying there. Highlights are oysters and fresh seafood, the stunning five-kilometre cliff drive at Elliston, fishing from town jetties, four-wheel driving in the Lincoln and Coffin Bay national parks and swimming with sea lions at Baird Bay.
southaustralia.com.

15 Race with the greats in Adelaide
 If watching Cadel Evans become the first Australian rider to win the Tour de France has inspired you to get serious about cycling, don't miss the Santos Tour Down Under in Adelaide from January 15-22. Attracting the big names in world road cycling, it's the first race in the UCI World Tour event. Join in and ride a stage of the event in the Bupa Challenge Tour or Bupa Mini Tour for kids and meet the cyclists and their teams.
tourdownunder.com.au.

16 Sail around Kangaroo Island
 A new luxury sailing adventure is setting sail in November, offering three-day all-inclusive sailing trips around Kangaroo Island in South Australia. The yacht, the Lady Eugenie, has four queen-sized staterooms with en suites, an alfresco dining area and a beautiful teak deck ideal for dolphin and whale spotting, as well as an onboard chef cooking up a storm with regional produce. Trips depart from Wirrina Cove on the Fleurieu Peninsula, so combine it with a few days of food and wine tasting along the way and you have all the reasons you need to hit the road. \$2500 a person.
kangarooislandsailing.com.au.

17 Become an Ironman (or woman) in Perth
 There'll be plenty of surf-sport action happening in Perth on the weekend of January 27-29 when it hosts a round of the Kellogg's Nutri-Grain Ironman and Ironwoman series. This year, budding ironmen and women will be able to join in with a new public participation event, the Indian Ocean Classic at

Scarborough Beach on January 29. The course includes the same categories of ski, board, run and swim as the main event and there will be a plenty of support events on the beach.

indianoceanclassic.com.au.

18 Play a round on the longest golf course in the world
 Spread across two states and two time zones, the 18-hole par 72 golf course spans a mind-boggling 1365 kilometres with one hole in each town or roadhouse along the Eyre Highway, from Kalgoorlie to Ceduna in South Australia. Distances aside, the course has a unique set of challenges. Seven of the holes are on existing courses but 11 have been purpose built, although the fairway is just the existing scrub. Crows have been known to steal balls, headwinds can be ferocious and you need to keep an eye out for snakes when you go looking for any lost balls. It puts the fun back into driving on the longest, straightest, flattest piece of road in Australia. Nullarbor Golf Links costs \$70 a round and golf clubs are available for hire for \$5 at each hole.
nullarborlinks.com.

19 Enjoy Canberra's Renaissance
 This summer's blockbuster show at the National Gallery is *Renaissance*, an exhibition of 15th- and 16th-century Italian paintings – think Raphael, Botticelli, Titian and Bellini. It's only on in Canberra, so if you want to see them you'll have to hit the road. But it's not the only part of Canberra undergoing a renaissance: two brand new hotels, the Aria and Burbury, are offering some great deals.
nga.gov.au; ariahotel.com.au; burburyhotel.com.au.

20 Taste Hobart
 In the past couple of years Tasmania has become the foodie destination of choice and the annual Taste Festival, a week-long carnival of food and wine that coincides with the arrival of the 100 or so yachts racing to the finish of the Sydney to Hobart yacht race, is earning a growing reputation as one of the country's best gastronomic events of the year. It's on December 28-January 3 and includes outdoor movies, kids' events, special exhibitions, outdoor concerts, wine tasting, food safaris, cider making, beer brewing and cooking classes.
tastefestival.com.au.



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Cool choices ... clockwise from above, Royal National Park; Montague Island; Thirlmere; Dreamworld. Photos: Lance Richardson, Christine Sams



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Idyllic ... left, Hayman Island; the Twelve Apostles on the Great Ocean Road.

Photos: Getty Images, Craig Abraham