

THE WANDERER

A U S T R A L I A ' S L A R G E S T R V C L U B M A G A Z I N E

W E L L N E S S

JOURNEYS

MURRAMARANG | HEPBURN SPRINGS | MOREE | OUTBACK HOT SPRINGS



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From bores to bathtubs, bush waterholes to corrugated iron tanks, conventional pools to swanky spas, there are myriad ways to soak up Australia's thermal waters. Heated deep within the earth, these mineral-enriched waters have long been lauded for their therapeutic benefits, including pain relief, muscle recovery, stress reduction, improved circulation and better sleep. Thermal pools are also places of social connection, so add these 10 beauties to your travel itinerary.

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SIZZLING OUTBACK HOT SPRINGS

WORDS BRIAR JENSEN, PICS SUPPLIED



MATARANKA THERMAL POOL

ELSEY NATIONAL PARK, NT

Mataranka Thermal Pool is a landscape architect's dream – 34°C gin-clear water flowing over white sandy gravel, edged by paved stones and framed by towering cabbage palms and pandanus. It feels strangely incongruous in this region known as the 'capital of the Never Never' (after Jeannie Gunn's book about Elsey Station, *We of the Never Never*). Curving through the trees, this is a pool to loll in – drifting on your back or just floating in the water chatting.

Just up the road, Bitter Springs has the same crystal-clear water but feels more untamed and river-like, enclosed by rampant reeds, paperbarks and pandanus. It's deeper too, so bring a pool noodle or inflatable ring to drift with the current downstream towards Little Roper River, which takes about 10 minutes, then climb out and walk back along the path to do it all again. Goggles or a mask and snorkel will enhance your underwater viewing and turtle spotting opportunities.
matarankahomestead.com.au

CHARLOTTE PLAINS

CUNNAMULLA, QLD

The original 1892 bore on this working sheep station spouts 42°C water from the Great Artesian Basin. Spilling from overhead pipes into shallow pools and drains, it creates an outback aquatic playground for all ages. Float or kayak along the watercourse or lie back and soak in the outdoor bathtubs lining the channel or from a private bathing pavilion. Nothing beats watching sunrise, sunset or the night sky from a steaming tub with your favourite tippie. Best of all, you can camp here. While at the station, take a self-drive farm tour, observe the prolific wildlife and, in the evenings, join fellow travellers for a drink at the Bore Baa.
charlotteplains.com.au

CHARLOTTE PLAINS © HAILEY BARTHOLOMEW/TOURISM AND EVENTS QUEENSLAND

CUNNAMULLA HOT SPRINGS

CUNNAMULLA, QLD

This \$11.7 million sanctuary of wellness takes outback hot pools to a whole new level. Curvaceous, ramped pools of different temperatures swirl beneath eucalyptus trees. Relax on the inbuilt seats or rest your elbows over the edge and watch the Warrego River below. An icy plunge pool, sauna and steam room round out the experience. You can even paint your partner in healing clay. Don't miss the visitor centre next door for fascinating insights into the hydrology of the Great Artesian Basin.

Afterwards, head up the road to Eulo and the charmingly quirky Eulo Mud Baths for an unforgettable private experience luxuriating in mineral-enriched, silky clay. Soak off the mud in an outdoor bathtub with a glass of wine while peering out across the outback plains.
cunnamullahotsprings.com
artesianmudbathseulo.com.au

© HAILEY BARTHOLOMEW

WOORAMEL RIVER RETREAT

SHARK BAY, WA

Fancy a dip in an upside-down river? Fear not, the mineral waters at Wooramel Station are pumped into a series of civilised bathing pools from 240 metres underground. The family-owned working cattle, sheep and goat station is a must-visit farm stay for any RVer visiting Western Australia's World Heritage-listed Shark Bay. Pull up by the Wooramel River (it's bone dry most of

the year - hence the nickname), soak in the pools under the moonlight and enjoy a campfire before you turn in. Don't leave before checking out the historic open-air 'tip' - a treasure trove of artefacts from four generations of pastoralist families. The station even has an on-site cafe. wooramel.com.au

WITJIRA-DALHOUSIE SPRINGS

WITJIRA NATIONAL PARK, SA

More than 120 mound springs surface here on the western edge of the Simpson Desert, an oasis forming the country's largest artesian springs complex. Water in the centre of the basin is more than one million years old, and the springs are home to species found nowhere else. As the only permanent water source for 150 kilometres, the springs were important to

local Indigenous groups and are now on the National Heritage List. You can swim in the main spring, screened by outback scrub, and feel like you're in the middle of nowhere. You can also camp here. The catch? You'll need a four-wheel drive. parks.sa.gov.au



© DESTINATION NSW

TALAROO HOT SPRINGS

MOUNT SURPRISE, QLD

A geological patchwork of travertine terraces and vent pools, the colourful mound springs at Talaroo are believed to be 65 million years old. The springs have been significant to the Ewamian People for millennia, and it's fitting that First Nations custodians manage conservation of the fragile ecosystem here. Take a guided boardwalk tour of the site, home to rare and endangered species, finishing with a swim in the communal bathing pool. Or book a 40-minute session in one of their private round tubs. Camp overnight to hear Ewamian stories around the fire pit in the Yarning Circle.

talaroo.com.au

ARTESIAN BORE BATHS

LIGHTNING RIDGE, NSW

Rock up to these free bore baths anytime day or night (open 24/7) and you'll likely meet locals, truckies and fellow travellers soothing sore muscles. Built as a social hub for the community in 1962, the bath's circular design fosters conversation, though there's plenty of space to spread out. A smaller, shallower, slightly cooler pool is more child friendly. Nowadays the pool water is recycled in the opal fields for sluicing. There are similar circular bore baths at Burren Junction and Collarenebri.

explorelightningridge.com.au
burrenjunction.com



© COURTNEY ATKINSON/AWOL FAMILY

ZEBEDEE SPRINGS

EL QUESTRO, WA

Commune with tiny Copland's rock frogs as you lie back in this shallow, palm-fringed water garden. With 1.8-billion-year-old ochre cliffs rising behind and lush Livistona palms towering above, it feels like you're back in the age of the dinosaurs. The 28 to 32°C spring water trickles over stones and tumbles into rock pools just big enough to stretch out in. Move from pool to pool down the slope for different temperatures and outlooks.

elquestro.com.au



© TOURISM WESTERN AUSTRALIA



© BRIAR JENSEN

HASTINGS THERMAL SPRINGS

HASTINGS, TAS

At 28°C, Hastings isn't the hottest of thermal waters, but it's usually much warmer than Tassie's ambient temperature, and on a cold day it feels devilishly hot. This traditional rectangular pool is surrounded by verdant grass, tree ferns and rainforest. When you brave getting out you can warm yourself beside the open fireplaces in the large stone picnic shelters. While here, be sure to explore the Hot Springs Track and Platypus Walk (platypus sightings not guaranteed) or take a guided tour of nearby Newdegate Cave, the largest dolomite cave open to the public in Australia.

parks.tas.gov.au

GREAT ARTESIAN SPA

MITCHELL, QLD

You feel part of the community at this mini wellness centre that includes two free-form pools evoking a billabong, surrounded by gardens and picnic tables. A hydro chair helps those with restricted mobility, and shade sails cover pools of various temperatures. Java Cafe on the adjacent deck serves Merlo coffee and delicious treats, and is popular with locals. There's a free gym, open to everyone, and weekly yoga classes for a small fee. The Visitor Information Centre is here too, making it a perfect stop for travellers.

greatartesiandspa.com



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