

Get travelling

ERIN CRAVEN kicks off our travel special with some great getaway experiences for singles, couples and families



HAPPY CAMPERS

Where? Darlington Beach Holiday Park, Arrawarra, NSW – 25 minutes north of Coffs Harbour

Cost? From \$22/night for an unpowered camp site to \$495/night for a villa.

From the minute we arrive at Darlington Beach Holiday Park just outside Coffs Harbour, it becomes clear that our relaxing family holiday has been turned into an action-packed week, planned with military precision by our seven-year-old son, Josh. Clutching the timetable of the week's activities, he spends at least the first half hour circling touch football, water polo and the weekly kids' disco while we set up our caravan on our ensuite site.

There is no doubt that Darlington Beach is a kids' haven. In school holidays, the resort comes alive with kids of all ages playing together on the giant jumping pillows or sliding down one of the park's two water slides. Parents, too, will appreciate the time out as their kids quickly make friends and

spend their entire holiday riding their bikes up and down the well-lit streets and taking part in the supervised activities.

Kids are given arm bands to wear for the duration of their stay with their parents' mobile numbers, so any lost children can be quickly returned to their family by resort staff.

Mum and Dad are also catered for, with the resort's fully licensed restaurant giving the family cook the night off, while for sportier parents, a nine-hole golf course and lawn bowls green are on site. A private, supervised beach is also just a short walk away.

Camping is the park's bread and butter, but Darlington Park also caters for non-campers with villas sleeping up to eight people. See www.darlingtonbeach.com.au

Alternatively, Paul Winmill Caravans (02 6642 4174) in nearby Grafton have hire



The holiday park comes alive with kids of all ages playing together on the water slides

caravans which they can set up for you.

While there's plenty to do at the park, Coffs Harbour's tourist attractions are a short drive away, including the Big Banana (www.bigbanana.com) and the award-winning Pet Porpoise Pool (www.petporpoisepool.com).

Keeping the kids entertained during family holidays can be a headache, but at Darlington Park you're more likely to have trouble convincing the kids to have a rest.

BEST FOR FAMILIES



WILD WEST, USA

Where? Departing from Salt Lake City (see www.trafalgar.com/AUS)

Cost? From \$1875 per person, twin share for adults and \$1125 for kids aged between 5 and 17.

There's more to America for kids than Disneyland! Trafalgar Tours Wild West Cowboys & Buffalos tour takes you through four states in eight days.

There's no roughing it here, however. Accommodation is first class, with most breakfasts and dinners included.

Starting in Salt Lake City, you travel along the famous Oregon Trail, the main route of early settlers. First stop, the old West town of Jackson, surrounded by the Rocky Mountains, for an authentic chuckwagon cowboy dinner and show.

Then to Yellowstone National Park, where kids can earn their Junior Ranger badge. You'll visit Old Faithful, and see bison, beavers, elks and bears. After two nights there, it's time to travel to Cody, named after Buffalo Bill.

The Ranch at Ucross is a highlight, with real cowboys, campfire stories, horse riding and trout fishing. You'll also visit Crazy Horse Memorial and Mount Rushmore.

Meet the ferocious American black bear at Bear Country USA, board an 1880s steam train which winds through goldmines at Keystone, and examine an 1850s-70s US army post at Fort Laramie.

With so much adventure and history, it won't matter if your cowboy is six or 60!



CITY BEACH BREAK

Where: Quest Cronulla Beach, Cronulla, NSW

Cost? 2-bedroom apartments start at around \$429 a night

Rather than trying to cramp the whole family in one tiny hotel room, consider a serviced apartment.

Kellie and Dale Robertson and their three daughters spend summer break at Cronulla's Quest Serviced Apartment (1300 887 979). "For more than a few nights, we'd stay at a serviced apartment over a hotel any day," says Kellie. "Not just for the cost savings, but for convenience and comfort."

Having your own kitchen means you'll save money on food, with a pantry service available to ensure your kitchen is stocked

when you arrive. There's also in-house dining.

With a swimming pool and beauty salon, plus the beach nearby, you'll all have the complete resort experience.

BEST FOR COUPLES



ROMANTIC EVENING

Where? Hilton Provocateur – selected Hilton hotels across Australia, Fiji and New Zealand. To find your destination, visit www.hilton.com/en/hi/promotions/hi_seduction/index.jhtml

Cost? From \$310 a night depending on location

GIRLS' WEEKEND AWAY

South Australia's Barossa Valley is renowned for its full-bodied wines, but now martinis are also on the menu at the Novotel Barossa Valley Resort.

After its \$2.2 million upgrade, the resort is now the height of style – and relaxation with its award-winning endota day spa.

With some of our best wineries just minutes away, the Novotel (1300 657 697) is the perfect base to explore the region.

MANIS & MARTINIS

Where: Barossa Valley, SA

Cost? Packages from \$456 per night, per room twin share





DESERT DINNER

Where? Sounds of Silence dinner, Uluru, NT

Cost? \$155 per person

Looking to put the sizzle back into your relationship? Hilton Provocateur has all the right ingredients. Designed to inspire couples seeking a naughty night out, the package may not be for the prudish, with raunchy tips to put the spark in your love life by Sydney sexpert Madame Lash.

Whether you follow the advice is up to you, but you're bound to be inspired by the scattering of rose petals, champagne and tempting aphrodisiac platter that await as you return to your room, after nominating a start time for your experience – we chose 9pm.

After checking in at Sydney's Hilton Hotel, in the heart of the city, we headed to the historic Marble Bar in the hotel's basement for cocktails to pass the time while the Hilton staff prepared our relaxation suite.

At 9pm, we arrived back at our room to be greeted by a breathtaking sea of flickering tea lights, a bottle of champagne and a plate of delicious canapes.

Music, picked earlier and downloaded on an iPod by the hotel staff, added to the romantic atmosphere, as did the view of the city lights – best taken in from the deep, double spa bath.

There's nothing more romantic than dining under a shower of falling stars. And that special pleasure is often on the menu at Sounds of Silence – the award-winning outback dining experience that has helped make Australia's Red Centre a great option for a couples' getaway.

The four-hour event begins with drinks and canapes atop a sand dune, with stunning views of Uluru and the domes of Kata Tjuta.

As darkness falls, you're ushered to your table for dining under the stars, which fill the sky in dramatic fashion. If you're as lucky as

we were, your fine buffet meal of kangaroo, barramundi and emu will be accompanied by a light-show of falling meteorites.

Judging by the number of honeymooning couples sharing our table, word of this experience has spread around the world.

When the sun is high there is plenty for couples at the five-star Sails In The Desert hotel (www.ayersrockresort.com.au/sails), which brings civilisation to the desert with private spa rooms, a soothing pool and the Red Ochre Spa, all of which help wash away the dust, as well as any lingering tension.

But it's the Manicures & Martinis package that brings us to its doors. We cradle a cup of endota herbal tea as our feet get five-star treatment and a coat of hot pink nail polish.

At Harry's Restaurant, a \$50 drink voucher, food platter, and the sunset await. Back at our Spa Suite, we jump into our PJs and stretch out on the chaise longues to watch our favourite chick flicks on the LCD TV. Bliss!



The Marriott Circular Quay's Pamper Me Please! package, designed for small groups, is fit for a diva. You and your friends will stay in a lavish duplex suite overlooking spectacular Sydney Harbour.

After check-in, a limo whisks us off to Lattouf Hair Spa in trendy Darlinghurst, for a Mini Aveda makeover, a wash and blow-dry, and a gift of Aveda lip gloss for the road.

Back at our luxury suite, we enjoy Moët served by a private butler, before dressing up to see *Wicked* at the Capitol Theatre – taken there and back in "our" limo.

With late check-out, we make the most of our luxury digs with a sleep-in and a relaxed breakfast at Icons Brasserie.

This pamper package could easily be Australia's best girls' weekend away!

PAMPER ME PLEASE!

Where: Marriott Circular Quay, Sydney, NSW; 1800 251 259

Cost? \$2038 for five



Star spotting

Places to go to spot the celebs, without breaking the bank

LOS ANGELES, USA



Tour the stars' homes, then hit Malibu to spot Courteney Cox, Jennifer Aniston and Demi Moore.

Jennifer Garner, Gwen Stefani and Jessica Alba shop at Farmers Market.

Star hotel: Chateau Marmont – one of Robert Pattinson's faves. From \$400.

Budget traveller: Best Western Sunset Plaza is close Chateau Marmont, Hollywood Walk of Fame and Kodak Theatre. From \$167.

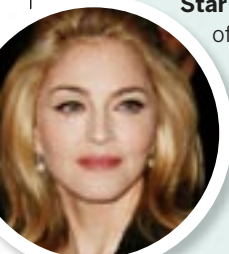
NEW YORK, USA



Times Square is home to TV shows including *Letterman*. Watch the stars live on Broadway.

Star hotel: The Plaza is a favourite of Madonna and Gwyneth Paltrow. From \$1,035.

Budget traveller: The AKA Central Park is near The Plaza and FAO Schwarz on 5th Ave, where Suri Cruise and the Jolie-Pitts buy their toys. From \$345.



HAWAII, USA

Drew Barrymore, Oprah Winfrey and Ben Stiller all own holiday homes here. Skip touristy Waikiki to increase your chances of spotting the likes of Jennifer Garner, Ben Affleck and Matt Damon sunning themselves on the island of Kauai.

Star hotel: The redeveloped St Regis Princeville Hotel on Kauai is expected to attract Hollywood's A-list. From \$950 – or \$7,100 for a Royal Suite.

Budget traveller: Just a short paddle from the St Regis is Hanalei Bay Resort. From \$113.



CANNES, FRANCE

Home of the famous Cannes Film Festival, the town comes alive with celebrities every May, making it the ultimate star-spotting destination.

Star hotel: Brad Pitt and Angelina Jolie, Calista Flockhart and Robert Pattinson are all fans of the luxurious Hotel du Cap Eden.

During the film festival, rooms here will set you back at least a \$1,000 a night.

Budget traveller: Hotel Beau Site. On the same strip as the Hotel du Cap, rooms here start at just \$145 a night.



PORTOFINO, ITALY



Megan Gale and Andy Lee holidayed there earlier this year, while former league star Stuart Webb proposed to Kate Ritchie there in September.

Star hotel: Kylie Minogue and Madonna have both stayed at Hotel Splendido. From \$1,557 to \$5,268 for a Presidential Suite.

Budget traveller: Family run Hotel Eden Portofino is just 50m from the harbour and close to the Hotel Splendido. From \$225.



