

Vacations

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James Baillie

*Co-Founder, Baillie Lodges and Director
and Chair of Luxury Lodges of Australia*



James Baillie had the hotel business in his blood and went from strength to strength as he gained experience in all facets of the business. His first general manager role was at Queensland's beautiful Silky Oaks Lodge, and he became managing director of P&O Australian Resorts in 1999 – the youngest divisional head in its history. James created Baillie Lodges in 2003 with his partner Hayley, with a vision of developing a new Australian premium boutique portfolio of contemporary accommodation experiences.

baillielodges.com.au

When did you start out in the travel industry?

I really grew up with the travel industry around me; my father ran P&O in Australia and over my formative years he was involved in many of the Queensland island resorts. My first real job was during a gap year from university as a barman on Heron Island. I had such a great time that I deferred the next year of study.

What is it you love about working in the hotel industry?

A travel industry colleague and friend recently told me that she “missed her people” after moving to the property sector and I think that sums it up. Hotels are in the blood, they can be like theatre, although with many opening nights! The highlight though for me is the opportunity to create amazing product and then see it all come together. And then to see guests from all corners of the globe come to enjoy it.

What is it that sets Baillie Lodges apart?

I'm often asked that question and my answer is three things; details, details and more details. The big picture takes care of itself when you focus on the small stuff. For us it's all about product integrity, an all-inclusive spirit of generosity, unique locations and windows to incredible natural environments.

Do you have a favourite hotel in the group and if so, what makes it special?

That's such a hard question, Southern Ocean Lodge is our flagship and a property that Hayley and I developed from the ground up – it says so much about us. However, if I had to pick one to spend a week at, it would be Capella Lodge on Lord Howe Island – barefoot beach house style luxury with World Heritage-listed Lord Howe Island as your playground.

What is your favourite city to visit and why?

New York always has been my favourite city. I first visited when I was 18 and have never tired of its many faces. I was lucky enough to attend hotel school in upstate New York during my career and this afforded many weekends back in the city.

You and Hayley live in Sydney – which three places do you love showing off to international visitors?

Sydney's attractions are so well known to overseas visitors, and they never cease to impress. For us however we like to show off the Northern Beaches and the amazing waterways of Pittwater.

What are your favourite restaurants to take guests to in Sydney?

My all-time favourite is The Bridge Room. Owner and chef Ross Lusted spent many years working closely with Adrian Zecha, founder of Aman Resorts and his food is simply outstanding. Sean's Panorama and Billy Kwong are also firm contenders.

Which places in the world would you love to visit that you haven't been to before?

Such a hard question, however on the list is certainly Iran and Oman. Two incredible destinations, it's just a shame from a tourism perspective that the perceived risks in travelling to the greater Middle East make you think twice about committing.

When not travelling for work, where do you like to go?

We stay at home! We are lucky to live in Pittwater and love spending time around the beaches or boating.

What tips to you have for people starting out in the hotel industry?

Live it, breathe it and love it! It's not a career for nine-to-fivers, however, the hard yards will repay in spades. To fast-track your career, I'd suggest an internship at a boutique-style property such as one of the Luxury Lodges of Australia – the hands-on nature of these properties lets you learn many departments and gain a breadth of experience. •