

The Concierge

TIPS FOR TOURING HERE AND ABROAD

LIZARD ISLAND, Australia — It wasn't the lizards that scared me. It was the shark.

It was a tiny, harmless reef shark, but to see a shark on the other side of your snorkeling mask while in Australia, home of some mighty shark-infested waters, can be jarring. Fortunately it was my only jarring moment on Lizard Island.

Lizard Island is a 2,500-acre national park that just happens to be home to a luxury resort on the Great Barrier Reef. The resort is the only development on the island (along with a marine research station), and the only way to reach it was by a small plane from the airport in Cairns. My trip here was ridiculously opulent, and I loved every minute of it.

This was a personal splurge. I was on a three-week getaway in Australia, and in between cities I was looking to relax. Lizard Island was the vacation from my vacation. As opposed to running around Melbourne or fighting crowds at the Sydney Opera House, my most difficult moments on Lizard Island were trying to decide which of the 24 private beaches I wanted to visit or what kind of wine to have with dinner.

I debated whether or not to write about Lizard Island. I was on vacation (technically my belated honeymoon), and also, I wanted to keep this place as private as possible. But because it's only accessible by plane (just like the 1970s TV show "Fantasy Island"!) and the resort is the only place to stay, it's unlikely — actually impossible — for its calm beaches to become overrun.

My room was minimal, modern, and beautiful. Despite being in a national park, there was nothing rustic about the experience. I was in a boutique hotel in the middle of the Great Barrier Reef. As a rule I'm not a fan of all-inclusive resorts,



CHECK-IN

FANTASY ISLAND

Carefree luxury on Great Barrier Reef's Lizard Island

BY CHRISTOPHER MUTHER | GLOBE STAFF



but Lizard Island felt more like my own well-staffed private island. This was the first resort I've visited where you could arrange a boat to pick you up and deliver you and a picnic lunch to your own beach, complete with snorkeling gear. Or, you could take the boat out by yourself.

The dinner menu changed night to night based on available ingredients and executive chef Mark Jensen's whims. I was partial to an evening of tapas that included a plate of grilled octopus, salsa verde, pickled vegetables, and charizo oil, and another of pumpkin arancini and smoked tagleggio.

Although Wi-Fi service was limited to a few locations (to help guests unplug), the resort is all new. In April 2014 the secluded resort was hit by Cyclone Ita. It had undergone renovations but was directly hit again in March 2015 by Cyclone Nathan just days before it was scheduled to reopen. It finally opened after \$33 million in repairs at the end of 2015.

There's a spa, tennis courts, and all the amenities you'd expect at a resort of this caliber, but the real stars are the hiking trails, beaches, turquoise waters, and the reef. Scuba is an option, but I stuck to snorkeling. I felt as if I were in a tropical aquarium as I swam along with colorful schools of fish, giant turtles, and yes, those tiny, timid sharks.

LIZARD ISLAND RESORT
Great Barrier Reef Marine Park, Lizard Island National Park, Australia. The 40 suites are open year-round with rates ranging from \$1,400-\$4,423 per night, all inclusive (with the exception of cocktails). www.lizardisland.com.au. 1-844-649-2865.

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HERE

GIVE MOM FIRST-CLASS TREATMENT

Don't have any plans for mom today? Shhh. We won't tell. You can still do something special for her: Take mom on a free train ride in coach class aboard the Conway Scenic Railroad today as long as one of her kids accompanies her. She'll ride for free in first class when accompanied by a paying adult. Complimentary appetizers will be served on board the first-class cars. Ride on a vintage train, departing from the railroad's 1874 Victorian station in North Conway, and travel round-trip to Bartlett or Conway. Already have plans? Keep this idea in mind for Father's Day — same deal, but you have a month to plan. Rates for adults start at \$17.50/\$22 for coach/first class, depending on the route; for ages 4-12, \$12.50/\$16.50 for coach/first class; free for kids under 4 in

coach, \$9.50 first class. 800-232-5251, www.conwayscenic.com.

BOSTON'S NEW WALKING TOURS

Learn about Boston's boozy past, what makes Kendall Square so hip and happening, and about the women who made groundbreaking contributions to the city. Boston by Foot offers three new tours this year, including The Tippy Tour: Dram Shops and Drunken Sailors on June 15, when you will learn about the city's booming 1600s rum industry, the sophisticated smuggling that took place during Prohibition, and the political revolutions that ignited in some of Boston's oldest taverns. Find out about Kendall Square's new restaurants, hotels, and businesses during the tour of the month on July 30, and learn how women from all backgrounds affected Boston from the 1600s to the mid-1900s, and how

they helped shape the city during the Great Women of Boston walking tour, Aug. 13. Tickets: \$5 (members), \$15 (nonmembers). 617-367-2345, www.bostonbyfoot.org.

THERE

TRAVEL BONUSES FOR RUNNERS

Training while traveling can be a challenge, but if you're heading to New York City, stay at any Kimpton Hotels property and enjoy the benefits of the Run This City Package. Hotel Eventi, Ink48, and The Muse offer guests free gadgets to use, including wireless headphones and a FitBit Zip, and 10 percent off hotel rates if you have proof of registration for any of the following races: NYRR AirbnB Brooklyn Half (May 20), NYC RUNS Narrows Half Marathon (June 4), NYC RUNS Queens Half Marathon (Nov. 18), NYC RUNS Brooklyn Half

Marathon (Nov. 19), or the NYRR Staten Island Half (Oct. 8). That's not all. Get a Moon Valley Organics Muscle Rub, a three-pack of BluePrint juices, a list of free group runs offered in Manhattan, in-room yoga mats with on-demand yoga and Pilates, a muscle roller, and a \$200 spa credit. Book at least two weeks in advance to get the spa credit. Room rates start at \$600. 646-572-7430, www.kimptonhotels.com/boutique-hotels-in-nyc.

A LITERARY WEEKEND AWAY

Hear compelling tales and learn what it takes to complete a novel during the first-ever Storyteller's Weekend at Sea Island in Georgia. The event, June 16-17, welcomes award-winning authors Charlaaine Harris, whose work inspired the hit HBO series "True Blood"; Sarah Pinborough, who wrote the psychological thriller "Behind Her Eyes"; and Steve Cavanagh, who penned

the legal-thriller "The Defense." Enjoy two days of storytelling, private consultations, question-and-answer sessions, and luncheons. Most events range from free to \$60 (or \$250 for a 30-minute one-on-one private session), but all activities and lectures require reservations. Room rates start at \$229 (The Inn) to \$649 (The Cloister) per night, double occupancy. 855-572-4975, www.seaisland.com.

EVERYWHERE

OVERSEE YOUR KID'S SCREEN TIME

Use Circle with Disney to manage screen time and viewable content for all family members, whether you're all at home or traveling to a hotel or vacation cottage, for instance. Connect the portable cube-shaped device to a Wi-Fi network. Then use the Circle app, available to Android and Apple users, to select filter levels for each family

member or device. Choose which apps and categories your children can or cannot have access to — you can block access to anything from explicit content to online shopping, social media, video games, and e-mail. Also decide whether or not to turn on ad blocking, YouTube access, and Google safe-searching. Set time limits for each app or category, or a bedtime and wake-up time for each device. You can even pause Internet access altogether. Add a monthly Circle Go service that lets you transfer all your settings to your child's 4GTE device, so you can monitor content while they're on the go, whether they're using their cell service or a friend's Wi-Fi. Your app's dashboard also shows where your kids spend the most time surfing. \$99.95 for Circle device; optional \$9.95 per month for Circle Go. www.meetcircle.com.

KARI BODNARCHUK

