

## AFM Travel: The Glittering Gold Coast

Written by Written by Marlene Montanez

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**Looking for a destination with a little bit of glamour? Soak up the sun in Australia's Gold Coast.**



If you've ever wondered what it would be like to travel to the Gold Coast in Australia, one word can sum it up: Sparkle. The way the sun illuminates the clear blue waters as they crash against the cream-color sand makes everything seem to sparkle. The haute high-rises that dot the beach seem to sparkle as they extend and reach toward the clouds. And the restaurant scene full of modern meals and impossibly chic patrons truly sparkles. Indeed, there are many things about the Gold Coast that makes it quite the sparkly destination.

But unlike many luxurious travel destinations, you won't find any pretentiousness in the Gold Coast. The surfer attitude and laidback vibe permeates into the everyday lifestyle. It's a city where you'll find kids at the beach taking surfing lessons before the sun even rises and hear the "click-clack" of designer heels flitting through the hippest restaurants by sundown. Yes, no matter what type of vacation you're in the mood for, the Gold Coast offers something for everyone. Take this guide as your go-to resource on where to stay and play on your Gold Coast vacation.

### For Family Time

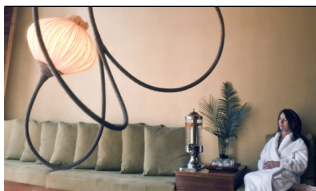
For those traveling en famille, a stay at Sea Temple Surfers Paradise will please the party. The five-star luxury apartments offer amazing views of one of Australia's most famous beaches, Surfers Paradise, and plenty of posh amenities to boot. The modern two- and three-bedroom beach-view condos boast floor-to-ceiling windows and comforting amenities for long stays like a full-size kitchen, a washer and dryer and modern décor. In fact, it's truly the best of both worlds at Sea Temple Surfers Paradise where you'll enjoy the privacy of an apartment and access to typical hotel amenities like a concierge, room service, hotel pool and workout facilities.

Sea Temple Surfers Paradise is also a short 30-minute jaunt to Currumbin Wildlife Sanctuary, a must-visit for any wildlife enthusiasts and for those traveling with tots. You'll be able to get up close and personal with some of Australia's most famous wildlife like koalas, kangaroos and other native animal species.

### For Posh Pampering

If you're quite the discerning traveler and want a front-row seat to some of the Gold Coast's best shopping and dining, a stay at Palazzo Versace will give you just that. The property is the world's first luxury fashion brand hotel and includes signature touches like Versace-print furnishings and ultra-luxurious fabrics. You'll also enjoy posh perks like ordering from the in-room Bath Bliss Menu which features decadent treats like the perfect-for-nighttime Lavender Bliss experience.

Palazzo Versace has three restaurants to tantalize your taste buds; be sure to indulge at the breakfast buffet at Il Barocco and try a light lunch at Vie Bar & Restaurant which affords fantastic views of the marina. For more world-class dining and shopping options, you'll want to stop by Marina Mirage, located a mere few steps away from Palazzo Versace. Christensen Copenhagen, Hermès and Carla Zampatti are just a few of the shopping destinations there you won't want not to miss.



### For Holistic Healing

Sometimes, a vacation means more than just a little r-n-r is in order. And if exploring one of the world's best spas and some serious relaxation and healing is what you need, that's exactly what you'll get with a stay at Gwinganna Lifestyle Retreat.

This spa and wellness retreat is located in the Gold Coast Hinterland, just 20 minutes outside the Gold Coast airport. It's a remarkable change from the hustle and bustle of the city, tucked within Australia's rainforest where you can explore the hiking trails every day. The stunning views of the lush greenery and ocean below are unforgettable and will instantly ease you into relaxation.

Gwinganna Lifestyle Retreat offers several program options to choose from, ranging from full detox experiences to short weekend getaways that let you enjoy the surroundings and sample Gwinganna's award-winning spa. In fact, it's the largest spa in the Southern Hemisphere, often frequented by celebrities like one of Gwinganna's co-owners, Hugh Jackman.

Everyone on the property is committed to enhancing wellness; you'll enjoy mingling with other guests, classes on healing and meditation and the all-organic cuisine that's provided daily.

### TO LEARN MORE

**Gwinganna Lifestyle Retreat** [www.gwinganna.com](http://www.gwinganna.com).

**Palazzo Versace** [www.palazzoversace.com.au](http://www.palazzoversace.com.au).

**Sea Temple Surfers Paradise** [www.mirvachotels.com/sea-temple-surfers-paradise](http://www.mirvachotels.com/sea-temple-surfers-paradise).

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### Travel Tips

No matter what type of trip you have in mind, there are certain things in the Gold Coast everyone simply must experience. Here are our top picks and some travel tips, too.

- Don't forget a converter. You'll need it to use any electrical outlet.
- Take a helicopter ride over the Gold Coast; it's the best way to see the city.
- Stop by QT Bazaar for dinner; it's a unique "interactive marketplace" featuring a hybrid fine dining/buffetlike experience of international cuisine.
- Get up close with some of Australia's native creatures at Currumbin Wildlife Sanctuary.
- Check out Surfers Paradise Beachfront Markets on Wednesday and Friday evenings which feature live entertainment and more than 100 market shops.

### How to Get There

Australia is far, so you may as well travel in style. Qantas Airways operates a direct 15-hour flight from LAX to Sydney and Brisbane airports and an upgrade to Business Class will ensure your journey is a pleasant one. You'll enjoy fine wines; meals prepared by renowned Australian chef, Neil Perry; more than 150 hours of entertainment at your fingertips; and a seat that fully reclines so you can get a good night's rest. In fact, a pair of Qantas pajamas is even provided so you can sit back, relax and enjoy your flight. [www.qantas.com](http://www.qantas.com).