

# A-list hoteliers

Susanna Clarke goes behind the glitzy façade of some of the world's most exciting celebrity-owned hotels

For some celebrities, it's not just about having a piece of real estate for personal enjoyment – they want others to share it too. This makes a celebrity-owned hotels particularly exciting to visit because, not only can you enjoy a memorable destination, there's also a chance of rubbing shoulders with members of the most elite of clubs.

Sustainable tourism in a spectacular natural setting can make perfect sense, both financially and philanthropically. US actor Leonardo DiCaprio has been in the news for an exciting eco-resort and restoration project on Blackadore Caye, the \$1.75m, 42-hectare island in Belize he bought in 2005. Although its opening is a little behind schedule

(the original finishing date was slated for 2018), when it is completed there will be a mix of resort villas and private homes alongside an ambitious scheme to repair previous ecological damage to the island. [restorativeislands.com/blackadore-caye](http://restorativeislands.com/blackadore-caye)

Fellow actor Robert Redford was one of the first to see how protecting natural landscapes could become part of a business model, with his Sundance Resort in the mountains of Utah, an hour from Salt Lake International. The famous Sundance Festival (24 Jan-3 Feb 2019) – founded by Redford – is just 35 miles away.

Now 50 years old, Sundance Resort has a rustic modern style (think gorgeous log cabins) and has been created according to

**Right: Hugh Jackman has a stake in Gwinganna Below: Robert de Niro with Chef Nobu**

Redford's desire to "develop a little and preserve a great deal". Visitors will find an atmosphere steeped in cultural heritage, creativity and nature. Alongside a spa, you can test out the slopes, improve your fly fishing technique or opt for classes in everything from journal-making to pottery. Some evenings, there's also a chance to enjoy theatre, live music and film – it's no surprise to hear Sundance Resort attracts established and upcoming writers, directors, actors and artists. If you want your experience tailored, ask about private activities, while film buffs can opt for the Epic Sundance Film Festival package,



which gets you special festival access as well. [sundanceresort.com](http://sundanceresort.com)

On the other side of the globe, Australian actor Hugh Jackman has a stake in Gwinganna Lifestyle Retreat in Queensland, winner of the 2018 Eco Spa Awards. Lying just 30 minutes from Gold Coast airport and an hour from Brisbane International, it was founded in 2006 by Sydney businessman Tony de Leede (who also started the Fitness First gym chain). Hugh and his wife Deborra-Lee became involved after Hugh stayed a few times and loved how it made him feel. He is a regular visitor, while other high-profile guests include fellow Australian actor Nicole Kidman.

Set on a plateau across 200 hectares of lush hinterland with ocean and valley views, Gwinganna has the largest land space of any retreat in the region,



making it a place where guests can truly feel 'away from it all'. It's perfect for anyone who needs some time out from a busy life to refocus on health.

Gwinganna is a complete wellness destination, so there are set arrival dates and no day visits. Everyone can be assured of exceptional service on its 14 program options (including a two-night Wellness Weekend or a seven-night Detox). Alternatively, go for one of the retreats specialising in themes such as stress, nutrition, women's health, sleep or mindfulness. [gwinganna.com](http://gwinganna.com)

If you're just looking for a fantastic place to party on the other hand, don't miss one of the eight Nobu Hotels. Their development is down to a long-running partnership between US actor Robert De Niro, chef Nobuyuki "Nobu" Matsuhisa and Hollywood producer Meir Teper,

**Above: DiCaprio, owner of Blackadore Caye Right: The opulent Spa at Gwinganna**

and they build on the success of the Nobu restaurants, which offer Japanese fusion food in locations worldwide.

De Niro's involvement started because he loved the food in Nobu's first restaurant in Los Angeles so much, he persuaded the chef to expand – first in New York and then elsewhere. With

De Niro's influence, the brand has become a magnet for A-listers, including models, celebrities and sportpeople, (Novak Djokovic is just one famous name who has been spotted recently).

New this year is a hotel in Marbella, Spain. Featuring 81 guest suites, it is created with the sophisticated sybarite in mind. [nobuhotels.com](http://nobuhotels.com) ■

Guests can enjoy many of Nobu's signature dishes like black cod miso (a De Niro favourite), or opt for Andalusian-inspired creations.

As you might expect from somewhere that prides itself on its mix of luxury and fun, there's also a spa, nightclub, sports club and fabulous cocktail lounge to enjoy.

