



escape



RELEASE, WANAKA, NZ
lake, wow

About 40 minutes from Queenstown lies another adventure destination, where Sally Feldman finds a softer option for those who like a spot of luxury with their mountains

The last time I visited Wanaka, I was swaddled in trekking gear and weighed down with camping equipment and highly unflattering footwear. Thankfully, roughing it isn't the only way to appreciate this gorgeous neck of the woods, despite the area's plentiful attractions of the fresh-air kind. Now there's somewhere to rest your Manolo fluffy mules while you enjoy the views.

Release, a new luxury eco-lodge overlooking Lake Wanaka in the South Island's Central Otago region, is just the sort of chic property that savvy trampers, skiers (and unhappy campers) will relish. Set up by adventurers Nick Hay and Nick Frame, who've spent much of their lives in search of wild times in wild places such as Honduras, Sumatra and Zaire, Release offers exclusive accommodation for six people, providing a range of opportunities to get in touch with their

inner Tarzans, or just relax and breathe that wonderful mountain air in style.

There's a concierge service to arrange tailored experiences such as local wine tastings or cooking classes, or more rugged pursuits, such as ice climbing.

When they're done with the great outdoors, luxe addicts will appreciate the huge Californian super-king beds in the three bedrooms (which split to make giant singles if necessary), bespoke local Cruikshank furnishings and cool Eon homewares - all 100% pure NZ.

Me? I'll settle for a foodie shopping spree at Mediterranean Market in town, followed by a browse through Release's wine cabinets, and leave the thrills of the lodge's 'extreme adventures for women' to someone else.

Details, releasenz.com. Bookings, +64 3 442 8672, email info@touchofspice.co.nz. For more information on Wanaka, visit newzealand.com.





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BETTER THAN BATH

This region of central Victoria has a lot going for it – sensational produce, wines, Alla Wolf-Tasker's Lake House (see our food feature on page 122) and the element that started it all, the mineral-rich waters at Hepburn Springs, Daylesford. At last, the heritage-listed Edwardian bathhouse has been given a \$13 million facial and scrub, and emerged gleaming as the new Hepburn Bathhouse & Spa. Before you know it, we'll be hastening to take the waters à la Austen and writing scorching, insightful novels about our spa-mates – or maybe not. Treatments on offer include the Soul Temple, a four-step ritual involving steam, a purifying body wash 'down your every curve', a body scrub, detoxifying clay polish and tension-relieving massage. James, harness the horses! Details, hepburnbathhouse.com.



Sneaking down a Berlin alley, buzzing a doorbell and heading upstairs to the cool warehouse space of Cookies Cream, to eat the smartest vegetarian food we've tasted. cookiescream.ch.



MOONLIGHT HEAD PRIVATE LODGE

An August/September story, Change of Tempo, featured this beautiful self-contained accommodation, LEFT, designed by Glenn Murcutt on Victoria's Great Ocean Road. Unfortunately, the wrong contact details were published. The correct ones are: phone (03) 5237 5208, website, moonlighthead.com. Stay tuned for news on a fabulous boutique hotel due to open in the lodge's grounds in 2010.

FLIGHTS OF FANCY Airport carousels just got funkier with the arrival of designer Ellie Heine's range of luggage. Made from 100 per cent cotton-canvas and leather, the collection includes this large duffel, \$410. **Stockists, (03) 9824 1172, ellierogers.com.au.**



WHAT'S HOT IN... HOBART



HIGH AND MIGHTY

LENNA OF HOBART Two smart penthouse apartments have added a whole new genre of accommodation to this venerable Battery Point hotel. We'd kill for a New Year's Eve booking, to watch the end of *that* yacht race – the views of the harbour, city and Mt Wellington are just sensational. The interiors are equally lush on the eye, and so well equipped you'll have to be prised out before next Christmas. **(03) 6232 3900, lenna.com.au.**



ALMOST FRENCH

D'ENTRECASTEAUX THE FRENCH HOTEL Just 15 minutes south of Hobart in Howden, enter a very different world of honey-toned, French provincial prettiness. The garden setting, on the banks of the D'Entrecasteaux Channel, is lovely, with views to Bruny Island, even from the hotel's indoor saltwater pool. Ideal for sole-use bookings, each of the hotel's 10 rooms is different, but best is the Tower Suite, with its gorgeous ensuite with claw foot bath. **(03) 6267 1161, dentrecasteaux.com.**



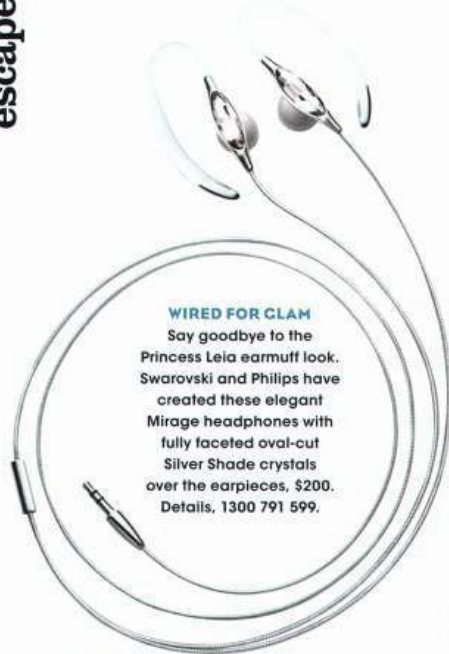
TO THE MANOR BORN

THE PRIORY COUNTRY LODGE If your tastes are more Gosford Park than Loire Valley, then this brand new four-bedroom property in Bothwell is right up your country lane. An hour's drive north from Hobart, The Priory is the Islington Hotel's sister property, and will definitely appeal to huntin', shootin' and fishin' types, as well as families looking for a classy, country-house experience. **(03) 6259 4012, thepriorycountrylodge.com.au.**

WORDS: KRISTY CASHMAN, SALLY FELDMAN



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WIRED FOR GLAM
 Say goodbye to the Princess Leia earmuff look. Swarovski and Philips have created these elegant Mirage headphones with fully faceted oval-cut Silver Shade crystals over the earpieces, \$200. Details, 1300 791 599.

MYKONOS ROCKS ON

Home to Greece's only Nabu, and venue over last northern summer for Melbourne chef George Calombaris, the glamorous Belvedere Hotel continues to expand its international cachet. US-based Rockwell Group, the award-winning architecture and design practice, whose portfolio spans Nabu New York, Hong Kong and Dubai to Broadway musicals such as *Hairspray*, has just completed the first two phases of renovations there, including the seriously luxurious Belvedere Suite, **BELOW**. In the restaurant and bar, hand-carved marble, stainless steel and mother of pearl are just a few of our favourite things. **Details, slh.com.**

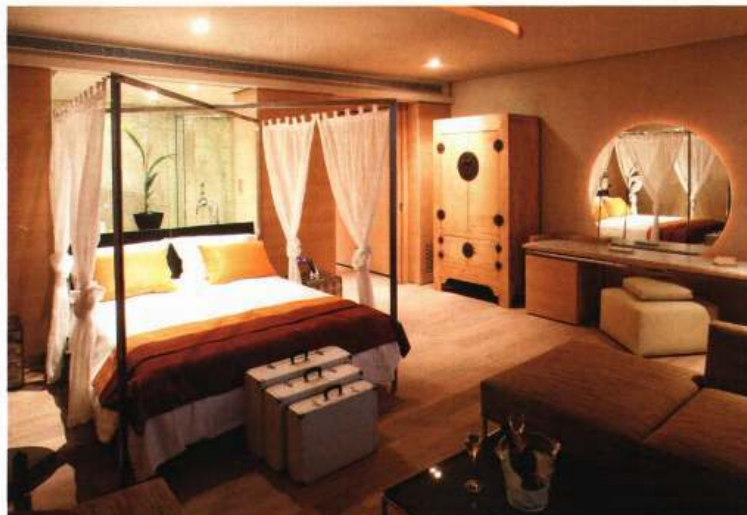


DOUBLE TAKE

Next door to Casa Camper, one of VE+T's favourite Barcelona hotels, is new eatery Dos Paillols ('two sticks'). Head chef Albert Raurich spent eight years as chef du cuisine at elBulli, but the food here's a very different kettle of foam. The two sticks refer to the two styles of cuisine that use wooden sticks – toothpicks (tapas) and chopsticks (Asian), which is how the menu's divided. Don't miss the razor clams. Elisabets 9, Barcelona. +34 93 304 05 13, dospaillols.com.

best of british

If you're flying at the pointy end with British Airways out of London, you'll get to enjoy the excellent range of 'British Classics' on the menu, each quaintly illustrated with a little crown. Ours featured Loch Fyne Bradan Rost salmon and smoked mackerel pate with oatcakes, shepherd's pie with cheddar mash and, best of all, Norfolk ham, Coastal Cheddar and Oxford Isis cheeses with Kentish huffkins (no, not a temper tantrum by a toff in his nursery, but a dense, delicious roll made from an old-English wheat variety). Mind you, the spiffing custard tart with blackberry confit *did* have VE+T shedding a nostalgic tear for dear old nanny's baking. Visit ba.com.



GET SMARTER

Globe-trotting women (or men) of mystery now get to disguise their passports in Cartier's beautiful new range of wallets. Pictured is the 'Must' International wallet, \$510. For stockists, call (02) 9235 1322.



TAKING THE AGUAS

Keen to try Cloud 9 in Ibiza? No, it's not some new psychedelic party enhancer, but a 'hotel within a hotel' at the Design Hotel group's glamorous new 112-room spa resort, Aguas de Ibiza, on the promenade at Santa Eulalia. The super-exclusive Cloud 9 Club's fourth floor loft-style accommodation, **ABOVE**, with sensational harbour views, has its own check in, private terraces and colour scheme, no less. Downstairs on the other three floors, it's all Mediterranean blues and white; while up here, it's a more smoochy palette of honey and chocolate. Naturally, we're keen to dip our toes in the two-storey Presidential Ibiza Loft, but will settle for a plunge in the red-tiled pool on the hotel rooftop, after a cocktail or two at the chilled-out Air Ibiza bar. **Details and bookings, designhotels.com.**

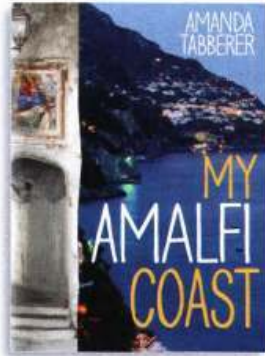
WORDS KRISTY CASHMAN SALLY FELDMAN



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HORSES FOR CAUSES Support the fight against breast and ovarian cancer with a Ralph Lauren Pink Pony Canvas tote bag, from \$169.95 (25 per cent of sales go to charity). Details, 1800 501 201.



BEAT A RETREAT

Retire gracefully from the buzz of Hastings Street at The Plantation luxury retreat in Cooroy, 20 minutes' drive into the Noosa hinterland. This new property accommodates up to eight couples, and is set in 8.5ha of gardens. Local produce shines on the menu, while local attractions include nearby Pantom's cute Majestic Cinema, built circa 1921, the longest running silent movie theatre in the world. Details, theplantation.com.au.



wide blue wonder

My Amalfi Coast, Amanda Tabberer, Penguin, \$69.95. Long-time resident Tabberer offers an insider's glimpse of the culture, food and luxurious lifestyle of Italy's idyllic playground. She also shares personal experiences from her 20 years of Mediterranean bliss, with tips on the best restaurants, events, festivities and more. Carla Coulson's sublime photos of the Amalfi coastline complete a picture-perfect itinerary (see more of Coulson's work in 'View Finders', p 164).

PS...

LANGHAM AUCKLAND
 We're keen to languish at the Langham hotel's new Chuan Spa, due to open in October. Expect Chuan's signature luxe take on traditional Chinese medicine. Details, visit auckland.langhamhotels.co.nz.
THE CLUB AT SAUJANA XL
 September sees the launch of Kuala Lumpur's latest resort, set amid 160ha of tropical gardens and the championship golf courses of The Saujana Golf & Country Club. Details, lhw.com; thesaujanahotel.com.
THE SEBEL & CITICATE KING GEORGE SQUARE BRISBANE
 New owner Mirvac has revived the old Carlton Crest Hotel with a multi-million dollar refurb that includes two new cocktail and dining options, KG Bar and Bistro Allure. Details, mirvac-hotels.com.

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