

PUTTING THE ART IN HOBART

HOBART'S TRANSFORMATION FROM
SMALL-TOWN CAPITAL TO CITY OF CULTURE IS
EPITOMISED BY A NEW LUXURY HOTEL CALLED
THE TASMAN. WORDS: STEVE MADGWICK



historically, Hobart was seen as a place to embrace the sweet small-town life, a city unlikely to make bold statements.

Yet even a cursory scan of the Tasmanian capital's cityscape in 2022 reveals that it has 'arrived' as a cultural capital. Its dynamism is best exemplified by unlikely bookends: a brand-new luxury hotel and an often polarising modern-art museum that sparked Hobart's metamorphosis a decade ago.

The Tasman, a Luxury Collection hotel that opened last December, is far from the first stylish stay near Hobart's waterfront, with high-calibre operators such as Henry Jones Art Hotel and MacO1 well established.

However, the fact that Marriott chose Hobart as the location for its first Australian Luxury Collection hotel ahead of both Sydney and Melbourne speaks volumes about this project and Tasmania's trajectory.

The Tasman's architecture is anything but a cookie-cutter transplant, drawing expansively on the modern history of two out of three interconnected buildings that comprise the 152-room, U-shaped hotel, which occupies three-quarters of a CBD block near Salamanca Market.

The heritage façade sets an old-world tone, but inside the mood shifts depending on whether you're staying in the Heritage, Art Deco or Pavilion buildings. The period homages are interwoven with pampering and practical accoutrements of modernity, such as auto-retracting curtains, mercifully idiot-proof light-switch panels and Frette linen.

Set inside the Georgian-era St Mary's hospital building, the generous Heritage rooms radiate stateliness. Convict-hewn sandstone walls contrast smartly with retrofitted bold, dark woods,



while bathrooms gleam with Italian marble. With its big windows, walk-in wardrobe and artful wooden bathtub, the premier St David's Park suite rewards the ultra-fussy guest.

The highly detailed Art Deco rooms are in lockstep with their building's mid-20th century exterior. Conceived by Joseph Pang Design, they are rich in personality, from the geometric-patterned hall carpets to the stunning 'matchbooked' blackheart sassafras inlaid ceilings.

Architecturally the new kid on the block, the Pavilion's sharp lines are unmistakably 'today'. The top-tier Aurora Suite points spectacularly towards Sullivans Cove but also catches aspects of

The low-lit Mary Mary and Deco Bar have quickly become social favourites with Hobartians.



Kunanyi/Mount Wellington. Show furnishings are crafted by Tassie design wunderkinds Matt Prince and Scott van Tuil.

The Tasman's boutique-brand collaborations draw on local flare, whether it's a mid-morning Storm + India turmeric-and-ginger tea or mid-afternoon Two Tonne (The Tasman) Pinot Noir from the Tamar Valley. The uncommon common areas are locally flavoured, too, adorned with artworks from predominantly female Tasmanian artists and signature-scented by Beauty and the Bees.

The Tasman's meticulously on-brand Deco Bar and low-lit Mary Mary, with its recycled Tasmanian Oak parquet floor, plump leather-padded bar and classic-cocktail menu, are social options for Hobartians.

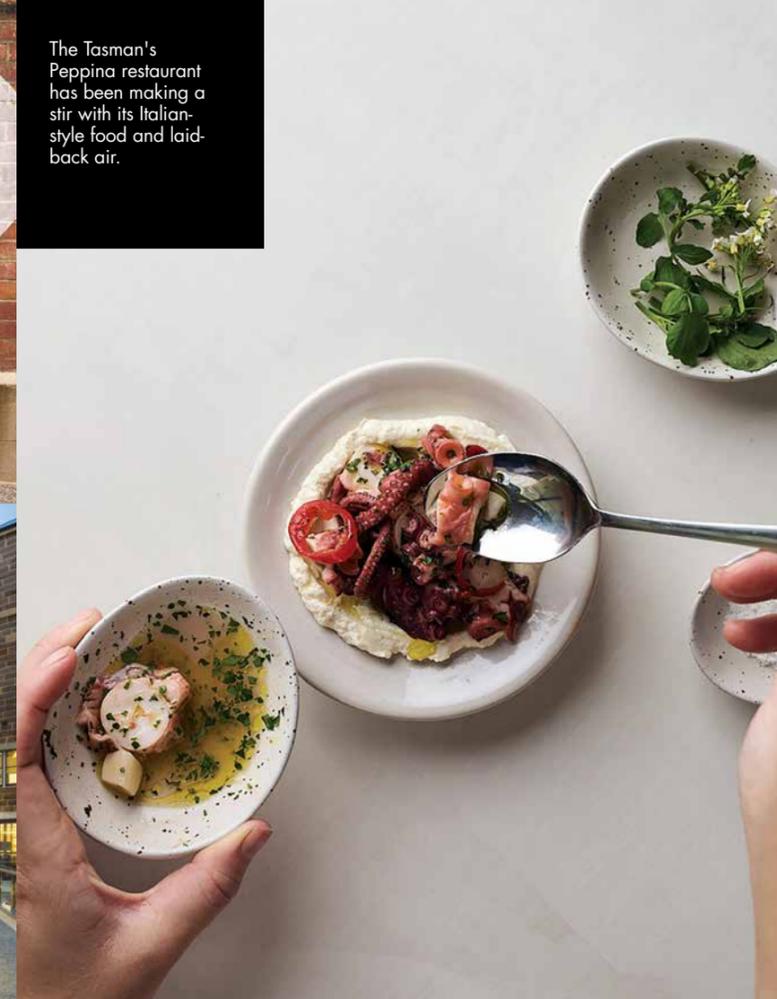
Quietly making the biggest stir, however, is the immense (by Tasmanian standards) in-house restaurant, Peppina. Culinary director Massimo Mele's Tassie-Italian heritage dictates cuisine that is "Italian in style, in the sense that there's nowhere really to hide when there's three or four ingredients on a plate".

PEPPINA'S LIGHT, SPACIOUS INTERIOR, ILLUMINATED BY A GLASS ROOF, HAS A SOPHISTICATED YET LAID-BACK AIR VERY MUCH IN THE MODERN TASMANIAN SPIRIT.

Mele says the restaurant's demand for prime local beef, crayfish and abalone means the best Tasmanian produce no longer needs to head straight to Sydney and Melbourne's fine-dining establishments. Peppina's light, spacious interior, illuminated by a glass roof and featuring two olive trees, has a sophisticated yet laid-back air – very much in the modern Tasmanian spirit.



The Tasman's Peppina restaurant has been making a stir with its Italian-style food and laid-back air.



A 'Rockstar Afternoon' at MONA requires an unwavering commitment to epicurean excess.



MONA (Museum of Old and New Art) is an essential day trip for The Tasman guests, whether it's their first or fourth visit to Hobart. David Walsh's trail-blazing subterranean modern-art powerhouse may be 11 years old, but it's still the city's cultural compass.

Not only are the edgy installations ever-changing but Cultural Attractions of Australia now offers three premium MONA experiences. The three-year-old industry-led collective's behind-the-ropes jaunts, which include Sydney Opera House Architectural tours and deep access to Melbourne's hallowed MCG, are included in Tourism Australia's 'Signature Experiences of Australia' programme.

Its MONA 'Rockstar Afternoon' requires an unwavering commitment to epicurean excess. The all-areas escapade begins with a glass or two of bubbles and canapés in the museum-bound high-speed catamaran. A five-course feast at Faro Bar + Restaurant, prepared by executive chef Vince Trim, then amps up the afternoon. The matched wines from MONA's frightfully well-stocked cellar flow until you say no.

'Rockstars get to wander beyond general-admission mainstays, with special access to light artist

James Turrell's made for Mona installations.' Choose wisely between 'hard' and 'soft' options before entering the deeply immersive *Unseen Seen* 'perceptual pod'. Fifteen minutes in Turrell's thought-provoking *Weight of Darkness*, followed by a complimentary absinthe-heavy cocktail on the Void Bar's red-velvet lounge, is a chic reset.

For those who prefer not to turn the reset up to 10, Cultural Attractions of Australia's *Full-on Turrell* lets you concentrate on the art in a state of relative sobriety. After a decadent lunch, retire to the riverside balcony at MONA Pavilions for a private oyster tasting.

Or you can become part of an installation at the (ladies only) High Tea for Two. Artist Kirsha Kaechele recreates her grandmother's infamous Beverly Hills soirées, renowned for their dancing butlers, vintage wine and occasionally being crashed by Pablo Picasso (fittingly, some of his works adorn MONA's Ladies Lounge walls).

And that's Hobart 2022 in a nutshell: old-world ambiance, new-world sophistication and a few other worlds you might not have expected. **W**