

QANTAS

Spirit of Australia

Alone at the Sistine Chapel

How to avoid the crowds at the world's tourist hotspots

Glamping under the stars

Seven exciting new reasons to holiday in Australia

Best food on the planet

From the flakiest croissant in Paris to Tokyo's top sush

A woman is shown from the chest up, her face and arms covered in vibrant, multi-colored body paint (pink, yellow, green, blue). She has her eyes closed and a serene expression. She is wearing a white flower-shaped earring. The background is a soft, out-of-focus blue and green. The overall mood is peaceful and artistic.

Moments like this

Immerse yourself in the world's best bucket-list experiences



Canberra

STORY BY CATHERINE MARSHALL

IF the name "Canberra" conjures up images of interminable roundabouts, stodgy bureaucracy and yawn-inducing politics, dismiss them at once. Australia's capital is undergoing a renaissance as lively new districts are delineated, restaurants and hotels spring up and its 390,000 fabulously diverse inhabitants spill out into public places to have a good time.

Yes, it's taken decades for Canberra – designed by architect Walter Burley Griffin in 1911 as the federal capital – to develop the personality, patina and grit of much older metropolises. But its grid-like design, once seen as somewhat sterile, is the perfect foundation for a progressive city: traffic is channelled efficiently along its roadways, inner-city suburbs are safe and welcoming and new neighbourhoods are neatly accommodated within the city's expanding radius.

Most office blocks are conveniently located off Northbourne Avenue and London Circuit in the eminently walkable CBD (there's a free city-centre bus, too). But Canberra is so compact – with hotels and restaurants scattered around and the airport never much further than a 20-minute drive – that there's no need to contain yourself to just one of its vibrant precincts.





A lounge area in Hotel Hyatt's eclectic lobby (left); the historic Hyatt Hotel Canberra

Stay

HOTEL HOTEL

📍 NewActon Nishi, 25 Edinburgh Avenue, Canberra

🌐 hotel-hotel.com.au

Housed in the provocative pineapple-shaped Nishi Building in trendy NewActon, Hotel Hotel is dressed in materials that evoke the Australian landscape: reclaimed wood, natural fibres, aniline leather and clay. About half of the rooms overlook Lake Burley Griffin or the bush but if you have a taste for the quirky, ask for one that faces the internal atrium filled with tree ferns salvaged from a Tasmanian rainforest destined for clearing.



Business facilities

Two boardrooms are available for guests to use at Servcorp, which is also located in the Nishi Building. There are tea- and coffee-making facilities and the hotel's restaurant, Monster Kitchen and Bar, offers catering. **Wi-fi** Free throughout.

Food and wine Monster Kitchen and Bar is excellent but if you'd prefer to venture out, try nearby Parlour for cocktails and jazz; Bicietto Restaurant for pizzas and a thoughtfully curated wine list; or cute bike maker-cum-café Močan & Green Grout for coffee.

Fitness and wellbeing

There's a gym with cardio, free-weight and machine-based equipment, complimentary yoga classes (see website for schedule) and bike hire.

Run route Cross the footbridge at the corner of Parkes Way and Marcus Clarke Street then take a short jog along the foreshore. If you're up for a 16-kilometre run, loop all the way around the western side of Lake Burley Griffin, past the Canberra Yacht Club, across Commonwealth Avenue Bridge and back to the hotel.

HYATT HOTEL CANBERRA

📍 120 Commonwealth Avenue, Canberra

🌐 park.hyatt.com

This doyen of Canberra hotels was built to accommodate politicians (Parliament relocated from Melbourne in 1927). It was so comfortable that James Scullin – prime minister from 1929 to 1932 – and his wife chose to stay at the Hyatt to save the expense of living at the Lodge during the Depression. Although it has since been revamped, the hotel retains its Art Deco ambience and spacious lawns.



Business facilities

Important decisions have been made within these walls for 90 years, making the hotel a veteran business-services provider. The suite of comprehensive offerings includes an in-house audiovisual company.

Wi-fi Free throughout.

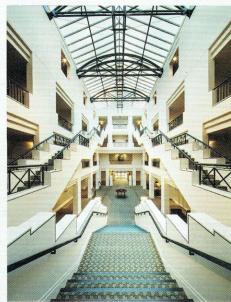
Food and wine The Private Dining Room at The Promenade Cafe caters for groups of up to 20 people. For informal meetings or drinks, head to Griffin's lounge,

tucked beside the Speaker's Bar and warmed by a log fire in winter.

Fitness and wellbeing The Clubhouse is equipped with a gym, indoor pool, personal trainers, a spa and a floodlit tennis court.

You can also hire a bike or take an aquarobics class.

Run route There are jogging and cycling paths aplenty in Lennox Gardens and along Lake Burley Griffin – just a two-minute walk from the hotel.



Business Travellers' Guide

Word of mouth



BREAKFAST MEETING

A. Baker

📍 Unit 2
NewActon Pavilion,
15 Edinburgh
Avenue, Canberra
🌐 abaker.com.au

Thanks to its weekday opening time of 7am, you can get off to an early start at this fabulously moody, well-staffed restaurant. The bread is baked on site, the ingredients are sourced from local growers and producers and the dishes (such as baked eggs with nduja and charred bread or rice pudding served with halva) are inventive enough to awaken the senses.

DINING ALONE

Monster Kitchen and Bar

📍 Hotel Hotel,
NewActon Nishi,
25 Edinburgh Avenue,
Canberra
🌐 monsterkitchen.com.au

Set on the ground floor of Hotel Hotel, Monster Kitchen and Bar feels like an oversize living/dining room, with tables in one area and communal couches in another. Tuck yourself into a comfy armchair and hide behind a newspaper or strike up a conversation. Order one of the sophisticated dishes – Wagyu bresaola, pork-neck bao or a yabby jaffle – from the Asian-inspired bar menu.

BUSINESS DINNER

Chairman & Yip

📍 Burbury Hotel,
1 Burbury Close,
Barton
🌐 chairmangroup.com.au

You can expect discreet, professional service at this centrally located Canberra institution – after all, it's long been the trusted haunt of politicians and businesspeople. The Oriental-Occidental fusion menu – featuring plenty of fresh seafood and classic Chinese dishes, as well as vegetarian options – encourages sharing with its banquets and tasting plates.

A restaurant with an in-house bakery, A. Baker is ideal for an early start

COFFEE PIT STOP

The Cupping Room

📍 1/1-13 University Avenue, Canberra
🌐 thecuppingroom.com.au

The queues can be long (try to get in early) but the coffee is worth the wait. Sasa Sestic, the founder of The Cupping Room's parent company, Ona Coffee (Canberra's largest specialty coffee roaster), was named World Barista Champion in 2015. Making coffee here is a sacred ritual rather than a quick fix so be prepared to have a chat with your barista about the origins of your brew. ●

DRINKS WITH CLIENTS

Bar Rochford

📍 1st floor, 65 London Circuit, Canberra
🌐 barrochford.com

Pull up to the bar or, for a more intimate gathering, take a seat at one of the booths and order a cocktail. This place, which opened early last year, is one of several breathing new life into the historic Melbourne Building. If you're visiting in summer, try to catch the sunset through the crescent-shaped window overlooking London Circuit.



Flight path

CBR

Qantas flies to Canberra from most Australian capital cities. qantas.com

Reviews

SAINT CRISPIN

📍 300 Smith Street, Collingwood; (03) 9419 2202
 🌐 saintcrispin.com.au
 ☺ Open Friday-Sunday for lunch and Tuesday-Sunday for dinner

Everything that's good about modern dining is rolled into this Smith Street shopfront: the unassuming staff, the ironic soundtrack of '70s and '80s soft-rock hits, the gripping wine list and the brigade of tattooed chefs slaving in the open kitchen. Oh yes, Saint Crispin sashays with style. And the food? It's pure joy – from opening snacks, such as pork crackle wafers dusted in sesame dashi powder, to bigger dishes that combine a European palate and a modern, sometimes Asian-leaning sensibility. Swordfish and sticky black rice team up with white-rice foam, while kangaroo tartare goes Japanese with yuzu and toasted nori. Really, it's fine dining in jeans and trainers.

TIPO 00

📍 361 Little Bourke Street, Melbourne; (03) 9942 3946
 🌐 tipo00.com.au
 ☺ Open Monday-Saturday for lunch and dinner

As premises go, it's disarmingly simple: Tipo 00 is a pasta bar, doing it the way Italians have always done. The reality is a case of the whole being greater than the sum of its parts. Stepping into this packed restaurant is like landing in 1960s Rome – an impression only augmented once the crack service team have magicked a glass of Friulano into your hand. From there it's a clear-cut case of Italians doing it better: silken ribbons of pappardelle tossed with braised rabbit, hazelnuts and marjoram; thin slices of grilled ox tongue bedecked with pink peppercorns; and the Tipomisù, a cheekily boozy take on the classic chocolate, mascarpone and coffee dessert.



ACT

PIALLIGO ESTATE

📍 18 Kallaroo Road, Pialligo; (02) 6247 6060
 🌐 thepialligoestate.com.au
 ☺ Farmhouse open Thursday-Sunday for lunch and Wednesday-Saturday for dinner; Garden Pavilions open Saturday-Sunday for breakfast, Friday-Sunday for lunch and Friday-Saturday for dinner

For country-style grandeur, head to the Canberra suburb of Pialligo, which is home to the Colonial-style Farmhouse – a hatted

restaurant – and the more casual Garden Pavilions. Both overlook landscaped lawns, a thriving olive grove, vineyard and orchard, plus a smokehouse that produces award-winning bacon (try it with poached eggs and wood-fired sourdough at the Pavilions). Homegrown produce features prominently in the Farmhouse's dégustations. Pan-fried scallops are dressed with blood orange, ginger and pumpkin sauce, while snapper is flavoured with saltbush, celeriac and jamón Ibérico. To finish, sip on local botrytis.

MONSTER KITCHEN AND BAR

📍 25 Edinburgh Avenue, Canberra; (02) 6287 6287
 🌐 monsterkitchen.com.au
 ☺ Open seven days for breakfast, lunch and dinner

Of-the-moment Hotel Hotel has many talking points and the entrance to Monster Kitchen and Bar is one of them. The 3D-like ascent through a tunnel of artfully arranged recycled timber leads to a retro bar that attracts patrons from sun-up to sundown. Hotel guests start their day with coffee and spelt granola, while night owls flock to graze on pork buns, beef tartare and yabby jaffles washed down with martinis. The adjoining restaurant faces Lake Burley Griffin but equally mesmerising is the tender lamb shoulder with pistachios, yoghurt and pomegranate. Cap it off with a silky crema Catalana before retreating upstairs to bed.



WA

WILDFLOWER

📍 1 Cathedral Avenue, Perth; (08) 6168 7855
 🌐 wildflowerperth.com.au
 ☺ Open Tuesday-Friday for lunch and Tuesday-Saturday for dinner

Dine at Wildflower so you can admire the State Buildings redevelopment it belongs to. Dine at Wildflower for the rooftop restaurant's arresting views of the city. Dine at Wildflower and marvel at the dining room's clean lines, glossy marble and dapper waitstaff. Dine at Wildflower to taste Jed Gerrard's thrilling interpretations of West Australian ingredients: wood-grilled marron with a nutty beurre noisette mayonnaise and sweet Shark Bay scallops played off against unripe berries. But, most of all, dine at Wildflower because once this fine-diner reaches its potential as Perth's best restaurant, landing a table is going to be really, really tough.

LULU LA DELIZIA

📍 Shop 5, 97 Rokeby Road (Forrest Walk), Subiaco; (08) 9381 2466
 🌐 lululadelizia.com.au
 ☺ Open Tuesday-Friday for lunch and Tuesday-Saturday for dinner

No chef in WA is cooking Italian food quite like Joel Valvasori-Pereza. During his four-year stint at Lalla Rookh, he impressed CBD diners with his gutsy takes on Northern Italian flavours (key motifs: butter, pork and woody herbs and spices). Out on his own and overseeing a smaller operation, our man is now able to really focus on his craft, especially his handmade pasta. From benchmark tagliatelle judiciously sauced with a meat ragù to lesser-seen shapes such as bigoli (fat tubes of spaghetti synonymous with Venice) and Friuli's sweet-savoury filled half-moons known as cjalsons, Lulu La Delizia is as much a study in tradition as it is in deliciousness. Switched-on service is another tick for this hot new restaurant.



NT

NABIL DREAMING SUNSET DINNER CRUISE

📍 Nitmiluk Gorge, Nitmiluk (near Katherine); 1300 146 743
 🌐 nitmiluktours.com.au
 ☺ Departs 4.30pm most days (April to October)

The cool, crisp dry season in the Top End is a magical time of year. True – this is not a restaurant in the traditional sense. But what could be more of a bucket-list experience than this dinner cruise that takes in breathtaking Nitmiluk Gorge, about 350 kilometres from Darwin? As the sun sets behind the sheer gorge walls, the onboard chef assembles a tasting plate of melaleuca-smoked chicken, saltbush kangaroo and crocodile bisque. That's followed by your choice of wild-caught barramundi with king prawns, thyme eye fillet or confit duck breast with native herbs. Dessert is coconut and ginger crème brûlée. A sublime experience in a mystical setting.

(Opposite, clockwise from top left) Saint Crispin is a statement in style; Tipo 00's Lingua (grilled ox tongue) starter; Wildflower; Monster Kitchen and Bar's pulled lamb shoulder, pistachio, yoghurt, vine leaf, pomegranate and brik