

## CANBERRA



# Let there be light

On the eve of a landmark exhibition, **Sarah Nicholson** surveys the capital's new life and lodgings

**T**HERE'S bureaucracy here, of course, but the nation's capital is no longer bland. A recent wave of new restaurants, bars and hotels has changed the character of Canberra and transformed a long weekend trip to the National Gallery of Australia and a raft of compelling museums.

A key attraction this summer is a landmark exhibition of five decades of work by James Turrell at the National Gallery of Australia. The acclaimed American artist has been "creating art from light" since the 1960s.

His show, which opened yesterday, features projections and built spaces, holograms and photographs.

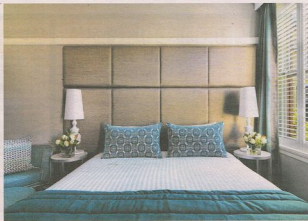
James Turrell's *A Retrospective* debuts shortly after the institution opened its NGA Contemporary on the Lake Burley Griffin Foreshore. The campaign provides a space to showcase the country's extensive collection of modern art as well as pieces "on digital and social platforms".

Elsewhere on the cultural circuit, the Australian War Memorial's timely *Australians in the Great War* exhibition has moved into its renovated First World War Gallery. Old Parliament House is hosting Friday night drinks in the House of Representatives Courtyard and daily high tea on the front veranda, and seven Asian Cup games will be played at Canberra Stadium in January.

The newcomer among Canberra's lodgings is Hotel Kurrajong, located between Lake Burley Griffin and Parliament House in Barton, which reopens this week after a six-month renovation. The Art Deco building was the home of Prime Minister Ben Chifley while he was in office; he preferred the down-to-earth atmosphere here to the Lodge.

Designed by government architect John Smith Murdoch, who created the plan for Old Parliament House, the 1920s building has 147 rooms and an atmosphere that celebrates the charm of vintage Canberra.

The reopening of Hotel Kurrajong marks the end of a big year for hoteliers in the city.



## Hop to it and book your tropical Easter Escape!

### Spirit of Queensland & Rhapsody of the Seas Queensland Discovery

11 nights departing Sydney 6 April 2015

- One way flight from Sydney to Brisbane
- 1 night aboard the Spirit of Queensland travelling from Brisbane to Cairns in a stabilised seat including main meals
- 4 night stay in Cairns including breakfast daily
- Full day Grand Kuanda Rainforest tour
- Full day Outer Great Barrier Reef tour
- 6 night cruise aboard the Rhapsody of the Seas cruising from Cairns to Sydney with port calls at Willis Island (Cruising), Arlie Beach & Brisbane. Includes on board meals and entertainment

	twinn share	single
inside cabin	\$2569	\$3709
outside cabin	\$2899	\$4379
balcony cabin	\$3169	\$4819

From **\$2569** per person

### The Ghan & Rhapsody of the Seas Queensland & Top End Explorer

14 nights ex Sydney 17 April 2015

- 9 night cruise aboard the Rhapsody of the Seas cruising from Sydney to Darwin with port calls in Brisbane, Arlie Beach and Cairns. Includes on board meals and entertainment
- 3 night stay in Darwin including breakfast
- Full day Kakadu National Park tour
- Full day Ulthild National Park tour
- 2 nights on The Ghan travelling to Adelaide in Gold Service including all meals, drinks and Off Train Experiences
- One way flight from Adelaide to Sydney

	passenger	senior	adult
inside cabin	\$4399	\$4579	\$5189
outside cabin	\$4509	\$4689	\$5209
balcony cabin	\$5179	\$5549	\$5909

From **\$4399** per person

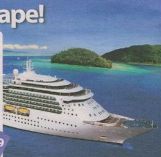
### Spirit of Queensland & Rhapsody of the Seas Queensland

10 nights departing Sydney 6 April 2015

- 5 night cruise aboard the Rhapsody of the Seas cruising from Sydney to Cairns with a port call in Newcastle. Includes on board meals and entertainment
- 4 night stay in Cairns at the Hilton Cairns including breakfast daily
- Full day Grand Kuanda Rainforest tour
- Full day Outer Great Barrier Reef tour
- 1 night aboard the Spirit of Queensland travelling from Cairns to Brisbane in a stabilised seat including main meals
- One way flight from Brisbane to Sydney

	twinn share	single
inside cabin	\$2319	\$3249
outside cabin	\$2589	\$3799
balcony cabin	\$2769	\$4189

From **\$2319** per person



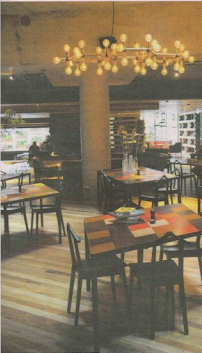
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**CULTURAL CENTRE:** (clockwise from main) James Turrell light unseen 2013 Gonzalez quirky lobby at Hotel Hotel, an unusual concrete tub at the hotel; a deluxe room at Hotel Kurrajong; and the barber at work at QT Hotels and Resorts.

QT Canberra opened in April after a \$6 million renovation of the Rydges Lakeside building, adding three new bars and restaurants and an aesthetic that blends political history with QT's trademark quirkiness.

The venue is home to Italian-style eatery Capitol Bar and Grill, Lucky's Speakeasy where some of Canberra's best cocktails are served, and a barber shop for sharp haircuts and straight-edge razor shaves. Nearby is Hotel Hotel, opened a year ago, which has been the magnet attracting a clutch of innovative new restaurants, cafes and shops, as well as a Palace cinema, to the New Acton neighbourhood. It's a boutique hotel but the attention to detail has redefined the genre. Chic and cosy, the 68 rooms and 32 apartments are "a reimagining of the Australian shack" with clay-rendered walls, natural-fibre wallpaper,

**GO2 CANBERRA**

**GETTING THERE**

Canberra is a three-hour drive from Sydney and a seven-hour drive from Melbourne, both via the Hume Highway. Qantas and Virgin Australia operate flights to the city from five mainland cities and the Gold Coast.

**STAYING THERE**

- Hotel Hotel has packages including lodgings and tickets to see the James Turrell exhibition, from \$245 a night. New Acton Nishi, 25 Edinburgh Ave, Canberra Ph 6287 6282. hotelhotel.com.au
- QT Canberra rooms from \$145. 1 London Circuit, Canberra, Ph 6247 6244. Here: visitcanberra.com.au

- Hotel Kurrajong rooms from \$169. 8 National Circuit, Barton.

**EATING THERE**

- Monster on the ground floor of Hotel Hotel, open 6.30am to 1am, ph 6287 6287.
- A. Baker at New Acton Pavilion Unit 2, 15 Edinburgh Ave, ph 6287 6150.
- Capitol Bar & Grill at QT Canberra, ph 6247 6244.
- Mochan & Green Groust at 1/19 Marcus Clarke St, Canberra, ph 6162 2909.

**SEEING THERE**

James Turrell: A Retrospective shows at the National Gallery of Australia until June 8. See [nga.gov.au](http://nga.gov.au)

Here: visitcanberra.com.au

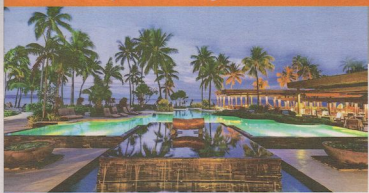
rain showers and concrete tubs, restored vintage furniture and bespoke pieces within a carefully designed eco building. Hotel Hotel's general manager, Tracy Atherton, says Canberra brothers Johnathan and Nectar Edkarpids commissioned a team that had "never designed a hotel before" to turn the building into a Canberra destination. The property aims for a

home-like quality for those regularly visiting the capital for work, while also evoking a sense of place for holidaymakers. "There is a story behind everything you see, from the 1950s chandelier that once occupied the waiting room of an Italian train station to the glasses in the bar that were salvaged beer bottles," she says. "We want people to make Canberra the destination for



weekends away, with New Acton an ideal base, because you don't even need to get into a cab with so much—restaurants, bars, galleries, a spa, a cinema—in the blocks surrounding Hotel Hotel." Dining options in New Acton include A. Baker, a bakery, cafe, wine bar and restaurant in one and the work of chef Sean McConnell, who is chef at pint-sized cafe-restaurant Mochan & Green Groust, as well as heading Hotel Hotel's hit, big lobby bar-lounge-restaurant Monster. This is the place for a yabby jaffle and a glass of Canberra-region natural wine, among inspired menus of share plates and unusual drops. The writer was a guest of Hotel Hotel.

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