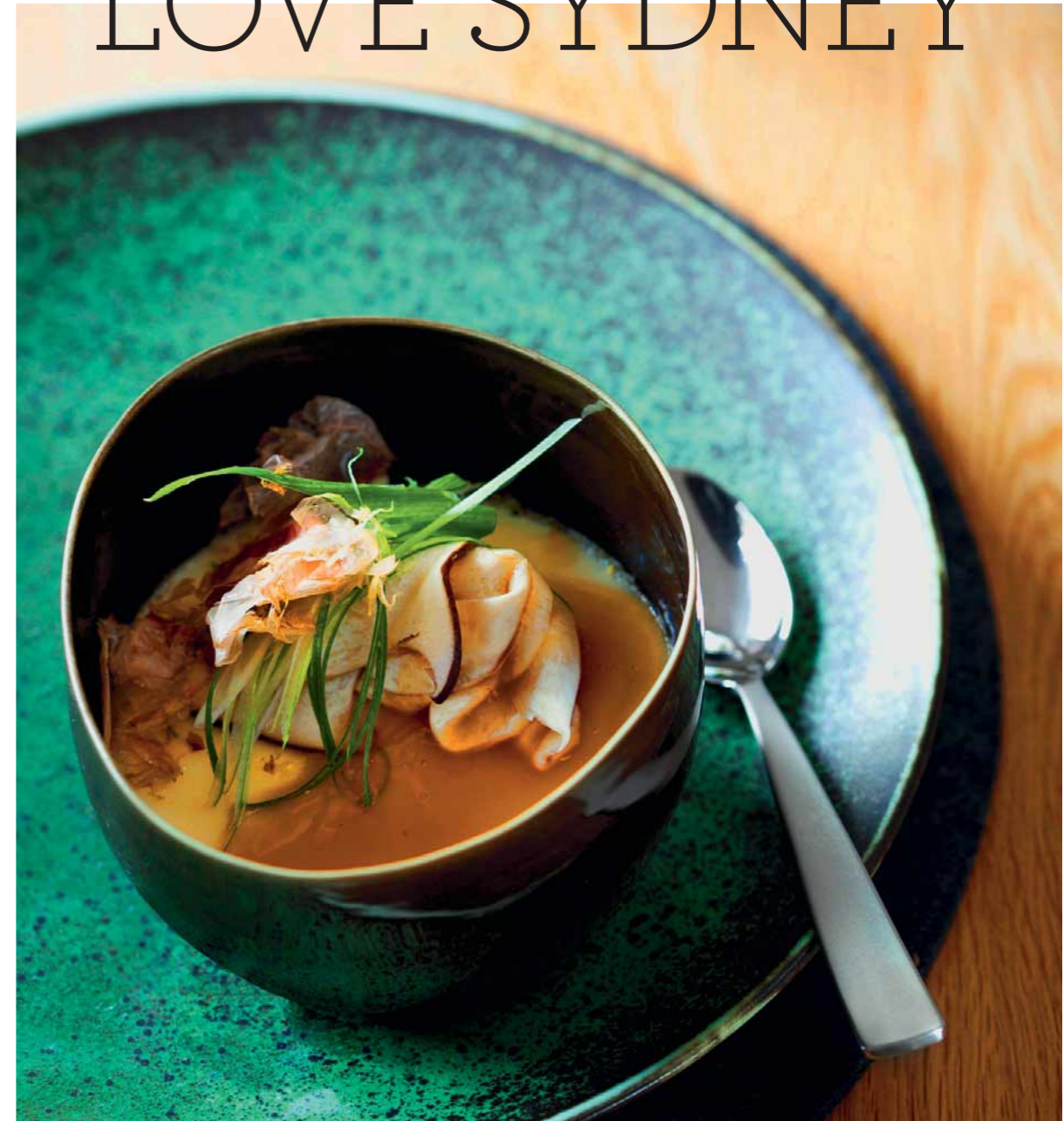




The Bridge Room; its goose liver and lentil custard with chestnut mushroom broth (opposite)

20 REASONS TO LOVE SYDNEY



PHOTOGRAPHY: MICHELE ABOUD

French writer **Marie Le Fort** travels the world investigating all that is premium for the prestigious Louis Vuitton guides. Last year, she visited Sydney. On the eve of the publication of the guide to Australia's emerald city, she nominates 20 discoveries that left her well impressed.



Mr Wong; QT Sydney (inset)



SYDNEY LUXURIATE

1 BEST NEW HOTEL

QT Sydney

49 Market Street. (02) 8262 0000.

qtsydney.com.au

It donned matinee idol finery in mid-2012 to take over Gowings department store and part of the State Theatre building. The listed facades contrast with the burlesque style of the entrance, while the more contemporary lines of interior decorator Nic Graham welcome you in the lobby. To preserve the patina, he has collected vintage and bespoke furniture, including 1950s Scandinavian caramel leather sofas, armchairs upholstered in shepherd's check, Voltaire XL seats in fuchsia fabric and velvet ottomans. This gives an inspired retro-chic look, attracting the artistic community. Art adviser Amanda Love has chosen a number of light installations and video-art pieces by Australian and New Zealand artists. The rooms, courtesy of interior decorator Shelley Indyk, feature sculptures by Morgan Shimeld and pieces

by Richard Blackwell, but the original mouldings remain, as do the elegantly varnished parquet and ceramic tiles. QT's Gowings Bar & Grill draws businesspeople and showbiz stars, overseen by executive chef Paul Easson (ex-Rockpool Bar & Grill Melbourne) and restaurateur Rob Marchetti.

2 BEST RESIDENCE

Guest Residence By The Country Trader

92a Surrey Street, Darlinghurst.

(02) 9698 4661. tctsydneyaccommodation.com.au

This trio of private apartments for rent boasts all the comfort and service of a five-star hotel, turning an urban stay into a truly relaxing break. The owner, Geoffrey Clark, combines curios, old sculptures, decorated mirrors, antiques, neocolonial furniture and Provençal style in a rather eccentric mix. The Grand stands out with its neoclassical interiors. The Boutique, elegantly laid out in the attic, plays the artist's studio card with its bright, African-inspired colours. The

Contemporary plumps for vintage pieces and a chic rustic patina. This elegant 1890s Victorian house is three storeys high at the front, with wrought-iron balconies, but has seven storeys at the rear, plunging into a hollow full of greenery, the site of a former quarry. The city disappears as you breakfast on the large balcony behind The Grand, with nothing but birdsong all around.

3 BEST SURPRISE

The Bridge Room

44 Bridge Street. (02) 9247 7000.

thebridgeroom.com.au

After a decade as a chef with Amanresorts and a stint at the Rockpool Bar & Grill, Ross Lusted has set up shop with the backing of The Fink Group, owners of the key Sydney culinary landmarks, Quay and Otto. This new restaurant features large frosted-glass windows that give a residential feel, and the tableware and decor are clearly designed for timeless elegance and a sleek stylish character. The interiors by Nick Tobias include a discreet kinetic wall installation and floral compositions by Tracey Deep. There's a Piet Hein Eek-style kitchen corner with chairs by Autoban for De La Espada, along with Coco Pendant suspensions in olive wood and aluminium by Kate Stokes for Matilda Design. The dissonant ceramic ▶

LUXURIATE SYDNEY



MCA Sculpture Terrace;
Kitchen By Mike (right)



tableware is made by the chef himself (on sale at Funkis), and the Japanese *robata*-style charcoal-fired kitchen produces such wonders as a duck cooked in ashes. Nordic vegetarian ideas and Scandinavian influences, such as the salad of peas, curd, pine nuts, flowers, white asparagus and carrot sauce, also emerge from the chef's workshop. The meal's end brings the feeling of a perfect gastronomic journey.

4 BEST DECOR

Mr Wong

3 Bridge Lane. (02) 9240 3000.
merivale.com.au/mrwong

Mr Wong plays hide-and-seek with first timers; the entrance is down a maze of brick paths. It's worth the effort when you segue into an atmosphere inspired by old Shanghai. With portraits of beautiful ladies on the rough-work walls, collections of old plates and ceramics, jade-green rattan sofas and Thonet chairs, the restaurant is surprisingly authentic. This latest Merivale group asset draws on chefs Dan Hong and Jowett Yu, from Lotus, El Loco and Ms G's, alongside dim sum specialist Eric Koh, ex-London's esteemed Hakkasan. The two floors are a happy jumble of communal tables, bar counters, lounges and nooks, serving the

finest modern Chinese dishes: dim sum with scallops and asparagus, seafood steamed or in XO sauce, wonton soup and crab, roast pork with spices, tofu and eggplant dishes are just the tip of the iceberg of a comprehensive digest of Asian flavours.

5 BEST STORE

Pure & General

114 Brougham Street, Potts Point.
(02) 9360 6060. pureandgeneral.com

As the name suggests, they're both purists and open-minded. Linda Gregoriou and Dale Jones-Evans gather objects from around the world. Their stock has a variety of patinas and prices - \$5 glasses from a Moroccan market next to fishing nets from Papua New Guinea and, further on, traditional copper-covered Japanese artisan tins. The common denominator is the desire to offer ethnic objects and textiles that are made to last and never go out of style. With its collection of old-fashioned embroidered linen pouches, delicate ceramics, faded, flowery Greek fabrics and Victorian table centrepieces, the space is full of objects with

a soul and an ethical conscience. The store added a cafe last year, where it is possible to prolong the pleasure of being surrounded by so many beautiful things.

6 BEST ICE-CREAM

Gelato Messina

1/241 Victoria Street,
Darlinghurst; 389 Crown Street, Surry Hills.
(02) 8354 1223. gelatomessina.com

Here, creativity rivals taste. Along with some classic flavours (coffee and lemon) are refreshingly bold combinations: figs poached in marsala; pear and rhubarb; burnt caramel with ginger; panacotta fig jam with amaretti biscuit. The most exotic sorbets resonate with Asian flavours: salted coconut and mango salsa; coconut and pandanus fruit. Far more surreal are frozen cakes from the "cake laboratory" such as Dr Evil's Magic Mushroom, a confection of chocolate ice-cream, cookies, peanuts and *dulce de leche*. Homemade in a process that pays attention to preparation, processing and roasting of each ingredient, Messina's products are madly addictive. >



White Rabbit Gallery; scallops, sweet corn, biltong and osmanthus flower at The Bridge Room (above)

AS ALICE MIGHT HAVE SAID, THE WHITE RABBIT IS WORTH FOLLOWING



7 BEST VIEW

Sculpture Terrace, Museum of Contemporary Art

140 George Street, The Rocks. (02) 9245 2400. mca.com.au
 Located near where the First Fleet came ashore in 1788, the MCA was extended in 2011-2012 by Sam Marshall at a cost of \$53m, giving it an extra 4500sq m of exhibition space, a passageway linking George Street to the waterfront and a top-floor cafe and restaurant with spectacular harbour views. A big Yoko Ono exhibition (November 15-February 23) will be followed by Annette Messager.

8 BEST CANTEEN

Sailors Thai Canteen

106 George Street, The Rocks. (02) 9251 2466. sailorsthai.com.au
 With its long steel table and open kitchen bubbling with vapours and aromas, this Thai canteen is a great place for authentic street food. You can order a quick pad thai, a black glutinous rice dumpling accompanied by caramelised pork served in a banana leaf basket, a green mango salad or a green wagyu beef curry at any time of the day in this colonial building harking back to the time of the old port. They don't take reservations, so it's a rare luxury to sit at one of the two tables on the balcony with harbour views. The lower floors offer more traditional yet expert Thai cuisine on white-clothed tables, small dishes inside large ones and out-of-control prices - making Sailors Thai a place for real connoisseurs.

9 BEST FLORIST

Grandiflora

1/12 Macleay Street, Potts Point. (02) 9357 7902. grandiflora.net
 In such a verdant city, it's only natural that florists should call the shots - and Saskia Havekes could be crowned their queen. No-one would dream of getting married or hosting a proper reception without at least one of her compositions (she and Jeff Leatham from the Hotel George V did the flowers at Eva Longoria's Paris wedding). The young woman is, incidentally, not a florist but a "floral designer", and doesn't hesitate to apply the word "artist" to her profession. Along with the famous magnolia grandiflora, her pet plant, she uses local species, plays with garden flowers, weaves in the cloudy tips of onion stems, slips a couple of marbled roses among chubby cabbages and tops it off with brambles and sprigs of hydrangea. Designers often call on her for their catwalks; her collaborations with the crazy creators at Romance Was Born confirm her as a member of the city's creative elite. The pavement outside her shop is aflame with colour after her flower market trips.

10 BEST NEIGHBOURHOOD CAFE

Gnome Espresso & Winebar

536 Crown Street, Surry Hills. (02) 9332 3191.
 With its wooden display counter and little bistro tables *à la parisienne*, Gnome has one burning desire: to serve excellent coffee, selecting only the best roasted beans. Menus are adapted to the seasons. Try an >



iced Chemex filter coffee using the system that was invented at the end of the 1930s by German-born chemist Peter Schlumbohm, with the aim of creating the “perfect” filtering method.

11 BEST RENOVATION

Carriageworks

245 Wilson Street, Eveleigh. (02) 8571 9099.
carriageworks.com.au

Once Eveleigh Carriage Workshops, a maintenance depot for the NSW railway fleet, this heritage building became an arts performance space in 2002. A vital hub of the Sydney arts scene, it has resident theatre and dance troupes, an art gallery, theatre bar and auditoriums. On Saturdays, 8am-1pm, Eveleigh Farmers’ Market moves in. On the first Sunday of the month (10am-3pm), is the Artisans’ Market.

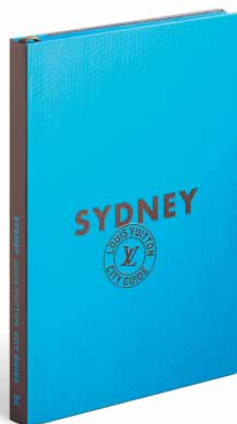
12 BEST GALLERY

White Rabbit Gallery

30 Balfour Street, Chippendale.
(02) 8399 2867. whiterabbitcollection.org

White Rabbit boasts one of the world’s biggest collections of 21st-century Chinese art. The MCA and Art Gallery of NSW put up stiff competition but, as Alice might have said, the White Rabbit is worth following. This internationally renowned institution features a remarkable collection by more

Brook Andrew installation *Travelling Colony* (2012), Carriageworks (above left); Grandiflora (above right); Sydney: *Louis Vuitton City Guide* (inset)



than 200 artists. Examples include the Jeeps and BMWs “sculpted” from wire mesh by Shi Jindjian and the hand-painted sunflower seeds by Ai Weiwei. Admission to exhibitions is free. As well as films, talks and other educational events organised by this enlightened establishment, there’s a shop stocked with original and colourful objects, books on Chinese art and a tearoom offering homemade dim sum and fine teas.

13 BEST COCKTAIL CROWD

Palmer & Co

Abercrombie Lane, The Rocks. (02) 9240 3172.
merivale.com.au/palmerandco

Going to this excellent speakeasy is like walking into Woody Allen’s *Midnight In Paris*. This time machine takes you back to the US Prohibition era with brick walls and old photos of bootleggers, sepia lighting and top hats in showcases alongside vintage whisky bottles, engraved crystal glasses

and mixologists dressed in anthracite-grey waistcoats. Evenings start early, with live jazz, cold cuts and a New York Yiddish menu, growing more classy and creative into the wee hours. Go into the night with a Hollywood sour (an adaptation of the Trinidad sour), a classic Belvedere vodka martini or a timeless 1930s *vieux carré*, with its mix of cognac, rye, sweet vermouth, Benedictine DOM and bitters.

14 BEST ART WALK

Sculpture by the Sea

Bondi-Tamarama Coastal Walk.
sculpturebythesea.com

Founded in 1997, this annual event is one of the most important on the international scene. Until November 10, works from sculptors of all nationalities make a 2km artistic walk between Bondi Beach and Tamarama Park. Several prizes now support the event; the overall winner is exhibited in Sydney’s Royal Botanic Gardens. Drawing more than 500,000 people in 2012, it is now also staged in Perth and Aarhus (Denmark).

15 BEST POOL

Park Hyatt Sydney

7 Hickson Road, The Rocks.
(02) 9256 1234. sydney.park.hyatt.com

Opposite the Opera House and next to the Harbour Bridge, this exceptional hotel had a multimillion-dollar facelift in 2010. Its interiors echo the rocky spur where the hotel stands, with stone everywhere, highlighted by fine striations evoking erosion and the ➤



Palmer & Co (left); Gelato Messina (above); Threshold by Kevin Draper at last year's Sculpture by the Sea (below)

17 BEST NEIGHBOURHOOD TRATTORIA

Fratelli Paradiso

12-16 Challis Avenue, Potts Point.
(02) 9357 1744. fratelliparadiso.com

This is a slice of Italy in Potts Point, exuding a contagious air of *dolce vita* and always full. Divided vaguely into a cafe-cum-bakery and a restaurant, there's a street-side terrace for alfresco dining. Fratelli serves up very fine food, listed daily on a blackboard: seared scampi, carefully selected burrata, tortellini and tagliatelle that have been steeped in the scullery, all fizzing with freshness and simplicity. The risotto is accompanied by broccoli sauce, the Sardinian gnocchetti by an osso buco and the lamb is served with the house polenta. The Italian wines have been scooped up from all around the peninsula: Puglia, Sicily, Friuli, Piedmont, Abruzzo, Tuscany and Veneto. ▶

country's arid centre. It's a monument of contemporary luxury. The public spaces are light, fluid and almost Japanese in their attention to detail (the owner, Daisho, is Japanese). The ground-floor area, curving around the point like the prow of a ship, is particularly impressive. Bespoke art works punctuate the various spaces. Organised as a succession of private precincts in neutral tones with huge windows, the rooms and suites have an instant calming effect. The rooftop pool, flanked by private cabins and lounges, has one of the best views in town; the spa opposite offers treatments using organic products by Australian brand iKOU. You'll feel physically, emotionally and spiritually balanced in this corner of Asia tinged with Australian culture.

16 BEST BEAUTY BUY

Alkaline Spa & Clinic

7/91 Macleay Street, Potts Point.
(02) 9332 2500. alkaline.com.au

In Sydney, Sodashi products are available only at Alkaline. Here, they are mainly for the facials and detox body massages that

are among the specialties of its naturopaths, Kylie Armstrong and Billie Jo David. Founded in 1999 by biochemist Megan Larsen, who had studied aromatherapy in Provence, cosmetics in Australia and ayurveda with a master, the brand eschews preservatives or chemical products such as parabens. Sodashi (Sanskrit for "wholeness, purity and radiance") promotes beauty resulting from the balance between body and mind. The formulas are produced in-house from natural organic essences and non-refined plant oils using ayurvedic and biochemical principles.



18 BEST CONCEPT

Kitchen By Mike

85 Dunning Avenue, Rosebery.

(02) 9045 0910. koskela.com.au/kitchen

Having worked for the very best (Sir Terence Conran in London, Sydney's Rockpool), Mike McEneaney now cooks for everyone. Grab an enamel plate and choose between grill of the day and a mix of red rice, peas and basil. Later, go for a tomato salad, watermelon and mint; or pieces of corn, parmesan and lime sauce; or slices of roasted pumpkin served with pomegranate and spiced yoghurt. Order a rosemary focaccia and add a jug of Australian olive oil to your basket, a pot of honey and lemon curd jam. Find a place at a stripped-wood communal table in the vast open space, get your cutlery from a tin and make new friends. In fine weather, take a table in the sun for a chic picnic for bohos, especially those who like the furniture and objects from the Koskela collection in the other part of this warehouse.

19 BEST BREAD

Iggy's Bread of the World

49 Belgrave Street, Bronte. (02) 9369 1650.

Many chefs swear by Iggy's Bread, but an obvious sign of success is the long queue snaking out the door. Leaders in the revival of artisan bread making in the US, Igor Ivanović and Ludmilla Luft settled here a decade ago. Their shop has no distinctive sign and is sparsely furnished with carts full of freshly baked bread and a minuscule shelf carrying Cistercian-labelled pots of Miellerie honey, produced by

Frenchman Yves Ginat in Tasmania. Every day, Ivanović and Luft cook 300 exceptional ficelles, baguettes and bagels. They knead their dough with the best flour and a pinch of Himalayan crystal salt or Maldon sea salt, then sell to leading chefs and a host of regulars, including a French cohort, who admit the bread is perfect. The duo now has a second bakery at 145d Macpherson Street, Bronte (02 9386 1370).

20 BEST STREET FOOD

MissChu

185 Bourke Street, Darlinghurst.

(02) 8356 9988. misschu.com.au

Some say MissChu is nuts. In one of her amazing makeshift bars, the first rule is: don't be surprised if she yells and screams when you order your meal. The success of MissChu lies in the sheer excellence of its Vietnamese street food. From old school desks painted black, and chairs with their backs sawn into bunny ears, to the flimsy bamboo canopy, MissChu has a ball with everything she does. On a pre-printed sheet, tick the boxes to order shrimp spring rolls and green mango, or roast duck and banana flower, or shrimps and scallop dim sum with tofu-spinach, or Hanoi-style spring rolls, or curry, or phở. There is something for everyone, including her famous hot salads of beef-lemongrass and noodles, chicken satay and vegan garnishes served in a white cardboard box with disposable chopsticks. Despite the owner's cantankerous nature, MissChu is highly addictive. There's an iPhone app, so you can order whenever you want, wherever you are. 🌐

Rooftop pool at
Park Hyatt Sydney

✦ For airfares and
holiday packages to
Sydney call Qantas
Holidays on 1300 735 542
or visit [qantas.com/
holidaysaustralianway](http://qantas.com/holidaysaustralianway)

