



GRANDE DAME HOTEL STYLE

I am intrigued by iconic, institutional hotels with a storied past. On our last visit to Singapore we stayed at Raffles; its old-world backdrop and service brings back the glory days of travel. The hotel's Tiffin Room (pictured) serves fresh, spicy Indian cuisine in traditional tiffin boxes amid a sumptuous setting. Lounging and people-watching by the Raffles pool, Singapore sling in hand, is pure holiday heaven.



GETTING TO KNOW SINGAPORE

Over the past five years I have enjoyed exploring the history, food and melting-pot culture behind the city's cosmopolitan facade. Half the fun of Singapore is wandering the hawker markets, like Newton Food Centre, for specialities such as seafood or noodles. In the hustle and bustle you can discover everything from exotic ingredients such as stingray to grandmothers ladling a simple soup. I'm fascinated by the plant world, so I visit the historic Botanic Gardens (pictured) to wonder at the exquisite blooms in the Orchid Garden.



ALL SIX SENSES

My wife, Hayley, and I are obsessed with Six Senses resorts because the architecture and untouched rainforest feel are intoxicating. The food mirrors the immersion in nature with bountiful, healthy dishes. You feel like a castaway who landed in paradise. We have visited Six Senses Koh Samui (pictured), which feels really private as your villa is nestled in jungle with its own pool and panoramic views over the Gulf of Thailand. We also visited Six Senses Yao Noi near Phuket, which is like something from a James Bond movie, with the backdrop of limestone pinnacles rising from Phang Nga Bay. It's a pinch-yourself place. We plan to make our way around the brand's other properties.

CAMERON CANSDSELL

The acclaimed chef's career has inspired a lifetime of pilgrimage to Italy and Asia



When Cameron Cansdell became the first head chef at boutique resort Bells at Killcare, he established the sophisticated Central Coast haven as a dining destination. Now, 17 years later, after enlivening the NSW regional culinary scene by launching award-winning restaurants Bombini, Fish and Saddles (and florist shop Flowergirl Lane in Woy Woy), he comes full circle and returns to Bells as culinary director.

Urban escapees travel north of Sydney to unwind among the resort's emerald lawns and coastal blue-white aesthetic. The on-site Wild Flower Bar & Dining has new Cansdell classics: spaghetti graced with pippis tossed in chilli and capers, and free-range suckling pig raised at Near River. "We make things from scratch," enthuses Cansdell. "The goal is simple, elegant food." Butter becomes a briny wonder with sea urchin; red deep-sea prawns swim in a tangy marinade of grapefruit and finger limes from the garden.

"My mother grew up on a farm and excelled as an Italian home cook, despite her Polish roots," Cansdell explains. "When she started studying to be a nurse, I took over the family meals as a teenager and cooking became my passion too. I got my first job straight out of school and then worked really hard; apprentice chefs tend to travel later in life. My food soul combines Mediterranean tradition with Australian ingredients, so when I got the freedom to take off in my early twenties, I made a bee-line for Italy."

Alba, white truffle country

My favourite place in Italy is the town of Alba in the Piedmont region. The local produce market opens early every Thursday in the historic centre, bringing the streets and squares to life. Truffle season is from September to December. A simple little stand will serve wild truffles from the surrounding forests, simply shaved – you won't taste better.

Must-try regional dishes

Alba's local specialty is "Tajarin" pasta, which is yolk-rich and thicker than angel hair. They serve it at a little restaurant in the backstreets of Alba's old town called La Libra. The pasta becomes an incredible summer ragu of rabbit, braised in white wine and dressed with basil. Raviolo di Nino Bergese is another traditional Piedmontese specialty on the menu, which showcases Alba's white truffle mingled with parmesan and butter, and served over one giant ravioli tube filled with herbed ricotta and raw egg yolk. You pierce it with a fork and everything oozes out. Stupendo!

bellsatkillcare.com.au



BYRON BOUND

I am falling in love with regional travel, which works well now that we have a two year old. We spend heaps of time in Byron Bay and stay at The Hotel Marvell for its great rooftop (pictured), or relax among the coastal luxe feel of The Atlantic. Our next trip is at the 1970s-inspired Sun Ranch to enjoy the nearby hinterland. The Hut restaurant in Possum Creek, just outside town, is in a refurbished old school and worth visiting. Its menu adapts to the local farmers' offerings and fishermen's catch. We order the tuna carpaccio and seafood Paccheri pasta platter for two, heaped with Ballina prawns and Kinkawooka mussels.



DISAPPEARING ACT

Saffire Freycinet lodge on Tasmania's east coast is one of the best places in the country to leave the world behind and breathe pure air, yet still experience luxury. It's a magical Aussie getaway, set in pristine bushland overlooking Wineglass Bay

LIGHTEN THE LOAD

I am a minimalistic packer and challenge myself to go overseas with a small suitcase. My secret is I take men's silk shirts. Camilla shirts (pictured) are wild and make a statement; they flow beautifully and are so light to wear. Silk Laundry, another great Australian brand, makes simple certified eco silk shirts locally. I tone the look down with a baseball cap rather than go full-tilt tropical tourist with a panama hat. You just roll them up so they sit nicely and pack small. I am a big fan of RM Williams sneakers, which have a traditional, quality feel yet still look contemporary; they are so soft and comfortable, which is important when exploring by foot or relaxing. I don't keep time on the phone; I like to use a classic men's watch, like a Rolex.



As told to Cleo Glyde