



Adelaide Thrills

THE NEW HOTEL SOHO IS JUST MADE FOR AN INDULGENT BREAK AT ANY TIME OF YEAR.

A FAVOURITE BIRTHDAY card reads: "Tracey got herself some beer and chips then settled down to watch her fitness video". It's an appropriate theme for my stay at Adelaide's new five-star Hotel Soho. It's Summer and all around people are sport-mad. The Tour Down Under is winding through the Adelaide Hills, the Australian cricket team is enroute to Adelaide Oval, and on the television, tennis great Jim Courier is interviewing World Number One, Rafael Nadal.

"So how does it feel," asks Courier, larger than life on the 42-inch flat screen in my fourth floor balcony apartment. "Wonderful," I say, curled up on the king-sized bed sipping my cleansing Coopers ale while watching other people exercise. I'm here for a weekend of gourmet gluttony and even before I venture into the city, the Soho impresses.

I begin my stay at Soho with a seven-course degustation menu at the in-house restaurant Decant. Chef Jonathon Kemble (formerly head chef at Port Willunga's famed Star of Greece, and 2003 Australian Apprentice of the Year) works only with locally sourced produce. His ever-changing menu features Kangaroo Island haloumi, Spencer Gulf prawns and Boston Bay mussels. We begin with quail egg omelette, followed by a snapper carpaccio and then mussels in a broth of garlic, shallots and parsley. Next is Berkshire pig scotch fillet with gnocchi, followed by Suffolk lamb confit – five hours in the making and served with a side of crumbled lambs brains. It's all wickedly rich, and the low-key desert is welcome – a bomb Alaska made with rosewater and strawberry. The local wine list impresses too – we taste chardonnay from the

Adelaide Hills, shiraz from the Barossa Valley and a merlot from the Limestone Coast.

When I finally creep back to my room, I've had much more than an elegant sufficiency and am ready for bed. The king-sized bed, with Missoni linen and rainbow-patterned throws, has views all the way to the Adelaide foothills. Designed by award-winning Australian architects Loucas Zahos, every whim has been anticipated. There's iPod docking, an Italian marble bathroom and a large private balcony with bi-fold doors, overlooking Mt Lofty. A console-style kitchenette has glasses, bottle openers and a generous range of other props for hosting your own party.

Next morning, I'm refreshed and ready for breakfast. Waiting for my free-range eggs, I open the paper to read all about the Tour. And feel very glad that I'm not out there. I make a note to come back soon and now it is Autumn, I suggest you book in too.

Clarion Hotel Soho, 264 Flinders St, Adelaide. Balcony suites from \$310 per night. Decant restaurant open Monday to Saturday. Details, (08) 8412 5600, www.clarionhotelsoho.com.au, reception@clarionhotelsoho.com.au.

THINGS TO DO:

Visit Adelaide's Central Markets to taste fresh local produce in season.

Book an in-room spa treatment.

Explore Hutt St shopping and entertainment precinct.

Walk to Adelaide Oval, Rundle St Mall and the Art Gallery of South Australia.