

Slim, taut and terrific



ROOM AT THE INN

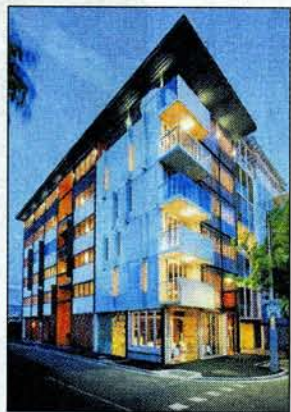
Susan Kurosawa

WHAT the Clarion Hotel Soho lacks in exterior presence is well compensated for by its jazzy interiors and intrinsic sense of style. This slender corner property at the east end of Adelaide's Flinders Street is almost a blink-and-miss proposition. Happily, though, its ground-floor Decant restaurant has glass folding doors that open to the street. At night there is little chance of not noticing Decant with its jewel-coloured lighting and busy vibe. Decant's Italian marble bar (which I barely notice at breakfast) is backlit when the sun goes down and it fairly glows and shimmers.

A hotel this size is bound to have limited facilities but what's available has been well considered. The 30 guestrooms (including suites) are kitted in grey and white, with Missoni Home linens and lollipop-striped cushions, and the comfort factor is high, including extra blankets, a pillow menu, iron and board, DVD player (free discs available) and good toiletries. The mini-bar is a cut above, with packets of wasabi crispy peas and gourmet jelly beans, a manicure kit and

adaptors. Swivelling easy chairs (Fler, perhaps, or Eames) lend a 1950s feel but the bold artwork is very now, all by South Australian artists and available for sale through the hotel.

My ensuite bathroom is cupboard-sized and all but floods after a shower, but the top-category Soho spa suites sound more luxurious and spacious. A heated jet pool on level five (why not a far more fashionable plunge pool?) is edged with terrace seating and city rooftop views and, while there is no on-site spa, treatments in your room can be organised



Cosy corner: The Clarion

with 24 hours notice (therapies average \$120 an hour) and the men's facial sounds rather natty: it's dubbed Bearded Dragon.

Then there is the food. Head chef Jonathan Kemble is an Adelaide son, formerly of the much-lauded Star of Greece cafe at Port Willunga on the Fleurieu Peninsula. He bases his menu solely on South Australian produce and typical seasonal dishes include grilled half-shell scallops with preserved lemon and chervil dressing and ginger-fried zucchini blossoms filled with prawn mousse on salsa verde.

The wine list is primarily South Australian in composition and the house cocktail is (what else but) a Sohotini. A glass of utterly delicious Charles Melton 2008 Rose from the Barossa is \$8.

Breakfasts in Decant are a treat, too. There's homemade bircher muesli, ricotta pancakes with chantilly cream and blueberries and scrambled Fleurieu free-range eggs with smoked salmon and watercress. Service is swift and friendly; coffee is heart-starting fine.

As a bonus for guests who want a night in, Decant's dishes can be ordered via room service. So there you would be in your big soft bed, with the huge flat-screen telly perfectly tuned, getting stuck into a Spencer Gulf bug thermidor with iceberg and radish salad. You'd want to eat fast, though, because it would be a disaster if the pear soufflé with white chocolate ice cream were to collapse.

Susan Kurosawa was a guest of the South Australia Tourism Commission.

Checklist

Clarion Hotel Soho, 264 Flinders St, Adelaide.

(08) 8412 5666; www.clarionhotelsoho.com.au.

Tariff: Studios (the smallest rooms) from about \$145 at www.wotif.com or www.needitnow.com.au. Also check the hotel's site for good deals.

Getting there: About 20 minutes from Adelaide airport.

Checking in: Groovy young professionals; couples on weekend packages.

Wheelchair access: Level street access; big lift.

Bedtime reading: *All Things Bright and Beautiful* by Susan Mitchell (murderous goings-on in South Australia).

Stepping out: Well located for exploring central Adelaide.

Brickbats: Not much water pressure in the shower. The Soho tag is said to "evoke the eclectic, arty vibe of London's Soho", which seems a stretch for this quiet end of Flinders Street. Too-dim lighting in the corridors.

Bouquets: A computer nook near reception has two laptops for guests' use. Good eco credentials (each room has a green master switch to save energy). Fab food.