

FAB FOUR FRESH SYDNEY BARS WITH VIEWS

Watering holes that exude the wow factor

ALEXANDRA CARLTON

TWR AT CROWN TOWERS SYDNEY

Sydneysiders can be wary of developments that fiddle with their skyline, particularly if it's near the harbour. The new Crown Towers, currently operating sans casino, certainly makes a statement, rising from the shore at Barangaroo like a shiny, twisting pen. Whatever you think of the exterior, it's difficult to fault what's happening inside. TWR (The Waiting Room) is a luxury hotel lobby bar, complete with acres of marble, elegant herringbone motifs and a glossy baby grand piano. The indoor space feels cosmopolitan, as you'd expect from lauded New York design team Meyer Davis, while the patio, with its lush trees, plush couches and views to Pyrmont Bay, is distinctly Sydney. The wine list leans local with an excellent selection from some of the more under-the-radar regions such as Canberra and Gundagai. The steak tartare, the classic dish served at any hotel bar worth its chopped cornichons, is very good; crownsydney.com.au.



TERRACE BAR AT LITTLE NATIONAL HOTEL

Not many people would choose a hotel because of the appeal of its common areas. That might change when visitors and staycationers find out what's at the top of Sydney's 230-room Little National Hotel, above Wynyard Station. The top-floor lounge, library and bar is an unexpectedly spacious indoor/outdoor venue featuring soft sofas, work desks, lots of greenery and a chic circular gas fireplace for winter. The view is of nearby highrises, which could feel claustrophobic; instead, it brings an inner-city sophistication to the experience. Drinks and snacks are served from 7am til late and there's even a microwave for those planning to work here all day and have the foresight to bring lunch. The area is accessible only to hotel guests but there's a sneaky workaround: a \$105 day-rate includes access to a hotel room and the Terrace Bar from 10am to 4pm; littlenationalhotel.com.au.



BAR 83, SYDNEY TOWER

The Jetsons. I Dream of Jeannie. Mad Men. There's a little bit of them all in the retro stylings of Bar 83 on the 83rd floor of Sydney Tower. It was a good call by the designers. The lipstick-red and sunflower-

yellow seating and bright gold accents need to be bold to compete with the real star of the room: the 360-degree panorama of Sydney. The bar, along with revolving restaurant Skyfeast and the higher-end Infinity restaurant, are part of a push to make this central city landmark less of a tourist trap and more appealing to locals. It mostly succeeds; the cocktails are fine, the snacks are good and the service is great, but the prices are a reminder you're paying a premium for the view. Then again, considering there's nowhere else to see the Harbour Bridge, Bondi and the Blue Mountains in one spot, it's probably worth it; bar83sydneytower.com.au.

THE ROOF TOP AT CRUISE BAR

If there's ever been a moment to spend time at Circular Quay, it's now. The usual throngs of tourists and the view-hogging cruise ships are nowhere to be seen, and the area is being reclaimed by locals. The Roof Top at Cruise Bar has changed tack from being a space reserved for special events, and is opening to the general public from 2pm til late, Thursday to Sunday. It's a relaxed afternoon spot to watch the ferries shuttle in and out of the wharves, especially for patrons who get there early enough to secure one of the outdoor sofas in front of the bar windows. From 11.30am Wednesday to Sunday, the bar on the ground floor has excellent Opera



House vistas and plenty of that clean, salty breeze international visitors come a long way to savour; cruisebar.com.au.



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Riviera dreaming on a luxe harbour jaunt

KATRINA LOBLEY

Mark Dagleish believes there's no such thing as bad publicity. Still, even his optimism was challenged when his boat tour business was splashed across front pages last March after celebrity clients Tom Hanks and Rita Wilson announced they had coronavirus.

Days earlier, the couple had cruised around Sydney Harbour with Dagleish's skipper daughter Elodie (she later tested negative). "The phone went absolutely ballistic within minutes of their announcement," he says. "We needed to react by closing everything down."

Ninety per cent of business had come from international visitors, drawn from five-star hotels such as the Park Hyatt. Dagleish watched three months of bookings on Spectre, a 12m Scandinavian sports cruiser that can zip about at 70km/h carrying 10 passengers, go down the gurgler.

Whales came to the rescue. Dagleish's Sydney Harbour Boat Tours launched a sister brand, MySydneyBoat, and started taking Australians, including stars such as Hugo Weaving, beyond the Heads to see humpbacks and southern right whales. As summer approached, the harbour beckoned again.

The operation began in 2017 when Elodie, who also skips vessels in the south of France, suggested offering a Mediterranean-inspired experience that allows visitors to charter a boat for casual exploration. Now father and daughter want to convince locals they too can enjoy the boatie lifestyle without the hassle of maintenance or fuel costs. Instead, guests hire Spectre skippered for \$500 an hour.

I step aboard at the vessel's Rose Bay base. It's a perfect day for pretending we're on the



Store Beach in Sydney

Riviera. A seaplane buzzes across a lapis-blue sky as we match eye-boggling harbourside mansions to names.

We speed across the harbour, riding some swell near Manly. Skipper Zane Kamat, a former water-taxi driver, is about to show off one of Spectre's talents: its ability to cosy up to the shore. With his helping hand, I step into knee-high water and — voila — hello Store Beach.

This secluded strip of sand is critical habitat for little penguins. Search around and you'll see the word "smallpox" engraved into a rock, a reminder of earlier pandemics and North Head's history as a quarantine station. All that is far from our minds, though, as we drink bellinis and slurp briny oysters from the shell (you can BYO or request catering).

We mosey west, cruising under the Spit Bridge into Middle Harbour. Off Flat Rock Beach, lunch is served. Platters of sushi, sashimi, prawns and more oysters are washed down with sparkly drinks. We wave to other boaties as though we're all in the same club. Guests can swim and snorkel in the clear waters if they wish but we linger in the sunshine before reluctantly turning for home base.

Katrina Loblely was a guest of MySydneyBoat. mysydneyboat.com.au