

**VERIU BROADWAY**

35 MOUNTAIN STREET, SYDNEY
(02) 8379 7880; VERIU.COM.AU

The location: On the western edge of Sydney's CBD, Ultimo is an educational hub, home to top unis and schools. A convergence point for students and young professionals, it's also one of Sydney's most transformed precincts. The area has undergone a major facelift in recent years thanks to the \$55-million Broadway shopping centre redevelopment bringing in retailers such as H&M and Sephora, and the Central Park shopping and apartment complex on the site of an old brewery.

The place: Once a textile warehouse, this serviced apartment hotel with 64 rooms opened in July this year. The hotel offers self-contained studios and one- and two-bedroom, split-level, loft-style apartments. Most feature a kitchen and laundry, and all have Wi-Fi, a smartphone and smart TVs. Rooms are between 32 and 60 square metres, with those on the lower floors featuring exposed-beam high ceilings and polished concrete floors – a nod to the area's industrial history.

The experience: It's all about "living like a local". There's no restaurant, just a small cafe offering coffee and pastries. This encourages guests to investigate the abundance of restaurants, cafes, bars, attractions and shopping nearby, as well as in neighbouring Glebe and Camperdown. If you're not a fan of the traditional hotel experience but Airbnb isn't your thing either, then this could be the place for you.

Don't miss: Take a complimentary hotel bike and ride around Blackwattle Bay to Trams Sheds Harold Park, a European-inspired market hall, to grab a bite.

Ideal for: Urban explorers.

ANNIE DANG

From \$250 a night.

MY FAVOURITE GETAWAY**MATHEW TRINCA**

DIRECTOR, NATIONAL MUSEUM OF AUSTRALIA

What's your go-to ACT weekend away?

What's happened in Canberra in recent years is frankly amazing. Where else can you go to see a wealth of cultural offerings, dine in great restaurants and visit cellar doors with world class cool-climate wines, stay in design-led boutique hotels, breathe in the fresh mountain air and fly across the Monaro in a hot-air balloon, all within 15 minutes of everything else? An ideal weekend would include, if you'll forgive me, a visit to our *Songlines: Tracking the Seven Sisters* exhibition at the National Museum of Australia.

Where do you stay?

I'm a big fan of the New Acton precinct for its proximity to the city, Lake Burley Griffin and nearby bars and restaurants. There are a number of excellent hotels, but QT stands out.

Why do you love it?

QT Hotel has a fun retro-political vibe – very Canberra – not to mention a great bar and bistro.

A favourite memory?

There are some great small country towns near Canberra.

I really enjoy the drive out towards Braidwood and Araluen – it's stunning.

What's your go-to eatery?

I love the fusion food at the Lanterne Rooms in Campbell.

And for the best coffee?

I recommend Ona in Manuka.

Your favourite local secret?

Find a great bend in the mighty Murrumbidgee River and watch the sun go down with beer in hand.

What does a quick getaway mean to you?

I'm lucky enough to get weekend downtime with my family on acreage outside Canberra.

**HOTEL HOTEL**

25 EDINBURGH AVE, CANBERRA
(02) 6287 6287; HOTEL-HOTEL.COM.AU

The location: When it comes to unlikely success stories, Canberra's reinvention as a cool urban escape has to top the list.

The place: Anyone can open a hotel in a hip 'hood; it's a brave hotelier who sets out to create not only a happening venture, but also transform the neighbourhood that surrounds it. Molongolo Group pulled it off when they launched the New Acton precinct featuring cafes, bars and restaurants, a gallery, a cinema and Hotel Hotel.

The experience: Hotel Hotel celebrates *wabi-sabi*, the imperfection of the handmade and the natural. Instead of designer wallpaper, the hotel rooms feature textured walls of felt and clay render, and pretty much every object you touch was constructed to order by Australian artisans.

Don't miss: The hotel's in-house restaurant, Monster Bar and Kitchen, is one of the best in town.

Ideal for: Travellers who enjoy having their preconceptions overturned. UTE JUNKER

From \$265 a night00.

**AVENUE HOTEL**

80 NORTHBOURNE AVENUE, BRADDON
1800 828 000; AVENUEHOTEL.COM.AU

The location: Our capital offers a steady stream of events and festivals throughout the year (Floriade, Enlighten and the Canberra Balloon Spectacular,

to name a few) that keep the visitors coming and the hotels full.

The place: Part of the city's cosmopolitan new wave, Avenue Hotel opened three years ago on Northbourne Avenue (the main road that heralds the end of the drive from Sydney), with 213 spacious rooms and an upscale steakhouse, Marble & Grain.

The experience: Glam modern rooms provide a welcoming nest, while the temptation to linger in the two-person spa bath suite might be irresistible.

Don't miss: The Last Post Ceremony at the Australian War Memorial. Held daily at 4.55pm, each day it tells the story of one name on the Roll of Honour, and *The Last Post* is sounded.

Ideal for: Couples, friends or solo travellers seeking luxury in the capital. KRISTIE KELLAHAN
From \$179 a night.

**LITTLE NATIONAL**

1 NATIONAL CIRCUIT, BARTON
(02) 6188 3200; LITTLENATIONAL.COM.AU

The location: A super-prime position in the suburb of Barton close to the parliamentary triangle.

The place: Little National, a minimalist, unorthodox 120-room hotel, is based on the concept of affordable luxury. Rooms reflect the fashion for snug timber-floored spaces with sizeable bathrooms. Extras include a Nespresso machine, cable TV, free Wi-Fi, free in-house movies and free local phone calls.

The experience: Among the most impressive features are the so-called common areas with views of Parliament House, fireplaces and a sculptural staircase linking two floors.

Don't miss: Walk across the street to eat and drink at the likes of Maple + Clove, LiloTang and Chairman Yip at Hotel Realm.

Ideal for: Minimalists who don't mind the bed being pushed into the corner of the room.

ANTHONY DENNIS

From \$129 a night.