



First Bite John Lethlean

Dumpling giant coming to town

After testing the waters in Sydney (seven outlets, waters well and truly tested), Din Tai Fung is coming to Melbourne. The international dumpling behemoth is opening at the food-centric Emporium shopping centre in the CBD. Sticking to the big-is-best approach of this much-loved chain, Melbourne's DTF will be a 235-seater with internal as well as direct external ingress to the restaurant. DTF began in Taiwan in 1974 as a single dumpling shop; it is now in 12 countries. One of the Hong Kong branches has a Michelin star.

Of course it's not the only modest Hong Kong dumpling house with a gong from the tycoon. Tim Ho Wan famously picked up a star several years ago and opens its first Australian branch this week at Chatswood with a local franchisee and chef Eric Koh, ex-Mr Wong. We expect the soft opening on Saturday to be chaos. But the real news is the suggestion of a Melbourne branch, possibly opening midyear in Chinatown, to follow.

Chris Lucas has snaffled young Melbourne chef Damian Snell to head up the kitchen of Hawker Hall, the entrepreneur's long-awaited Southeast Asian-accented restaurant in Melbourne's Windsor. The man behind Chin Chin, Kong and Baby says the ex-Ba Charlie and Dandelion chef is one to watch. "Damian is an exciting young talent with a real love affair for Southeast Asian food," Lucas says. "He has great empathy with the food culture of the various regions that make up that part of the world. He's the perfect candidate." Lucas' group executive chef, Benjamin Cooper, will again be in control. "The building is a beautiful turn-of-the-century horse stable with gorgeous original brick walls and the original roof trusses ... (it) looks very much like a traditional hawker market you would find in Singapore or KL, so that part was easy." Due to open July.

As you read, Australian chef Martin Benn, with his wife and business partner Vicki Wild, are busy re-creating Sepia ... in Manhattan. As the result of an invitation from Franco-American chef Eric Ripert, of three Michelin star New York restaurant Le Bernardin, Benn, Wild and a core team from the acclaimed Sydney restaurant will reproduce the Sepia experience for an audience of the city's most powerful food media, including *The New York Times*, on Friday morning our time. Ripert visited Sepia last year with his film crew — part of the lavish *Invite the World to Dinner* campaign by Tourism Australia — and was so impressed he asked the pair to do a lunch for NYC media. "He said, 'I think they ought to know about you,'" Wild says. Come Friday, they certainly will.

Melbourne chef-restaurateur Geoff Lindsay, of Dandelion, and his wife Jane will be the next Australians to plant a flag in the Seminyak (Bali) soil. The couple have spent a lot of time in Bali during the past two years and know the territory well. Dandelion Seminyak will be in the former Mantra site opposite the W Hotel in Jalan Petitenget, and will be a joint venture with Australian businessman in Bali Aki Kotzamichalis, one of the founding partners behind the institutional beach bar-restaurant complex Ku De Ta. Dandelion will be designed by another Aussie with a swag of Bali experience, Alex Zabotto-Bentley (AZB Design), who did Petitenget. For Lindsay, it marks a shift towards semi-permanent residence on the island, where he and Jane already live most of the year. Lindsay will be "on the pans", as he put it. **Ennis Le**, Lindsay's head chef at Dandelion Elwood of the past four years, continues in the role.

A very short season for chef Daniel Southern, who joined South Melbourne's Coppersmith for its launch in July last year, only to bail at Christmas. Southern has gone to coffee roasters Allpress, in Collingwood, with a view to ramping up the food at the impressive roastery-cafe and then doing similar tweaking at other Allpress sites locally and abroad. At Coppersmith, the sous chef, **Mark Wong**, has been promoted.

Melbourne's Noir, in Richmond, fresh from a smart refit in January, is launching a dessert and cocktail bar upstairs. Noir Bar will be a showcase for the talents of pastry chef Jerome Soubeyrand, who comes to Richmond from the London kitchens of Heston Blumenthal (Dinner), **Daniel Boulud** (Bar Boulud at the Mandarin Oriental) and **Helene Darroze** at The Connaught.

LIFE

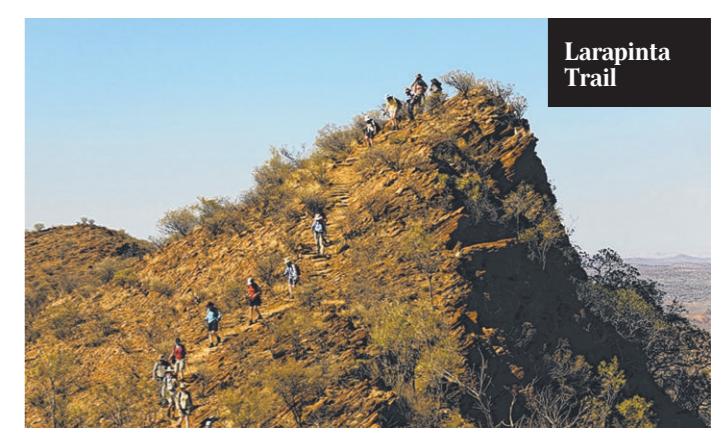


TOMORROW
Autumn racing: As the temperature drops, the fashion heats up

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TRAVEL



PETER WALTON



RICHARD FIELD



GREAT WALKS OF AUSTRALIA

HIKING GETS HIP

These enticing guided walks combine creatures — and creature comforts — in some of the nation's wildest places

HELEN ANDERSON

Everyone who walks the Larapinta Trail through the Northern Territory's West MacDonnell Ranges, one of the world's premier desert walking routes, has their magic moment: the unexpected drama of the 80m-deep Standley Chasm, perhaps; the delicious shock of plunging into an icy waterhole after a hot day's hiking; or a glowing palette that inspired Albert Namatjira.

For Chris Buykx it's an unscripted moment when, walking high on a ridge flanking one of the trail's gorges, he's at eye level with a vast flock of budgerigars careening past, screeching at full volume. "The mass of swirling colour, the noise is stunning," recalls the domestic general manager of trekking company World Expeditions, who has helped to develop its Larapinta walks across two decades. "You can forget the budgie doesn't come in a cage — it's a desert bird and the flock sizes these past couple of seasons have been staggering."

For Dana Ronan, the magic moment on her four-day Twelve Apostles Lodge Walk in Victoria is when the track drops to pristine Johanna Beach, 2km of surf beach flanked by cliffs and the Southern Ocean and close to her eco lodge.

"We've been operating the walk for 10 years and I still find it hard to believe a beach like this is essentially our backyard," she says.

These walks are among a small but growing number of multi-day guided walking trips redefining the Australian bushwalk. Treading lightly across extraordinary landscapes, including South Aus-

tralia's Flinders Ranges and Tasmania's Cradle Mountain, these walks involve physical challenge but none of the discomfort of DIY camping.

Instead, distinctive eco-sensitive lodgings and good food and wine are hallmarks. They're designed primarily for people who identify as non-bushwalkers; for those who fancy some walking during their holiday rather than the other way around. And with well-trained guides, the focus is squarely on the journey rather than the destination.

Adventure tourism has grown exponentially in the past five years across the globe, so three years ago

Distinctive eco-sensitive lodgings and good food and wine are hallmarks

a handful of guided-walk operators formed Great Walks of Australia to raise the nation's profile as a unique walking destination.

So, too, demand for the eight experiences showcased in Great Walks of Australia has grown, says Ronan. The travellers on her Twelve Apostles Lodge Walk are getting younger and are keen to "collect" experiences from the Great Walks master list, she notes. They increasingly are interested in "guilt-free" short breaks focused on the power and simplicity of nature, exercise, local produce and sustainable environmental man-

agement. "We make it easy for people to immerse themselves in remarkable, wild places," she says.

Walkers can be so moved by their experience that they "shed a tear or burst into spontaneous laughter", says Heath Garratt, general manager of the Tasmanian Walking Company, operator of the Bay of Fires Lodge Walk and Cradle Mountain Huts Walk.

On Arkaba Walk in South Australia's Flinders Ranges, just 10 walkers get to enjoy the isolation of Arkaba Station's 24,000ha. It has the twin effect of "reconnecting us with the land and our better selves", says Charles Carlow, chief executive of operator Wild Bush Luxury.

A sheep farm since 1851, Arkaba Station is now a private wildlife conservancy. Five years of sustained feral-species eradication and habitat rehabilitation has yielded exciting results, says Carlow. Among the newcomers are at least 10 new bird species, including regular nocturnal sightings of the Australian owllet nightjar.

For many the walks are transformative, says Buykx.

"Waking up with the birds, the meditative effect of putting one foot in front of the other, moving slowly through a place, being well fed and enjoying the company of like-minded souls under big skies — these things free the mind and body to be open to the land, and that's when the country starts working its magic."

LARAPINTA TRAIL BY WORLD EXPEDITIONS

The six-day "classic" version of this Northern Territory walk remains World Expeditions' most popular trek. New this season is the opening next month of the company's third stylish and low-impact campsite, this one at the base of Mount Sonder, at the western end of the 223km Larapinta Trail. From \$295 a person, worldexpeditions.com.

ARKABA WALK BY SPICERS

South Australia's dramatic Flinders Ranges is the hallmark of this four-day walk. To meet demand there will be twice-weekly departures from mid-March to mid-October. From \$250 a person, arkabawalk.com.

Magic moment: Waking up at dawn in a deluxe swag on day three to watch the colours as the sun creeps down the Elder Range.

TWELVE APOSTLES LODGE WALK

This 55km, four-day walk traverses two Victorian national parks and spectacular coastline, culminating in the Twelve Apostles viewed by helicopter. Walkers relax each night with foot spas at Johanna Beach. From \$195 a person, twelveapostleslodge.com.au.

MARIA ISLAND WALK

Up to 10 walkers arrive by boat via Mercury Passage for a meditative four-day exploration of Tasmania's pristine Maria Island, staying in two beach-bush camps and a final night at the restored convict settlement of Darlington. From \$250 a person, mariashandwalk.com.au.

BAY OF FIRES LODGE WALK

Highlights of this easy four-day, 33km coastal walk in northeast Tasmania are the airy timber and glass eco lodge and its spa. From \$2250 a person, bayoffires.com.au.

Magic moment: Splashing around in the Bay of Fires after a day's walk, with surfing dolphins for company.

CRADLE MOUNTAIN HUTS WALK

This six-day, 60km guided walk is the most comfortable way to walk Tasmania's famed Overland Track. Walkers stay in the only private huts on the track, with luxuries such as hot showers and drying rooms. From \$3050 a person, cradlehuts.com.au.

Magic moment: The satisfaction of reaching the summit of Mount Ossa, Tasmania's highest peak, after walking for four days.

FREYCINET EXPERIENCE WALK

Up to 10 walkers on this four-day walk in the treasure trove of Tasmania's Freycinet Peninsula are based in Friendly Beaches Lodge, known for its fine collection of art. From \$2150 a person, freycinet.com.au.

Magic moment: Scrambling over the granite boulders to the summit of Mount Graham for the breathtaking view over the Hazards range and Wineglass Bay.

SCENIC RIM TRAIL BY SPICERS

This latest inclusion in Great Walks of Australia is a four-day 33km hike run by Spicers

Retreats in the rugged and remote Scenic Rim in southeast Queensland. Two nights are spent in Spicers Canopy, a luxe private camp with safari-style tents and a stylish main lodge; the final night is at Spicers Peak Lodge. From \$1899 a person, scenicrimtrail.com.

AND COMING UP:

THREE CAPE TRACK

The highest sea cliffs in the southern hemisphere will be among the highlights of this dramatic coastal walk, due to open in November, on Tasmania's Tasman Peninsula, 90 minutes' drive from Hobart. Walkers will depart by boat from Fortescue Bay, taking in Cape Raoul, Cape Pillar and Cape Hauy.

THE CURIOUS CASE OF BENJAMIN BUTTON

He says that at the Cannes film festival in May, during a fashion event, L'Oreal plans to quickly create make-up profiles of models on the runway and beam them to the Makeup Genius app. Users will have the model's make-up choices on their faces in minutes.

Emery says Priceline Pharmacy will be the first local retail outlet to have L'Oreal's barcode scanning, which will create virtual mock-ups of cosmetic products on a customer's face in store.

The app is available through Apple's App store and Google Play.

L'Oreal leads the way with make-up app

Cosmetics giant's marketing tool tipped for 500,000 downloads

CHRIS GRIFFITH



TRENDS

It's instant make-up time. There's no need to try on that lipstick or eyeshadow; your smartphone and tablet can deck you out with a range of wild new cosmetic looks — virtually.

Consider these scenarios. You're in a shop, scan a lipstick barcode on a cosmetic product, and suddenly you see your face reflected on your phone sporting the lipstick. Or, watching a fashion show, you are alerted to a file downloaded to your smartphone and, moments later, your face has the exact make-up look as the model you were watching.

Once the stuff of fantasy, from today it becomes reality, part of the experience make-up giant L'Oreal Paris offers via its Makeup Genius app, launching here today.

Of course this is great PR hype for L'Oreal. The app is a digital marketing tool with the potential to push thousands of L'Oreal products to customers. But it's

clever nonetheless. The download loads to date speak for themselves.

In France, China and the US, the app so far has been downloaded 10 million times. L'Oreal expects to double that globally by year's end. Christophe Emery, head of digital, L'Oreal Australia, says the company predicts 500,000 downloads in Australia this year — a fair slab of the population.

L'Oreal won't stop there. It is investigating creating an Apple Watch app, preliminary talks are underway.

Emery says L'Oreal wants to make use of sensors on the underside of the watch to analyse the conditions of a wearer's skin and offer advice on the best skincare product for that day.

The Watch app would glean weather conditions and temperature before making recommendations.

A customer could scan a

L'Oreal product barcode in a store, see a mock-up of the cosmetic on their face, and follow through with watch-based payment. Sample sticks of lipstick could become a thing of the past.

L'Oreal has a New Jersey-based IT section developing these ideas known as its "digital beauty incubator". Created 30 years ago, it employs about 30 people, mainly scientists.

An earlier L'Oreal Paris app, the Colour Genius, would recommend nail polish, lipstick and eyeshadow to match an outfit you snapped with your smartphone camera.

L'Oreal's incubator also placed intelligent vending machines in New York subway stations that sized you up as you approached, assessed your colour scheme and recommended a matching nail polish colour.

The Makeup Genius app is the company's third entrée into

modern consumer technology. You start by taking a photo of your face. L'Oreal says the app analyses 64 data points of your appearance.

Once you register your face, you can access up to 4500 L'Oreal products available in Australia and try them on virtually: lipstick, powders, mascara, eyeliner and more. Makeup Genius then mirrors your face with the cosmetic applied in real time.

Alternatively, you can select from about 20 complete looks that use a combination of L'Oreal products. Once selected, an iPhone, iPad or Android device turns into a mirror that shows you with the chosen look applied, in real time.

It's not just a still image. Customers can change their facial expression and test out new looks at various angles and under different lighting conditions.

If you're game, you can take a snap of the new you, even video,

