

THIS PAGE Whether catching up on emails over breakfast or slinging back a piccolo, The Lobby Bar at Ace Hotel is a cool hangout. If I didn't have such a long list of places to visit, I could happily have worked from here all day. It's pretty good people-watching too — from digital nomads to the DJs that had played the night before, Ace Hotel attracts a creative crowd.



SYDNEY SIDE

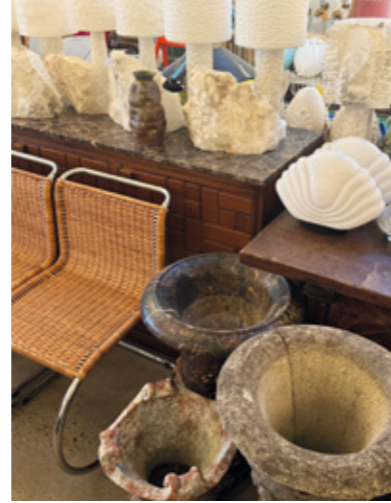
Lace up your sneakers and wander out on a walking safari of design, art, good eating and iconic architecture.

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Alice Lines

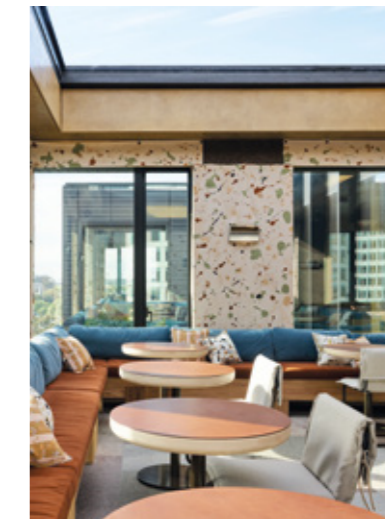
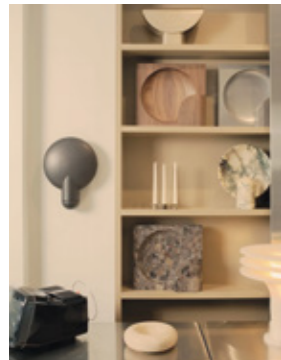
It's been a while since I dusted off my passport — pre-pandemic in fact. So when the opportunity arose to head to Sydney for a whirlwind trip recently, I jumped at the chance. Sydney is known for its iconic landmarks — its opera house, stunning coastline, the insta-favourite Bondi ocean pool... Don't get me wrong, all of the above are right up my alley, but on this trip I was seeking something else from my visit across the ditch: I'd been hanging out for some design inspiration. Now, I can appreciate that not everyone enjoys travelling alone, but there's certainly something to be said for waking up and heading wherever the day takes you, at your own pace. In my case, it involved 20,000 steps through the inner-city suburbs to soak up as much interior, art and design detail as daylight hours allowed.

Staying at Ace Hotel in Surry Hills, I was perfectly positioned to explore what could be considered Sydney's design hubs on foot, with a little public transport thrown in. Drawing inspiration from the site's legacy as one of Australia's first ceramic kilns, Flack Studio has created an earthy, textural haven throughout the Ace Hotel, punctuated with thought-provoking pieces by local artists.

Even if you're not a guest, make a booking at Kiln rooftop restaurant for a unique perspective over the city and some flavour-packed dishes. Heading up there for sunset and a dégustation dinner was the perfect way to spend an evening catching up with an old friend. I've always admired Fiona Lynch's interiors, and what she has created for this space is welcoming and unique. >



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Scoping out the surrounding Surry Hills area was first on my list, with plenty of spots to pop into as I crisscrossed along Crown St: Hay for a Scandi fix, Provider Store for Japanese sensibilities, Above the Clouds if you're serious about sneakers, Hunter Candles for the sensory experience (the blue gum + lemon myrtle + wattle is giving bushwalk). Popping over to Bourke St to visit The DEA Store was well worth the extra steps; their curation of ceramics of all shapes and sizes was awe-inspiring.

By now, I was ready for refreshments and found them at Ito, a neighbourhood izakaya where the chef means business. I'm not usually one to rave about the carbs from a Japanese restaurant, but the shio kombu bread with garlic seaweed butter was all kinds of delicious! With all

that window shopping, Copybara Bathroom was a welcome retreat and, after 90 minutes of bathing, I was ready to call it a day and slink back to the Ace.

Day two started with a view and a queue at AP House. Their baked goods come recommended by all who visit and, once you've scored yourself a perch, catching some morning vitamin D at this rooftop locale feels very L.A. Paddington was next on my list, and right along Oxford St there are plenty of places to pop into: Jordan (an Australian furniture icon in its own right), the InBed store for luxe linen, and Hands with its fun range of quirky, cool, cute design goods. Then on to William St, where you could pop into any one of the boutique stores that occupy the old terrace houses here to discover something wonderful. Special

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP

LEFT InBed's Paddington store, where their linen range is complemented by handcrafted homewares. Overflowing with antique curios, furniture and lighting, the Tamsin Johnson showroom is a must for unique interior finds. Jordan has a room-by-room curation of their furniture where you can get up close and personal with all their upholstery options. There's a lovely range of homewares, too. AP House's strawberries and ricotta on toast — summer on a plate! Studio Henry Wilson is the new kid on the block in Paddington, and the space is as chic as his design pieces.

Photography: Terence Chin (top left), Dina Grinberg (above left), Phillip Huynh (opposite top), Jessie Prince (opposite left), Anson Smart (opposite middle).

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP

YSG are interiors gurus and Superfreak cafe in Marrickville, which they designed, is stylish and comforting at the same time — great for a modern Aussie brunch. The team at DEA Store curate an artistic collection of ceramics with a focus on local and Japanese artisans. There's revolving exhibits to check out, too. Kiln Rooftop at Ace Hotel where, among other custom sustainable details, the wallcoverings are hand-painted with ink splatters. Studio Gardner is a treasure trove of designer finds carefully selected by creative couple Joseph Gardner and Aaron Wong.

mention to Puddle Duck toy shop where I picked up a couple of trinkets for my son Ted. I also loved Lucy Folk as much for the fashion as for the fit-out designed by Tamsin Johnson, who fortuitously has a showroom just around the corner stacked to the gunwales with vintage treasures. 10 William St and Fred's are both winners for dinners, or aperitifs in this case. Revived for one last must-do, I headed for Rushcutters Bay to seek out Studio Gardner and was glad I didn't miss it. The edit of objects, art and artefacts here is impeccable.

Tossing up between the city and Bondi to round out my adventures, I realised I might be pushing it for time to head out to the beach (with an international flight to catch home that evening!), so it was a treat to discover Magritte had just

opened at the Art Gallery of NSW. There's always something special about seeing a great artist's works up close and personal. Heading next door to the freshly minted Sydney Modern Project — a new gallery building — was even more impressive. The collection pays special homage to Aboriginal artists, and the work has a strong spiritual presence in the space. Not one to miss the icons, I couldn't resist rounding out the morning with a walk through the country's oldest botanic gardens and around to the opera house, where throngs of tourists basked in the Australian sunshine. As I sat on the steps with a gelato, I felt that, while there was plenty more on offer in Sydney, dipping in for a design escape was the perfect mini-break. 🍷