



19 JAN, 2020

## SMART ART

Sun Herald, Sydney

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# SMART ART

## THE PLACE

A new addition to Melbourne's seemingly unending stable of funky accommodation, Zagame's House is a renovation worthy of a TV show. Hotelier brothers Victor and Robert Zagame splurged \$18 million to transfer the former motor inn on the site into a clever and colourful 97-room boutique hotel and, despite its insalubrious previous iteration as the Downtowner on Lygon, a few locals still refer to it by that name.

## THE LOCATION

Residing at the southern end of cosmopolitan Lygon Street – Melbourne's Little Italy – there is no shortage of ristoranti, trattorias, cafes and pizza joints nearby. Cappuccino and cannoli, grappa and gelato, limoncello and linguini, negroni and Nonna food. You could spend a week just drinking, eating and shopping your way through this homage to La Bella Italia.

## THE SPACE

The outlook from the interior car park still looks like a motel. But that's where the resemblance ends. The reception area is warm and welcoming with fires, plush lounges and a coffee bar. This is also where the Zagame's House art attack begins, a theme that continues throughout. Bright, colourful artworks, murals and installations by Karl Gordon, Ryan Foote, Rosie Wood and Robert's partner Lulu Zagame (who also designed the staff uniforms) vivify the digs.

## THE ROOM

Zagame's House offers four room options. Clever notes fill my sound-proofed 30 square metre Corner Room, including a Bluetooth sound system, coffee maker,

unlimited Wi-Fi, Cowshed toiletries and pop up USB and power points. Behind a huge sliding door off the bedroom is a double shower and double vanity with variable-

lighting and de-misting mirrors. But the highlight is the mini bar, which offers a cocktail-making kit, top-end spirits and a choice of no fewer than 18 bottles of wine.

## THE FOOD

Lord Lygon Wine Shop is a serious spot for a drink, with an extensive wine list. A limited menu provides diverse options, from share plates including a "toastie of the day" (think meatballs, Brie and/or truffle), plus duck sang choy bau and popcorn chicken to a choice of three mains – wet lamb with spätzle and gremolata, chermoula John

Dory and wagyu sirloin with trimmings. There's also a fine selection of cheeses and salumi. With LL-monogrammed plates, exposed pipes, heavily remixed music and a pumpkin tart for dessert, Lord Lygon is fabulously and archetypically Melbourne.

1851 Coffee Kitchen, named for the year Carlton was founded, is the a-la-carte breakfast and coffee venue.

## STEPPING OUT

Start with coffee at the hard-to-find-but-well-worth-the-effort Vertue Coffee Roasters and drop into Brunetti, Lygon's iconic Roman Pasticceria for a pastry and top-up espresso. For fine-dining lunch and dinner, make a reservation at Carlton Wine Room or Agostino, or just take pot luck and do the Lygon Street shuffle. Chances are, even if you wander into a less than five-star tratt, you'll still have a fun feast.

Alternatively, take the 20-minute stroll – or even shorter tram ride – into the CBD for a taste of the nation's finest theatres, shopping, sport, museums and galleries.

## THE VERDICT

Hospitable and sustainable, arty and smart, great location and glam accommodation.

## ESSENTIALS

House Rooms from \$158 a night; Corner



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Rooms from \$218 a night. See [zagameshouse.com.au](http://zagameshouse.com.au)

*Mal Chenu was a guest of Zagame's House.*

### OUR RATING OUT OF FIVE



✿ HIGHLIGHT GORGEOUS ROOMS AND A GLORIOUS BAR. ✿

✿ LOWLIGHT FOR A DESPERATE FOOTY FAN, NO FOXTEL WAS A HOWLER. ✿



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