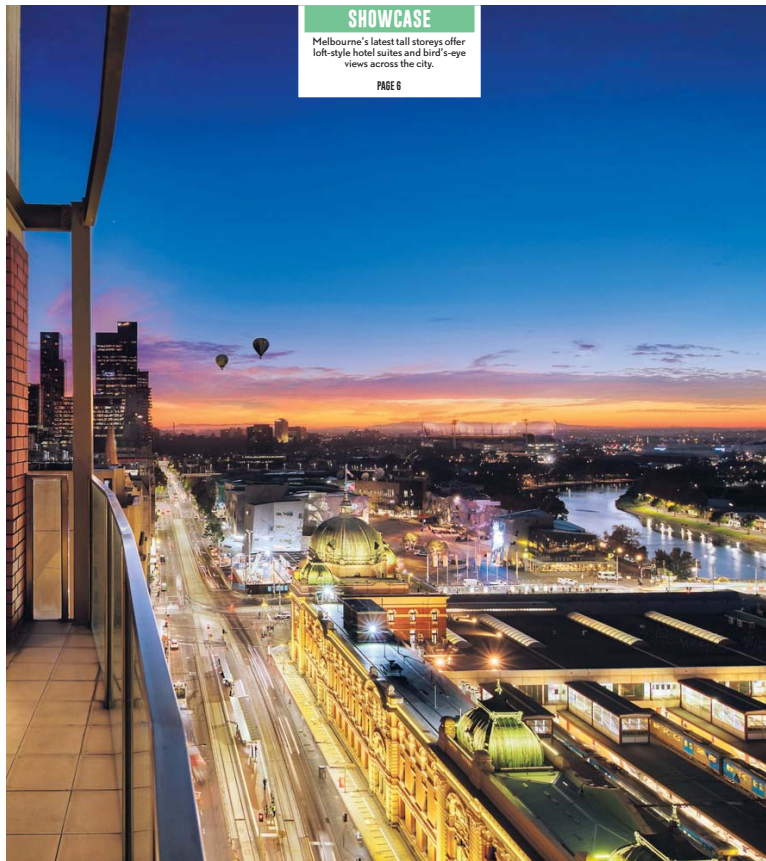




TAKE-OFF

YOUR SUNDAY TRAVEL DOSSIER | EDITED BY BELINDA JACKSON



SHOWCASE

Melbourne's latest tall storeys offer loft-style hotel suites and bird's-eye views across the city.

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STAYING POWER

If you've recently been lost in Melbourne, it may be because you didn't recognise that new hotel which has popped up seemingly overnight. The city is enjoying a burst of mid-range openings and resurrections, starting with the DoubleTree by Hilton on Flinders Street, which has taken an egalitarian turn and scrapped its top-floor penthouse to now share the bird's-eye views between seven new hotel rooms.

Set on Level 14, the floor includes three loft-style suites as well as a king room and another suite with balconies, all with quintessentially Melbourne views down over Federation Square or historic Flinders Street station, which even lent inspiration to the rooms' colour schemes.

Meanwhile, Carlton's Lygon Street sees the old Downtowner Hotel given an

\$18 million sprinkle of fairy dust and feng shui to become Zagame's House, named after the owners, who have held this property for 16 years. The 97 rooms have an inner-city palette of charcoal with splashes of red, the mood lifted by halls of larger-than-life art (and a late-night toastie menu).

Zagame's has gone all-Melbourne, employing local artists and designers, while on the F&B front, expect bottled cocktails by Fitzroy's Everleigh Bottling Co and a heavy dose of Victorian produce in its adjoining wine bar, Lord Lygon, headed up by chef Chris Bonello, of Vue de Monde fame.

And bookings are now open for rival Westin's new Elements brand, the first in Australia when it opens later this month. Adding 168 rooms to Melbourne's hotel stock, it's also on the city fringe, just off

Richmond's happening Swan Street, with a 24-hour gym and hotel bikes, and an eco-focus that includes its self-described extensive recycling program.

DoubleTree by Hilton's Level 14 rooms cost \$260-\$520 a night, see doubletree3.hilton.com. Zagame's House has an opening special of \$190 a night, normally \$240 a night, see zagameshouse.com.au.

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