

SPEND IT

Financial Times Weekend Sept 28-29, 1998



urt hotel

meteoric stars in Sydney's culinary firmament. A winning combination, it means, of French/Japanese cuisines.

Catalina's (tel: 9371 0553) is right on the water at Rose Bay (take a water-cab if you're on the other side of the harbour), with terrific views and gratifyingly trendy food. But it is very social - don't go on a bad hair day - and exposed to me over-priced with rather haughty service. I am told that **The Plo**, close by, and also on the water, has better food, better service and better prices.

Benelong, in the Opera House itself, owned by Gay Wilson, a legendary figure among Sydney's foodies, is one of the restaurants that offers the defining Sydney eating experience, with the bonus of terrific views across the water. She is awfully fond of otaf but there's always plenty else to choose from. Make room for the pudding and have a glass

of De Bortoli (a great Aussie Ban dessert wine) with it. Better for pre-theatre than for lunch.

For a proper business lunch, it would be hard to beat **Kable's** (tel: 9263 0226), in the Regent Hotel in George Street. Impeccable food - I had the best, most tender beef of my life.

The **Bather's Pavilion** (tel: 9868 1194) on Bondi Beach is an unmissable experience. It used to be a bathers' changing room and is now the perfect people watching place - great for Sunday brunch and great for children.

Also good for children and Saturday or Sunday brunch is **The Nielsen Park Kiosk** at Vaucluse, the prettiest beach in Sydney. It closes at 5pm, so it's not so good for dinner.

Watch Sydney's *jeunesse d'été* at play at the **Clubs** at 29 Challis Avenue, Potts Point (tel: 9358 1265), in a converted Victorian terrace house. Politicians, bankers and other heavyweights are regulars at **Mozzalluna** at 123 Victoria Street, Potts Point (tel: 9387 1988).

The **Fish Markets** at Blackwattle are an authentic Sydney experience - give the restaurants there a miss and cook your own (fresh from the water, anything from chunky tuna to Balmain bugs) on the handy barbies. Buy some salad and a bottle of wine and sit in the sun and ponder on why it is that the combination of water and sun makes everything taste so much better.

Doyle's Seafood Restaurant at Watson's Bay is another longstanding Sydney-side favourite - there's little to beat arriving by water-taxi and having simply cooked fish straight from the sea. Doyle's own water-taxi leaves from Commissioners Steps on the western side of Circular Quay on weekday lunchtimes and costs just A\$7 return. If you feel like splashing out, **Hilton's** is on the top floor of the overseas passenger terminal and also specialises in seafood - but of a much grander sort than Doyle's and at much grander prices.

■ **Luca van der Post** travelled as a guest of the *Australian Tourist Commission* and *Qantas*.

■ **Qantas** has return flights to Sydney from £299 per person. The fare includes two free internal flights on selected routes in Australia, as well as stopovers in Bangkok or Singapore in each direction. It is valid until November 30 and from January 21 to March 31 1998. For further information or reservations, call Qantas on 0345-747 767. Qantas and British Airways offer 35 flights a week from the UK and Europe to Australia.

■ For further information on Australia and a copy of the 120-page *Travelers' Guide*, call the *Australian Tourist Commission's* Asiaic Helpline on 0299-561 434.

■ **Best Guide Book** - *Outmost Sydney* by Jacqueline Huk, A\$28. Opinionated and very user-friendly.

■ For converting prices, A\$1 equals £2.23.



Printing from Waringarri Arts Centre in Western Australia

Aboriginal Art

Desert flights to culture

None could go to Australia without taking some interest in the history, art and great creation myths of its first people, the Aborigines.

All sorts of enterprising initiatives have been started to involve Aboriginal communities with tourism and one of the most rewarding, particularly for those who want to buy Aboriginal works of art (sometimes hailed as the last great art movement of the 20th century), are the trips into remote areas organised by **Helen Read of Didgeerri Art Tours**.

A midwife from Bristol who worked for years as a nurse and pilot among the Pintupi people in the Gibson Desert, Read takes small groups of art lovers into the Aboriginal communities she has grown to know well over the years.

... A tour with Read is a unique way of gaining some insight into this ancient art form. You meet the artists themselves and, flying in her small aircraft, see the land to which the Aboriginal people feel so intimately connected.

To buy a work of art from an artist who can talk to you about its meaning, and to see the land from which the work grew, is a very different experience from buying in the grander galleries of the big cities.

With Read we flew to three different centres - the Warman community at Turkey Creek, the Waringarri Arts Centre in Kununurra, both in

Western Australia, and, best of all, to the Jilamara Arts and Crafts

Association on Melville Island, north of Darwin. Soon we began to recognise the different artistic styles and to learn something of their symbolism.

At Warman we saw the bold shapes of Rover Thomas, and Queneo McKenzie's love of pastel pinks and blues - very different from that at Waringarri, where the work is influenced by the Wandjina traditions of the west. On Melville Island, the Tiwi people lived in isolation for thousands of years and their long tradition of body painting has impacted on their modern work.

Each area reveals the diversity of artistic styles, the richness of the different histories, customs and languages. We are reminded how much the blanket term "Aboriginal" hides more than it reveals.

This is an experience not to be missed and the picture bought from one of these centres retains a meaning and importance unmatched by one bought anonymously from a gallery.

■ **Didgeerri Art Tours**, PO Box 108, Povey, Northern Territory, Australia. Tel/fax: (089) 828 5055. Four people on a six day, five night tour would cost A\$3,500 per person, including all flying and catering. Read goes to Arnhem Land and Kimberley as well as to the Western Desert.

L.v.d.P.