

GOURMET TRAVELLER

Best of the best

Insider tips, food trends, chefs to watch, hot restaurants... it's back!

US luscious pears, juicy beef, cool Indian and heart-warming bread recipes

PREMIUM ECONOMY
Is this the new business class?



Pear and chocolate fudge tartlets

B AUST \$8.50
traveller.com.au NZ \$8.95
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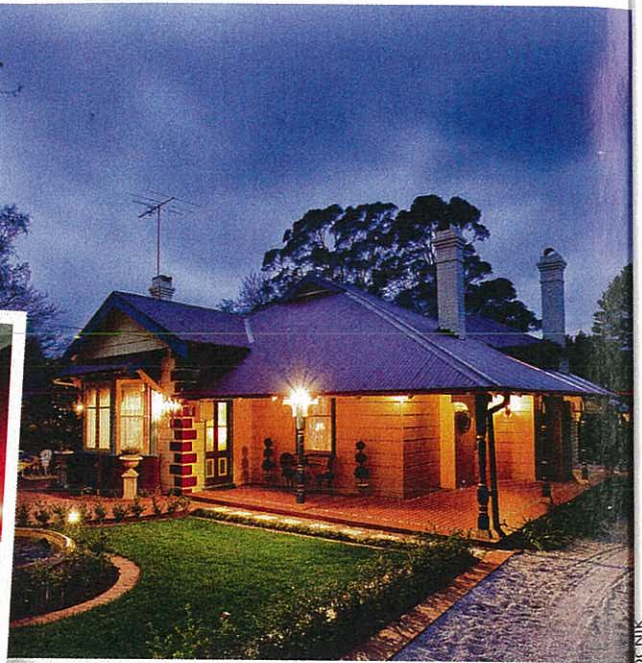
PACK YOUR BAGS
TUNISIA TO QATAR: WHERE TO TRAVEL NEXT
Sexy stopovers and breathtaking beaches
WORLD'S BEST NEW HOTELS

HIGH-ALTITUDE HAVEN

An elegant Blue Mountains escape of one's own.

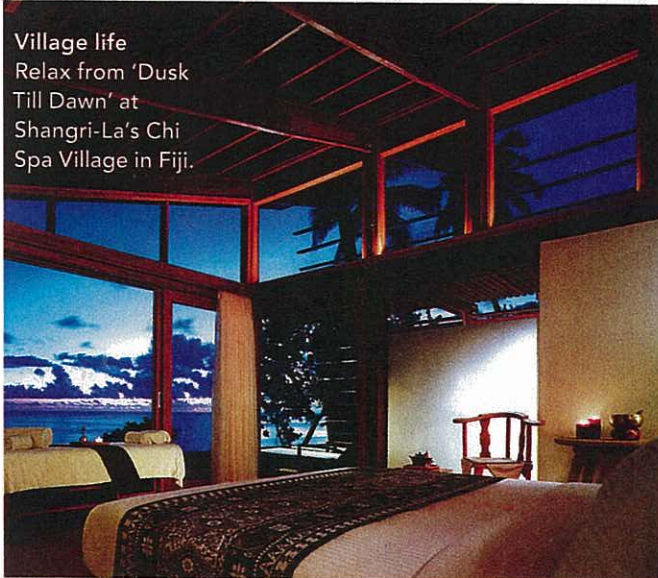
LEURA The words 'old-world charm' can strike fear into the hearts of even the most robust traveller, so it's a nice surprise to find a restored gem that doesn't make one feel like they're lost in nanna's craft room. The newly opened Varena in the Blue Mountains is a Victorian residence brought back to its former glory and now operating as an elegant European-style luxury guesthouse. Fully self-contained, it has three bedrooms but is only let out for one booking per stay – so if there's just two of you, you get the run of the house, which includes kitchen, living area, outdoor barbecue area and more. A lovely touch is the complimentary port, wine, chocolates and breakfast provisions left for guests. The only downside is the 10am checkout. Who wants to leave? Prices for one couple (Mon-Thu) \$480 for two nights; weekends \$560 for two nights. www.varena.net.au, 0430 496 755.

Private property Varena offers travellers a B&B feel but without any of the hassles – like other guests.



PORTRAIT BY FRANCES MOCNIK

Village life Relax from 'Dusk Till Dawn' at Shangri-La's Chi Spa Village in Fiji.



ISLAND NIGHTS

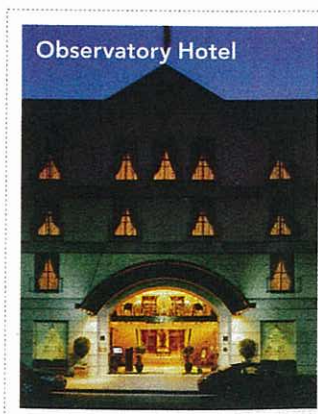
Spoil yourself with a new level of pampering in Fiji.

FIJI The Shangri-La's Fijian resort has a splendid new addition offering the sort of privacy that the big resorts usually can't provide. Tucked away at the northern end of Yanuca Island, the Chi Spa Village consists of six ocean-front bures with outdoor Jacuzzi, sunken bath, garden and butler service, linked to four tranquil treatment bures – a unique 'spa-within-a-spa'. Chi's signature therapies are developed by experts in traditional Chinese medicine and Himalayan healing techniques and include some locally inspired treatments. The Dusk Till Dawn (\$356 single; \$570 couple) experience is sensational – guests are bathed under the stars, scrubbed, massaged and put to bed after a light dinner, then woken at dawn for breakfast and a facial. *Shangri-La's Fijian Resort, Yanuca Island, Sigatoka, Fiji*, +679 652 8363, www.shangri-la.com. LEE TULLOCH

IN BRIEF

PRE-BABY BLISS

Hot demand for 'Baby moons' – a last holiday before two become three – has seen Lillianfels Blue Mountains Resort & Spa and Sydney's Observatory Hotel introduce a Baby moon package. Couples enjoy overnight accommodation, a gift pack with spa products, baby-sized monogrammed bathrobe, a 20 per cent spa discount and snacks from a Crave No More menu. From \$449 per couple. www.orient-express.com, (02) 8248 5220.



THE BEST WORST-KEPT SECRET

Save up to 75 per cent on rooms at four and five-star hotels with lastminute.com.au's excellent Secret Hotels deals. Participating hotels remain anonymous until web bookings are processed, but location, facilities and star ratings are listed – as are the heavily discounted rates for rooms they're trying to sell on a last-minute basis. *Gourmet* nabbed a \$570 room in a Melbourne five-star hotel for a mere \$143. Bargain. www.lastminute.com.au.

WINDSOR GETS A FACELIFT

Melbourne's iconic The Windsor Hotel in Spring Street will get a \$45 million makeover – guest rooms will be modernised; the Cricketer's Bar will make way for a contemporary bar and lounge area, a new restaurant will open in the basement and the lobby and foyer will be dolled up. The two-year renovation is due to begin next month and the Windsor will continue to operate on a limited basis during the renovation. www.thewindsor.com.au