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BRIEF JONAHS

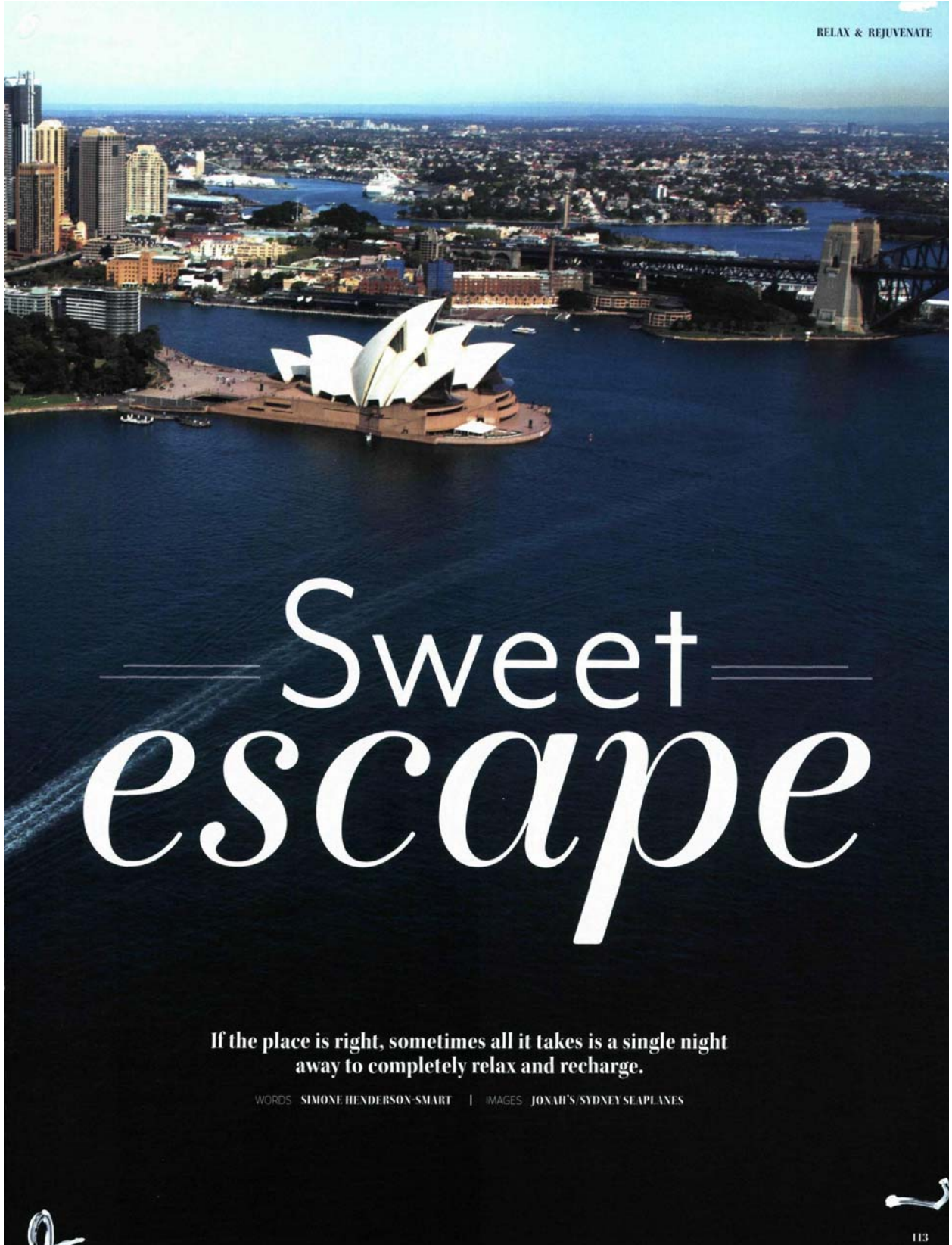
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RELAX & REJUVENATE

Sweet *escape*

**If the place is right, sometimes all it takes is a single night
away to completely relax and recharge.**

WORDS SIMONE HENDERSON-SMART | IMAGES JONAH'S SYDNEY SEAPLANES



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Fast fact
The Rose Bay seaplane terminal is the site of Sydney's original international airport for flying boats.

Sitting in the Empire Lounge, a timber-lined bright and breezy space perched on the edge of Sydney's glittering harbour, with a chilled glass of sparkling wine and a cheese plate on a sunny afternoon, is enough to set any heart aflutter. But my heart is racing, my eyes glued to the horizon, for any minute now a gorgeous circa-1963 seaplane will gracefully glide to a halt a few metres from where I sit and prepare to whisk me up the coast for a short and indulgent escape.

I'm off to Whale Beach, a quick 20-minute, breathtakingly beautiful flight up the coast from Sydney. Leaving what is arguably the world's most stunning departure lounge, I climb up into the plane. It's been impeccably restored, the leather upholstery and timber accents keeping the retro vibe intact. I feel a huge rush of excitement as the propeller starts to spin and we 'taxi' across the water in preparation for take-off.

After a quick buzz over the Sydney Harbour Bridge, we're off, with the pilot naming each golden beach that we pass on our way. It's such an exciting way to see this stunning part of the world, and the seaplanes do an

For busy executives who think they can't afford the time for a holiday, this is the perfect refresh.

incredible 40 flights a day in summer. My flight is extra special though — I've booked a package deal that combines a return Sydney Seaplanes flight to Whale Beach with dinner, bed and breakfast at Jonah's, a luxury boutique hotel that sits high on the cliff looking out across the Tasman Sea.

Sinking into an oversized outdoor lounge on an expansive terrace, breathing in the salty air and sipping on my complimentary welcome glass of Bollinger, it's impossible to believe that I was sitting at my desk in the city only a few hours ago. For busy executives who think they can't afford the time for a holiday, this is the perfect refresh.

The hotel itself is a beautiful and relaxing place to spend some time, the rooms all very generous and each with its own private outdoor terrace from which to soak up the sun and the views and — between May and September — watch the whales swim by. However, for those with a love of exploring, Whale Beach and surrounds have plenty to



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offer, and the wonderful staff at Jonah's are happy to help arrange an adventure. There are many wonderful walks in the area that take in the natural beauty of the bushland and the ocean. The Barrenjoey Lighthouse walk is a fairly easy one-hour round-trip that rewards hikers with enthralling views over Palm Beach, the Central Coast and the South Pacific Ocean. For those who want to get closer to the water, there are whale-watching cruises, kayak tours and a surf school.

Guests at Jonah's can also charter a Beneteau yacht with a private skipper, snorkelling equipment, and a custom-designed day bed for relaxing on deck. It's a perfect way to explore Pittwater's hidden coves and beaches that can only be reached by water. Jonah's will even prepare a picnic hamper and chilled French Champagne so you can make the most of escaping to the secluded beaches. I'm here to de-stress and hit the refresh button, but a staff member admits that they see a lot of marriage proposals at Jonah's. This place is high on romance.

Post-adventure, the restaurant at Jonah's is a lovely place to dine and unwind. With floor-to-ceiling glass windows taking in the view over the crystal-clear azure waters



and the beach below, there's more than a hint of Greek Islands or Amalfi Coast here. The menu, though, is unapologetically Australian. Contemporary, seasonal and with a predictable seafood focus, the food at Jonah's has earned many awards, including a chef's hat from *The Sydney Morning Herald Good Food Guide* for the past nine years. The wine list, too, has received many accolades. It's fine dining, but very relaxed and friendly. Looking around, there are a lot of couples enjoying the intimate space, huddling closer in the candlelight. I wonder if I'll see a proposal? Jonah's has certainly worked its magic on me. ■

For more information, see jonahs.com.au, seaplanes.com.au

Previous page Sydney Seaplanes provides a magnificent view of the Harbour. **Clockwise, from top** Jonah's restaurant views take in the Tasman; While the food has earned its chef's hat, the service is relaxed and friendly; Dishes are fresh and seasonal, with a seafood focus. **Opposite, left to right** The rooms are bright and airy, with generous private terraces; The seafood platter is one of Sydney's best.