



JONAH'S RESTAURANT

BEST SEATS AT THE BEACH

There's a lot to love about the refurbished Jonah's and its clifftop perch

KATHY LIPARI

The finest of food and rooms with a view are still the priority at this iconic location where executive chef Matteo Zamboni now hangs his hat.

PICTURES: JONAH'S



To come the raw prawn in Australia is generally an experience destined to end in tears but on a glorious Sydney summer's day, I am delightfully happy to go with it.

We are at Jonah's at Whale Beach, on the Northern Beaches, looking out to a magnificent ocean view, and executive chef Matteo Zamboni has served us some scarlet prawns – raw. Well, kind of. They're marinated, and they are divine.

Zamboni took over the luxury boutique hotel

and restaurant's kitchen in September after time cooking for the royal family in Qatar and in the driver's seat at several Michelin-star establishments in Milan and Rome.

It's far from Jonah's humble beginnings as a roadhouse offering cake and refreshments for afternoon tea or lamb chops with peas if you were arriving closer to dinner.

Constance Sealy-Vidal and her daughter, Mary, took a leap of faith building Jonah's at Whale Beach after the death of their husband and father, Reverend George Sealy, in the UK in



the 1920s. Fortuitously, joy-riding in your new automobile was gaining popularity at the time, a pastime that favoured the beachside establishment with its spectacular surrounds and tasty treats.

In the past 89 years, Jonah's has witnessed countless weddings, birthdays and special occasions. It has been favoured by celebrities ranging from the legendary Laurence Olivier, U2's Bono, and actors Cate Blanchett and Joan Collins through to Justin Bieber, who sent his legion of female fans (and subsequently Jonah's switchboard) into a frenzy by tweeting his location.

But it is refreshing that while the price of waterside property has changed dramatically – Mrs Sealy-Vidal reportedly bought the land in 1928 for just £750 – the 11-room boutique hotel is still all about fine food and rooms with a view.

After a near hour-long car trip from the CBD, our first opportunity to try the food – after a glass of champagne on the terrace – is a mouth-watering lunch in the dining room. It's only right to eat seafood, so we start with oysters bathed in the Japanese fruit yuzu and watermelon, and one of Zamboni's specialties, Mooloolaba prawns cooked in a bisque and served with buffalo mozzarella and green tomatoes, plus the scarlet prawns the chef has secured from a local supplier that day.

More common in Europe, scarlet prawns are a rare treat in local restaurants.

Zamboni has already introduced some subtle Italian overtones and delicacies into his menu, such as reimagining an Italian classic, pumpkin ravioli with a burnt butter sauce, as a dessert. His burnt butter and sage is white chocolate and sage gelato featuring native plums. With sommelier-chosen matching wines at each course, we are in heaven.

Zamboni has high ambitions for the restaurant, and plans to source even more delicious local produce from an array of smaller suppliers to continue to improve his already hatted establishment.

It's hard to imagine it could get any better.

Whale Beach's wide stretch of gorgeous yellow sand waits downhill from Jonah's, and an ocean swim after lunch is a must.

The 10-minute walk downhill is a more challenging 20-minute climb back, so if you are feeling slightly lazy after an indulgent lunch, it is probably best to drive (if you still can).

Otherwise, Jonah's also offers a car to transport guests. If you prefer to admire the

ocean rather than swim, take in the view from a different vantage point at the nearby Bible Garden (palmbeachbiblegarden.org).

All of Jonah's 11 ocean-view rooms have been recently refurbished. Interiors in a neutral

palette of blues, greys and crisp whites with gold accents create a relaxing, yet subtly luxurious, atmosphere. Furniture and artworks have a chic beach theme and include new Australian handcrafted king-size beds, perfect for a lie-in to listen to the ocean below.

The bathrooms are luxuriously large with spa baths and dual sinks. There is complimentary video on demand and free Wi-Fi.

Balconies face the brilliant blue water but automated blackout curtains helpfully keep the sun out until you are ready to greet the next day. And when you are, a breakfast of fresh pastries, seasonal fruit and spanner crab omelet will be another treat as the sun comes up over the Pacific Ocean.

**THE WRITER WAS A GUEST OF JONAH'S, 69 BYNYA RD,
WHALE BEACH, JONAHS.COM.AU**



Sunday Telegraph (Sydney), Sydney

14 Jan 2018, by Kathy Lipari

Escape, page 39 - 769.00 cm²

Capital City Daily - circulation 378,449 (-----S)

ID 897614059

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