



Sequoia

ADELAIDE

A classic-luxe lodge – and sister property to Mount Lofty House in Adelaide Hills – masterminded by hotelier David Horbelt is set to raise the bar when it comes to South Australian hospitality.

Words: Ianthe Butt • Photography: © Aaron Clitt

Taking ownership of a heritage property can be challenging, particularly when it's as historic as Mount Lofty House and Estate. Since being built in 1852 as Gatsby-esque statesman Arthur Hardy's British-inspired country manor in the Adelaide Hills, it has changed hands and personality often – sometimes a high-society hub, a beloved family home, a commune, other times hit by hardship and left to fall into disrepair. In the 1980s, devastating wildfires burned it to the ground, yet it rose phoenix-like from the ashes when rebuilt by architect Ross Sterling and transformed into a boutique hotel.

Come 2009 and hotelier David Horbelt – along with business partner Malcolm Bean – had a compelling vision for the future, and prior to buying the estate enquired about building new rooms on an escarpment within the grounds. After purchase, Horbelt's first order of business was upping the ante at Mount Lofty House itself, with bedroom renovations and the creation of now three-hatted restaurant Hardy's Verandah,

where Korean chef Jin Choi serves up roasted onion, black baba ganoush and freekeh salads followed by peanut and dulce de leche mousse.

With Mount Lofty House now cemented firmly as one of South Australia's finest hotels, Sequoia, a new ultra-luxe 14-suite sister property, has opened within the estate. Whispers of a six-star classification feel timely, as Adelaide has long been fêted as a destination for discerning food trippers, yet doesn't have much to offer when it comes to boutique accommodation.

A grand Corten steel entry gate and a high dark timber fence skirted by a sandstone wall clearly marcate Sequoia as a distinct offering to Mount Lofty House. Three 170-year-old giant redwoods in the grounds give the property both its name and its spirit: "Sequoias are the planet's tallest trees, they eclipse all others – we aim to do the same with the hotel," says Horbelt. The hotelier has form, with over 30 years' experience in running, owning and refurbishing four- and five-star hotels, but Sequoia is his most luxe project to-date.



The open-plan bedroom and lower-level lounge is oriented towards floor-to-ceiling windows and a cantilevered balcony to ensure the panorama takes centrestage

14 suites are housed in four contemporary Australian Spotted Gum and sandstone buildings, which follow the curve of the valley rim. Basket Range sandstone was selected for its longevity and locality – quarried 10km away – and complements the stone of Mount Lofty House. The flowing, step-down layout of the buildings was designed both to help seat the structures into the hillside, and to capitalise on the bucolic Piccadilly Valley panorama.

Horbelt’s design vision – brought to life with plans by architect David Frazer and built by South Coast Construction – centred around making the most of the olive and chartreuse patchwork of rolling hills, peppered with vineyards and farms. Everything from the placement of suites – positioned to ensure the view only reveals itself once inside for the ultimate ‘wow’ moment – to an open-plan bedroom and lower-level lounge layout oriented towards floor-to-ceiling windows and a cantilevered balcony – ensure the panorama takes centrestage.

The aim within the suites was to create a quiet, private space that would “offer escapism from the real world,” says Horbelt. An of-the-land aesthetic

runs deep, with custom-made Spotted Gum joinery and floorboards, a creamy WA Limestone feature wall and fireplace clad in misshapen sandstone giving the comforting feel of being clasped within the landscape. Warm woods and natural tones are livened up by Stephen Trebilcock’s native flora artwork, which hangs next to a bespoke gum wood platform bed with comfortable A.H. Beard mattress. Honey-coloured cushions mirror the hues in Trebilcock’s depiction of blooming golden wattle, adding an uplifting glow that’s heightened when sunlight streams in through a trio of slender horizontal wall skylights.

Balconies feature onyx-coloured wicker chairs by Mamagreen and bespoke silver-cushioned corner daybeds by Reality Furniture. At night, the lounge’s Real Flame Gas fireplace comes into its own; a cosy spot to sip on a glass of local pinot noir or sparkling water from the property’s spring-fed bore, which is carbonated and bottled on-site.

Soft furnishings were a collaboration with interior designer Georgie Shepherd, and the work of local suppliers and artisans chosen to reinforce Horbelt’s overall homegrown hospitality vision. Aubergine glass