

WINTER TRAVEL SPECIAL

Melbourne

It's the unofficial nightlife capital of the nation – and unashamedly food obsessed. Here's what's hot right now in this bustling metropolis.

TIP
Check out the top places to eat on a budget in *Cheap Eats 2010* (\$24.95, theageshop.com.au)

BY NIGHT

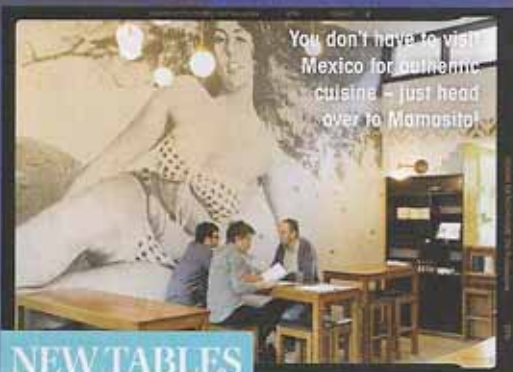
24 MOONS

In the tradition of all great bars, this 'still under the radar' new fave is damn hard to find. Be brave and make your way down grungy ACDC Lane (off Flinders Lane) and you'll be rewarded with the nature-inspired 24 Moons (24moons.com.au). A forest vibe, complete with moonlight and the song of birds and insects, sets the scene for this bar-cum-art space. On any given night you might discover music, a burlesque performance and visual pieces equally as interesting as the cocktail and bar food menu. Open Wednesday to Sunday, this place is only around for 24 months (hence the name) – so don't wait too long to visit!

IZAKAYA DEN

Offer delicious Japanese food and the A-list crowd are instantly wooed! This new bar and restaurant (from the brains behind the popular Verge) is perfect for that late-night sake cocktail or sushi snack. Tucked away in the Postal Hall building (where you have to really seek it out!), this spot is a welcome treat for those looking for

Japan's unique izakaya experience – tapas, meets pub, meets bar. Head along for the specialty beers and edamame, or a top-shelf sake and full dinner – there are no rules.



You don't have to visit Mexico for authentic cuisine – just head over to Mamasita!

NEW TABLES

MOVIDA AQUI/ MOVIDA TERRAZA

If you can't secure a table at the original tapas bar, then this larger venture on Bourke St has 190 seats of tapas dining awaiting you! Far from playing second fiddle to MoVida and MoVida Next Door, Aqui and Terraza offer more exciting dishes like paella and spicy grills. There's still a big demand, but arrive early and you should get in.

MAMASITA

You've got to get in fast when a great new restaurant hits town, or you'll be left waiting for months for a table. Mamasita (mamasita.com.au) has the perfect mix of delicious dishes and the

popularity of being a fresh face on the scene. It serves great Mexican food – but not, you know it. Fresh and original, there's no piled-on cheese and taco concoctions. And the hell-of-a-cool crowd appreciate the long opening hours starting at midday and closing at 2am on weekends.

SLEEP IN

THE OLSEN

As soon as you walk in and are greeted by the six-foot mural *The Yellow Sun and the Yarra*, you know this is a special hotel. The Olsen – named after the famous Aussie artist, John (not a Hollywood twin!) – is the latest \$90 million addition to the Art Series Hotels. Think luxury and style, without any of the tacky bling. There's the glass-bottom swimming pool, sun deck, restaurant (and a Brazilian Churrasco charcoal grill in the works) – plus welcome extras like a gourmet kitchen and huge LCD TV in your room. See artserieshotels.com.au for more.

VIBE SAVOY HOTEL MELBOURNE

Marrying a thoroughly modern interior with a heritage façade, this hotel offers a place to stay just a couple of blocks from the impressive Collins Street shopping strip. You're also situated close to Southbank's great entertainment and the trendy Docklands area – a spot that's lined with waterfront restaurants, shops and exhibitions. ▶

Jennifer Hawkins and Ruby Rose make the most of the city's happening nightlife