

AWAY GAME

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It took less than 48 hours for me to grasp what Sydneysiders mean by the 6am club. I've never been one to rise early on holiday — aren't long lie-ins the purpose of turning on that

OOO? — but there's something about the Northern Beaches suburb of Manly and its weirdly addictive pre-breakfast wellness routine that quickly turned me into That Person Who Sets An Alarm On Holiday.

Mercifully, the sight of the number five on my home screen took surprisingly little time to adjust to, since the reward — sunrise, Sydney's glittering skyline in the distance, depending on which of Manly's eight world-beating beaches you decide to view it from — was worth every single lost second of shut-eye. 'You can send all the extras home now,' I joked to a friend during a morning snorkel, convinced that the 6am crowd of runners, surfers and volleyball players could only be there on commission.

If the reward is good coffee, I suppose you could see it that way. Even nine-to-fivers here like to joke that every day is a Neilson or Body Holiday — though last time I checked, Neilson didn't have infrared saunas or order-to-room Peloton bikes like they do at the Manly Pacific, the go-to hotel for luxury wellness.

The five-star coastal hangout overlooks Manly Beach (think Cali vibes, with fewer skateboarders and more spikeball) and has become a mecca for spa and sports-lovers since its £16m facelift last year. Health shots at breakfast, surf lessons and a rooftop pool spiced with magnesium (it boosts your skin and muscle health, apparently) are on the menu, with yoga mats delivered to your suite and a Mercedes on hand to take you for your red light therapy session.

Sydney's Northern Beaches are naturally swimming with spas and fitness studios, from ice baths at Recoverie to sound healing sessions at Power Living. A-listers who do stop by are low-key and get stuck in. Rugby legend Michael Hooper is a regular and former Spice Girl Mel C recently swung by for a cryotherapy session at Cryo Northern Beaches, run by Londoners-turned Manly-converts Dimple and Ash Naik (and Waffle, their Toy Cavoodle, who likes to sit in on glow facials if you don't mind him seeing you in your fetching ice chamber attire).



EXCUSE THE MANLY-SPLAINING

In Sydney's Northern Beaches, *Katie Strick* finds a new get up and go for an early morning start

Speaking of fetching attire, pack your goggles. The waters off Shelley Beach boast some of the most breathtaking snorkel spots in Sydney, with members of the 7am Bold and Beautiful Swim Squad regularly spotting turtles and dolphins. Eco Treasures is your go-to for guided snorkel safaris, Manly Surf School for surfing and She SUPs is a favourite for its women's-only paddleboarding sessions.

By the end of the week, I felt invigorated. I'd eaten well and drunk my body weight in good coffee (pastries at Rollers Bakehouse are a local religion) — but not in that heavy, gluttonous way it's easy to fall into abroad. There's something about Manly that feels real, like you're doing what the locals do because they all seem happy and, well, well. If this is what the 6am club looks like, I've drunk the Kool-aid.

Two-bed coastal villas with sea view at the Manly Pacific, from £518 (manlypacific.com.au)

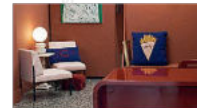
EAST COAST COOL

Your mini-guide to a chic Kent seaside sojourn, by Margate House founder *Will Jenkins*



Where to stay: MARGATE HOUSE

Margate House, nestled beside the sea, offers a tranquil escape with stunning ocean views and Instagram-worthy interiors, ensuring a serene and memorable coastal getaway for guests.



Where to shop: L'ABSURDE OBJECT

An interiors and art gallery, showcasing an edit of contemporary and vintage artworks, homewares and body care. Personalised consultation services in interiors and art curation are available.



Where to eat: HIGH DIVE

Blue walls, green upholstery and terracotta tiles offer an immersive take on iconic international residences. The menu is inspired the by Los Angeles dining scene.



Where to drink: OFF LICENCE

A buzzing bar nestled in Margate's core, boasting stunning ocean panoramas and a vibrant array of colours. The cocktails are obviously great, too.

THE INTEL

People, places and trends happening around the world



SEE JAPAN IN 360 VISION

Standing 108m above the old trading port, Kobe Port Tower's vantage point over Osaka Bay has been shut away since the pandemic for renovations. Now, finally, its spectacular 360-degree views are back for spring.



PICK UP A MEAL IN DEAL

The husband and wife behind The Rose, Chris Hicks and Alex Bagner, are taking flight with Japanese-infused The Blue Pelican in Deal. Expect smoked eel washed down with hot and cold sake and Japanese whisky.



HIMALAYAN HIGHS

Find your serenity at Shakti Himalaya's newest spot, on the highest plateau in India: Thiksey House. High in Ladakh region, and opposite the stunning Stakna Monastery, it's a perfect intimate getaway. *Opens May*