



The rear courtyard of Mollisons showing one of the apartments. **FACING PAGE** Guests can purchase the antique furniture pieces in the rooms.

elegant niche

A VISITOR BOOM IN KYNETON
CONVINCED TWO BUSINESS
PARTNERS THE TOWN WAS READY
FOR A BOUTIQUE HOTEL.

WORDS VIRGINIA IMHOFF
PHOTOGRAPHY JOHN LAURIE





FROM TOP A downstairs apartment is furnished with contemporary pieces; another apartment opens to a sunny verandah; the all-white interiors set off antique pieces.



IT WAS A SPUR OF THE MOMENT purchase when Deborah Myers and Yvonne Paulke acquired an imposing red-brick building in Kyneton five years ago. Initially the business partners, who had been involved in importing ultrasound equipment, thought they would refurbish and rent out the property. But then they decided to think again. Kyneton, an hour's drive north-west of Melbourne in the Macedon Ranges, was changing and the potential intrigued the two Melbourne residents.

"The town was starting to boom... People were coming for the restaurants and wineries, and we thought, 'Not everyone wants to stay in a bed and breakfast,'" Deborah says. "After a year or so we decided to do what the town needed."

The result is six very elegant and luxurious hotel rooms and two ground floor apartments, all under the name of Mollisons. (The town's main street, on which the building stands, takes its name from the district's first settlers, the Mollison brothers, who took up a large pastoral run in 1838.) The boutique hotel features soaring ceilings, airy white interiors and mellow polished timbers, all stylishly fitted out with a mix of antique and contemporary furniture, and carefully selected artworks.

It's a long way from the "rabbit warren" the new owners confronted. Built in 1903 to house the Bank of NSW, the building underwent various incarnations that by the next century had left the interior in poor repair. "It was solid, but a wreck," Deborah says. "It took me a long time to even know where the rooms were."

Although they come from different professional backgrounds — Deborah worked in medical ultrasound and Yvonne in education and textile design — they share a love of architecture, interior design and art. Now those interests had to be developed as owner-builders. They started a massive restoration and refurbishment, which was finally completed a year ago. "We did the top floor first, and patched and repaired," Deborah says. "We've tried to retain as much original character as we could while incorporating modern conveniences."

Having noted the town's new status as a dining destination and the increasing traffic of visitors from Melbourne, the pair made sure to offer a one-night stay option for those who want to stop over after dinner. But whether they stay one night or 10, a place with such style tends to make guests wish they could take it all home with them. Astutely, Yvonne and Deborah have ensured that they can...

Almost any of the antique furnishings can be purchased; the owners simply find replacements. "And we decided to put a shop in downstairs to extend our offering, so when guests see something in the room they like they can buy it, and we can also offer a decorating service," Yvonne says. "Having a concept store was also a way to get to know the people in the town and now they are our best customers."

Apart from the bath products, beds, bed linen and the lamps, they also stock baby wear, fashion items, bath products, contemporary furnishings and unusual antique pieces, including old silver ware. "We find old silver works with old and new furnishings, and really gives a room a lift," Deborah says. "For instance, we love to fill battered silver teapots with succulents."

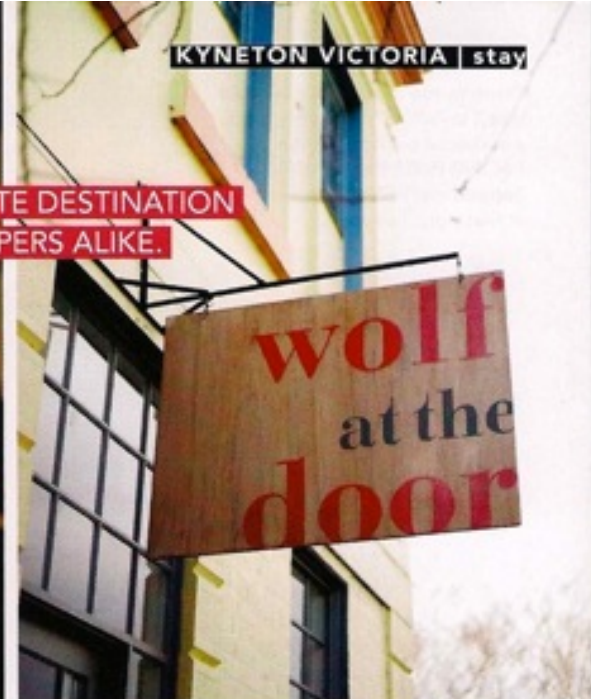
In between scouring auction rooms for artworks and antique pieces for guest rooms, and finding products for the store, Deborah and Yvonne continue to commute from Melbourne to manage Mollisons, making sure that at least one of them is always on site. But discreetly. Guests have complete privacy and can be as independent as they like: "Some people don't even want to see us," Yvonne says with a smile. *
Mollisons Kyneton is at 116-118 Mollison Street, Kyneton, Victoria. 0419 001 518; www.mollisons.net.au

KYNETON IS FAST BECOMING A FAVOURITE DESTINATION
FOR TREE CHANGERS AND DAY TRIPPERS ALIKE.



where to shop, eat & play

Kyneton was settled in the late 1840s and by the 1850s was a coach stop for miners heading north. Today the town (population 6000) is a beautifully preserved and evocative example of colonial and goldrush architecture. Thanks to its location, just an hour's drive or a direct train ride north from Melbourne, Kyneton is fast becoming a favourite destination for tree changers and day trippers alike. The main streets, especially Piper Street, have many lovely Victorian terraces refurbished as smart restaurants and cafés. Meander past the pubs, fashion and decorating boutiques, galleries and antique stores, and it's easy to recognise the town's appeal. In the surrounding countryside there are many small wineries and olive groves that welcome visitors.



ANNIE SMITHERS' BISTROT & PRODUCE

72 Piper Street. (03) 5422 2039.

Annie grows much of the produce for this much loved, award-winning restaurant with a French country flavour. What isn't grown in her kitchen garden usually comes from nearby, fitting with Annie's conviction that fresh and regional is best.

MONSIEUR PIERRE

143 Mollison Street. (03) 5422 1136.

This sweet little providore/café, run by ex-Melbourne chef's Simon and Bec Fenwick, is the place to go for mouth-watering local and European cheeses, charcuterie, take-home meals and picnic supplies, or just to sit on the side verandah with a great coffee and the paper.

MRCARSISI

37 Piper Street. (03) 5422 6739.

This modern Turkish restaurant and bar, run by chef Matthew Fegan and his wife Clare, was recently awarded Best New Regional Restaurant in the 2012 *Age Good Food Guide*.

PRUNELLA

68 Piper Street. (03) 5410 8835.

One of the most stunning flower shops you'll ever see is located on Piper Street. Inside it's a bower of distinctive and unusual floral arrangements mixed with rustic, garden-themed wares.

STOCKROOM

98 Piper Street. (03) 5422 3215.

The exciting and diverse mix of works by Australian artists and designers ranges from jewellery and ceramics to homewares, furniture and fashion, all displayed among vintage and industrial furniture. Vintage wares from Wolf At The Door is a featured collection.



CLOCKWISE, FROM TOP LEFT
A table of ceramics in Stockroom; Wolf At
The Door's vintage wares are a Stockroom
standout; tempting morsels at Monsieur
Pierre; smart shopfronts on Piper Street.