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DEBUT

Mornington Magic

Expect to be transformed when you
check in to the new hotel on
Victoria's Mornington Peninsula.

BY LINDY ALEXANDER

A bold dining
plate at
Jackalope.

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THE ANCIENT ART OF ALCHEMY IS alive and well at Jackalope, from the vines laden with grapes waiting to be turned into chardonnay to the hotel's namesake: a seven-meter-tall Jackalope (a mythical creature that is half jackrabbit and half antelope) overlooking the entrance piazza.

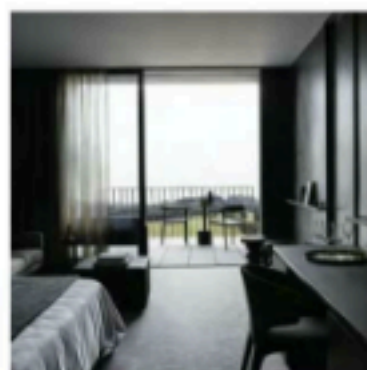
Framed by two coastlines, Jackalope sits on 11 hectares in the heart of the Mornington Peninsula's wine region. The striking black modern building is in stark contrast to its surrounds where undulating grape vines stretch to the forest beyond. The hotel is a passion project for 29-year-old Melbourne-based entrepreneur, Louis Li, who stumbled upon a small statue of a Jackalope while traveling in Germany knew this was the inspiration he needed for his hotel.

Originally from southern China, Li's family develops property and luxury hotels. After moving to Melbourne to study filmmaking, Li wanted to build a fanciful hotel on the site of working winery Willow Creek. "With a growing awareness of the connection between the elements of a luxury hotel and of my developing passions—art, design, dining and storytelling—I set about to merge the family hotel gene with my passions and artistic creativities," he says. "Design-wise, the bold, surreal and contemporary form of Jackalope is not something you would expect to see in a rural setting. That ties in with our desire



to present a luxury offering, but in a form you might not expect or have experienced before." Li plans to open a second Jackalope in Melbourne, with Shanghai and Los Angeles on the radar.

The theme of alchemy continues as you check in, wine glass in hand, surrounded by large glass vessels reflecting the light, as if potions were dancing inside. The gilded chairs, the bespoke furniture and quartz busts in the reception area all speak to Li's sense of theater.



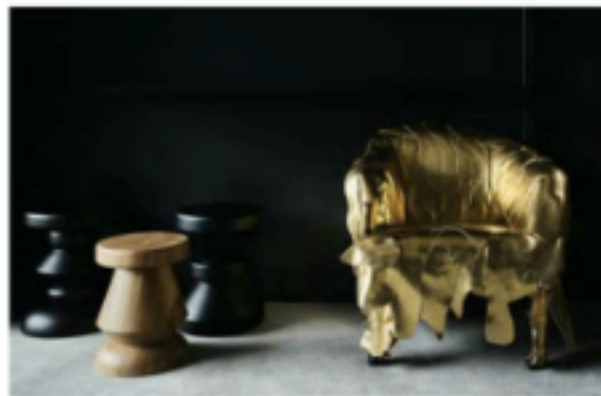
But narratives of food and winemaking are never far away. It'll be hard to resist the urge to press your nose to the prominent glass cube that houses 1,000 bottles, but it's the ceiling installation in fine dining restaurant Doot Doot Doot that really takes your breath away. Made from 10,000 light bulbs, it emulates the bubbles of the fermentation in winemaking.

Like any good cinematic experience, you get the feeling that all this is the swelling crescendo to the moment when you open the door to your room. If you've gone all out, you'll be in the biggest room of the 46 available—the 85-square-meter Lair with its enormous terrace, indoor/outdoor fireplace and views to the black stone infinity pool, giving the impression of water lapping at the vines. Inside, everything is both beautiful and thoughtful, from the hand-crafted furniture to the Hunter Lab toiletries.

After a soak in your deep stone tub, you'll wonder if there is any magic you can possibly conjure up to extend your stay at Jackalope. 🍷

jackalopehotels.com; doubles from A\$650.

FROM TOP: Panorama view of the sleek hotel; rooms look out to the vineyard; a gilded chair; Japanese stone tub with Hunter Lab toiletries.



COURTESY OF JACKALOPE (N)