



## Kyneton in Victoria is a lesson in quippy charm

By Carrie Hutchinson  
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*In this classic country town, a single street is full of surprises.*

It has the hallmarks of a country town Chinese restaurant. There are red vinyl chairs, retro tables and, of course, lanterns. But [Fook Shing](#) is also more refined. The waiters' station is a long antique dresser and a portrait of the Chinese detective after whom the eatery is named greets guests on their arrival.



📍 Kyneton Springs Motel. Picture: Visit Victoria

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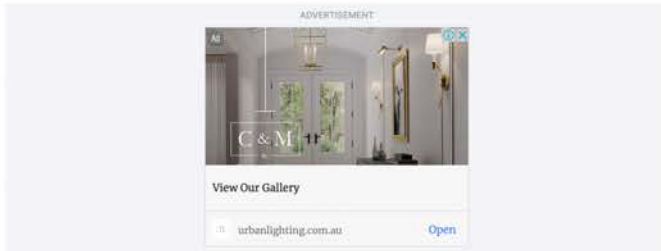
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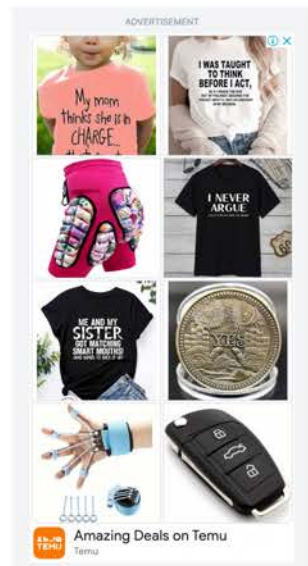
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But it's the food that keeps people coming back to the former Alexander Temperance Hotel. Prawns and pomelo with a pleasing tingle of chilli are piled high on betel leaves. A wobbly egg custard is topped with blue swimmer crab for a lip-smackingly sweet-salty dish. Sour-spicy eggplant and tamarind relish is a great foil for sweet, sticky pork belly. On a Friday lunchtime, the tables are filled with visitors, local businesspeople and families.

Fook Shing is just one of many attractions drawing travellers to Kyneton. Once at the heart of Victoria's goldfields, it was never a goldmining town itself. Instead, it was a major Cobb & Co outpost. One of the company's largest coaches, the Leviathan, pulled by 22 horses and carrying 75 passengers, ran



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covered, the remaining part of the house was built by the original owner, and between Kyneton and Castlemaine.



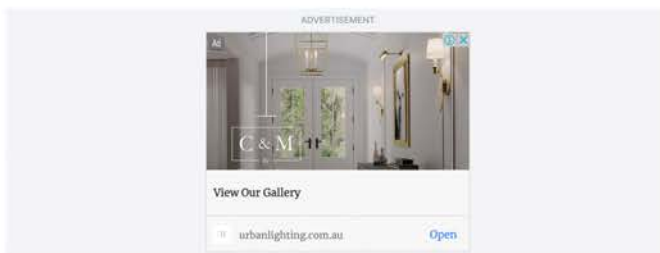
Fook Shing.

These days, the evidence of the town's history is best seen along Piper Street, where grand old buildings have been transformed into restaurants, boutiques and galleries. One of the town's first pubs, the Royal George, is now owned by local hospitality royalty Melissa Macfarlane and Frank Moylan. They moved to Kyneton in 2006, transforming the Royal George into a successful gastropub before handing it over to new leaseholders. In 2019, they got a call telling them they needed to take it back. "We reopened it as a more casual place," says Macfarlane, "but then COVID happened."

She'd been running a furniture store and decided, instead, to put the stock - a mix of her minimalist designs, vintage pieces and covetable homewares and accessories - into each of the rooms and rebrand the Royal George as [Kabinet](#). The result is a series of intimate spaces that invite exploration. Upstairs at this modern-day emporium, delve into two of Melissa's passions: avant-garde fragrance and herbal liqueurs and wines like vermouth and amaro. "There are bottle shops and distilleries everywhere," she says. "I wanted to do something different."



Marye O'Brien at Malaveda.



You can sample just about anything on the shelves, but there's also cosy [Botanik](#) at the end of the room serving cocktails like the Red Pony, a fusion of horseradish-infused vodka, La Cerba Vermouth, tomato and lemon. Take a seat in a velvet armchair, up at the bar or out on the plant-filled veranda.

After an aperitif at Botanik, stroll across the road to [Miss M's Lounge](#), where another dynamic hospo duo, Mike and Heather Allen, serve tapas, wines and cocktails. There's a buzz of conversation in the room, where Mike oversees the bar, burning cinnamon sticks for his signature Baton Rouge, with spiced rum, cognac, spiced pear syrup and fresh lime. From the kitchen, Heather's team runs dishes like tuna tartare with cucumber and jalapeno on a sourdough crumpet and creamy croquetas.

Satisfied and sleepy, mosey back towards the pink neon sign of one of the town's newer attractions, [Kyneton Springs Motel](#). Catherine Foote bought the motel in 2014 and a few years later decided to create an homage to road trips. "There are neon signs everywhere, half are in the original colors, some with

There are now 20 rooms in total, half are in the original wing, some with vintage formica benchtops, vanity units and side tables, with the other half a new build. Each of these rooms has the same layout but is individualised with wallpaper and artwork. There's a nod to Route 66, but there are also luxe details, like premium bathroom products and super-comfy beds. "It's still unashamedly a motel," says Catherine. "People sit outside the rooms and have a beer and a chat."



📷 A Botanik cocktail.

By summer, the onsite bar should be in full swing. Still, you can order breakfast on a ticket handed in to reception and have it delivered to your room the next morning through the old-school hatch.

Choose an early time and go for a walk along the river or through the botanic gardens before making your arrival at [Maiaveda](#), an intimate ayurvedic day spa. An hour in the hands of owner Marye O'Brien will have you feeling supremely relaxed and ready to take on the rest of the day.

There's still plenty to do. Stroll around [Stockroom](#), a huge art gallery showing work from local, national and international artists in the old 1850s butter factory. Drop by [Animus Distillery](#), where you can do a guided gin tasting. There's the bold and spicy Macedon Dry Gin, the Ambrosian Gin, inspired by a trip to Bangkok, and the Arboretum Gin, a herbaceous gem, made with botanicals like strawberry gum and bush tomato. If wine is more your style, [Musk Lane](#) has a cellar door, tucked away on Turner's Lane. If the day is fine, find a spot in the sun for a glass of Moscato Giallo.

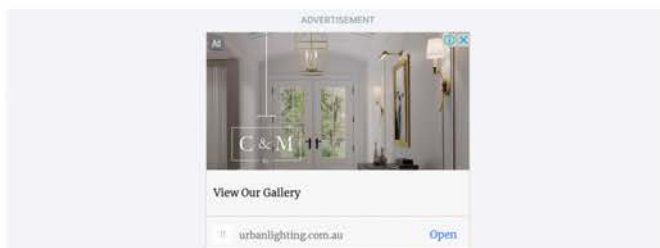
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Before you head home, treat yourself one last time. For a decade, Steve Rogers, who worked with Jacques Reymond in Melbourne and at Michelin-star eateries like Restaurant Pierre Gagnaire, has created Gallic magic at [Midnight Starling](#). Over a relaxed three-course lunch, you can dine on the sumptuous seasonal menu. It's not really what you'd expect in a country town, but then Kyneton is a country town like no other.

## TRIP NOTES

Getting there: Kyneton is just over an hour's drive northwest of Melbourne. It's also on the V/Line Bendigo line from Southern Cross. See [vline.com.au](#)



Staying there: Take a step back at Kyneton Springs Motel, where you'll feel as though you've stepped into Palm Springs via the Gold Coast. King rooms start at about \$150 a night. See [kynetonspringsmotel.com](#)

Explore more: [visitmacedonranges.com](http://visitmacedonranges.com)

*The writer travelled with the assistance of Daylesford Macedon Tourism.*

*Pictures: Visit Victoria; Tara Pearce*



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