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ISSUE



New spins on
the classic Spritz

Rock-star appeal

Dune-top dining, drinking and dipping are on the menu at the new Longitude 131° in the Red Centre, writes HELEN ANDERSON.



Longitude 131°'s new two-bedroom Dune Pavilion has dress-circle views of Uluru.



AT A GLANCE

Longitude 131° has 15 guest tents (from \$1,400 per person per night, twin share) and a new two-bedroom pavilion (from \$2,400). This includes all meals, drinks and signature experiences. longitude131.com.au

“I will cross Australia or perish in the attempt,” declared Robert O’Hara Burke. The boast he made before leading his transcontinental expedition in 1860 hangs among other Burke and Wills memorabilia on a wall of my tent at Longitude 131°, a reminder to be careful what you wish for (Burke ended up achieving both pledges) and

of the singular characters and remarkable stories forged in central Australia.

One of these is about Longitude 131°, the luxury outback camp with dress-circle views of Uluru and Kata Tjuta. Opened in 2002 and devastated by bushfire the following year, it was rebuilt and then reborn when luxe-lodge operators James and Hayley Baillie

Clockwise from top: the new bar in The Dune House; inside the Dune Pavilion; aerial view of the Dune Top outdoor bar and pool; Adelaide designer Jon Goulder’s Settler’s Chair; the deck and plunge pool at the Dune Pavilion.

PHOTOGRAPHY JULIAN KINGMA

took on a 30-year operating lease in November 2013. They’ve invested around \$11 million in the lodge since then, including \$8 million in the latest redesign revealed in August. Almost all elements of the lodge, apart from the awe-inspiring views of the rock-star formations themselves, have been restyled and upgraded since the Baillies arrived. “The destination has really come of age,” says James, “and we wanted Longitude to set a new standard of world-class experiential luxury.”

The project was undertaken with architect Max Pritchard, also responsible for Baillie Lodges’ Southern Ocean Lodge on Kangaroo Island. His work includes the wide balconies fitted to guest tents in 2015, each with an EcoSmart “campfire” and double daybed laid with a luxe swag for nights under the stars.

A new high-walled entrance delivers guests to the central Dune House for their first full-frontal view of Uluru after winding past collections of ceramics and paintings by Indigenous artists, commissioned by Hayley in tandem with art centres in the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Lands. A new bar features 500 tiles hand-painted in spinifex patterns by artists from the Ernabella community, and a new two-room spa, its design inspired by a wiltja, a traditional Indigenous shelter, features spears handcrafted by Ernabella men and birds woven from spinifex by the Tjanpi Weavers.

The swimming pool has been reimagined as a “contemporary billabong”, with self-serve bar and an awning that spritzes daybed dwellers with a cooling mist in summer. The outdoor dining

experience, called Table 131°, has been restyled around a central campfire. And The Dune Top, the highest point on the property, has been remodelled with decks, a circular plunge pool, a quartzite-topped bar (“I love a help-yourself outdoor bar,” says James) and four private dining alcoves.

The height of outback luxe is the new Dune Pavilion, a two-bedroom suite wrapped around a deck with daybeds, EcoSmart campfires and a circular plunge pool, reminiscent of an outback homestead water tank. Inside there’s custom-designed furniture and Australian blackwood joinery, a drinks cabinet tailored to guest tastes, striking works by artists from the Tjala Arts Centre, and deep tubs with views. Bedroom allocation will be tricky: one faces Uluru, the other Kata Tjuta. ●