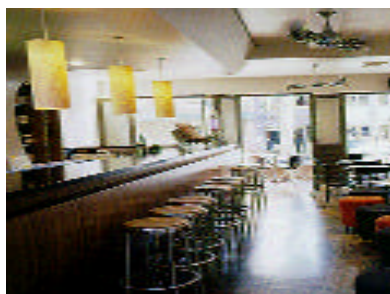


*chips with everything*

It's bad news for stamp collectors everywhere (visa, not postage) as the Malaysian government introduces electronic passports. If you, like us, were disappointed on entering Australia to find that the traditional marsupial stamp is now extinct and has been replaced by something that exists only electronically, then this latest modernization will leave you cold. The new passports will have a built-in identity chip that stores the holder's fingerprints, photograph and vital stats/ While we're all for the streamlining of global travel, using a swipe card just doesn't do it for us. More importantly, why conceal vital statistics on a microchip? These are the very details that help us jump the queue at passport control. LH

Closer to home, gypsy mystics are seeing great things in their crystal balls- BAA is planning to recruit, palm-readers to screen incoming passengers. But maybe they should consult Wallpaper instead of tea leaves next time. This autumn, Heathrow is scheduled to test out a card system in conjunction with a monitor that reads palm-prints. The Fastgate system, developed by IBM, will ease the ever-rising flow of passengers and toughen things up for forgers. It is already in use in Bermuda and can be adapted for fingerprint and voice recognition. Gattaca here we come. EP

*aussie rules*



Liago is the latest buzz-word in Mediterranean food with a contemporary Australian twist. Specialities range from gnocchi with nut-brown lemon butter to chargrilled beef, and choosing desserts is a guaranteed challenge. It's tasty, unfussy food accompanied by a wine list which specializes in the New World- all at very affordable prices. Whether you're drinking or eating, it'll be a funky affair, surrounded by fish tanks and lava lamps. In fact, it's full-on 70's throwback- with the exception of the no-smoking policy in the restaurant before 10pm. HP

*caffeine capsule*



Just when you thought Sydney's Victoria Street couldn't possible cope with another cafe, the people behind Parmalat have opened Bernard's. Bright and boxy, they serve the best croissants we've ever had in Sydney and every caffeine-charged concoction you could ever want. Swing by the Fire Station newsagent around the corner to stock up on the latest mags before you pull up a table out front. JM

*mexrated*



Mexico used to conjure up images of sombreros, tequilas and cheap silver jewellery. Only the privileged had friends with beach-front properties complemented by infinity pools and 20-a-side banquette lounges. Not any more. Like the Far East, Mexico is rapidly being developed into a land of luxury resorts, and choosing between beach or jungle isn't always necessary, especially with the introduction of the Bel-Air El Tamarindo on the Pacific coast. Fourteen villas have been designed for ultimate privacy, inclusive of pools and jacuzzi's. Set amongst 2,000 acres of ecological reserve as well as ten miles of private coastline divided into three beaches, there really isn't a lot left to wish for, but just in case you feel like getting active, there's a tennis club and an eighteen-hole world-class championship golf course. HP