



# A MOVEABLE FEAST



Hop aboard a historic Melbourne tram and experience the city as you've never seen it before. Cassy Polimeni steps back in time on the Colonial Tramcar Restaurant

**A**s dusk descends on the city, dozens of well-dressed folk assemble under the burgundy arches at Stop 125 on Normanby Road, the designated starting point for an evening aboard the Colonial Tramcar Restaurant.

Waiters clad in white shirts and black vests check our names against the guest list and assign us to carriage number six where we take our seats for a moveable feast.

Guests are seated in booths of two or four, and each table is laid with enough silver cutlery to see us through five courses. A plate of crackers, chicken liver and cognac pate and roasted red capsicum dip is waiting for us. Our maître'd welcomes us aboard and introduces the wait staff and talented mobile chef Eddie, before filling our glasses with Lone Fig sparkling wine, all the better to wash down our appetiser with.

Our mobile restaurant begins its gentle rocking journey down Clarendon Street to a soundtrack of jazz standards by the likes of Sinatra. Each tram has been fitted with stabilisers to ensure smooth travels. As we sip sparkling wine, nibble crackers smeared in pate and watch the city slide by outside our window, my partner remarks, "Everything tastes better here!"

ABOVE: Inside the Colonial Tramcar Restaurant.

TEXT: CASSY POLIMENI / IMAGES: THE COLONIAL TRAMCAR RESTAURANT AND DREAMSTIME



ABOVE: Couples dining aboard; outside the Colonial Tramcar Restaurant.



The food is indeed delicious. No sooner has our appetiser been cleared away, and our glasses topped up with our choice of local shiraz or sauvignon blanc, than it is time for the entrée – grilled barramundi with chilli-lime sambal, or kangaroo marinated in lemon myrtle and honey served with a sweet potato frittata – followed by a main course of grilled chicken breast with cranberry stuffing or eye fillet with potato rosti and seasonal vegetables. We opt for one of each of everything to maximise taste sensations.

The tramcar interior is luxurious, with carpeted floors, imitation gold leaf ceilings, divinely comfortable seats with quilted burgundy velvet backs and brass lanterns illuminating each table. We watch the changing city views through windows framed with fringed burgundy curtains. Outside looms a modern city of lights, but inside we're ensconced in old world charm – it's the perfect setting to imagine another, earlier Melbourne.

Melbourne's first cable tram trawled the streets of Richmond in 1885 and now rests at The Melbourne Museum in Nicholson Street, Carlton, after a record 55 years of service. It was operated by the Melbourne Tramway and Omnibus Company. Electric trams replaced cable cars in 1955 and today Melbourne is home to one of the world's largest tram networks, with over 500 trams making their way across 250 kilometres of tracks through the city and suburbs.

However, none of them compare to The

Colonial Tramcar Restaurant. Used to trekking through the city at street level, being trapped in traffic or rushing by on a packed public tram, dinner on board the tramcar gives us a unique perspective. It's as if we're seeing the city for the first time.

And what a city. We pass Queen Victoria Market, cruise along St Kilda's Esplanade with the sea glimmering behind it and the face of Luna Park leering through the window. In between the fourth course (a cheese platter with crackers, quince paste and fruit loaf) and dessert (a choice of sticky date pudding or Italian panna cotta) we disembark at Albert Park to stretch our legs and have our photo taken under the lightbulb-framed sign sported by our stately restaurant on wheels. On the final leg of our journey we sip tea, coffee and Frangelico.

We travel from the city to the bay and back several times over five courses before being deposited safely back at our starting point just after 11.30pm. If we hurry, we can hop aboard a more run of the mill public tram and be home by midnight. But our bellies are full, the summer air is balmy and it feels as if we're only just getting reacquainted with this fair city. So we walk. **DV**

**Breakfast, lunch, early or late dinner and morning and high tea options are available. For more information or to book, contact (03) 9695 4000 or visit [www.tramrestaurant.com.au](http://www.tramrestaurant.com.au)**