

Huski, Falls Creek

S KI weekends in Victoria need never again mean shared bathrooms, retro carpet and all-you-can-eat buffet. Falls Creek came of age with the opening of the ski-in, ski-out Huski Apartments last year.

THE ROOM

A mere 14 apartments that range from simple studios to a three-bedroom penthouse make up the complex.

The lodge is a combined effort between the boutique design company Zacamoco and Elenberg Fraser architects.

It is inspired by the shape of a snowflake. All rooms have sweeping views of the valley at Falls Creek and are a mere "schuss-schuss" away from the first run of the day.

Some of the apartments have spa tubs on the balcony. All are light and spacious with clean lines complemented by cowhide throw-rugs and chocolate black or cream leather sofas. There's also under-floor heating.

There's a funky galley kitchen in stainless steel and luxury linen bedding for comfy sleep-ins.



THE FOOD

Head downstairs to the Produce Store and the hospitality of Melbourne gourmet lad Zeth Romanis. It's the perfect meeting point for a pre-run hot drink or post-ski day vino. Swap stories at the communal table or nestle in a corner with a loved one. Either way, don't go past the hot chocolate.

THE FUN

In a word? Snow. Falls Creek is a very pretty ski village.

Cars are not allowed in during winter, meaning a pure winter wonderland not tainted by tyres, grease and petrol. Book into the Endota Day Spa for a soothing rub using indigenous alpine herbs or roast marshmallows over the terrace fire pit.

THE COST

Starting from \$530 for two nights in a studio apartment during low winter season up to \$1260 for two nights during peak winter season.

THE CONTACT

Huski Apartments, 3 Sitzmark St, Falls Creek. Ph: 1300 652 260, www.huski.com.au

Rachael Oakes-Ash



In Egypt Anne Chalfant finds splendid sights, many smiles — and honesty

▲ **Welcoming city:** in the streets of Cairo, people thank tourists for coming.

► **You buy?** Cairo's Khan al-Khalili bazaar dates to medieval times.

► **Look smart:** in Cairo's chaotic traffic, pedestrians have to play chicken.

Pictures: LONELY PLANET

T HE lure of Egypt has been there since we started learning about the land of the Pharaohs in primary school.

Seeing the Great Pyramids, the Sphinx and the mummified pharaohs in the Egyptian Museum has as big an impact as any teacher ever suggested.

What our teachers never could have anticipated, though, was the enthusiastic welcome we had from the Egyptians.

"Thank you for coming to Egypt," people said, walking up to us on the street.

There were so few Westerners there, it surprised me.

Now, with the conflict between Lebanon and Israel, people in shops told us they feared tourism would contract even more as travellers wrongly tended to associate Egypt with its tumultuous neighbours.

The Egyptian people do not deserve this. With their eager welcomes, hospi-



Hearts of gold

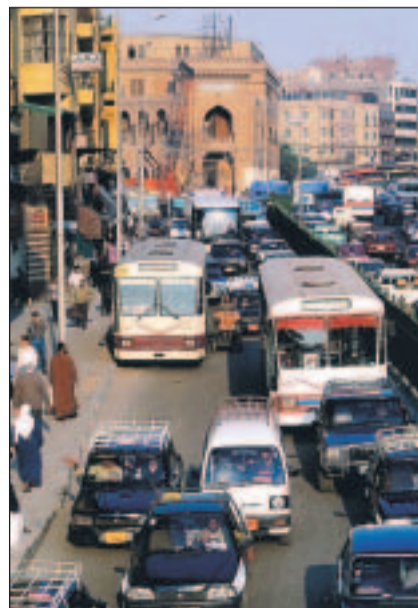
tality and mastery of the English language, travellers have a sense of being protected.

I felt nervous only in the wildly unchannelled Cairo traffic, where pedestrian crossings are a rarity, making street-crossing a game of chicken.

One afternoon my husband and I went to Khan al-Khalili, a bazaar dating to medieval times.

Shops there sell silks, spices, antiques, papyrus paintings and hand-crafted gold and silver jewellery.

I was going for the gold. Many small shops sell lovely stuff, but you have to run the gauntlet of salesmen trying to pull you into their stores.



When we did go into one jewellery shop, we found the owner watching a broadcast of Israeli attacks on Lebanon.

This man's English was good and he expressed fear that Egypt would be deeply affected by this conflict.

After discussing the Middle East, we looked at some gold necklaces.

They were stunning but out of my price range, so we thanked him and left.

Farther down passageways, at another jeweller's, I looked at some necklaces, then asked to use the toilet. They had one and it was very clean.

Some vendors directed us through a shortcut — right, left, right, down a dark stairway — to the mosque on the square.

It was beautiful and I reached in my purse for the digital camera to shoot some photos. But, no camera.

I dug and dug into the depths of my purse — but no. My husband and I had that sinking feeling — we would never see that camera again.

I insisted we make our way back through the maze and visit the two jewellery shops where I had tried on necklaces.

Back we went, vendors greeting us with: "Ah, you are back — now would you like to see my beautiful scarves?"

"I'm in a very bad mood. I've lost my camera," I said.

Instantly, the sales pitches stopped. The shopkeepers redirected us to the two jewellery shops in which I had tried on necklaces, and what I thought to be

the most probable places I had set the camera down.

We stopped where we had watched televised war, but the shop owner said I had not left my camera there. I believed him.

Then as we stepped into the other shop, the old man who had shown me to the toilet greeted us with a huge grin.

He tapped his chest, pointed to me, and tapped his chest again — grinning and grinning.

"You have my camera!" I exclaimed.

I NDEED they did. The owner stepped from the back room and handed it to me. I had left it on the shelf in the washroom.

We told him how helpful the other vendors had been. He shrugged.

"We are an association in Khan al-Khalili. If someone does something wrong — cheating customers, stealing — they lose their place here."

The same families have owned these shops for hundreds of years, handing them down to the next generation.

Of course I did the right thing. I tried on necklaces until I found a beautiful but simple 18-carat gold choker. The jeweller served us tea and we chatted as it was being prepared.

When we emerged by the mosque again, it was dusk. The dome seemed to be floating in the air, and the sonorous call to prayer bordered on the ethereal.

My photo didn't do Egypt justice.

MCT