



TAKE MY ADVICE

The most discussed word-of-mouth topic in Australia, according to recent Roy Morgan Research, is eating out at restaurants, with the second being buying a car.

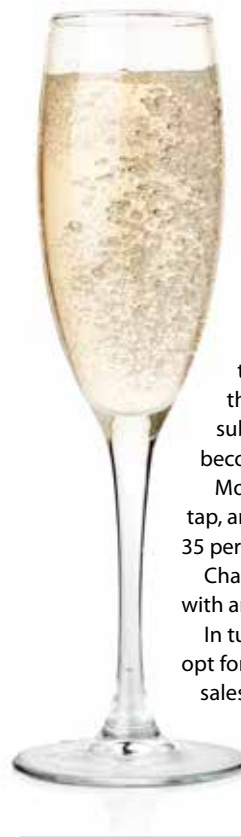
Your guide to regional travel

WE'RE LOVING THESE pocket-sized guides on all things regional Australian travel. After noticing a gap in the market the creative team behind Whileaway Guides set to work writing and designing these sweet booklets to share their knowledge on Aussie travel. Beautifully presented and featuring detailed, hand-drawn maps, quirky facts, events and plenty of insiders' knowledge, don't explore Oz without them! Also available is the Whileaway Journal, a hardcover coffee table-style book in which to collect your guides, photos and other bits and pieces from your travels. www.whileawayguides.com.au



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The weight in kilograms of the largest naturally occurring pearl to be found in the world. The huge pearl was found in a clam in the Philippines in 1934.



More 'pagne, less grain

BEER HAS LONG been the staple of Australian pubs and clubs. Throughout 2011, however, there has been a noticeable shift away from this type of drink, particularly towards two substitutes. The two drinks that have noticeably become more popular are cider and champagne.

More pubs are making the move to put cider on tap, and figures show that cider sales have increased 35 per cent in the past year.

Champagne has also witnessed surging sales, with an increase of 25 per cent from 2009.

In turn, as it becomes increasingly popular to opt for sweeter, fancier drinks, grain-based beer sales are dropping.

Perhaps it's time to sit back and relax with one of the many cider varieties or a glass of champers!

In the spotlight

SCATTERED ALONG AUSTRALIA'S coastline, lighthouses are iconic landmarks that each hold a story of their own – from the lighthouse keepers to the windswept coastlines, they have long held a fascination with the Australian public. ABC Local Radio has released free audio and visual tours, called Shine a Light, on some of Australia's lighthouses so you can discover their hidden stories. www.abc.net.au/local/lighthouses





The art of Play

LOOK AT THE world with a smile when you visit the National Gallery of Australia's **PLAY** exhibition. Designed for people who love happiness and laughter, the collection will display painting, photography, prints and sculpture from the National Gallery's collection. This exhibition celebrates finding joy in our work, playfulness in art and happiness in the everyday.

Showing in Canberra from February 4 to June 24, the exhibition is free.

Don't worry, be appy

EXPLORE AUSTRALIA LIKE a local. This new app from Tourism Australia lets you explore Australia with more than 3,500 photos created by Australians all over the country. Use your phone to

get ideas and samples of what your travel experiences could be like. It's free, it's beautiful and it's easy to use.

Search 'Nothing Like Australia' in the iTunes App Store or Android Market.



Quiz

1. Which is New Zealand's highest mountain?
2. In which ocean did *Titanic* sink?
3. Which city will host the 2016 Olympic Games?
4. The city of Perth sits on which river?
5. The Big Pineapple is located in which Australian state?
6. Which is the largest planet in our solar system?
7. Which is Australia's longest river?

ANSWERS
1. MOUNT COOK 2. ATLANTIC 3. RIO DE JANEIRO 4. THE SWAN RIVER
5. QUEENSLAND 6. JUPITER
7. THE MURRAY RIVER.

Q&A

Meet David Pratt, manager of BEST WESTERN Southgate, Mount Gambier, South Australia.

How long have you worked in the hotel industry?

Ten years.

How do you like to unwind when you're not working?

By taking a holiday.

What's been the strangest request from a guest?

I once had a guest demanding sea views, when in fact we are 30 kilometres from the coast!

What's the most rewarding aspect of your job?

The most rewarding part of my work is providing a quality

experience for our guests and being recognised for that.

Where do you love travelling to most and why?

Noosa on the Sunshine Coast as it's a perfect place to take in the sunshine, totally relax and enjoy awesome restaurants. Melbourne too as it's great for quality restaurants, shopping and the mighty Collingwood Football Club.

What are your tips for visitors to Mount Gambier?

My must-sees for Mount

Gambier include the Blue Lake, the Umpherston Sinkhole, the Main Corner project and various caves nearby. Also, we're close to the amazing Coonawarra wine region.



Choose your reward



GOLF CLUBS, COFFEE machines and perfume are some of the fantastic redemption items available for you when you register for Best Western Rewards, the global loyalty program that truly gives. You can also cash in for free nights at any Best Western hotel worldwide.

To enrol and earn points each time you stay, please go to: www.bestwestern.com.au/go/bwrewards.



QLD Cooly Rocks On June 1–11, 2012

Rock along to this 1950s and 60s nostalgia festival. There'll be 11 days of fun, including rock 'n' roll and swing performances and 200 market stalls, with the Grand Finale rocking eight stages.
www.coolyrockson.com

VIC

Mornington Peninsula 54-hole Tournament May 1–3, 2012

The Mornington Peninsula hosts its third annual tournament with spectacular views over the Bass Strait and the adjoining National Golf Club.
www.golfmorningtonpeninsula.com.au

WA Margaret River Wine Festival (WA) April 13–16, 2012

Sip and sup on some of the finest wine and produce in Australia. The festival aims to showcase Margaret River wines and the rich culture of food, arts and crafts of the region.
www.margaretriverfestival.com



IMAGE COURTESY OF MARGARET RIVER WINE INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION

ACT Canberra and Region Heritage Festival April 14–29, 2012

The theme for this annual festival is innovation. As Canberra approaches 100 years since its inception, the region's history is just as important as where it's going. More than 100 events will be held around Canberra to celebrate the nation's capital and its history.
www.events.act.gov.au



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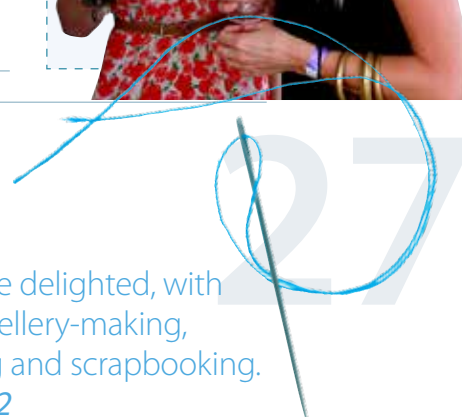
SA Tasting Australia Festival Adelaide, April 26 – May 3

The topics at this biennial festival are diverse, stretching from food, wine and beer, to travel and lifestyle. Pick up tips from celebrity chefs, taste delectable food from SA's finest eateries or take a relaxing break and sip fine drops with a view of the River Torrens.
www.tasting-australia.com.au



TAS Craft and Quilt Fair April 27–29, 2012

Enthusiasts and beginners alike will be delighted, with workshops and displays covering jewellery-making, quilting, embroidery, crochet, knitting and scrapbooking.
www.craftfair.com.au/Tasmania2012



NT BASSIN THE GRASS May 26, 2012

The Darwin Amphitheatre hosts local talent and big acts (2011 featured Sneaky Sound System) at the NT's music event of the year.
www.bassinthegrass.com.au



NSW Sydney Film Festival June 8–19, 2012

Every year, this festival brings the best new films from more than 40 countries to Sydney silver screens. With diverse formats, including short films, Australian films and restored historical titles, plus free talks and forums, there's something for everyone.
www.sff.org.au

25 NZ Made in New Zealand, Wellington May 25, 2012

A celebration of New Zealand's most talented composers, musicians and artists. This annual concert is a showcase of the country's musical talent, with original and renowned works.
www.nzso.co.nz