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the Best of Gay Australia

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gay australia guide™ Summer 2003

in this issue

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When we set ourselves the task of working out what was the best of gay Australia, we were faced with a compelling question: exactly what is this thing called "Gay Australia"? It feels real enough, but where does it begin, where does it end and where is it concentrated most strongly?

This much is clear: Gay Australia extends a long way beyond the ghettos, and that intangible (but very fabulous) gay spirit crops up and makes its presence felt in the most unlikely places.

Take Swansea, an unassuming little town on Tasmania's east coast: it's home to what we consider to be Australia's Best Café (p18) and the nation's Best Berries (p10).

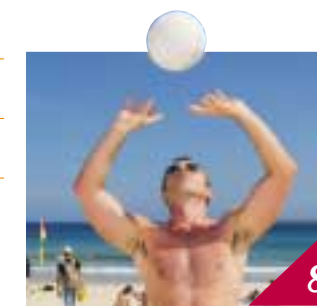
But, as we all know, the big cities offer much for gay men and lesbians in Australia, and it is in the cities that we find our Best Gay Nightclub (p8), our Best Shopping Experience (p9), our Best Gay Street (p11) and even our Best "Gentlemen's Club" (p16).

You'll find a lot more of our "best ofs" in this issue – like the Best Places to Cruise Girls (p17) and the Best Place to Fall in Love (p16) – but we know there's an iceberg out there that we've only just tipped. If you think we've left something out, we'd love to hear from you.

DAVID MILLS, EDITOR

20 Wine Guide

We take in South Australia's spectacular Coonawarra region and sink a few green bottles.



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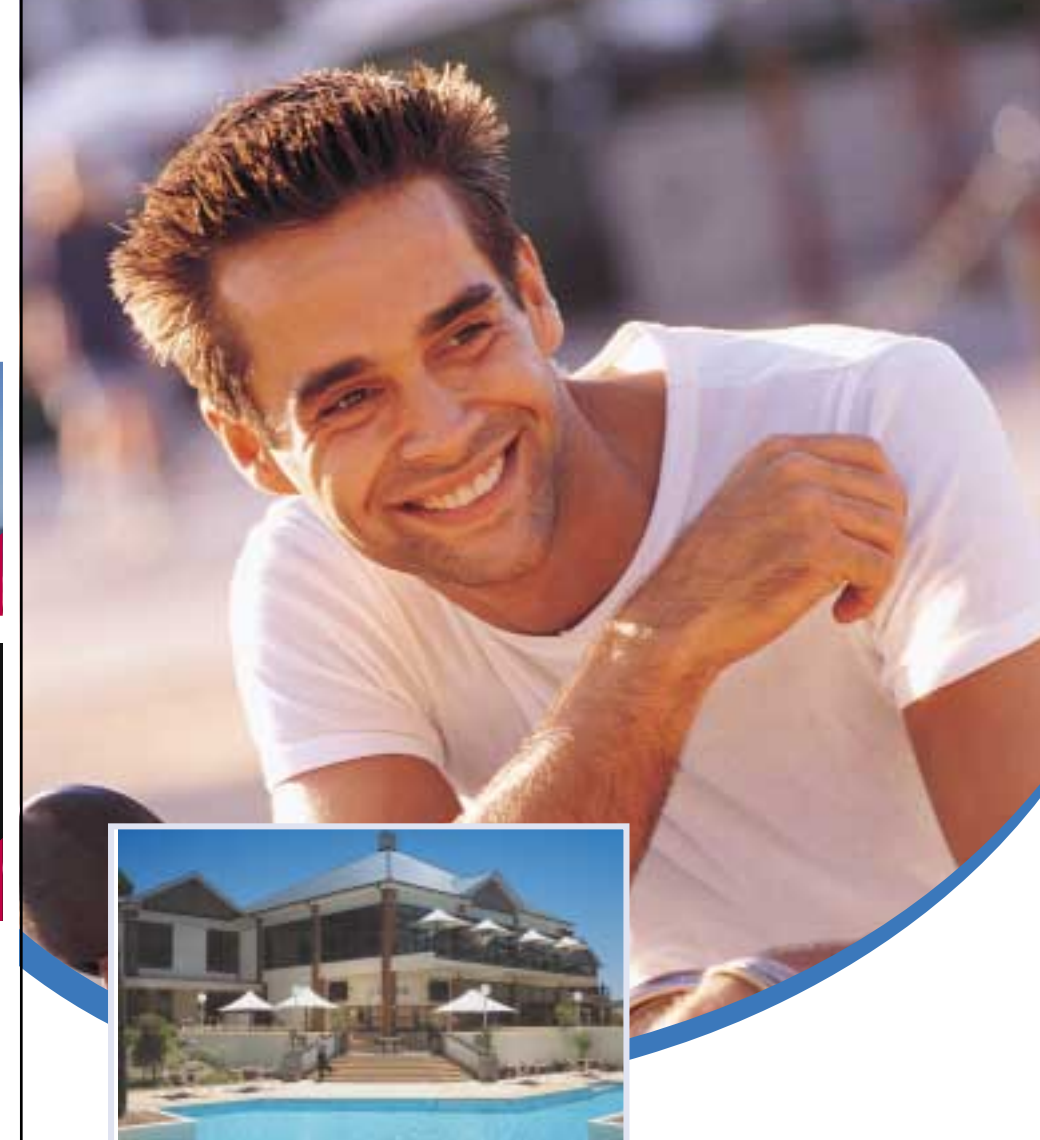
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PHOTO: CAMERON MUIR

Just two out of the several thousand hot men who attended Pride's last new year's eve bash.

Dancing in the New Year

Hot gay party action will be pretty easy to come by this new year's eve, despite the fact that Melbourne's ALSO Foundation won't be holding a party and the Sydney Pride Centre bash will be a tad smaller than previous years. Only 1800 tickets will go on sale for the Pride party, which will be held at the venue formerly known as City Live (now known as Stage 11) at Fox Studios. That venue will pump to the hard house sounds of some of Sydney's best DJs, while a second outdoor dance space will offer fluffier, handbag music. In addition, Pride organisers are promising stalls, surprises and roving entertainers.

Sydneysiders and Brisbanians both will converge on Lismore for the Tropical Fruits new year's eve party – something of an institution on the gay calendar.

Last year, Lismore hosted two gay parties – Tropical Fruits and Tribal Fruits – but this year the Tribal Fruits organisers are concentrating their energies on a January 1 pool party at the Lismore Memorial Baths. Starting off at 6am and kicking on to the ungodly hour of 5pm, the Tribal Fruits pool party will feature two DJs, a dancefloor and lots of pool-based shenanigans. Tickets will cost a mere \$20.

The Tropical Fruits party – to be held for the first time at the Lismore Showgrounds – includes an impressive line-up of DJ talent, including Ruby, Sveta, Kelly Lynch and Gavan Bright from Sydney, Henri from Melbourne and Matt Steer, Neroli and Les Smith from Brisbane.

Organisers are promising to turn the Lismore Showgrounds "into a party playground featuring a number of dance and entertainment areas, incorporating a diverse selection of dance and music styles that will have something for everyone." Sounds good!
www.pridecentre.com.au, www.tribalfruits.com.au, www.tropicalfruits.org.au



PHOTOS: SASHA CUNNINGHAM

Midsumma's Carnival Day ... a little bit of everything under the sun.

Midsumma with a twist

Melbourne's festival of all things GLBTI and Q, Midsumma, looks set to fire up this summer season. The 2004 festival will open a week later than usual, and for the first time ever will overlap with Sydney's Mardi Gras Festival by one week.

In another break with tradition, Midsumma's launch event on Friday 23 January will be held at Federation Square, which will be lit up in spectacular style by renowned designer Allan Parkinson. Things kick off around 4pm, and before too long the main area will come alive with several stages worth of entertainment and the electric charge of thousands of homosexuals checking each other out. The wind-down is expected around midnight, but a special "SummaDIVA" event – showcasing the best of Melbourne's drag scene – will rock on in Federations Square's Atrium until 2am. The launch weekend also features the Red Raw dance party on the Saturday night – an ALSO Foundation event rather than a Midsumma event proper, but who cares, right? –

and the Midsumma Pool Party on the Sunday night at the St Kilda Sea Baths. The Festival wraps up, as always, on the Carnival Day at Alexandria Gardens, this time slated for Sunday 15 February.

The much loved dog show and physique show will make a return, although the jelly-wrestling event has been junked, sadly. For the first time ever, the Carnival will feature a Produce Pavilion, including crazy CWA-style produce dioramas (anybody who's ever wondered into the produce hall of a Royal Show will know what we're talking about). It promises to be really quite camp.

Between 23 January and 15 February, Midsumma serves up a full arts program. Highlights include "pissed off rock'n'roll dyke nigga bitch" Staceyann Chin, a revival of *Hombres Fatale: the Joey Stefano Story*, and from David Knox, the man who brought us the Kylie musical *I Should Be So Lucky*, an as-yet-unnamed production based on the music of the Pet Shop Boys.

www.midsumma.org.au



Find New Zealand Online

Thinking about a trip across the Tasman? Looking for inspiration or information but don't know where to start? You won't do better than checking out the Gay New Zealand Guide, now found online at www.gaynewzealandguide.com

In this issue: getting out and about in Auckland, with advice on places to stay, places to see and the dirt on things to do after dark. Plus, we go further afield to the beaches of Piha and Karekare, and take in the natural – if somewhat pungent – beauty of Rotorua.



 <p>15 and 16 November Paul Capsis in concert City Recital Hall, Sydney www.capsis.org</p>	<p>1 December World AIDS Day Events in all capital cities – check local press or the AIDS Council in your state or territory for details.</p> 
<p>22 November Mr Gay Oz Darwin Heat At Throb. Former Big Brother contestant Jamie O'Brien, DNA editor Andrew Creagh and modelling maestro Peter Chadwick are scouring Australian venues for Mr Gay Oz. The national final will be held in Sydney just before next year's Mardi Gras, but heats will take place in all major cities around Australia. So Mr Cutey-pie – are you ready for your close up? www.mrgayoz.com.au</p>	<p>6 December Mr Gay Oz Brisbane Heat The Wickham Heat</p> <p>12 December New Mardi Gras releases their Festival Guide and planner for 2004. www.mardigras.org.au</p>
<p>29 November Mr Gay Oz Cairns Heat Liberty Resort, Kuranda</p>	<p>13 December Mr Gay Oz Sydney Heat Arq</p>
<p>29 November Caravaggio and His World Exhibition Opens at the Art Gallery of New South Wales – runs until end of February</p>	<p>20 December Mr Gay Oz Canberra Heat Cube</p>  <p>25 December So, who's going home to the family then?</p>
<p>Until 30 November Adelaide FEAST Festival Parties, performances and a whole lot more! The whole thing ends with the annual and much-loved Picnic in the Park event on November 30. www.feast.org.au</p> 	<p>27 December First preview of Sydney Theatre Company's production of <i>The Republic of Myopia</i>, featuring the music and witticisms of Phil Scott. Until 15 February. www.sydneytheatre.com.au</p>  <p>31 December New Year's Eve Go out and get pissed.</p>

ADELAIDE FEAST PHOTO: MICK VOYERS

Have an event you would like listed? Send details to editor@gayaustrialiaguide.com

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Singer, actor, seasoned traveller ... Paul Capsis shares a few stories from his globe-trotting adventures.

What was your last international holiday destination? What took you there?

I went to Vienna for five days after being in Edinburgh for the Fringe festival. I was exhausted after the festival and so decided to see friends in Vienna and see the city I love.

What was your last Australian holiday destination? What took you there?

Last Aussie holiday was at Coffs Harbour with my boyfriend Simon. I just finished doing a season of *Volpone* with the Sydney Theatre Company, eight shows a week, and six weeks later I needed a break. We had a really nice and relaxing time in Coffs. We stayed at the Waterside. This is a four-room hotel like no other. You are totally spoiled there by the owners.

What's your idea of the perfect holiday?

Quiet is a must for a holiday. A chance to put my feet up and read. Maybe have a swim. Warm weather is preferable – or a nice open fire if it's too cold outside. Good food is a must too. I guess loud big cities aren't ideal for holidays.

What's your favourite city?

Vienna is without a doubt my favourite city in the world but then I haven't been to Paris. I love Edinburgh for the same reason I love Vienna. It's the sense of history that surrounds these cities, but it's also the culture of art in the cities. More so for Vienna which I think is far more sophisticated than most cities when it comes to art and culture and the respect the people have for it.

What's your greatest holiday indulgence?

Once I flew to Malta after working like crazy (again it was the Edinburgh Festival). I stayed with painter Maree Azzopardi and her partner Ann Maree Sweeney. The girls drove me around the island of Gozo in a hire car and took me to the beach and showed me the gay beats and we ate delicious Maltese crusty bread and went snorkelling and saw the Maltese fiestas and fireworks and the Catholic processions. I visited relatives on the main island. Getting into my roots so to speak.

What's the stickiest situation you've ever got yourself into while on holiday?

Travelling on the London Tube ... very dangerous. The bloody thing stopped and it was hot and horrible. I wanted to dig my way out of there ... hideous.

Which do you prefer: planes, trains or automobiles?

Trains above ground.

Where are you planning to travel next?

I don't usually travel unless it's for work. I would like to visit Greece or Egypt as these are my cultural heritage. I'd love to visit Athens for the Games. Also would love to return to Spain – another favourite place.

What has inspired you to go there?

Greece for the heritage and food. Egypt for the heritage and history. Spain for the passion.

What can't you go on holiday without?

Passport and clean undies!

Paul Capsis is performing at Sydney's City Recital Hall (Angel Place) on 15 and 16 November. Tickets available through Ticketek (02 9266 4800). For more information about Paul's upcoming appearances, check out www.capsis.org.



Qbeds deal The Pacific Palms area of NSW is renowned for its beaches and lakes. Less than three hours north of Sydney, it's the ideal place to enjoy surfing, swimming, wind-sailing and snorkelling. Or try hiking some of the state's most beautiful national parks.

Qbeds, the online gay and lesbian accommodation directory, features a number of self-contained properties at Boomerang Beach. Aqua Studios are modern executive-style apartments, while The White House and Boomers Beach House are luxurious homes. All are just a short stroll from the beach.

Visit www.qbeds.com for information on these and other gay and lesbian accommodation options Australia-wide.

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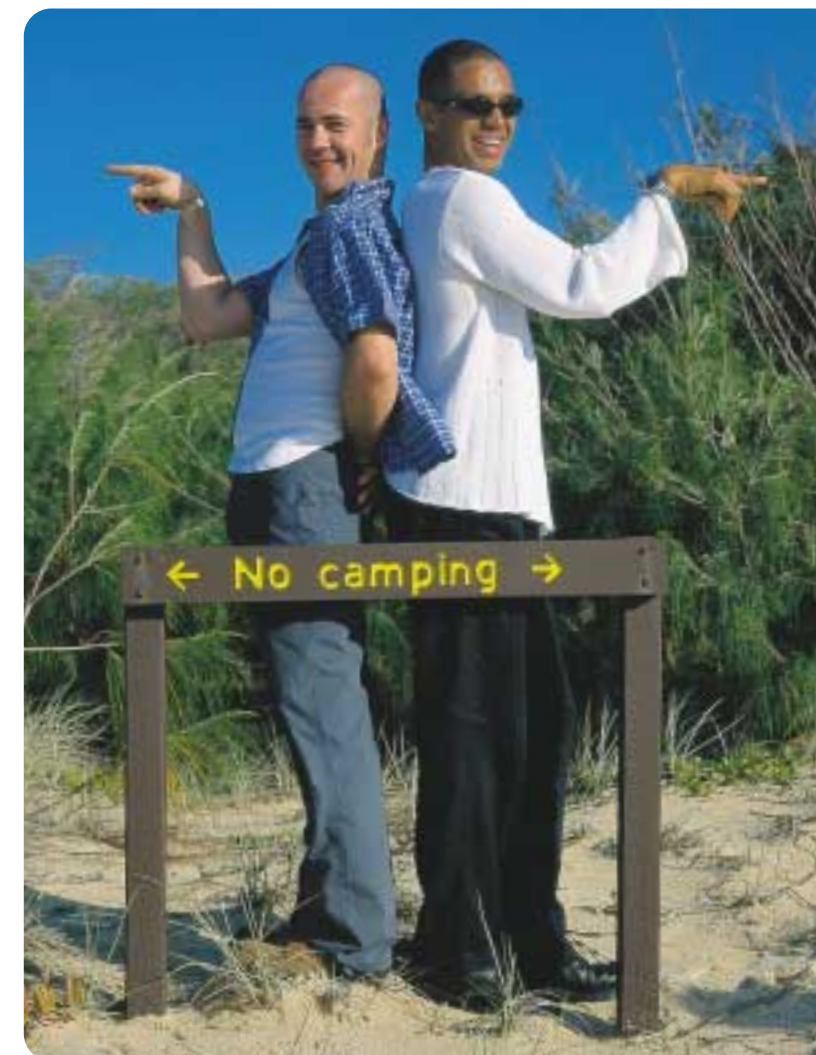
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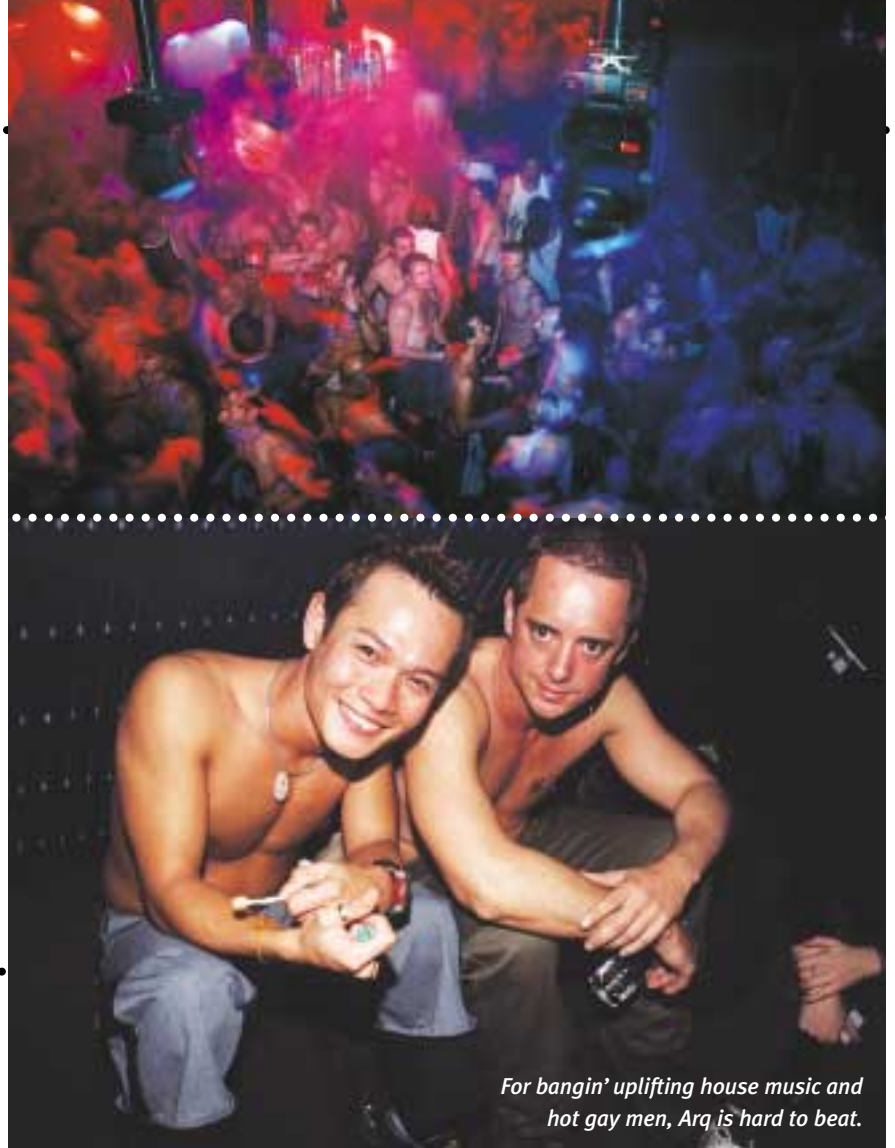
Best Gay Club

ARQ SYDNEY

It's not cheap; it gets pretty crowded; some of the regulars have a yucky "don't touch me, I'm fabulous" attitude – but Arq remains the best gay nightclub in Australia. Why? Because it actually feels like a special place to go. Because the DJs know what they're doing. Because it has two dancefloors and pool tables and great shows (live and mimed) and clean loos. Because although it predominantly attracts gay men, lesbians and straight women are welcomed. And lastly: because the men who go are so unbelievably hot.

The club has its detractors, to be sure – those who say the music's too commercial or not commercial enough, or that the crowd is too pretentious – but Arq has been the undisputed market leader of gay nightclubs in Sydney since the day it opened its doors four years ago. In more recent months, the club has also taken the lead in educating patrons about the dangers of drug use. In the fickle and faddy world of nightclubs, Arq is one of that rare breed: the stayer.

Text: David Mills
Photos: Mazz Images



For bangin' uplifting house music and hot gay men, Arq is hard to beat.



Forget Tamarama, darling ... for surf action and the largest mass of sunbathing gay men, try North Bondi.

Best Beach

NORTH BONDI SYDNEY

The north end of Bondi Beach wins hands down (and bums up). No, it's not nude and doesn't offer conveniently foliaged "nature walks", but is nonetheless sexy, muscly and cruisy all through summer. Here's why. Bondi is Australia's most famous beach, it's glamorous, it has patrolled and relatively safe waters and is close to restaurants, barbecues and amenities. It also possesses that very gay criterion of popularity: it's great simply because lots of us are there. There was a time when Tamarama (a.k.a. Glamarama) was the beach of choice for Sydney gay men, but a combination of dangerous rips, backpacker colonisation and a desire for something better meant a gradual move north. Runner-up: Alexandria Bay, Noosa – it's nude and has "foliage".

Text: Tim Benzie
Photo: Jamie Dunbar



The Great Ocean Road can wait. When sashaying into Melbourne, glamour gals, label queens and all those afflicted with the shopaholic gene know to make their way to Chapel Street – the world's only runway with tram tracks down the middle. Once crammed with churches, now full of holy places for fashion freaks and latté lovers, Chapel Street is where a spot of shopping can turn into a three-day marathon (or triathlon, if you take Melbourne weather into account). This well-heeled corridor spans three suburbs with enough intersecting distractions to have you changing your flight itinerary or wishing you took up that friendly offer for a credit extension.

Best Shopping

CHAPEL STREET MELBOURNE & SURROUNDING PRECINCT



Chapel virgins will be brought to their knees with the wealth of fashion options, from cheap chic to high-end boutique, commercial to cool, casual to classic. It's street wear, sportswear, formal wear, underwear, club wear, after-five wear, any wear. The purists will tell you it's gone too commercial of late, the Sunday shopper will tell you it's too expensive, but one thing is certain: there is something for everybody in Chapel Street and no other shopping experience is as pretentious as it is therapeutic.

Generally speaking, Chapel Street South Yarra is the up-market end, Chapel Street Prahran the commercial centre, and Chapel Street Windsor the grunge stretch.

Eschewing the familiar brands for some edgy Melbourne originals, check out the street punk himself, Roy, a hit with the boys (125 Greville) and more recently the girls (424 Chapel). Louis Epstein (415), a Melbourne institution of denim, is an essential pitstop, as is Fox 14 (210 Toorak). Kwamee by Francis (561) serves up an eclectic brand of urban wear with a dash of tribal.

Travelling poofs and dykes who love plundering ultra-rare Euro casuals, sneakers and accessories (Diesel and the like) will flip over Cyberia (539), Dakota 501 (501), D Inc (147 Greville) and Louis Epstein. The hot tips for urban chicks are Credo (149 Greville) and Phillips (246). Giallo (487) and Mollini (524) are the pick for glamour shoes; head further south into Chapel Street, Prahran, for some earthier treads.

If designer labels are more your thing, you'll cream over the crème of haute couture at Cose Plus (Shop 3, 286 Toorak). Head further south and further back in time to the impossibly kitsch Shag (130). Now these boys know how to window dress! Continue the retro immersion at Eurotrash (228), Kinki Gerlinki (122 Greville) and American Rag (161 Greville) where you're sure to uncover that elusive pre-loved print.

This, of course, is just a small selection of stopovers. Shops seem to mysteriously get up, move and swap places down this strip and remembering where you spotted those boots you liked two hours ago could leave you crying in the Chapel. As with all things fashion, nothing stays the same, so, prior to arrival, best visit www.chapelstreet.com.au, the official site for Chapel Street retailers, which includes a complete directory of all stores.

Text: Patrick Sheehan
Photos: Tourism Victoria



Bags of fun ... a day of shopping on Chapel Street.

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Best Berries

KATE'S BERRY FARM JUST OUTSIDE SWANSEA, TASMANIA

It's easier going from rags to riches in a land that is already rich. When Kate Bradley moved to Tasmania almost 16 years ago, she had nothing but several years' experience as a textile technician and the scant savings it cost to buy some acres on a hillside near Swansea. From this she has built one of Tasmania's best known berry farms.

According to Kate her thriving business started almost by accident.

"I was living here in a caravan – a step up from my tent – and a farmer asked me to sell his strawberries alongside the surplus from my vegie patch.

No-one else sold strawberries on Tasmania's east coast back then. Suddenly I'd found a market niche."

Kate has a simple explanation for why her berries are so popular, particularly with mainland visitors. "Tassie's cool climate means it takes berries longer to ripen and that makes them juicier and tastier."

The taste isn't limited to fruit straight from the garden. Drawing on her technical training, Kate turns her berries into ice cream, jams, sauces and even wine, and sells them from the mud-brick shop-front and winery she built herself.

"People scoffed at the idea of strawberry wine but I couldn't afford the other stuff so I made some berry wine for myself – dry and medium riesling style – and it was delicious."

As if making and serving all her berry products 10 hours a day, 364 days a year, isn't enough, Kate has thrown



Kate Bradley ... like the berries she grows on her farm, Kate's stories are full of juice.

herself into community life. As the local SES chief and emergency management coordinator she is on call 24 hours a day and was involved in the response to the 1996 Port Arthur crisis.

"When I first came to Tassie and then to Swansea I felt like I'd come home. This is a beautiful, caring, accepting,

close-knit and quirky place that captures your heart and won't let it go," Kate says. Licking my raspberry ice cream and taking in the spectacular view from Kate's front porch, I have to agree.

Text: Rodney Croome
Photo: Tourism Tasmania

It's more "life" than "lifestyle": King Street, Newtown.

Best Gay Street

KING STREET NEWTOWN, SYDNEY



King Street, Newtown, is now the best GLBTI street in Sydney and so, inevitably, in Oz – no argument. It's book-ended by Victoria Park at its city end – site of the annual Mardi Gras fair day and poolside pashing all year round – and Sydney Park at its southern end – queer dog off-leash heaven. Without any of Oxford Street's tackiness, here you'll find the kissingest, hand-holdingest fags and dykes, along with hets who aren't out to hoon or hurt and a road you can cross without first taking out life insurance. Why? Because 24/7 it's a lived-in street, not an after-hours entertainment strip for the desperate and dateless. Plus, it feels safe.

Pot pool balls with the gals at the Bank Hotel; pot pourri your home cooking with fresh herbs from one of the best and last-surviving family greengrocers; or lick the bottom of a different tasty pot seven days and nights a week from any of the dozens of nouveau ethnic and modOZ nosheries. Catch a drag show at the Imperial or the Newtown; catch fringe theatre at The Edge, agitprop at the New; catch new Bohemians flogging their latest quickprint project; or catch a falling star at a location shoot coming any day now to a corner near you. Shop till you drop for hammers and hand-me-downs, booze and bedspreads, incense and indie pop, dildos and dishcloths.

The hub of it all is the arcade smack in the centre of the strip. It's home to Cinque, the best café in town, splendid for perving, grazing and caffeining. Why settle for your usual buns or lemon delicious pie? Take a seat on the banquette that fronts the street or a table in the arcade, and ask your waiter to bring you the blackboard special that just walked by – big dykes, small dykes, girl dykes, boy dykes, buffed bods, pomo homos, shaggy baggy fags, foppish Wilde fags, new baby boom families doing their bit to keep Oz nuclear-free – and best of all, every damn one of them has companion dogs, dogs, and dogs! And if that ain't enough for ya, the arcade also houses Fish Records, the Dendy cinema, and the terrific indie and very queer-friendly bookshop Better Read Than Dead. We're talkin' queer nerd nirvana!

Back out on the street, heritage queens ooh and aah at one of the best preserved first-floor Federation façade shopping strips.

And over it all, Martin Luther King holds high his dream, looking down from the massive mural that no-one has ever, ever graffitied.

Text: Paul van Reyk
Photo: Jamie Dunbar



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Best Cultural Destination

ADELAIDE THE FESTIVAL CITY



A Teddy Tahu Rhodes in the South Australian State Opera production of *Dead Man Walking*.

Featured artists of the 2004 Adelaide Festival:

- B** Bangarra Dance Theatre,
- C** David Gulpilil and
- D** The Spanish National Ballet.

On its website, the city of Adelaide has chosen an artichoke to symbolise the arts and culture of the city. They explain their visual metaphor this way:

"An artichoke has a 'heart', it is beautiful to look at, it's fun to eat and is good for you too ... Developing arts and culture is about putting 'heart' into the city. This heart, like the artichoke, has many leaves or layers. Self-expression, creativity, sense of place and civic pride, celebrations ... socialising ... and valuing heritage, are just some of the layers that can add meaningful vitality to our lives."

When I went to Adelaide recently after not having visited the city of churches for over a decade, I unexpectedly fell in love with its relaxed charms. It is indeed a city of heart, a city on a human scale where a sense of civic pride, heritage and creativity seem to be valued highly.

While it is true that Adelaide does have numerous impressive churches and other heritage buildings dotting the cityscape, it is also true that it has a long history of tolerance and innovation. Under the campaigning premiership of Don Dunstan, who famously caused a stir in the 70s by wearing pink hot pants to parliament, South Australia was the first Australian state to decriminalise homosexuality. Much earlier it had been the first state to give women the vote.

I was in Adelaide for the Australian premiere of the opera *Dead Man Walking*. The operatic adaptation of the story made famous by the Susan Sarandon film is one of contemporary opera's success stories. After its premiere in San Francisco in 2000, the opera, composed by young opera hotshot Jake Heggie and well-known gay playwright Terrence McNally, had sellout seasons throughout the United States. This year's Adelaide production marked its first production outside America.

The South Australian Opera Company, although small, specialises in dynamic special projects like this. In 2002 they produced Philip Glass's opera *Akhenaton*, which they have recently restaged for the Melbourne Festival, and at the end of next year they will produce the first homegrown version of Wagner's *Ring Cycle*, a three-day operatic extravaganza.

It is innovative events like these that make Adelaide Australia's best cultural destination. The city has long been host to Australia's premier international arts festival. Held every two years the festival attracts artists and visitors from all around the world.

One of the unique things about the Adelaide festival is that Adelaide is small enough for the city to be totally taken over by the festival and for three weeks it becomes the city's heart.

After the 2002 festival was marred by controversy over the forced resignation of maverick international director Peter Sellars, next year's festival, under the guide of Bangarra's Stephen Page, promises to be a time of re-consolidation and one of the most accessible Adelaide festivals.

Page has commissioned star international drawcard acts such as the National Ballet of Spain, but he has not put innovation to one side. His program includes acts like the remarkable Canadian company CanStage with their production of *The Overcoat*, based on the story by Nicolai Gogol and using the music of Dimitri Shostakovich. A mesmeric "Chaplinesque" performance, it has been called "a play without words, a ballet without dancers and an opera without singing".

Feast, Adelaide's gay and lesbian festival, is also the best in Australia. Held over four weeks in November, it includes a mix of fun community events, films, performance and visual arts. Unlike Mardi Gras or Midsumma it has managed to secure funding to produce its own events, thus offering gay and lesbian artists the unique opportunity to develop new work specifically for the festival.

One of these projects is the "I Can See Queerly Now Project" that gave five same-sex-attracted young men and women the opportunity to write and/or direct their own queer short films which will premiere at Feast.

Adelaide is also the city of food and wine so while you are enjoying its cultural highlights you're also sure to find plenty of other diversions, but that's another story.

Text: Marcus O'Donnell
Photos: Adelaide Festival and State Opera

For further information on Feast Festival: <http://www.feast.org.au/2003/>

For Adelaide Festival 2004: <http://www.adelaidefestival.com.au>

For SA Opera's 2004 Ring Cycle: <http://www.saopera.sa.gov.au/thering/>



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Discover the Secrets of



Best Sunset

CABLE BEACH BROOME

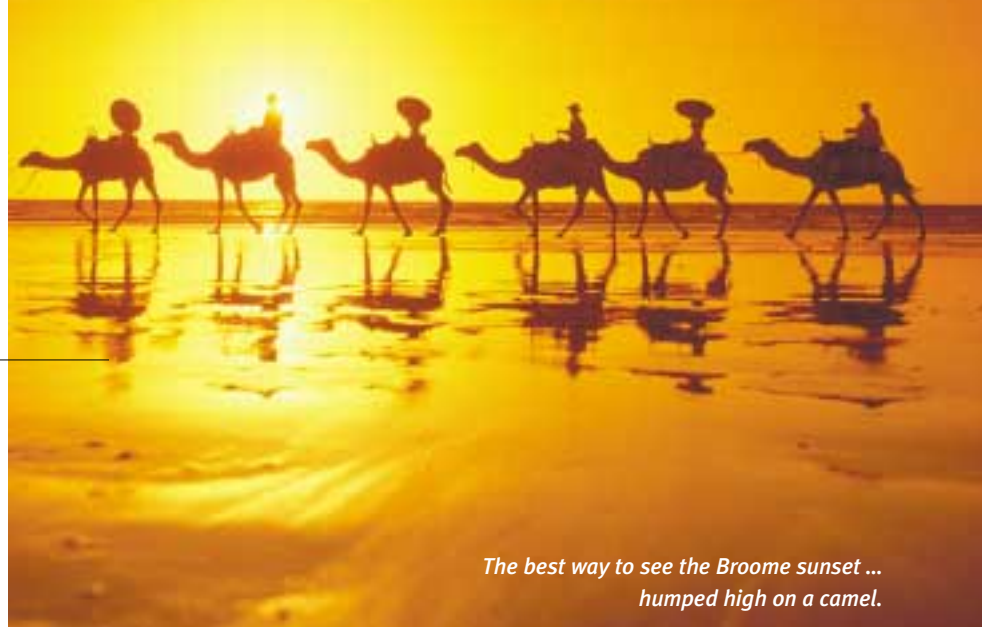
Are you tired of lying on your favourite beach attempting to catch the last rays of gold, the encroaching shadows of buildings stealing your view of the setting sun? You need to head to Western Australia, where the sun sinks daily into the waters of the Indian Ocean.

Cable Beach in Broome is famed for its sunsets. You can lie on your towel, facing the water until the very end of the day with nothing but sand dunes behind you. If you're of the 4WD persuasion, park the car right on the shore line, pull out the picnic chairs and esky and you've got a ring-side seat for the big show. You can spot the locals – they're the ones with the barbie built into the back of the boot.

The most unique sunset experience has to be humped two and a half metres up in the air on board a Camelus Dromedarius. Join a train of up to 20 and enjoy a quiet amble along the beach at a speed of about 5km an hour. It's a great chance to entertain fantasies of being whisked off to the sultan's harem for a night of Kama Sutra acrobatics, but at this speed it hardly feels like being abducted. The colours are picture postcard, with the best sunset employing a few clouds for dramatic effect.

Sunrise is pretty special in Broome too and best enjoyed over a latté or three at the Town Beach Café right on Roebuck Bay. Another unique way to experience the sunrise is 1,000 metres high in a hot air balloon. The 4am start and long drive to a safe ballooning location is more than compensated for by the sunrise, followed by a champagne breakfast after touchdown.

Roebuck Bay is a great spot for snorkelling, swimming and fishing. Western Blue Sea Kayaking takes small tours to Turtle Bay, and the friendly guides are a wealth of knowledge about the ecology and fauna of the area. The red sandstone cliffs of the bay are an incredible contrast to the turquoise waters.



The best way to see the Broome sunset ... humped high on a camel.

Broome enjoys a multicultural history, due largely to the pearl diving industry which still prospers here. A must-do is a visit to the Pearl Luggers complex in Chinatown (the town centre) for the talk and presentation by Salty Bailleue, a former diver and local celebrity. His stories and passion for pearling are fascinating and full of local gossip and insight.

You'll find a large range of eating options in town. The Old Zoo Café comes highly recommended, as does the Town Beach Café mentioned earlier. Accommodation ranges from luxurious resorts to cheap and cheerful backpacker hostels. Cable Beach Club Resort is right opposite the beach and sports an adults-only pool. McAlpine House is a very special B&B built in typical Broome style out of corrugated iron with wide verandahs. Gay operated, McAlpine House offers a very up-market experience while the local caravan and camping ground is ideally located right on Roebuck Bay on some very expensive and picturesque real estate.

Text: Malcolm Harding
Photo: Cable Beach Club

Essential contacts:
www.tourism.wa.gov.au, www.redsuncamels.com.au, www.westernblue.com.au,
www.outbackballooning.com, www.cablebeachclub.com,
pearlluggers@bigpond.com, www.mcalpinehouse.com



Palm Cove Beach: something this nice couldn't stay a secret for long.

Who said there was no beach in Cairns? Just twenty minutes north of Tropical North Queensland's major city lies a town with all the advantages of Cairns – plus a pristine strip of beach that was voted the cleanest in Australia this year. For tourists disappointed by Cairns's estuarine frontage, Palm Cove is a revelation.

The town is also fashioning itself as a Noosa of the North, it would seem. With a clump of good restaurants, Palm Cove's Esplanade seems vaguely reminiscent of Noosa's Hastings Street – but unlike Hastings Street, there's development on one side and only an expanse of blue on the other. Try the Sebel Reef House or Blue for modern-Australian cuisine, or the nearby Spice Market (adjoining the Novotel Hotel) for Asian fusion cookery. Prices are surprisingly reasonable, given the outstanding quality of the dishes.

Best Worst Kept Secret



PALM COVE TROPICAL NORTH QLD

A new dining initiative also takes food right into the heart of the rainforest. It's called "Flames of the Forest", and it's one of the more unusual dining experiences you're ever likely to have. A chartered bus takes you to a secret location – somewhere north of Palm Cove, but a place you'd never find on a map – where you are wine and dined in the middle of the rainforest. At \$179 per person, it's not a cheap experience, but it is an absolutely unique one.

The region's other major attraction – the reef – is also very accessible from Palm Cove, as the town has its own jetty, which caters for many reef tour operators.

Like Cairns, the town draws an eclectic crowd of tourists, but there is still something a bit "in the know" about staying in Palm Cove rather than Cairns or Port Douglas. One of the ways you can tell this is by the relatively high proportion of gay men and lesbians who choose to stay there (we are such arbiters of cutting edge taste, after all). The cosy Sebel Reef House seems a popular spot for many a gay tourist, although others are drawn to the exquisite 5-star Outrigger Resort, which includes a delightfully over-the-top lagoon-style swimming pool – featuring its own swim-up bar, naturally.

Text: David Mills. The writer flew to Palm Cove courtesy of Tourism Queensland and stayed at the Outrigger Resort as a guest of the hotel.
Photo: Tourism Queensland.

For more info, www.flamesoftheforest.com.au

Best Outback Experience



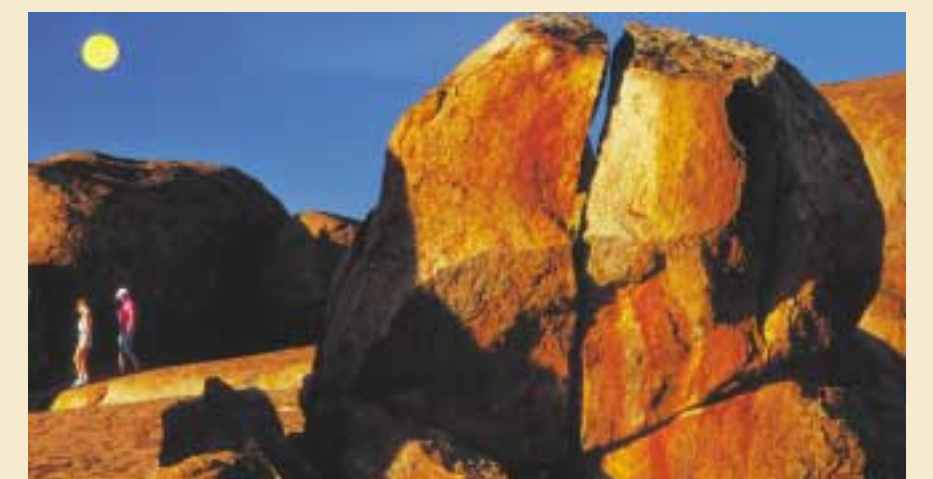
ALICE SPRINGS

Alice Springs sports a large gay and lesbian community for a small town. A lot of the dykes come to work in the area's social service industry, while most of the boys appear to be escaping big city lifestyles and attitudes. They're a close-knit bunch and everyone seems to know each other. New faces are always welcome and it's not the shark feeding frenzy one might expect for fresh meat around the many barbies that make up social life here.

Alice sits in the Australian psyche as a central icon, both geographically and historically. It's hot, dusty, dry and isolated. You'll find characters walking around the town who look like they are straight out of an outback saga – wearing thongs, stubbies, dusty Akubras and red raw tans. The best trait of the population here – gay or straight – is the total lack of pretension. Don't bother packing those D&G hipsters for this trip.

Must-dos on the Alice calendar are the SPIN FX pre-Mardi Gras party (28 Feb 2004) and the Precisely Priscilla Party, held at the beautiful Kings Canyon in May. Bar Doppio in the town centre is the hang for the girls and no poof worth his weight in sand should miss visiting Febe's Bar, set in the spare bedroom of a local celebrity and featuring mirror ball and high-tech sound system. More info: www.aliceiswonderland.com

Text: Malcolm Harding
Photo: Northern Territory Tourist Commission.



After years of being labelled Australia's most homophobic state, Tasmania now boasts the most progressive laws and attitudes on homosexuality in Australia. The island confirmed its status as gay-friendly in late August when it enacted new relationship laws that are some of the most advanced in the world.

Not only do same-sex relationships have virtually the same legal rights as their heterosexual counterparts, beginning 1 January 2004 Tasmania will be the first Australian state to allow same-sex couples to register their relationships officially.

Tassie has even given legal rights (including registration rights) to other types of personal relationships like older companions, carers and indigenous kin. The new relationship laws complement Tasmania's Anti-Discrimination Act (passed in 1999), which has also been lauded as world-best because it features no caveats or exceptions.

According to opinion polls, up to 70 percent of rural Tasmanians support equality for same-



Best Gay Laws

TASMANIA



sex couples and the figure is even higher in Hobart and Launceston. This is a far cry from 10 years ago when Tassie was labelled "bigot's island" for being the last Australian state to repeal its blanket ban on gay sex.

The change of laws and attitudes has been attributed to large-scale public education by Tasmania's active LGBT community. But whatever the reason, you'll enjoy a holiday in the new free, open and gay-welcoming Tasmania.

Text: Rodney Croome



Victoria's Great Ocean Road: thousands of Kodak moments.

Best Drive

GREAT OCEAN ROAD VICTORIA

It's the fourth most visited region in Australia, carved from rearing cliffs plunging into cold waters along a dramatic coast west of Melbourne. It's a road winding along craggy promontories, past foamy surf and through green forests.

The Great Ocean Road starts at Queenscliff, perched by the side of Port Phillip Bay, and shoots past the village of Torquay – where surfies blend with the waves pounding off world-famous Bells Beach – before diving into blink-and-miss Anglesea and on to the buzz of Lorne.

Enjoy the lattés and seashell shops in this town pumping with visitors, locals and the bikies who love grazing the winding road with their knees. Behind Lorne are clear rivers and waterfalls and further along is the quieter Apollo Bay, home to fishing boats and a well-attended annual music festival.

From here you can get away from it "all" and this is the reason Glenn Wallace, 20-year

resident, GALTA member and ex-national parks ranger, loves the "Road". Operating a guest house in the peace of the little village of Yulong, he loves the secluded beaches and rustic ambience of places like Lavers Hill, tucked away in the wilderness of the Otway Ranges, a large stretch of lush fern-filled forest.

Glenn's large 1950s guesthouse, Wombalano (basic décor but all facilities), is a convenient place to stay to reach both a new attraction, Otway Fly, a treetop walk amidst the forest canopy, and a better known one, The Twelve Apostles. Standing sentry in the foaming sea, the Apostles turn rich colours at sunset and, no matter how times they are viewed, they remain a true spectacle.

Lorne Visitor's Centre (03) 5289 1152, Wombalano Country Retreat (03) 5237 5264

Text: Phoenix Arrien
Photo: Tourism Victoria



Best Place to Fall in Love

CANBERRA ACT

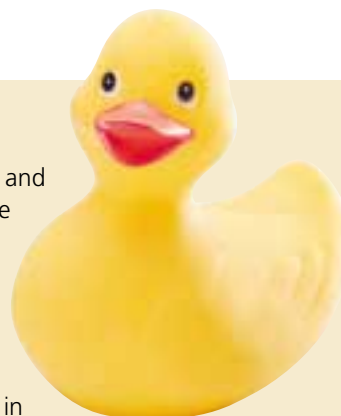
There's not a lot to do in Canberra. Oh sure, there's Parliament House, and the War Memorial, and the High Court, and – well, there's actually heaps to do in Canberra but, in many ways, it's a city designed for family groups rather than groovy singles. There aren't many pubs; the alfresco dining season comes and goes quickly; the nightlife ain't up to much.



But Canberrans compensate for all this by taking a DIY approach to their own entertainment. The dinner party circuit is a hot ticket, while discussion groups, book clubs and sporting clubs flourish. The city's population pushes 300,000, but every year brings a new wave of people into our nation's capital: university students, political advisers and new public servants among them. The result of all this is a constantly evolving social scene, in which newcomers and natives alike take advantage of any social (or, if single, romantic) opportunity that presents itself.

Plus, Canberra's abysmal winter means that every local who finds themselves unattached in late autumn really goes all-out to find a partner to snuggle up to in the colder months. When those minus 5° nights hit, living in Canberra only makes sense when you're sharing a bed with your lover.

Text: David Mills
Photo: Australian Capital Tourism



First it's the stylish lockers, fancy fittings and circular glass-walled showers that catch the eye. Then you notice the indoor pool, complete with retractable roof, poised to capture the seemingly perennial Queensland summer. Other such clubs might be busier, but Wet is a sparkling example of why we don't have to socialise in substandard surroundings any more.

Text: Tim Benzie

Best 'Gentlemen's Club'

WET SPA AND SAUNA BRISBANE QLD



Wet is drenched in class and sex. It's not much to look at from the outside and, like everywhere else in Brisbane, you have to drive to get there. It's worth the trip. Once you're inside, the layout expands impressively like a gay TARDIS.



Markets ... prime dyke-hunting grounds, anywhere.

Best girl Watching

AUSTRALIA-WIDE ALL YEAR ROUND



Recidivist babe-watcher NICKY BRYSON presents some of the best spots in Australia to watch girls.

A travel plan is very important, we all know this. Without one you may find yourself serving behind the counter of a cake shop in a far-flung rural town for three months. Not a personal example.

Flirting with CWA members may be fun for a while but it soon palls because they don't know how to dance. So arm yourself with a good babe list when you plan to travel and you'll get a lot more eye candy for your money.

Check-out chicks

Scope out the trendy suburbs where lesbians buy and rent. The local supermarket will be a Mecca for girl-

watching because we sure do love our groceries. Sydney's Marrickville Metro has seen so much cruising that the place has practically become a beat.

Old-fashioned hospitality

When gay boys and girls move to the country, we seem compelled to make an industry out of it. "Pink inns" are booming in beautiful places like Tasmania and South Australia, so book a room at the Old Colony Inn (Tasmania) or Maslin House (SA) and you are sure to enjoy the local attractions.

Market value

Open-air trade is alive and well in this country, so it's no wonder that outdoor markets have become such a dyke-spotters' paradise. In Brisbane, the girls are checking out more than quirky home wares at the Brunswick Street market stalls every weekend.

Footy fever

Women are definitely the fairer sex when it comes to those tiny little football shorts and no one proves this better than the babes from WA's Melville Dockers. When these enterprising AFL girls realised their matches had become the hottest perve-fest in Perth, they even brought out a nudie calendar.

On the road again

At first glance, a dirt-encrusted roadhouse doesn't seem like the greatest place to watch the girls go by, does it? Take a second look the next time you are in the Northern Territory, though. You'll find that half the VWs parked out front sport rainbow stickers and that the waitress in the white rayon uniform may just be the dyke of your dreams.

Lesbian chic

Fashionistas know that Melbourne is the best place to perve on designer dykes. Commercial Road in Prahran and St Kilda's Smith Street both offer such a heady mix of galleries, wine bars and couture boutiques that you are bound to wear your Manolo heels down to the sole.

Text: Nicky Bryson
Photo: Tourism Victoria

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Best Summer Reading

WE ASK THE EXPERTS

We asked some of gay Australia's literary types for advice on the best summer reading.

ALASDAIR DUNCAN

Author of *Sushi Central* (University of Queensland Press)



What are the essential ingredients of a good summer read?

Something long and involving, with strong characters and a good atmosphere. Family sagas are good – I've just finished *Middlesex* by Jeffrey Eugenides and it's brilliant.

What will you be reading this summer?

I have a big stack, but among them are *What I Loved* by Siri Hustvedt, *Bonfire Of The Vanities* by Tom Woolf, *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* by Salman Rushdie and *number9dream* by David Mitchell.

NATASHA CHO

Short story writer; zine editor; organiser of the "Hello Kitty" literary events.



What are the essential ingredients of a good summer read?

A gold embossed title on the cover is a good start.

What will you be reading this summer?

Sweet Valley High #1: Double Love. The classic first book in the *Sweet Valley High* teen romance fiction series. If I've lost you, think *Babysitter's Club* for 16 year olds. Also, I will be reading zines by Australian zine-makers.

GRAEME AITKEN

Editor of *The Penguin Anthology of Gay Australian Writing*; Author of *Vanity Fierce*; Manager of *The Bookshop, Darlinghurst*



What are the essential ingredients of a good summer read?

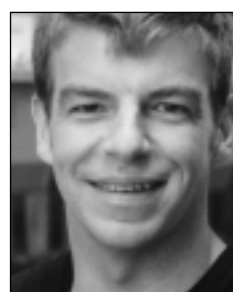
Personally I think holidays are a time to read a book that is long or perhaps something more challenging – as that's when you have the time to devote to it.

What will you be reading this summer?

New Zealand writer Peter Wells' new novel *Iridescence* which is set in 1870s London. It's over 500 pages and is based upon a real event – the Boulton and Park scandal which predated the Oscar Wilde trial.

BRUNO BOUCHET

Author of *The Beauty of Truth* and *The Girls*



What are the essential ingredients of a good summer read?

The cover is the most essential ingredient, because after all no-one actually reads at the beach, you just hold a book while you look round and talk to your beach mates every time they try to read their book. So anything that's bright and can give someone an opening line is good. I know from personal experience that Proust is a good option if you're interested in much older men with French Lit degrees.

What will you be reading this summer?

This summer I'll be reading proofs of my next book, *French Letters* (released in April) which might make a good summer read next year. If I wasn't shamelessly promoting my own work, I'd be reading something even more badly written, hopefully with lots of sex.

PHIL SCOTT

Entertainer; librettist; funny man; author of *Gay Resort Murder Shock, It's About Your Friend and One Dead Diva* (Penguin).



What are the essential ingredients of a good summer read?

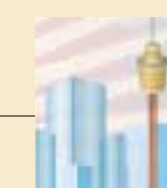
A good summer read has to be so engrossing that you forget to check out passing trade. And it should be something you've read before, so you can look up if necessary. I like a book that brings a smile to the lips and a tear to the eye: even when you're reading, your face still needs exercise.

What will you be reading this summer?

This summer I'd like to read ecstatic reviews of *The Republic of Myopia* (my new musical), and probably *Dry* by Augusten Burroughs – which I bought a month ago but have been too busy to start on.

The Worst of Gay Sydney

TIME FOR A BITCH



So you've gotten this far. We've told you about the best gay this and the best gay that, but the truth is: it's only part of the story. BRAD JOHNSTON dishes the dirt on the worst of gay Sydney.

Oooh, where to start? Having been born and raised here (and having managed to cling to my homosexuality throughout this period), I feel as qualified as anyone to announce the worst of Gay Sydney. Mind you, it is a delightful place with much to recommend, but you've read about all that.

So consider this a harmless bitch session. The pubic hair on the cherry on the icing on the cake, if you will.

Let's start at **Taylor Square**. Once considered the epicentre of same-sex socialising, it's a debacle. Currently undergoing the latest in a series of dreadful makeovers, this grey wasteland continues very convincingly to refute the notion that gay men have good taste.

Should you be driven to drink after navigating the plastic labyrinth of safety barriers on the Square, I suggest you either avoid gay licensed venues or, if you simply must have a

poofier beer, you do so before 8pm, when the prices go from merely exorbitant to thoroughly appalling. Despite the Pink Dollar being exposed in most quarters as something of a crock, bar owners appear to have missed this. (Note: the situation worsens the further you go from street level.)

Having consumed said overpriced beverage, you will, at some point, be forced to use the restroom. Here you'll encounter some truly outrageous behaviour. **Urinal etiquette** in this town is routinely ignored. Men who insist upon standing with legs apart, half a metre away from their fellow punters on either side – and then spend the entire time peeing, not pissing – should be shot. Or hosed down.

This sort of inappropriate activity extends to **Gay Sydney cafés**, where competition for outdoor tables is stiffer than Madonna's acting. This is

largely due to those patrons who sit there, not smoking, over the tepid remnants of a skim latté for hours. Whether or not this has much to do with the service at such establishments is debatable. Either way, it's bloody annoying.

Of course, these customers are usually engaging in gay surveillance, formerly known as cruising, which is just people-watching with invisible score cards. The **unsmiling audience** that greets you along any gay strip is a tough one but remember, try as they might, they can't vote you off.

This constant jostling for a prime spot on the social mezzanine of Gay Sydney can be exhausting, so it's important to pace yourself and keep in mind that the worst perpetrators are often refugees from other, less fabulous, locations. They have yet to grasp the fact that **Gay Sydney is Tiny Town**. Really very small. And utterly incestuous. Gossip, innuendo, scorn and ridicule are rampant and, like malfunctioning heat-seeking missiles, invariably return to blow up in your face.

So, unless you want to become the first gay social suicide bomber, it's best to keep your mouth shut, enjoy what's on offer and ignore cynical queens such as me. Because, let's be honest, we're the worst thing about Gay Sydney. Sorry about that.

Text: Brad Johnston
Photo: Aussiebum

Even Sydney's arse-end looks good, when wrapped up in an Aussiebum cossie.



Best Café

THE LEFT BANK SWANSEA, TASMANIA



When they walked passed the For Sale sign and into Swansea's former Commonwealth Bank, Subi Mead and Helen Bain both knew that this was where they'd make their future.

What they couldn't have known was that this was where they'd create one of Australia's legendary dishes.

"We were looking for a new life in a small town – a place we could make a contribution to, perhaps running a general store," Subi recounts.

"Within minutes of poking around the old bank, our plans had changed. We had the concept, we had the colour scheme and the Left Bank was born."

The Left Bank is one of only two Tasmanian eateries outside Hobart and Launceston listed in *Gourmet Traveller's Restaurant Guide*. And you'll know why after just one mouthful of the lemon tart.



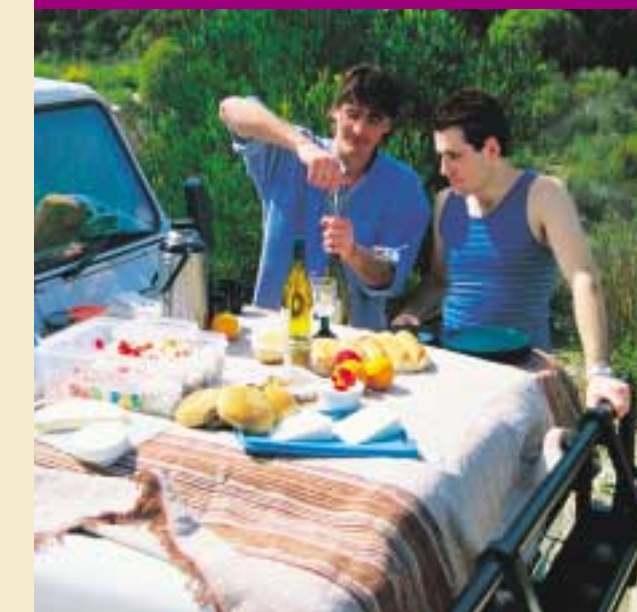
Never a fan of pastry for its own sake, Helen makes the tart crust just thick enough to serve its purpose of holding in the good stuff; stuff so good that her Left Bank tart, carefully constructed in 12 delicate stages and baked fresh every day, has a national following.

Not quite as famous but just as tasty is the choc orange cake with Valhalla vanilla bean ice cream served warm so the chocolate ganache is half-melted.

Customers might be drawn by talk of tart, but what keeps them coming back to the Left Bank, in extraordinary numbers, is the friendly atmosphere, the fresh Tasmanian produce, great coffee, a sophisticated selection of magazines and consistent high quality.

Whenever doubters query the wisdom of converting a bank in Swansea into a top-notch café, Subi and Helen quote their adopted motto: "Build it and they will come." And they do, again and again.

Text: Rodney Croome



Next Issue: On the Road

Pack your bags and pump up the volume on your car stereo: we're going for a little drive. Whether your thing is highway hitchhiking or the road less travelled, we'll show you the way. Are we there yet?

Booking: NOVEMBER 17, 2003
Material: DECEMBER 1, 2003
Release: JANUARY 22, 2004

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* Readership based on 3 times audited circulation (CAB).



Wine Guide

Exploring Coonawarra

The Coonawarra in a wine lover's holy grail. This narrow strip of land on South Australia's Limestone Coast has pretty much everything you need to make the 380km pilgrimage from Adelaide worthwhile.

It produces some of the best wines in the country (think Zema Estate and Katnook Estate, for starters); has a nice range of restaurants and accommodation; and boasts a local history that's more than mildly interesting.

Coonawarra's main claim to fame is what the French call "terroir", that unique combination of climate, soil and spirit that defines a region's wine style and quality. Coonawarra's soil is especially important in this equation; it's a rich, red, volcanic soil that sits on top of a limestone base. The results are big, full-blooded red wines such as the shiraz from Zema Estate and Majella Wines, elegant cabernets such as those produced by Rymill Estate and Wynns, and a knockout earthy merlot from Katnook. Surprisingly, Katnook also does a wonderfully elegant sauvignon blanc, full of fresh lychee and gooseberry flavours with a nice crisp finish.



Navigating the Coonawarra is dead easy. It's a cigar-shaped strip of land with one main road, the Riddoch Highway, running through the centre, and wineries off either side.

At the southern end is the town of Penola, established in 1850, and regarded as the oldest village on the Limestone Coast. It was also home to Australian poet John Shaw Neilson,

and saint-in-the-making, Mary Mackillop. Maps and local information are available either at the Penola Visitor Information Centre, or from the South Australian Visitor & Travel Centre (details below).

One of the best places to stay has to be Punters Vineyard Retreat, built by the owners of the adjacent Punters Corner winery.

The retreat is a self-contained architectural beauty, hidden away among the vines and the gum trees. A bit Glen Murcuttish in style, it's exactly where you want to be after a hard day's tasting.

The retreat is a self-contained architectural beauty, hidden away among the vines and the gum trees.

It's private, quiet, and very comfortable, suitable for a couple or larger groups. The general store is about 10 minutes drive away, but if self-catering feels like too much hard work, the restaurant at Hollick winery, known as Upstairs at Hollicks, is just up the road.

One more tip: be sure to drop into the Yalumba 'Menzies' Wine Room on the Riddoch Highway.



Scenes from the holy grail for wine lovers ... the Coonawarra.



It's a good looking and user-friendly interpretation centre and tasting room, offering a selection of goodies from sparkling shiraz through to their signature wine, the Menzies Coonawarra Cabernet Sauvignon. Serious temptations no matter where you look. ☺

Text: Dominic O'Grady. The writer traveled with assistance from the South Australian Tourist Commission.

Photos: Australian Tourist Commission.



Contacts:

South Australian Visitor & Travel Centre:
Ph 1300 655 276
or www.southaustralia.com

Punters Vineyard Retreat:
Ph (08) 8737 2007 or email
punters@coonawarra.lscst.net

Upstairs at Hollicks:
Ph (08) 8737 2753
or www.hollick.com

tasting notes



Tempus Two Botrytis Semillon 2002

If you could bottle sex, this would be it. It's rich and luscious in the mouth, with enough acidity to keep the most jaded palate interested. Fruit was harvested from the Martindale Vineyard in the upper Hunter Valley, and the wine displays excellent Hunter semillon characteristics. Flavoursome, without being too fruity; sweet but not cloying. Poetry, in other words.



Punters Corner Coonawarra Cabernet Sauvignon 2000

This is beautiful cabernet, an outstanding wine from an outstanding vintage. The 2000 vintage is the product of hot and dry conditions in the Coonawarra, producing a low yield of very small berries with intense flavour. The colour is a strong red-purple, with a bouquet of blackberry. On the mouth it has a rich, full body with lovely fruit. The wine has done well in the medal department as well, winning three golds and three silvers, and scoring a 91/100 rating from James Halliday.



Nightingale Wines Chambourcin 2001

To be honest, this is a style I'm not familiar with (but am happy to express an opinion about). It's a dry and savoury red wine from the Hunter Valley that would work well with salmon or ocean trout rather than a big meaty casserole. Its relatively low alcohol count (12.5 percent) puts it in the easy drinking category. Not a blockbuster, but worth experimenting with.



Riverby Estate Sauvignon Blanc 2002

There's a certain type of person who only ever drinks New Zealand sauvignon blanc ... they're either New Zealand expats, and/or Australians with an acute love for fine-boned cool climate "savvies" with loads of taste and an elegant finish. Riverby Estate produces a sauvignon blanc that shines in this category, and its riesling is not bad, either. The 2002 is a fresh invigorating wine with a crisp finish. It's from New Zealand's Marlborough region, and well worth seeking out.

Text: Dominic O'Grady

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