

Travel *Today*

AUTUMN 2026

**BEAUTIFUL
GYMPIE
REGION**

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**A BROOME
LOVE AFFAIR**

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GEM
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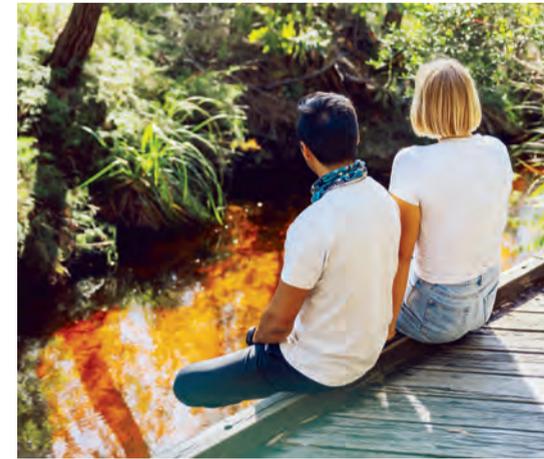
Visit
Gympie Region



Enjoying the great outdoors.



Plenty to see and do.



Great Sandy National Park-Seary's Creek.

The perfect autumn weekend getaway

Autumn is one of the most exciting times to visit the Gympie Region. As the summer heat eases into pleasant days and crisp country mornings, the landscape comes alive with colour, fresh produce and a packed calendar of festivals and community celebrations stretching from the hinterland to the coast.

Across the region, towns roll out the welcome mat for a vibrant season of events. From country shows and food events to arts markets, quirky festivals, and major sporting competitions, nearly every weekend brings a new reason to explore a different corner of the region.

Beyond the events, autumn is the perfect time to discover the landscapes that make the Gympie Region so special. It's the perfect time of year to combine the excitement of destination events with the tranquillity of some of Queensland's most beautiful scenery and natural experiences.

With spectacular scenery, welcoming communities, and a massive season of festivals and events unfolding across the region, autumn is the perfect time to turn a simple visit to the Gympie Region into a weekend of adventure.

Hinterland Villages

The region's vibrant hinterland villages are where time slows and flavour takes centre stage.

With green rolling hills and rich agricultural foundations, "farm to plate" isn't a trend — it's a way of life.

Seasonal menus are shaped by the morning harvest and local eateries proudly showcase Gympie Region's diverse produce and homegrown hospitality through every ingredient and every dish.

At the heart of it all, the Mary Valley is a true feast for the senses.

This scenic region embodies the essence of rural Queensland, offering visitors authentic country experiences, charming villages, fresh local produce, heritage attractions, and some of the most beautiful natural swimming holes in the state.

Browse weekend markets or local farm stores bursting with artisanal products, fresh vegetables, free-range eggs, raw milk, and jars of honey or chutney prepared just down the road.

Then follow scenic drives that wind past flowing creeks, vast lookouts and grazing cattle, offering natural beauty as abundant as the produce itself.

In these hinterland communities every bite tells a story, every stop feels personal, and every visit leaves you nourished in more ways than one.

Rainforest Pockets

Where rolling hinterland meets wild coastline, the Gympie Region is an outdoor playground just waiting to be explored.

From forested mountain trails to wind-swept sand dunes and tranquil creekside camps, this is a place where adventure and serenity go hand in hand.

Lace up the hiking boots and discover the ancient landscapes of Cooloola Great Walk, a multi-day journey through towering forests, pristine coast, and remote beaches.

For a shorter wander, the trails around Amamoor State Forest offer shaded rainforest paths, birdlife and peaceful creek crossings.

Continued page 3



The West Kilkivan-Kilkivan To Kingaroy Rail Trail.



Enjoying the Mary Valley.



Getting back to nature.

From page 2

For unforgettable panoramas, head to Carlo Sand Blow, where golden dunes roll toward the Coral Sea in a scene that feels almost otherworldly.

Inland, scenic drives lead to elevated lookouts that offer the perfect place for a picnic.

Nestled in Brooyar State Forest, Point Pure Lookout offers breathtaking views that must be experienced when the sun is setting for the day.

For a more tranquil oasis, check out Seary's Creek in the Great Sandy National Park.

Bring a bite to eat, swimmers, and settle into the crystal-clear waters of one

of the region's most popular swimming spots.

Coastal Escape

Where coloured sands meet crystal-clear waters, the Cooloola Coast is pure beachside adventure. This spectacular stretch of shoreline invites you to dive in, cast a line, paddle out or simply soak up the salty air.

At Rainbow Beach, dramatic cliffs of red, gold and ochre tower above a sweeping stretch of sand perfect for swimming, surfing and scenic seaside walks.

For the keen off-roaders, Double Island Point is a must. Accessible by 4WD along the beach, it's famous for its long right-hand surf break, sea kayaking adventures and seasonal whale watching. Beach camping, fishing, and boating are also

popular dedicated sites nearby.

Further north, the tranquil waters of Tin Can Bay offer a different kind of magic.

Here, visitors can experience the joy of hand-feeding wild dolphins in the shallows which is a truly memorable wildlife encounter guided by dedicated volunteers.

Calm waters make the bay ideal for stand-up paddleboarding, kayaking, boating, shoreline fishing, and relaxed waterfront picnics.

The Cooloola Coast offers a mix of accommodation types sure to suit every traveller – with resorts, hotels, tourist parks, and picturesque campsites available year-round.

Season of Events

Gympie is becoming renowned for its packed calendar of events, and the Autumn season is a prime time to get in on the action and plan the ultimate weekend escape.

10-12 April – Kilkivan Great Horse Ride & Country Festival

Celebrating its 40th anniversary, venture to the rural township of Kilkivan for a massive celebration of trail riding and life on the land. Keen riders are able to join in the 30km trail, with a massive country festival to bring endless entertainment for the whole family.

17-19 April – Accent Benchtops Rally Queensland

Experience the high adrenalin excitement of the Rally as it brings Gympie's CBD to life. With a packed three day program sure to excite punters of all ages, Gympie

Region is the only place to be.

1-31 May - GourMay Mary Valley Food Festival

Taste your way through the best of the season at GourMay. This month-long festival is a celebration of farm fresh flavours, local producers and mouth-watering paddock to plate experiences. From long lunches to farm gate tours, it's your chance to savour autumn at its most delicious.

2-3 May - Big Rosella Field Day

A day of farm tours, live music, local flavours, and all things rosella. Wander the fields, meet passionate growers and experience the colour and taste of this unique crop straight from the source.

14-16 May - Gympie Agricultural Show

Where thrilling arena events, prize-winning livestock, local produce, and family-

friendly entertainment come together for an unforgettable celebration of rural life. Join in on one of Queensland's biggest agricultural shows.

29-31 May - Goomeri Pumpkin Festival

A delightfully quirky day of pumpkin rolling, street parades, market stalls and country hospitality. Explore one of Australia's most unique festivals located in the picturesque country town of Goomeri.

With exciting events as your anchor and a feast for the senses all around, it's easy to turn one of the region's unique festivals into an unforgettable weekend escape. There's no time to wait – plan your weekend getaway to the Gympie Region.

For more information on upcoming events and things to do, visit VisitGympieRegion.com.au



Tin Can Bay Marina.



The beautiful Cooloola Coast.



Beautiful Slovenia. (Paul Thomas)

Dreaming of Slovenia

Being a Eurovision Song Contest fan has allowed me a chance to learn about a lot of European countries and makes my travel wish list longer and longer each year.

One of those countries now firmly on the must-visit list is Slovenia – more so after reading this month's page 13 story by Paul Thomas.

Paul describes beautiful lakes, the high mountain passes through the Julian Alps, rustic stone shelters, the capital Ljubljana's mix of tradition and quiet trendiness – watched over for nearly a millennium by a castle and food and views to die for.

For those unfamiliar with it, Slovenia is a country in Central/Southeast Europe bordering Italy (west), Austria (north), Hungary (northeast), and Croatia (south/east), with a short Adriatic Sea coastline.

It is situated at a crossroads of European cultural and trade routes, with Ljubljana

centrally located around the middle.

The first of the Yugoslav republics to declare independence in 1991, Paul described modern Slovenia as “young as a state but deeply rooted in Europe” and I'd add and in European history.

Stable from the outset, it joined the European Union in 2004 and adopted the euro in 2007, building a national character that is calm, orderly, and quietly self-assured (something often reflected in their Eurovision entries – which are often young and yet worldly).

For Paul it was his love of cycling that obviously drew him to Slovenia and for me it's getting to experience their music and culture through Eurovision.

All I know now is I'm more determined than ever to see it – once I get my bathroom renovation out of the way.

Tania Phillips
Editorial Coordinator

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DEADLINES 2026

Winter 2026

Publication week starting: 29th June 2026
Advertising Booking: 29th May 2026

Spring 2026

Publication week starting: 28th September 2026
Advertising Booking: 28th August 2026

Summer 2026

Publication week starting: 27th November 2026
Advertising Booking: 28th December 2026

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Budget-friendly camping options

With cost of living continuing to bite, Aussies are looking for more budget friendly holiday options driving a camping boom that's expected to skyrocket in 2026.

Tapping into this camping trend, Coles Best Buys has released a range of stylish and affordable camping products and accessories, just ahead of peak camping season during the Easter school holidays.

The Trekker collection includes everything from trendy stainless steel wine glasses to heated seat cushions, rechargeable light-up LED beanies, portable travel pet beds for our furry friends, and collapsible kettles and bowls, all in a stylish colourway.

With prices starting at just \$4, the range is tipped to be one of Coles' most

popular Best Buys yet.

“Trekker is all about making the outdoors more accessible for everyone,” says Adrian Carson, Creative Director at Trekker.

“We know more Australians are turning to camping as an affordable way to holiday, so we've designed this coordinated range to deliver innovative and practical products that make camping easier and more fun without the premium price tag.”

Leading the range is the innovative Heated Seat Cushion (RRP \$30), expected to be a standout favourite.

Designed to bring extra comfort to chilly mornings and cool evenings outdoors, the portable cushion delivers

targeted warmth in a lightweight, packable format, a smart solution for campers, festivalgoers and sideline spectators.

The range also features several clever designs that prioritise convenience and visibility at the campsite, including Glow in the Dark Tent Pegs (RRP \$10 per pack) and Glow in the Dark Guide Rope (RRP \$12 each), designed to help campers safely navigate their setup after sunset and reduce late-night trip hazards.

Trekker's limited-edition collection is available in selected Coles stores nationwide while stocks last.

Heated chair pad.





The off-grid accommodation is available at Bonnie Doone, near Monto in Queensland.

Luxury in the bush

By Lee McCarthy

With the overload of social media, screens, and unrepentant news, our minds and bodies need to get off grid and offline occasionally and travellers of all ages are seeking to find that mix of freedom and fun.

One such place is Bloodwork Cabin near Monto. It ticks all the off-grid boxes and adds a dash of luxury.

Bloodwood Cabin is located on a beef cattle property called 'Bonnie Doone' 60 kilometres west of Monto in the North Burnett region.

It is 80 kilometres from the nearest town north, Thangool/Biloela.

Fourth generation farmers Grant and Carly Burnham are the exceptional hosts, and the 20,000-acre organic certified property is a life of passion for them and their four children.

Grant and Carly use new and proven farming practices, prioritise learning and travel extensively to educate other farmers across Australia.

Carly says the property boasts a perfect blend of deep-rooted heritage and contemporary practices in relation to agriculture and their beef grazing, grass growing, carbon sequestering property.

"Our practices are focused on the re-generation of the earth and improvement of our soils," Carly said.

"It is about honouring the deep roots and beating heart of the landscape, producing natural grass-fed beef in an organic agricultural system, and thanking each and every day for the blessings of family, friends, and community."

Earlier this month Landcare Australia recognised their commitment to the environment through their ecological approach to agriculture and soil carbon work.

The Bonnie Doone experience begins before arrival with Carly sharing a playlist as soon as guests leave Monto - a move designed to get visitors in the mood before arrival.

It is 30 kilometres to Old Rawbelle Road, past the Cania Dam and Gorge turn-off and another 2.5km from the front gate.

Bloodwood Cabin is a short drive on from the homestead, set atop a gentle hill and is constructed with Australian Ironbark milled on the property.

Heavy roller doors with old industrial handles function as retractable modesty partitions in the bathroom on one side of the building offering privacy or expansive rural views.

The bath is recessed into the hardwood floor to allow for overflow and the toilet and rustic shower, along with handmade washers and carefully selected natural products and homemade soap added to tactile joy of the room.

Inside the sleeping area, recycled French doors placed horizontally make up one wall next to the comfortable king size bed with thick, soft linen sheet looking down over the property and beside this a heavy timber and glass door which opens to capture the breezes and overlooks the kangaroos and abundant bird life.

A curated selection of books and games for guests and fire set in the fireplace inside the cabin offer an easy indulgence of time well spent.

There is a much scrubbed timber table, bone handle knives, clay plates, along with the glow of lantern lights which spill over the table offering a place and time to chat, laugh, and delight in exquisite simplicity without competing with technology.

A veritable bounty of home-grown organic leaves, radishes, carrots, shallots, edible flowers grown by son Knox are provided for guests use as well as tea leaves and ground coffee, freshly cracked salt, and pepper, home grown sausages, eggs, milk, red wine and cold water and all bring such simple joy.

A hot plate sits outside the main door beside the big old laundry tub and serves as the kitchen or guests can cook in the Weber or directly on the coals.

There is a camp fire set between two chairs looking over the plunge pool and Bonnie Doone to enhance the adventure.

The rustic cabin is simple but complex, raw but luxurious, silent but full of birdlife, off grid but with an abundance of hot water and smart engineering.

It is perfect for time away and belies the enormous amount of work and thought that has gone into the clever use of recycled materials used to make the cabin functional, safe, and exciting.

It's rural, raw, simple, and slow living at its best and I would highly recommend the experience.

Bloodwood Cabin is at 2141 Old Rawbelle Road Monto, and is available to rent on Air BnB or via their website <https://www.bonnieoone.com.au/bloodwood-cabin/> or phone (07) 4167 8902 or email on admin@bonnieoone.com.au.

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FIELD DAY
2 & 3 May

Chef demos Farm tours Markets
Art Live music Kids activities & more!

📍 Petersen's Farm - 8 Reilly Rd, Woolooga

www.petersensfarm.com.au/big-rosella-field-day



The Village Green in Amamoor. Locals and visitors come out to play in May this vibrant month-long program of food experiences, farm tours, music and community events. (Leeroy Todd)



Indoor, outdoor and alfresco dining showing off the products of the region are some of the highlights of GourMay 2026 in Gympie's Mary Valley.

Beloved GourMay festival returns

Renowned chef Matt Golinski and Mary Valley's own Martin Duncan have been announced as the official ambassadors for GourMay Mary Valley 2026, flying the flag for one of the region's most loved food and culture festivals.

The month-long celebration of local produce, people and place returns this May, showcasing the best of the Mary Valley through a vibrant program of food experiences, farm tours, music and community events.

Chef Matt, a long-time champion of regional food and sustainable farming, will lead a series of cooking masterclasses and special dining events throughout the festival, sharing his passion for local produce and seasonal cooking.

Martin Duncan, well-known across the region for his enthusiasm for community

events and storytelling, takes on the role of Festival Day Host.

Martin will also lead several unique festival experiences, including hosting Sconversations at Stockyard Valley in Coles Creek and guiding visitors on a special bus tour as part of the Mary Valley Farm Trail.

Across the month, both ambassadors will appear at a range of events throughout the valley, bringing their energy, humour and love of the region to the festival program.

Visitors can expect a packed calendar of experiences celebrating the flavours and lifestyle of the Mary Valley, including cooking masterclasses, long lunches and dinners set against sweeping valley views, sunrise breakfasts, and a variety of music, art, film and dance events.

The New Mary Valley Farm Trail will be a highlight, offering both self-drive and two exclusive guided tours with Matt and Martin that give visitors the chance to meet local producers, explore farms and taste their way through the valley.

Festival favourites will also return, including the Big Picnic and a relaxed campfire dinner under the stars.

GourMay Mary Valley continues to grow as one of regional Queensland's most distinctive and authentic food festivals, bringing locals and visitors together to celebrate the rich produce, creativity and community spirit of the valley.

To view the full program and start planning your visit, head to: www.gourmay-maryvalley.com.au

Lawrence leads music muster

The Gympie Music Muster has named multi-Golden Guitar winner Amber Lawrence as Ambassador, for the 2026 festival, held 27-30 August.

Joining Amber so far are some of Australia's most loved live acts, including Lee Kernaghan, The Wolfe Brothers, Graeme Connors, James Blundell, James Johnston, Brooke McClymont and Adam Eckersley, Adam Eckersley Band, Beccy Cole, Sara Berki, Taylor Moss, Canadians PETRIC, Pierce Brothers and more, with dozens of artists still to be announced in the coming months.

For Amber, being named Ambassador is a full-circle moment, 20 years in the making.

"The Gympie Muster is such an iconic Australian festival, one that I could only dream of playing when I first started my career," she said.

"It's a bucket list festival to play, so it's even more of a bucket list to be trusted to

be the Ambassador.

"What an honour to be trusted to continue to spread the word of how great a festival it is and be part of the line up in 2026."

Amber first stepped onto the stage at Gympie in 2006, so the 2026 event celebrates significant milestones in her career.

"This year will be my 10th Muster, and my first Muster was 20 years ago – can you believe those stats?" she said.

"I feel its history is so important because of how long it's been running and the number of Australian legends that have played on those iconic stages.

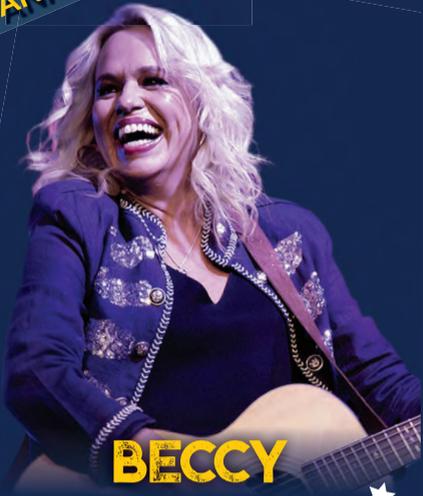
"Its location is also so special, and, of course, the people who attend including people who have never missed a Muster, people who come weeks in advance to rope off their sites, fans who stand in the sun, rain, the mud, the dust to sing along to their favourite Australian acts. It's just



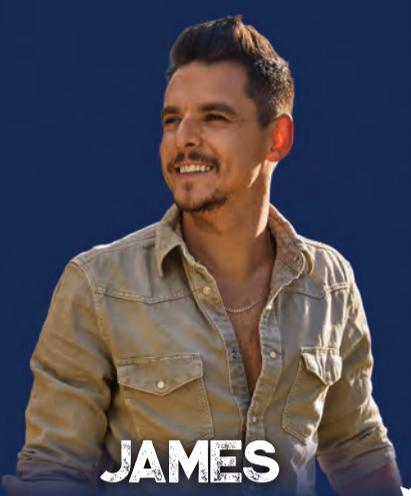
Muster Ambassador Amber Lawrence.

1ST ARTIST
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Queensland



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**JAMES
JOHNSTON** ★



**LEE
KERNAGHAN** ★



**THE WOLFE
BROTHERS** ★

**AMBER
LAWRENCE** ★

**BROOKE MCCLYMONT
& ADAM ECKERSLEY** ★

**GRAEME
CONNORS** ★

**JAMES
BLUNDELL** ★

**LANE
PITTMAN** ★

**MAX
JACKSON** ★

**SARA
BERKI** ★

**TAYLOR
MOSS** ★

**ZAC &
GEORGE** ★

ADAM ECKERSLEY BAND • BO'NESS BROTHERS • BRETT WOOD • BREWN
BROOKE SCHUBERT • CASS EAGER • CHASE THE SUN • CLAUDIA TRIPP • JAKE WHITTAKER
LUKE GEIGER • MARSHALL & THE FRO • NATHAN CAVALERI • PETRIC 🇨🇦
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Time
To Rally



Host Cecilia 'CC' Diaz-Petersen.



Farm tours to enjoy.

Woolooga's fruity flower field day

Woolooga's Big Rosella Field Days are back 2-3 May - offering a weekend-long explosion of colour, flavour and on-farm fun.

Hosted at Petersen's Farm, the Big Rosella Field Days celebrate the annual harvest of tangy, crimson-coloured rosellas (also known as wild hibiscus), with the Petersen family among Australia's largest commercial producers of the unique crop.

Now in its second decade, the event delights locals and interstate visitors alike, blending food, farming, creativity and community in a relaxed country setting.

This year's program builds on much-loved favourites while adding fresh energy, with lively cook-offs between local personalities and chefs, rosella races, a silent disco, live music and expanded farmers markets.

Demonstrations from chefs including Matt Golinski and Dominique Rizzo, farm tours and creative experiences will once

again round out the event and showcase just how versatile rosellas can be beyond the jam jar.

The atmosphere is deliberately low-fuss and welcoming - like an old-fashioned country fair with a distinctly modern paddock-to-plate twist.

Host Cecilia 'CC' Diaz-Petersen says the longevity of the event comes down to staying grounded in community and farming values.

"People tell us they love the simplicity and authentic farm experience", CC says.

"Fresh air, good food, meeting farmers and makers, and spending proper time together.

"That sense of community is what's carried us through floods, droughts, and even a virtual festival during COVID."

Usually referred to (and enjoyed) as a fruit, rosella is a flower believed to have arrived in Australia thousands of years ago.

It's incredibly rich in Vitamin C and has a beautiful tart, rhubarb-like flavour, and

has historically been popular with First Nations peoples and later European settlers for its abundance and nutrition.

Today, it's growing a legion of fans using it in syrups, with champagne, in meat marinades and more.

CC herself has an extensive range of products using them, as part of her popular Woolooga Farm Kitchen brand.

"We actually grow about 20-30 types of exotic fruit and vegetables each year, from gooseberries to okra to tomatillos and lots of chillies, but rosellas are what really draw people in," she said.

"Older generations remember making rosella jam with their own grandparents because it was plentiful in their backyards, while younger people are interested in it as a gourmet superfood."

Early tickets on sale. Big Rosella Field Days | Petersen's Farm, Lot 4 Reilly Rd, Woolooga | 2, 3 May 2026 | Adults \$12 | Kids under 12 free | petersensfarm.com.au

Revving to Gympie

The Gympie Region will throw open its doors and forest trails to its largest-ever motorsport festival this April, with the Accent Benchtops Rally Queensland (ABRQ) returning to town, bringing a whole new level of action and adventure.

The 2026 Rally from 17 to 19 April will bring the adventure to the heart of Gympie's CBD with the service park and street activations planned for Nelson Reserve and Mary Street, and exciting plans for a street stage in the middle of town.

Gympie Mayor Glen Hartwig said this year's Rally would be unlike any other, with more action in the heart of Gympie and punters being given a unique opportunity to get close to the action.

"Council is proud to be a key event

partner for Rally, and it's been great to see the relationship between the Gympie community and ABRQ continue to strengthen over the past six years - delivering an epic experience for all ages," Cr Hartwig said.

"Thanks to this outstanding local support, the offerings just keep getting bigger and bigger, and this year Rally will bring all the action right to Gympie's doorstep with the CBD converting to a racing precinct for the length of the festival weekend.

"This year we have more community involvement than ever before, with a long list of local sponsors and event partners throwing their support behind this huge event for our region.

"The iconic Velmec Automotive Wheels on Mary Street party will kick off festivities

on Friday 17 April, which will see plenty of rally cars on display, alongside food stalls, markets, and family entertainment taking over our main street.

"Across the weekend we will see high-octane action across an expanded racing hub across town, with iconic stages at Imbil, Amamoor, Brooyar, and Glastonbury forests and for the first time, the introduction of the Campbells Super Special Stage (Street Stage) in the middle of Gympie.

"This nationally significant motorsport and festival experience is not to be missed, and I thank ABRQ, sponsors, and partners for choosing our great region to get engines revving."

For more information visit <https://rallyqueensland.com.au/>

GYMPIE GOLD MINING & HISTORICAL MUSEUM

Discover the history of the "town that saved Queensland". Over 25,000 items in 35 display spaces set on 4.6 hectares of land. It's an extraordinary collection of artefacts, memorabilia and machinery from Gympie region's gold mining era, industries and lifestyle. Spend time gold panning and enjoying a coffee or meal at the Gold Mine Cafe. And if you're around on the 1st, 3rd or 5th Sunday of the month, visit our vibrant outdoor Markets!

Gold Mine Cafe opens at 7am, Museum opens at 9am and closes at 4pm.

More than you expect

(07) 5482 3995

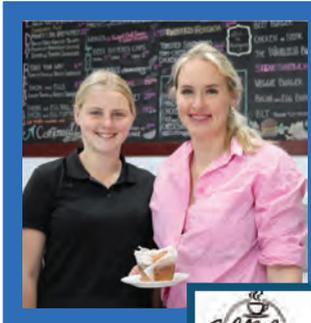
<http://gympiegoldmuseum.com.au>

info@gympiegoldmuseum.com.au

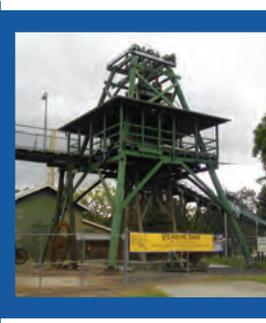
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Gympie Gold Museum, Markets & Cafe

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New Zealand is a place that stays with a visitor long after they leave — fresh air, wide open spaces, and warm hospitality.

With the comfort, care and expertise of Grand Pacific Tours, all someone has to do is say yes to the adventure.

Call today to Secure a NZ Holiday – with Grand-Pacific Tours in Fruition Travel Group.

Sydney lives in Vivid colour

In 2026, Vivid Sydney invites visitors to rediscover the Harbour City in bold, bright and inquisitive new ways.

This year, the festival takes its first steps into a new era with its expansion into daytime activities with a selection of installations, talks, and food experiences, before the city transforms again each night into its signature glow.

Running from Friday 22 May to Saturday 13 June, the 23 day program brings together the full breadth of the city's creative identity across Vivid Light, Vivid Music, Vivid Minds and Vivid Food.

More than 80 per cent of the festival remains free, including the entire Vivid Light Walk, an unbroken 6.5 kilometre journey featuring over 43 installations and projections created by acclaimed local and international artists.

The Vivid Light Walk stretches across Circular Quay, The Rocks, Barangaroo and Darling Harbour, with additional venues in and around the CBD hosting Vivid Music,

Vivid Food and Vivid Minds events that bring the entire city into the experience.

Showcasing Sydney's creative pulse during winter, Vivid Sydney will feature collaborations for a series of events with Biennale Sydney, as well as cultural institutions, venues and arts companies such as the Museum of Contemporary Art Australia, Australian National Maritime Museum, City Recital Hall, The Mint, Carriageworks, State Library of NSW, Sydney Opera House and more.

Last year, Vivid Sydney partnered with more than 400 local businesses, enriching a global cultural celebration that draws millions of visitors to the city and strengthens NSW's visitor and night time economies.

Expressions of interest for the 2026 Vivid Sydney Local Business Program are now open and close on 3 April 2026.

Vivid Sydney 2026 marks Brett Sheehy AO's first year as Festival Director; a creative homecoming after two decades

leading major festivals and arts companies across Australia.

"For 2026 we are expanding our program into new artforms including aerial performance, daytime public art, theatre and dance. These join our vast Vivid Minds, Light, Music and Food offerings to now make your Vivid Sydney one of the great comprehensive arts festivals of the world," Sheehy said.

"This year we invite you to go beyond your previous expectations of Vivid Sydney into a bold new festival designed to surprise, delight, challenge, entertain, and fill you with joy.

"Whether you encounter Vivid Sydney as a happy observer, an eager participant, or someone keen to engage with one of our dozens of interactive opportunities, we can promise you a festival of a lifetime."

Tickets for Vivid Sydney are on sale now. For more information and for a full list of events, go to vivid Sydney.com




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The Horizon Festival provides 10 days of creativity and unforgettable experiences across the region.

Keep the summer feeling alive

Summer may be officially over, but not on the Sunshine Coast, where the lingering autumn warmth makes getting out and about even more attractive.

New hotel delivers 'Mediterranean chic'

The unveiling of the Avani Mooloolaba Beach Hotel marks the first major internationally branded, full-service hotel to open on the Sunshine Coast in nearly four decades.

Opening in May, the 180-room hotel blends a relaxed beachside vibe with sophisticated comfort in the heart of Mooloolaba, moments from the beach, restaurants, boutiques and experiences.

The stylish rooms and suites are ideal for everything from indulgent special occasions to casual weekend family getaways.

The hotel's standout feature is Sully's Rooftop – a pool, bar and dining space boasting sweeping views, while the menu champions local produce, including famous Mooloolaba prawns.

Great walks with a touch of comfort

The 'Great Walks' of the Sunshine Coast are perfect for autumn, especially when combined with luxe overnight accommodation.

The more adventurous will enjoy the 102km Cooloola Great Walk, which requires you to carry everything on your

back as you traverse the Great Sandy National Park.

Meanwhile, the Hinterland Great Walk and Conondale Range Great Walk allow you to break up your stay at places such as the newly opened Seven Hills Estate or multi-award-winning Narrows Escape Rainforest Retreat.

This also makes for a great opportunity to explore the 'Three Ms' – Montville, Mapleton and Maleny – located along the Blackall Range ridge.

Widen your horizon with premier arts and culture festival

Horizon Festival, the Sunshine Coast's premier celebration of people, place and possibility, returns from 1–10 May 2026 with 10 days of creativity and unforgettable experiences across the region.

From joyous sunset performances along the coast to tranquil hinterland settings and music energising our urban streets, Horizon Festival marks its 10th year in 2026 with a world-class program of more than 35 events across the region.

Stargazing on the Sunshine Coast

The elevated hinterland areas of the Sunshine Coast offer incredible visibility, perfect for spotting everything from constellations to shooting stars – and even the shimmering arc of the Milky Way.

Mystic Mountain Tours offers regular Night Sky

Journey experiences between May and October, hosted by local experts who take astral enthusiasts to the best vantage points to soak up the shimmering skies, with guided viewing through state-of-the-art telescopes.

A taste of Thailand in the heart of the hinterland

The Sunshine Coast is renowned for its fresh produce, with a subtropical climate and fertile soils capable of growing almost any fruit, vegetable, herb or spice.

It is the perfect setting for Spirit House in Yandina, which opened 30 years ago as a haven for Thai-style dining and hospitality among five acres of tropical gardens.

Guests can experience the vibrant cuisine in the restaurant or at the cooking school, which hosts hands-on classes year-round.

Also in the hinterland is Tamarind at Maleny, along with the recently opened Thai and Asian street food-inspired restaurant, Pocky, where the food is "full of flavour and fun to eat".

Discover more holiday inspiration at visitsunshinecoast.com.au



Spirit House in Yandina is a haven for Thai-style dining.



The Avani Mooloolaba Beach Hotel delivers 'Mediterranean chic'.

📍 MOOLOOLABA BEACH, SUNSHINE COAST

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If there's one thing that sums up Broome, it's the camels walking along Cable Beach at sunset. (Supplied).



A tour of Broome by Trike with a local is a great way to get to experience the region.

A love affair with Broome

By Lucy Moring

Three years ago, I left the UK with a backpack and a one-way ticket to Australia.

Fast forward to today and I'm still here, currently working in Rainbow Beach to top up my funds before my next leg of travel.

I'm over halfway through my lap of Australia in my trusty 2009 Subaru Forester, camping in a second-hand swag that's seen just about every kind of weather this country has to offer.

Starting in Perth, I headed south to Esperance, then looped back up the entire West Coast, through the Northern Territory and into regional Queensland, before heading down to Rainbow Beach.

It has been the journey of a lifetime.

Campfire dinners, corrugated roads, breakdown scares, tropical water holes, incredible coastlines and endless sunsets.

People always ask, "What's been your favourite place?" While it's almost impossible to answer, one place that truly stood out to me is Broome in Western Australia.

We arrived late October, just as the wet season was creeping in.

Sleeping in a swag in that kind of heat and humidity is not for the faint-hearted.

To make matters worse, we were surrounded by flashy campervans with air conditioning units humming through the night, a cruel reminder that most travellers were doing this lap with a bit more comfort than us.

Despite the sticky nights, Broome itself fascinated me from the very beginning.

On our first day, we did a trike tour with a local guide.

As we cruised through the streets with the warm wind blasting against us, he told us about Broome's rich multicultural identity, rooted in the late 1800s pearling boom.

Chinese merchants were pioneers of the industry alongside Japanese, Malay, and Aboriginal workers, shaping the town into something truly unique.

You can still see that influence today with Asian supermarkets lining the streets and decorative lanterns hanging outside shops.

Contrasting to the British and European dominated culture I'd grown used to on much of the East and West Coast, Broome felt entirely unique and complex.

What really struck me the most though was the landscape.

The Kimberley region is famous for the red rocks and stunning sunsets and seeing them in person was incredible.

Walking along Simpson Beach, Roebuck Bay and out to Gantheaume Point, the stark contrast between the deep orange and the turquoise water was like nothing I'd ever seen before, it felt like a different planet.

Our guide showed us the natural pigment 'ochre' that have been used in Aboriginal art for thousands of years and holds deep cultural significance to the Yawuru people, the Traditional Owners of the Broome area. This experience was incredible and highlighted the beauty and rawness of the Kimberley landscape.

It felt like I was truly experiencing 'proper' Australia. I urge all backpackers to see this part of Australia, not just the iconic surf towns and city skylines up the East Coast.

If there's one thing that sums up Broome, it's the camels walking along Cable Beach at sunset.

I was fascinated to learn that Australia has the largest population of feral camels in the world, now an iconic part of the Broome experience.

While we didn't do the camel ride ourselves due to our backpacker budget, every evening we'd sit on the beach and watch the silhouettes move along the shoreline as the sun set into the Indian Ocean.

Broome also surprised me with its laid-back brewery scene. We headed to the Matso's brewery, the birthplace of Australia's first alcoholic ginger beer, which was such a reward after hot days exploring.

We were also brave enough to try some of their interesting fusions like the Angry Ranga (spicy chilli ginger beer).

As I continue my lap of Australia, I know there are still so many incredible places ahead.

However, Broome sticks in my mind, not because it was the most comfortable (far from it), but because it reminded me why I left home in the first place.

To learn stories I'd never heard before. To see landscapes that simply don't exist back in the UK and meet people who expand my understanding of the world.



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Lake Bled, with its stunning island along with Bled Castle perched above, is a must-visit destination in Slovenia, offering breathtaking views and rich history.

Escape to Slovenia

By Paul Thomas

Some countries win you over slowly, Slovenia does it the moment you arrive.

We entered from the north, winding our way through the dramatic switchbacks of the Vršič Pass, the highest road in the Julian Alps.

The road lifts you through forest and out onto rocky ridgelines where the scenery widens, the pace drops, and the silence feels like part of the country itself.

Near the summit we stopped for lunch at Erjavčeva Koča, a rustic stone hut that has sheltered travellers for more than a century.

There is nothing curated about it, just honest mountain hospitality, timber benches, steaming plates, and a sense that the view is part of the meal.

The pass descends into Kranjska Gora, a postcard alpine town framed by jagged peaks.

We checked into the Ramada Hotel and Suites and, in perfect timing, watched the final kilometres of the Tour de France live on television, fitting in a country that now celebrates cycling as part of its identity thanks to two-time champion Tadej Pogacar.

The next morning we hired bikes and followed the scenic valley trail toward Lake Jasna, its twin emerald pools reflecting the Alps so clearly they seem almost drawn into the water.

This is Slovenia at its most natural, beautiful without theatrics and peaceful without needing to be remote.

From Kranjska Gora we detoured south through Komenda, Pogacar's hometown, where murals and tributes celebrate the sporting hero who grew up riding those quiet local roads.

Soon after, we reached Ljubljana, the capital and the most unexpected highlight of the trip.

Elegant, compact and built for people rather than traffic, it is one of the most liveable small capitals in Europe.

Breakfast the next morning was at Norma 23, a modern cafe that captures Ljubljana's mix of tradition and quiet trendiness.

It has a relaxed, almost Scandinavian feel. From there we walked up to Ljubljana Castle, which has watched over the city for nearly a thousand years.

First a medieval fortress and later a Habsburg prison, it now stands as a symbol of continuity and identity.

The castle is also linked to Ljubljana's most enduring emblem, the dragon.



Lake Bohinj in Triglav National Park is the wilder of the two alpine lakes where visitors can swim in the cold, glassy water.

According to legend, Jason and the Argonauts fought a dragon in the marshland below, and the creature became a symbol of protection and courage.

Today it appears on the city's coat of arms and on the Dragon Bridge, which feels like a threshold into the old town.

Modern Slovenia is young as a state but deeply rooted in Europe.

It was the first of the Yugoslav republics to declare independence in 1991, and its Ten-Day War was brief compared with the conflicts that followed elsewhere.

Stable from the outset, it joined the European Union in 2004 and adopted the euro in 2007, building a national character that is calm, orderly and quietly self-assured.

From the capital we continued to Lake Bohinj in Triglav National Park, the wilder of the two alpine lakes.

We swam in the cold, glassy water and stayed nearby, wading to mist over the tree line and a sense of stillness that felt like a reset.

Before leaving Bohinj, several locals suggested we skip Lake Bled, saying it had become crowded with tourists and that Bohinj was the "real lake" for Slovenians.

The road between them is narrow and slow, with a steady line of cars heading for Bled, but the moment the lake came into view we knew we would not have missed it for anything.

Bohinj is soulful, Bled is cinematic, and together they show two different faces of Slovenia's beauty.

We stayed at Hotel Park overlooking the water.

The hotel is famous for more than its

view, it is the birthplace of the original Bled cream cake, created in 1953 by chef Ištvan Lukačevič.

More than 15,000,000 slices have been served since, still made fresh daily and cut with a hot knife so the layers do not collapse.

Later we walked up the steep path to Bled Castle for the panoramic view.

First mentioned in 1011 and perched on a 130 metre cliff, it is the oldest castle in Slovenia and once served as a strategic residence of the Bishops of Brixen.

The position says everything: the lake below appears perfectly framed by the island and mountains, as if the landscape were composed for that vantage point alone.

Back at the hotel we visited the sauna where the signs politely asked for no phones and no swimsuits, though most guests wore both, leaving us politely unsure which etiquette to follow.

We finished the evening with dinner at Pr' Mirku Grill, perched above the water as the last light turned the lake gold.

Slovenia does not need spectacle to impress.

It is scenic without being showy, cultural without pretence, and welcoming without performance.

We arrived expecting a picturesque detour and left already planning to return.

For travellers seeking Europe at its most authentic, Slovenia should be next.

IF YOU GO

Getting there: Accessible by road from northern Italy or Austria. Ljubljana Airport links to major European hubs.

When to go: May to September for warm mountain weather and open passes. Winter brings snow and skiing in Kranjska Gora.

Where to stay: Ramada Hotel and Suites, Kranjska Gora; Ibis Styles, Ljubljana; Hotel Park, Lake Bled

Where to eat: Erjavčeva Koča, Vršič Pass; JB Restaurant, Ljubljana; Pr' Mirku Grill, Lake Bled

What to do: Walk or hike the Vršič Pass; cycle to Lake Jasna; visit Komenda; explore Ljubljana Castle and Dragon Bridge; swim at Lake Bohinj; walk to Bled Castle; try the original Bled cream cake

TEASER

Slovenia may be small, but it leaves a big impression, from alpine passes and emerald lakes to elegant Ljubljana and the storybook beauty of Bled, it is Europe at its most authentic and quietly spectacular.



Tracey and Neil McKean with Judy and Tony Stephens at the Rialto Bridge in Venice enjoying a pre-cruise extension before embarking on the Viking cruise.

Enjoying the joys of Europe with Viking

By Lee McCarthy

A first cruise and a first trip to Europe experiencing a different city every day - Gympie couple Tracey and Neil McKean had nothing but praise following their trip on Viking Sea in October.

Joined by Tracey's sister and brother-in-law Judy and Tony Stephens on the 12-night Viking Sea Mediterranean Odyssey, they began their journey in Venice.

"As this was our first cruise and our first trip to Europe, we loved the itinerary," Tracey enthused.

"With only one day at sea, it gave us the perfect opportunity to experience a different city every other day."

"We chose to arrive a couple of days before the cruise so we could meet up with my sister and brother-in-law and enjoy exploring Venice at our own pace."

Viking offers the opportunity to enjoy pre and post cruise extensions, which Tracey said were quite appealing since they take care of everything for you including accommodation, activities, and airport transfers.

"If we take another Viking cruise in the

future, we'd definitely consider adding one of these extensions," she said. "From the moment we were greeted at the Fusina (Venice) cruise terminal we realised that this was going to be a special holiday.

"A glass of bubbles on arrival and a welcome induction in the ship's Star Theatre then off to start exploring.

"The staff were professional, friendly, and had a great sense of humour, making it easy for us to settle in."

"We loved that the shared spaces weren't crowded and there were plenty of places to sit and relax with a drink and we were excited to check out the dining options, all of which are included in your trip.

"Oh, and it was quiet. This was a no kid cruise, for those looking for a more relaxed kind of holiday."

She said from there they explored new destinations including Sibenik and Dubrovnik in Croatia, Corfu in Greece, Naples, Rome and Pisa in Italy, Villefranche-sur-Mer in France with an excursion to Monaco, followed by Marseille and finally Tarragona in Spain.

"The staff really added to our experience, we met amazing professional young

people from different countries who greeted us by name after the first meeting, made us laugh and knew our favourite beverages.

"It didn't take us long to realise that the trip we booked was amazing value for money. Every room has a verandah and a view.

"The list of inclusions is extensive. Included in your ticket are all meals at all ship restaurants, 24-hour room service, beer/wine/soft drinks with lunch and dinner plus 24-hour specialty coffees and teas, one shore excursion per port, access to spa/fitness areas, entertainment plus Wi-Fi so you can share your memories with those at home."

She said the ship was immaculate and reassuring to learn that every Viking cabin has its own dedicated air supply, meaning no shared air between rooms.

"The Viking Cruise embarkation and disembarkation process was effortless, from our luggage being collected at the port on our arrival and delivered straight to our stateroom, to being taken to the terminal on the final day for an easy departure.

Continued page 15



Touring the ancient streets of Pompeii looking towards Mt Vesuvius.



Viking Mediterranean Odyssey map overview.



The Gympie group of Tracey and Neil McKean and Tony and Judy Stephens relaxing on deck enjoying a game of shuffleboard with stunning Greece as a backdrop.



Watching over the crowds at the Trevi Fountain at this rooftop gem in Rome.



Tracey and Neil McKean with Judy and Tony Stephens at the Rialto Bridge in Venice enjoying a pre-cruise extension before embarking on the Viking cruise.

From page 14

“Every time we left the ship for a tour, we were offered cold water to take with us and then greeted warmly on our return.

“One of the great things about Viking is that a complimentary excursion is included at every port, with additional optional tours available if you are looking for a different experience.

“Across our ten tour days, we chose to upgrade four of them, including unforgettable visits to the Krka Waterfalls in Croatia, a charming winery in the hills of Corfu, Greece, and the ancient preserved Roman city of Pompeii.

“We didn’t feel that we needed to take any extra tours on our own, most of the tours allow you more time in port to explore if you want. They provide a regular free shuttle back to the ship, so we took advantage of this in multiple cities.”

“The cruise director and her team were exceptional when it came to organising excursions. Every tour ran on time, was professionally coordinated, and featured local guides who delivered fantastic experiences with plenty of humour along the way. At the end of each day, they sought feedback and are committed to improving their offerings and exceeding expectations.”

Tracey said they had so many favourite places on our cruise it was hard to name just a few however one of the highlights was Venice.

“Getting lost in the city, gondolas, pasta, our first taste of Italy didn’t disappoint.

“We loved our Dubrovnik tour; the me-

dieval Old Town is beautifully preserved and clean. Doing the walk around its two-kilometre ancient wall is a must with stunning views over the coastline and down into the city and its terracotta rooftops.

“We had a fascinating day spent exploring the preserved ancient streets and buildings of Pompeii, that were once covered in up to six metres of volcanic ash after the 79AD eruption. Mt Vesuvius looming in the background creates an eerie atmosphere and is a constant reminder for those living in the region.

She said afternoons spent on the back of the ship while leaving the ports were also a highlight.

“One of the best views was looking back at the coastline while departing Sibernik in Croatia.

“The standout sunset of the trip was from the Adriatic Sea overlooking Dubrovnik, even the captain and crew were impressed.

“The view from the port of Naples was an eye opener with Mt Vesuvius on the skyline overlooking the city.

“One of our favourite ports was Marseille due to the close proximity to many attractions that were in walking distance from the ship. After our tour of the coastline, we opted to walk back from the city to the port and visited the La Major Cathedral and historic quarter.

The group said the most colourful spot was Burano, the Venetian island not far from Murano.

“Known for its stunningly bright houses, businesses and charming streets, it’s a beautiful spot to wander, and our photos

from here are some of our favourites.”

Rome was voted the busiest city by the group and Tracey said it was the most crowded of all their tour visits and no surprise as 2025 was also a Jubilee Year, a major catholic event that only happens every 25 years.

“We spent a fast-paced three hours exploring the city by foot on our own, first stop was the Trevi Fountain, followed by The Pantheon and then an incredible walk past ancient ruins to The Colosseum. To finish off the visit we left the city centre and headed over the Tiber River, with a stunning view of St Peter’s Basilica.

“There are plenty of warnings in Europe about pickpockets and scammers, and several of our tour guides gave helpful reminders even pointing out the types of people to be cautious of in each area we visited.

“Although we were approached quite a few times by people begging or trying to get our attention, we never felt unsafe. As long as you follow the usual common-sense precautions, no phones or wallets in pockets and keeping valuables secured in a crossbody bag worn at the front, it’s easy enough to avoid any issues.

“I am though, slightly embarrassed to admit that within ten minutes of arriving in Venice, I accepted a rose from a man, thinking he was simply being kind. The penny dropped quickly when he turned to my husband expecting payment. Nice try, buddy, but no thanks.”

A wonderful journey on a remarkable ship.

For further information please contact Viking on www.viking.com or phone 138



Arriving into the port near Sibernik, Croatia.



The group arrived in Rome only to discover 2025 was also a Jubilee Year, a major catholic event that only happens every 25 years, so it was very busy but still stunning.

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