

Escape

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3. Tertini Wines

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Open 7 days
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4. Joadja Estate

110 Joadja Road, Berrima.
Weekends 10am-5pm. Thurs,
Fri & Mon 12-5pm.
4878 5236

5. Joadja Distillery

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6. Bendooley Estate

Cellar Door 3020 Old Hume
Hwy, Berrima. Open 7 days
10am-5pm. 4877 2235

7. Centennial Vineyards

252 Centennial Rd, Bowral
Open 7 days 10am-5pm.
4861 8722

8. SH Brewing Company

Kitchen & Tap House 490 Argyle
Street, Moss Vale. Thurs 5.30-
10pm, Fri & Sat 12-10pm,
Sun 12pm-7pm. 4899 7100

9. Mount Ashby Estate

128 Nowra Rd, Moss Vale.
Open Thurs-Sun & public
hols. 11am-5pm. 4869 4792

10. Southern Highlands Wines

Cnr Oldbury Rd & Illawarra Hwy,
Sutton Forest. Open 7 days
10am-5pm. 4868 2300

11. St Maur Southern

Highlands Estate
Old Argyle Rd, Exeter.
Open Thurs-Mon 10.30am-
4.30pm. 4883 4401

12. Sallys Corner Wines

257 Sallys Corner Rd, Exeter
Open Sat-Sun & P. Hols
10.30am-4.30pm. 4883 4999

13. Cuttaway Hill Wines

212 Sally's Corner Rd, Exeter
Open Fri-Sun 10:30am - 4:30pm
or by appointment.
0409 902 982

14. Sutton Forest Estate Wines

21 Black Horse Ln, Sutton
Forest. Open Fri-Sun
& Public Hols 10am-5pm.
4878 9278

15. Eling Forest Winery

& Cellar Door
12587 Hume Hwy,
Sutton Forest. Open 7 days
10.30am-4.30pm.
4858 1788

16. Cherry Tree Hill Wines

12324 Hume Hwy, Sutton
Forest. Open 7 days.
Thurs-Mon 10am-5pm.
Tues & Wed 12pm-4pm

17. Tractorless Urban

Winery & Brewery
3/11 Pikkat Drive, Braemar
Open 10:30am - 4:30pm.
Thurs-Mon. 4858 1788
0402 217 907

18. Peppergreen Estate

13 Marketplace, Berrima.
Open Thurs to Mon until 5pm.
4877 1070



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Woodside, 252 Centennial Road, Bowral NSW, 2576 [f cvrestaurant](#) [cvrestaurant](#) Photo: ameliasoegijono.com

Welcome back WEDDINGS

With loved up couples chaffing at the bit to finally walk down the aisle after enforced delay, we talk to some clever Highlands professionals helping the betrothed achieve their most magical of days.

WORDS ALEX SPEED



Image of Kalinya Estate by Andrew Szopory



Wedding Photographer *Thomas Stewart*

What makes a good wedding photo and are some couples harder to shoot than others? A great photo makes the viewer feel they were there, with the couple. It conveys that sense of joy present at weddings while also being really lovely to look at. Some couples are more relaxed in front of the camera while some are a little nervous, and say they feel very unphotogenic. However, it's those couples, who don't think they photograph well who are actually my favourite to shoot.

What are your favourite SH locations? There are so many venues I love with such a diverse range of styles that I honestly can't list my favourites. What I do LOVE is the fields, forests and paddocks we have. Incredible options for photos.

Got a favourite season to get married here? Autumn! Soft golden sunlight, cooler days, delicious colours in the trees.

Shooting a wedding looks like hard work. What's always your biggest concern? It is hard work but I remind myself that I'm not performing open heart surgery so there are tougher jobs. My biggest concern is the 'juggling act' as photographers are at the mercy of different elements, many out of our control. Things like locations, timing, weather, the chemistry of couples. And that, despite these ever changing factors, which all have an affect on our final images, we must deliver a top-quality product for which we've been paid. It's tough but also a wonderful challenge.

What's one wedding that always sticks in your mind? I shot a wedding at the incredible venue, Mali Brae Farm a few years ago. The bride's grandmother came to the wedding in a patient transport vehicle as she was permanently in bed and couldn't walk. The ceremony was in a spot that required some walking and grandma's vehicle couldn't access it. Greg, the owner, literally dug up and removed part of the fence to allow the vehicle to get through so granny could be at the ceremony. She watched the whole thing from the comfort of her hospital bed. It was a wonderful thing to see, and a true reminder of what's important at weddings.

Wedding Celebrant *Diana Kelly*

Why a marriage celebrant? Flattery!

I became a celebrant four years ago when one of our venue owners suggested I would make a good one! It wasn't too long before I found myself sitting in a training course in Canberra, and I loved it from day one. I worked as a television and theatre producer for years which gave me a great understanding of how people can react in stressful and stimulating situations. I love to be able to hold their hand or lead the way.

What makes a good wedding ceremony, and are some couples harder to marry than others?

I always try to ensure the ceremonies I do are personal and totally reflective of who the couple are; it can only be their ceremony. I never presume or apply a "one for all" approach. If a couple doesn't know exactly what they want at the time you meet with them, they usually know what they don't want once they see it on paper with the first draft. Every couple is different and I love that.

Favourite marrying locations here? The Southern Highlands is a unique location because of its natural beauty and seasons and all our venues offer something different and special. For me it's all about the atmosphere created. Capture the love in the room and the ceremony will be all the more memorable and beautiful.

Favourite season to utter those famous words, "by the power vested in me"...? Winter. There is something special about winter in the Highlands and what can be conjured up with colours, flowers and candlelight! So romantic.

Is there one particular wedding that always sticks in your mind? It was my very first actually. They were a great young couple, first marriage for both but we just connected on our first meeting. I was very nervous of course and it remains one of the biggest weddings I have ever done but it all came together on the day. It was very special. Another one that sticks in my mind was for two friends. They hired Kangaloon Hall, and had a bagpipe player and we held the ceremony on the stage which was decorated like a forest setting. It was such a happy, fun and crazy wedding. I shall never forget it.



Caterers: Chef in Your Kitchen *Kelly & Michael Garske*

What makes a good wedding feast? When we married, we chose a cocktail reception and we love this style as it is elegant yet informal with plenty of food. 14 courses all up! Share platters are a very popular option now too and are a perfect blend of sit down reception, with lots of choice and variety, while all the guests remain seated. We also cater for every dietary requirement from diets and allergies to vegan and vegetarian. We've even catered a full paleo wedding.

Favourite marrying locations? There are so many wonderful private properties we have catered at ... beautiful gardens, woolsheds, marques on farm paddocks. There are also wonderful local halls that offer a unique event such as Exeter Village Hall and Burrawang School of Arts.

Got a favourite marrying season in terms of menus? Autumn means lots of seasonal vegetable varieties and milder weather conditions make this a great option. Winter, often not considered for weddings, can feature slow cooked meats, roasted veg and scrumptious hot desserts. Spring in the Highlands means beautiful tulips in the gardens and delicious spring salads and vegetables on the menu. Summer is all about berries and canapes in the garden.

Any wedding that particularly sticks in your mind? We catered for a pop-up wedding at The Secret Garden, Wildes Meadow last year. The bride and groom were so relaxed and wanted a beautiful celebration but without the fanfare. The ceremony was at 10am followed by champagne in the gardens followed by cocktail style lunch canapes. Wedding cake was served at 12.30pm and everybody left at 1pm. Fabulous idea. ►

A WEDDING DESTINATION LIKE NO OTHER



Bendooley Estate sits just outside the historic Southern Highlands village of Berrima. Situated between Sydney and Canberra, the Estate offers an idyllic setting for wedding ceremonies and receptions.

Two venue spaces are available, including the iconic Berkelouw Book Barn and the exquisite custom-built venue space, The Stables. Featuring breathtaking gardens and the rolling landscape of the Highlands, the majestic Bendooley Estate is truly unrivalled for its beauty.

For style, elegance and exceptional food in a magnificent rural setting, look no further than this remarkable venue.

Bendooley
— Estate —

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Florist: Botanica Style Co

Jessica O'Neill

Why a florist? I have a BA in Set & Costume Design for Film & Theatre, which turned out to be a fantastic foundation for wedding design. I felt really passionate about creating beautiful things and found myself getting frustrated with compromising aesthetics for practicalities. I threw myself into a floristry course and never looked back. I come from a long line of watercolour artists and garden designers so I think it's in my blood.

What do flowers bring to a wedding, and what's the secret to amazing flowers? Flowers absolutely establish the mood in a space and bring about a sense of occasion. Flowers bring life to an old stone church and transform a restaurant into a reception. My top industry insider tip is to use the flowers when they're at their absolute best. The more open and voluminous, the more fragrant and frankly more value for money. Sometimes that means day four or five.

Do you have favourite flowers for the different seasons in the Highlands? Oh absolutely! I love to draw inspiration from the changing seasons and whenever possible use locally seasonally grown product. For spring weddings, I love to use delicate Lily of the Valley, Forget Me Nots, fragrant Lilac, everyone's favourite - Peonies. Summer often calls for bigger blowsier blooms such as Dahlias, hydrangeas, heavy garden roses, vast

foliage branches. I love incorporating dried botanicals into late summer weddings. Autumn is divine in the Highlands, faded late summer roses, Japanese maple, berry laden branches. Winter evokes a more sculptural aesthetic and dramatic blooms, flowering magnolia branches, decadent parrot tulips, hellebores, dramatic black centre anemones.

Installations seem to be big news – does bigger mean better? I will always advocate for quality over quantity. That being said, the Highlands is the destination for luxury weddings and installations like the beautiful ones we create at venues such as Bendooley Estate are fast becoming the norm. A statement arch installation or ceiling dripping with blooms will guarantee the wow factor and ooze romance and glamour.

If you had to choose one wedding flower, what would it be? Roses because they're so versatile, virtually available year round and the variety is amazing. Sweet lace cluster roses. Fragrant David Austin's and heritage varieties. Wild climbing roses like Cecile Brunner. Voluptuous imported blooms purposely bred in the most perfect toffee, latte and champagne tones. Local roses in 'perfect white' bought by the bucket.

Bendooley Book Barn with flowers by Botanica Style Co (above).



Location, location, location

THE SOUTHERN HIGHLANDS HAS SOME FABULOUS WEDDING VENUES FOR EVERY BUDGET AND TASTE AND EVERY BRIDE AND GROOM, GROOM AND GROOM, BRIDE AND BRIDE ...

COUNTRY ESTATES & HOTELS: Bendooley Estate, Berrima. **Kalinya Estate, Bargo.** Somerleys, Sutton Forest. **Robertson Hotel, Robertson.** Milton Park Country House Hotel & Spa, Bowral. **Peppers Manor House, Sutton Forest.** Sylvan Glen, Penrose. **Hopewood House, Bowral.** Gibraltar House, Bowral. **Peppers Craigieburn, Bowral.** Links House Hotel, Bowral. **Mali Brae, Moss Vale.** Retford Park, Bowral. **Fitzroy Inn, Mittagong.** Hillview Heritage Hotel, Sutton Forest. **Briars Country Lodge & Inn, Burradoo.**

OUTDOORS: GrowWild, Alpine. **Weddings in the Wilde, Wildes Meadow.** The Secret Garden, Wildes Meadow.

VINEYARDS: Centennial Vineyard Restaurant, Bowral. **Southern Highlands Winery, Sutton Forest.**

RESTAURANTS, PUBS AND CLUBS: Mittagong RSL, Mittagong. **Bowral Golf Club, Bowral.** Moss Vale Services Club, Moss Vale. **Robertson Public House, Robertson.** Dormie House at Moss Vale Golf Club, Moss Vale. **Highlands Golf Club, Mittagong.** Bundanoon Hotel, Bundanoon. **Burrawang Village Hotel, Burrawang.** BIRCH, Moss Vale. **Bundanoon Guest House, Bundanoon.** Sutton Forest Inn, Sutton Forest. **Eschalot, Berrima.** Centennial Vineyard Restaurant, Bowral.

HALLS FOR HIRE: Robertson Showground Hall, Robertson. **Canyonleigh Hall, Canyonleigh.** Exeter Community Hall, Exeter. **Burrawang School of the Arts, Burrawang.** Avoca Community Hall, Avoca. **Kangaloon Hall, Kangaloon.** Sutton Forest Hall, Sutton Forest.

BED THEN WED: VENUES WITH ONSITE ACCOMMODATION Sylvan Glen, Penrose. **Fitzroy Inn, Mittagong.** Bendooley Estate, Berrima. **Peppers Manor House, Sutton Forest.** Robertson Hotel, Robertson. **Peppers Craigieburn, Bowral.** Links House Hotel, Bowral. **Burrawang Village Hotel, Burrawang.** Mali Brae, Moss Vale. **Gibraltar Hotel, Bowral.** Springs Resort, Mittagong RSL. **Bundanoon Hotel, Bundanoon.** Milton Park Country House Hotel & Spa, Bowral.

WED THEN BED: FIRST NIGHT SNUGS The Potting Shed at Bunya House, Bowral. **Redleaf Carriages, Fitzroy Falls.** The Lazy Duck Tiny House, Exeter. **Hideout Cabin, Moss Vale.** Berida Hotel, Bowral. **Studio Cottage, Bendooley Estate.** Wild Ducks, Burrawang. **The Humpy, Wildes Meadow.** The Berrima Bakehouse Motel, Berrima. **Watershed, Robertson.**

EXTEND CELEBRATIONS AND MEET FOR BREKKIE OR LUNCH PRE OR POST WEDDING:

WEDDING MORNING BREAKFASTS: Moonacres Kitchen, Robertson. **Exeter General Store, Exeter.** Old Cheese Factory, Robertson. **Raw & Wild, Bowral.** Shaggy Cow, Mittagong. **The Corner Store, Bowral.** Highlands Merchant, Moss Vale. **Burrawang General Store Cafe, Burrawang.** Cafe Rosso, Bowral. **The Hospital Shop Cafe, Bowral.** The Grand Bistro, Bowral. **The Boston, Mittagong.** Berrima General Store, Berrima. **Links House Hotel, Bowral.** Il Pranzo, Moss Vale. **The Post Office Cafe, Moss Vale.** Rush Roasting Co, Moss Vale. **Sutton Forest Cafe, Sutton Forest.** DeliLicious, Bundanoon.

POST WEDDING RECOVERIES: Southern Highlands Brewing & Taphouse, Moss Vale. **Surveyor General Inn, Berrima.** Briars Historic Country Inn, Burradoo. **The Mill, Bowral.** Bendooley Estate, Berrima. **Burrawang Village Hotel, Burrawang.** Bundanoon Hotel, Bundanoon. **Sutton Forest Inn, Sutton Forest.** Artemis Vineyard, Mittagong. **The Royal Hotel, Bowral.** PepperGreen Estate, Berrima. **Bistro Sociale, Berida Hotel, Bowral.** Bowral Golf Club, Bowral. **Harry's On Green Lane, Bowral.**

Homegrown wedding tips

Do a reccie: Meet with some of our unique wedding professionals to help you plan, book and count the days.

Go local: Using outside suppliers means travel to the Highlands, and travel always equals more cost. Bespoke local suppliers will share their valuable inside knowledge to make your day shine. Venues such as Bendooley Estate, Milton Park Country House Hotel, Centennial Vineyards Restaurant and Mali Brae Farm have their own on-site wedding coordinator who can take care of your heart's every desire.

Think off peak: Traditionally spring and summer are the most popular seasons to marry, but there's no need to follow the crowd. There are savings to be had marrying off peak, with some Highlands venues offering discounts on venue hire, and food and beverage costs. Have a chat.

Vintage vantage: Want bespoke or truly unique? The Highlands is a treasure trove of outlets selling vintage and pre-loved clothes, accessories and homewares. Check out the fabulous Twisting Vintage and Mittagong Antiques Centre in Mittagong; Classic & Chic and Dirty Janes Bowral in Bowral and Cedar & Cloth at The Everything Store, Sutton Forest for those key killer flourishes. 📍





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Boho BURRAWANG BLISS

Tash Wilson and Marc Groves met over a footy game and fell in love. Their wedding in spring was a definite game, set, match moment. Photographer Darryn McKay captured every joyful moment.





The State of Origin will always hold special significance to Tash Wilson and Marc Groves, who met nine years ago, barracking on the Blues at Bundanoon Pub.

“Marc lived in a small town called Bombala four hours’ drive away and was staying in Bundanoon with his work,” says Tash, a cleaner from Moss Vale. “I went to watch the match with a girlfriend.” As the match played, the couple became oblivious to the interstate rivalry playing out on the small screen. “We remember making each other laugh and feeling a weird sense of comfort like we could be our complete selves around one another,” Tash recalls. Marc, who works in IT, was equally struck. “My first thought was ‘this girl is so beautiful,’” he recalls. “It wasn’t only Tash’s appearance but also her radiant smile and genuine friendly nature. I knew I couldn’t let her get away.”

When Marc returned home, the couple began a long distance, weekend relationship.

“Not being able to see each other made us miss each other more,” says Tash. “Marc moved to Moss Vale and although a lot of people said it was too soon, we started living together. Respect and attraction soon became love and our relationship has been a blessing and a gift.”

On Christmas Day 2017 Marc proposed in Hoi An, Vietnam. “We were on a private long boat cruise when Marc very nervously and beautifully got down on one knee and popped the question,” says Tash. “People were cheering as we came back in as they had witnessed our engagement. One girl even video recorded it and sent me a copy so we can cherish it forever. It was magical.”

The couple married at Burrawang Village Hotel in November. It was the perfect laid-back garden wedding.

“It was exactly the vibe we were looking for,” says Tash. “Beautiful gardens, a marquee and a fireplace not to mention the stunning backdrop of Burrawang village itself.”

Their theme was boho and the ceremony and reception were held on the hotel’s lawn in front of 100 guests. Marc and Tash married in front of a tepee altar they made with the help of groomsman Pete. Guests enjoyed canapes and cocktails in a huge marquee before dining on a laid back buffet of tandoori chicken, vegetarian skewers, roast potatoes with feta and caramelised onion, Caesar and garden salads. Dessert was a two tiered butter wedding cake, one layer with lemon curd, the other, strawberry coulis. There was a pop up bar, yard games for guests and trees draped with festoon lights.

The couple married in spring because it is their favourite season and kept their fingers crossed the weather would behave.

“The weather was perfectly warm with the sun beaming over us and although there was a cold change later in the afternoon, the pub supplied many heaters and everyone was having too much of a great time to notice,” says Marc. “Regardless of the weather the day would still have been amazing.”

Tash wore a bespoke two piece wedding dress she originally found on Google. Amazingly when she met Sydney designer, Denisse M Vera at the Bowral Wedding Festival, the pair realised it was actually one of the talented dressmaker’s designs.

Tash and Marc spent their wedding night at luxury accommodation venue, Wild Ducks in Burrawang, as Tash did the night before her wedding with her bridesmaids, her mum and sister. The couple honeymooned in Bali staying at Ubud, Nusa Lembongan and Seminyak. All in all, it was a perfect ending to a wonderful day of highlights.



details

Venue

Burrawang Village Hotel, Burrawang
burrawangvillagehotel.com.au

Bride's Dress

Denisse M Vera
denissevera.com

Bridesmaid's dresses

Petal & Pup
petalandpup.com.au

Groom's suit

Tramps, Wollongong
tramps

Wedding cake

Kate Ingmire, Applemire Cakery
@applemirecakery

Photographer

Darryn McKay
McKay wedding photography
McKayphotography.com.au
(Darryn also shot the Escape Cover)

Florist

Lilies and Lace Weddings
Liliesandlaceweddings.com.au

Bouquets, buttonholes, table arrangements

Rosey Days Studio
Roseydays.com.au

Celebrant

Allison Baldwin
Allcelebrants.com.au

Hair

Jenny Zeiser
@passiflora_hair

Music

Bodey Maiorana DJ (friend)

"My highlight was seeing Tash for the first time as she walked down the aisle towards me and being able to express our love in such a raw way in front of our family and friends was truly a moment we will never forget," says Marc. Tash concurs. Although there is one teeny detail she would change.

"Everyone tells you how fast your wedding day goes and afterwards you realise how true that is. If I could change one thing it would be trying to stay present to take in every moment." 📷

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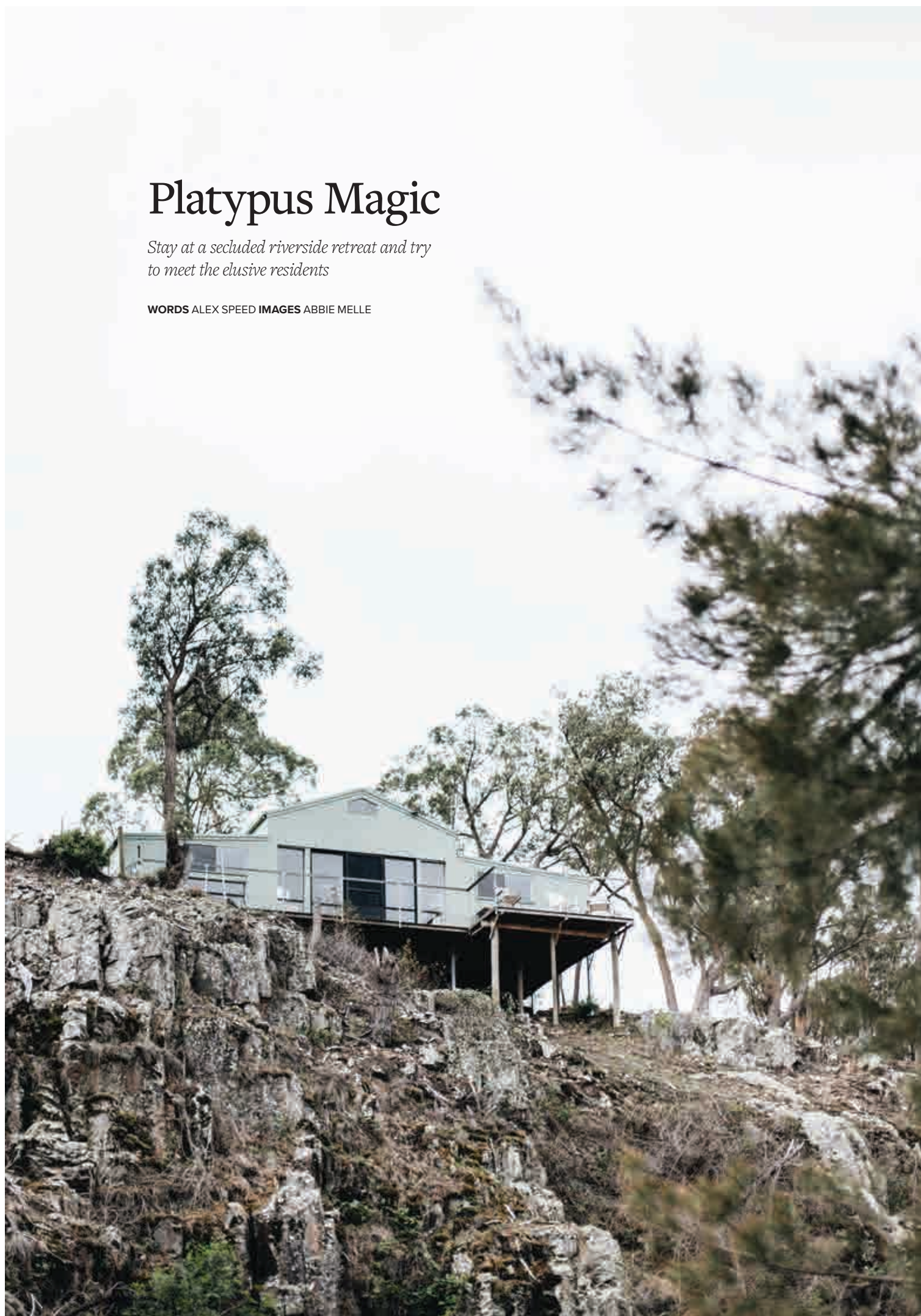
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Platypus Magic

*Stay at a secluded riverside retreat and try
to meet the elusive residents*

WORDS ALEX SPEED **IMAGES** ABBIE MELLE





Ornithorynchus anatinus is a curious creature. This iconic Australian monotreme with its duck bill, beaver tail and webbed feet so confounded the first Europeans to examine a specimen, they judged it a hoax, believing it several animals sewn together.

Taxonomy aside, the publicity shy platypus (Mulunggang in the local Gundungurra and Ngunnawal languages) can trace its lineage to prehistoric times and is particular about its habitat. Freshwater rivers throughout Tasmania and along the east and southeast coast of Australia, such as the Wollondilly River in our own backyard, are their lifeblood. Roger Fagan totally gets this. Seventeen years ago when Roger, 76, first laid eyes on his 80 hectare property at Paddys River with its three kilometres of pristine river frontage, he also knew this was the perfect home for him.

"I had always dreamed of having river frontage because when there is a drought and the dams run dry and you haven't got any water, the river keeps on flowing," Roger says. "The estate agent drove me down to the river that day and I said 'where do I sign?'" Owner of a company which manufactures camping trailers, in 2015 Roger handed control to his son, made the move permanently to Paddys Creek and started Platypus Valley Camping.

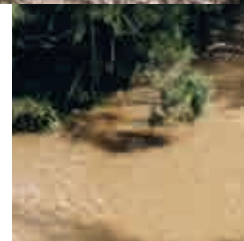
Today his secluded property has 15 different camp sites scattered along the river. One site has power while others have hot showers and long drop compost loos. All have fire pits and there are BBQs. There is a bush hut which sleeps two and a

homestead which sleeps more than 14. With pets welcome and motorbikes and quads not, this camping retreat has proved the perfect way to bankroll his and partner Nikki's retirement. "We are so busy at the moment which is fabulous given the past few months we've all had. All our camp sites are booking up before long weekends and the Cliff House at Platypus Gorge has gone berserk."

I'm here with my eldest teenager for a midweek stay. The promise of spotting a platypus did it for me. The teenager is happy at the promise of WiFi.

These are the traditional lands of the Gundungurra and Ngunnawal peoples. In 1818 Charles Throsby, surveyor James Meehan and Hamilton Hume crossed Paddys River from Moss Vale in the hope of finding a road to the coast and Jervis Bay. Our trip is easier. It takes 30 minutes from Moss Vale out across the Hume Highway, past Cayonleigh and onto the rich grazing paddocks of Paddys River. The last part of the trip is via dirt road and prone to flooding so leave the Porsche at home and bring the 4WD instead.

Perched high on a cliff, the Cliff House barn conversion is tucked away from all other campers. It is also toasty warm thanks to a wood heater. Inside an open plan kitchen and living atrium opens onto three bedrooms, two with queen beds and fabulous views over the Wollondilly and the other with two singles. There is also a queen sofa bed. Linen and towels are supplied. There are basic essentials like tea and coffee provided but you'll need everything else foodwise. It's 20 minutes away to Sutton Forest



or Berrima for a great coffee or lunch and Moss Vale is 10 minutes further for all your grocery needs. As darkness falls, I take a glass of red outside onto the house length deck and look at the night sky. The rushing of the Wollondilly River is the only sound for miles. In the morning I head down early to the river. It is a glorious spot. Fishing, canoeing and of course, swimming are favourite pastimes for Roger's guests and many repeaters bring the kids' bikes or play a game of tennis up at the homestead. There are paddocks to run in, wombats, kangaroos and echidnas to spot and endless river bends to explore. I stand looking over the water hoping to see the bullseye pattern of ripples which announces the arrival of a reclusive platypus. Today though they are staying quietly out of sight in this lovely corner of their special world.

Cliff House on Platypus Gorge, Paddys River bowralcampingandglamping.com
ESH was a guest of Cliff House




If you like the sound of that, try these...

Wollondilly River Station, Goodmans Ford:

family and pet friendly camp sites that straddle both sides of the beautiful Wollondilly River. Still accessible on Wombeyan Caves Road via Taralga wollondillyriverstation.com

Willowview, Big Hill

A 52 hectares farm stay on the Wollondilly. With accommodation for up to 16, this beauty has donkeys, horses, turkeys, chickens, sheep, alpacas and chooks and canoes to take out on the river. willowviewfarmstay.com.au

River Island Nature Retreat, Bullio: If going with the flow, au naturel is your thing then this clothing optional retreat might tickle your fancy. Offering cabin, caravans or camp site accommodation this is one out in nature option with four kilometres of unspoilt Wollondilly river frontage. riverisland.com.au 





Nothing added, nothing taken away

Winemaker Tony Zafirakos has taken inspiration from his father's lifelong hobby and turned it into a natural growing business.

WORDS ALEX SPEED
IMAGES ABBIE MELLE

Growing up the son of Greek migrants in Sydney in the 1980s, Tony Zafirakos realised the wine his parents drank didn't look much like other wine. As his friends' parents sipped clear, yellow chardonnays and lighter rieslings, Ari and Anthea Zafirakos' chosen tipples were cloudy, brightly coloured and always homemade.

"I vividly remember end of season soccer barbecues where Dad would take along these clear glass bottles," says vintner Tony, who started Ari's Natural Wine Co in 2017, now based in Sutton Forest.

"The bottles were always clear because Dad needed to see where the sediment was sitting, and the wine inside was always this really strong yellowy orange colour. Our wine never looked like shop bought wine but I also remember other parents being amazed with it."

Natural wines are part of a growing global movement, produced without the use of synthetic chemicals.

"The basic principle of natural winemaking is nothing added, nothing taken away, is what's generally said," says Tony. "The flavour and nose are very distinctive compared to traditional wine production, where the skins of the grapes are pressed off. Natural winemaking involves leaving the skins on the grapes and letting them stay in contact with the juice for a certain period of time."

Sales of natural wines are booming globally, with millennials especially concerned about the environment and what goes into their wine glass. Every part of Tony's winemaking process is done by hand, with no electricity or pumps. All his wine is wild fermented, unfiltered and unfined, which means its coloured is not clarified by filtration. Also, sulphur is not added at any stage. "Dad always made his wine without adding anything or taking anything away, including the skins from the grapes. He did everything by hand, and we helped."

Ari arrived in Australia alone as a 17 year old in 1962. He returned to his homeland often over the next 15 years, where he met and married Anthea. In 1983 the couple moved to Coogee, where they raised three children.

"Mum and Dad both grew up in villages in Greece where people grow up knowing how to grow their own vegies, make bread, forage for edible weeds and ferment wine," says Tony, 35.

"By the time I came along in 1984, my parents had already started doing the whole home-wine operation thing because Dad missed it from his childhood.

"He would go out to the markets in western Sydney each year in March or April and come home with buckets full of grapes, which we would all stomp in the backyard. Then those buckets would be moved to the garage for fermentation, and when the ►



wine was ready, Dad would bottle it and move the bottles to a little sandstone cellar he built under the house until they were ready to drink."

Growing up, tasting the first of Ari's bottles became a celebration for family and friends, says Tony.

"There was always an open policy in our house that any family or friends could have the wine for free. But over the years, natural wine started becoming a thing and my friends said, 'You should put a price on this', because as soon as Dad would bottle, we'd keep some for ourselves but the rest would get snapped up."

In 2013, Ari and Anthea retired to Bowral. Tony, then a graphic designer with his own agency in Sydney, began to spend more time in the Southern Highlands with his parents.

"I fell in love with the area and wanted to spend more time here because I found the open space so inspiring and I've always loved the countryside so I was inspired to begin."

In 2016, he decided to make a major life change and started winemaking full-time.

"Natural wines were really starting to become a thing and my friends were all in my ear to give it a go so I took some time off from work. I started Ari's Natural Wine Co in honour of my Dad and decided to go for it. I've never looked back."

Between his 2016, 2017 and 2018 vintages, Tony spent time in Italy and Germany with natural winemakers who are gaining international recognition: Michael Völker at 2naturkinder in Kitzingen, Bavaria, and Jacopo Battista at Ajola winery in Orvieto, Umbria.

"As a winemaker, you probably do only 30 to 40 vintages in a lifetime so I think going overseas doubled my experience and

learning curve," says Tony.

Determined to source fruit within a three-hour radius, initially Tony started buying grapes from Marist Brothers Wines in Mittagong. When production stopped there, he found Willow Vale vineyard, a small local affair near Mittagong. He also sourced grapes from Hill Top, Marulan, Goulburn and Canowindra. This year, due to the bushfires and the damage to local grapes, Tony bought from Ricca Terra vineyards in South Australia.

Ari's Natural Wines' core range is named after the colour spectrum of naked wines. There's a Big Red, Little Red, Pink Orange and Whiteish, as well as five other varieties including three natural sparklings referred to as Petillant Naturel, or Pet-Nats. The wines are available online or locally at Moonacres Kitchen, Robertson or BIRCH, Moss Vale. Tony also supplies bars and restaurants nationally and in South Korea and Japan.

Last year production moved to friends' property at Rockaway Farm, Sutton Forest, and Tony also credits fellow Exeter winemakers Michael and Katrina Archer of Dawning Day for their help. Now planting for next year's vintage, he says Ari and Anthea are always on hand to give advice and taste test.

"For Dad, taking his hobby full-time was too difficult when I was growing up," says Tony. "He was a taxi driver for 40 years and although he sometimes talked about doing it, he had three children and a family to support so it wasn't easy. It's nice we all get to share in this today."

For more local wineries see our drinks map on page 99.

arisnatural.wine 



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INSTA
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MY NAME IS *Vanessa Stockard*

Artist Vanessa Stockard grew up on NSW's north coast playing in remnant rainforests, chasing 'butterflies as big as my hands' and dreaming of becoming a concert pianist. At 19, when she realised she wasn't going to make it on the international music stage, Vanessa reverted to her other great love - painting - and has never looked back. A three times Archibald finalist, Vanessa's luminous, often humorous works, expertly executed, continue to gain collectors and followers around the globe. A self-confessed homebody, Vanessa paints in a lilac coloured studio in her garden in Bowral where she lives with her photographer husband and their small daughter. Recently she opened Birdcage Collective, a small curated art and lifestyle gallery in Mittagong in collaboration with friend and fellow artist Garth Nichol. She is represented by AK Bellinger Gallery.

 @vanessastockard

My name is ... Vanessa Stockard. **My life in five words is...** fun, hectic, imaginative, mad, shiny. **We moved to the Southern Highlands in...** 2010 because my husband and I wanted to live together in a place that was less busy and we wanted more space. **We love the Highlands because it's...** hard not to love the seasons, but I really like the cooler climate too. **My favourite thing to do in the Southern Highlands is ...** paint. That and visit the antique shops; we have some great ones here. **Followers of my Instagram see pics of ...** my paintings. Not me in a bikini understandably. It's too cold. **When it comes to painting, there is one truth I know** start. **I started painting...** seriously probably 10 years ago but I have thought of it as a career for 20 years in my mind. **The first thing I always say to people who tell me they want a life in art is...** do it. **In a sentence, my philosophy to finding contentment and fulfilment is...** finding your thing, whatever that is and making a life out of it. **When it comes to being an artist, the thing that has always driven me is...** some sense of urgency. **Being a finalist in the Archibald three times now is ...** validating and fun to be part of it. **Creating and developing my painted characters like Derek, Kevin and Satan allows me to...** continue creating stories. We all have our language, and mine is made of pictures. **The most precious piece of advice I ever received was...** be yourself. **My most precious loves are...** my daughter, my husband and family. Good champagne and a cheese plate. **The one art gallery in the world I love the most is...** Musee d'Orsay, Paris. **Away from the studio, I love to...** sit by the fire. **When we have friends staying with us in the Highlands, we always take them to....** Dirty Janes and Harry's on Green Lane in Bowral. **My special place in the Highlands is...** Harris Farm car park. **The lessons I hope my daughter learns from me are...** stop cutting your fringe, do what you love, be decent at the right times and indecent at the right times too. **The things I hope my paintings give people is...** some comfort, some beauty and a reminder of history. **And finally, please finish this sentence. Acclaimed artists never die, they just...** make a lot of cash when they do.

Vanessa has a solo exhibition coming up on August 22 at Scott Livesey Galleries, Prahran, Victoria.


Birdcage Collective is located behind Just a Smidge, 16A Bowral Road, Mittagong. 

Image: Will Wolfenden



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Domino, Oil on canvas, 1500mm x 1500mm

Galerie Têtu, a brand new contemporary art space situated within The Shac art complex in the village of Robertson NSW. Showcasing local, interstate and international artists.

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Galerie **TÊTU**



BEE NICE

With bees under threat globally, the dawning of a new spring is the perfect opportunity to become a local warrior for our honey-making mates. Starting point? Plant more bee-friendly garden varieties, says Bowral beekeeper Deb McLaughlin of Bulwarra Bees. "Purple flowering varieties are bee porn," Deb says. "They adore all varieties of lavender, salvia, stachys (lamb's ear), catmint, thyme and rosemary." Luckily, we have some fabulous nurseries in the Highlands (Mount Murray, Moss Vale; Wariapendi Native Nursery, Colo Vale, Welby Garden Centre, Mittagong, Tahmoor Garden Centre, Tahmoor and The Shrubbery, Exeter are a few faves) so make an outing of it and get planting. Also if you are looking for a fun, cheap, easy way to occupy the kids or grandkids, you can't go wrong with making a bee hotel. Instructions abound online but all you need is a few bricks, some bamboo and whatever other recycled material you've got lying about the garden - and soon the bees will be taking up residence at your place. "Bees are fascinating, intelligent creatures," says Deb. "They may appear domesticated, but they are independent and tenacious beings with a clear set of roles for each. Bees do what they do with precision. If the moisture content of honey is too high it will eventually spoil and start to ferment. Bees instinctively know exactly the right proportions, so the honey will never spoil. How wild is that?" If you want to go a step farther and become your own apiculturist, join John Scott, another local beekeeper, for his Eezy Beez one-day intensive Beginning in Beekeeping course. Learn about bee behaviour, how to care for your bees and what you'll need to raise happy, honey-producing bees. Sunday September 13. Hill Top. eezybeez.com.au Workshops limited to 10 people.

TOP things

As we usher out winter and start taking off layers to welcome in spring, here's a few of our favourite local things going on ...

SWING OUT SISTER

One of the saddest sights recently was seeing our local playgrounds taped up like scenes of a crime. Now all that red and white tacking has gone, it's time to revisit. The Southern Highlands Botanic Gardens new playground opened in June and has lots to keep littlies entertained, from a great climbing frame, to tyre swings and a playhouse. It is fenced to stop any would-be escapees and has shade and plenty of seating for weary parents. For bigger kids, head to Berrima Market Place Park, Old Hume Highway, Berrima with its fabulous flying fox, or Lake Alexandra, Queen Street, Mittagong for its bouncy climbing frame. For tweens, teens and freewheeling youths head to the new Bundy Skate Park on Erith Street, Bundanoon. Fun, free, outdoors and open all hours.



WILD THANG, FANCY DRESSING UP IN FEATHERS, FUR AND FACE PAINT AND DINING ON SPIT-ROASTED ANIMALS AND QUAFFING MULLED WINE WITH OTHER TRIBES IN BEAUTIFUL FORESTED SURROUNDS? FEAST OF THE BEAST IS BACK, ONLY IN A SOCIALLY DISTANCED NEW FORMAT WITH FEWER GUESTS. BROUGHT TO YOU BY WILDFEST AND HIGHLAND HARVEST FEASTS. BOOK ONLINE FOR THIS SPRING EQUINOX CELEBRATION. Saturday September 19 highlandharvestfeasts.com

HIGH AS

Nothing captures those childhood feelings quite like the thrill of flying a kite, so hotfoot it to Marulan this September and take part in the tiny town's annual Time Flies Kite Festival. There will be loads of kites to see and lots of high-octane events to get involved in, including the famous Billy Boil Cup race (all competitors are given two blocks of wood, some water, an axe or tomahawk, some paper and matches, and whoever boils their billy fastest wins). There will also be a kids' pet show and the Bol Run where you can test your strength against Mother Nature and try to pull a parachute behind you, market stalls and a mass kite fly-off. Don't forget to take your kite.

September 19 & 20, 9am to 3pm, Tony Onions Memorial Park, George Street, Marulan. marulankitefestival.org.au

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PLEIN AIR

If landscape painting is your thing or your dream, spend a very special weekend being taught by artists Jonathan Throsby and Sal Falkiner, whose own practices are entwined with remote Australian landscapes. This two day drawing and painting workshop at Ashton Park, the lovely property of former NSW politician Peta Seaton, will include advice on techniques and the building blocks of working in landscape plein air, as well as focusing on smaller scale perspectives to bring the colours and textures of rural Australia to life. Lunch, refreshments and essential materials included.

Saturday and Sunday 19 & 20 September, Ashton Park, 6077 Illawarra Highway, Moss Vale. For more information and to book ashtonparkmossvale.com.au

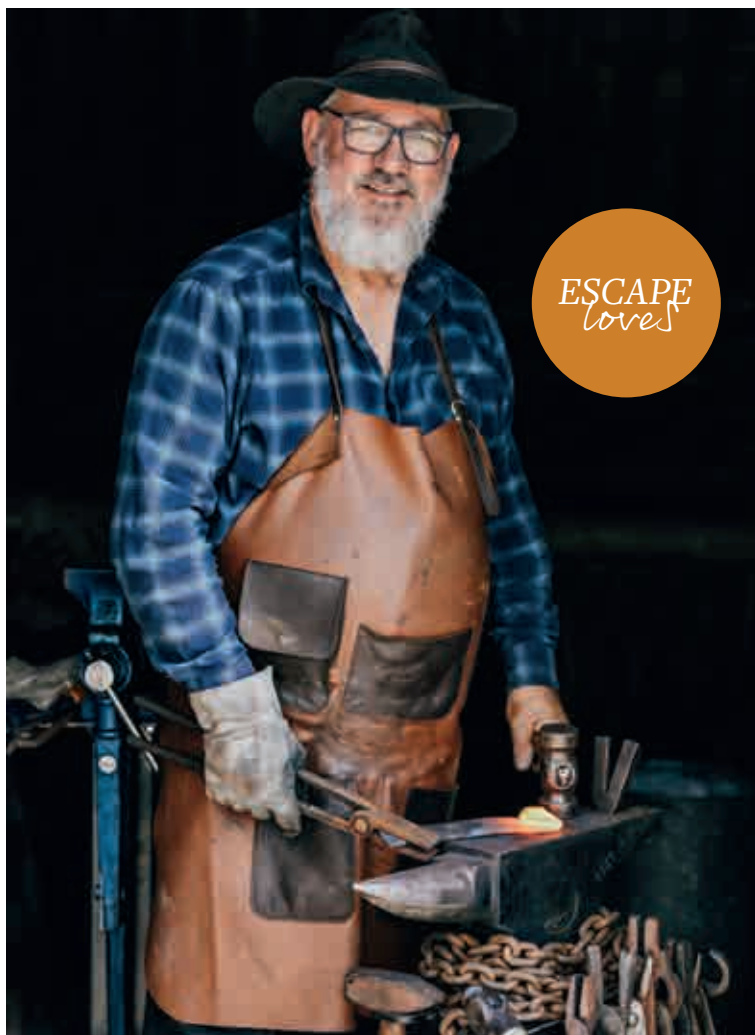


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ORCHESTRAL MOVES

Acclaimed international pianist Kathy Selby, artistic director of Selby & Friends and oft-time performer in the Southern Highlands is returning to the stage post-COVID. Only this time, it's in your living rooms, in Selby & Friends' first social distancing concert. Shot at Sydney's City Recital Hall to celebrate Beethoven's 250th birthday, Beethoven's Ghost: Ludwig from Lockdown includes Beethoven's revolutionary Ghost piano trio, his much-loved C minor Trio Opus 1 and his piano trio for Symphony No. 2. Kathy is joined by debut guest artist, violinist Harry Ward and acclaimed cellist Timo-Veikko Valve. Enjoy this musical spectacular from the comfort of your own couch. A treat for classical music lovers. Don't forget the popcorn. selbyandfriends.com.au



ESCAPE
loves

HAMMER AND TONGS

Steve Hogwood, blacksmith, teacher and founder of the 1910 Ironworks in Wildes Meadow runs great Going Hammer and Tongs Blacksmith Beginners Courses. Great for anyone who likes banging, thumping and making metal things, his all day workshops at his smithy includes fire control, forge welding, hot splitting and forging. You'll also receive lunch and refreshments.

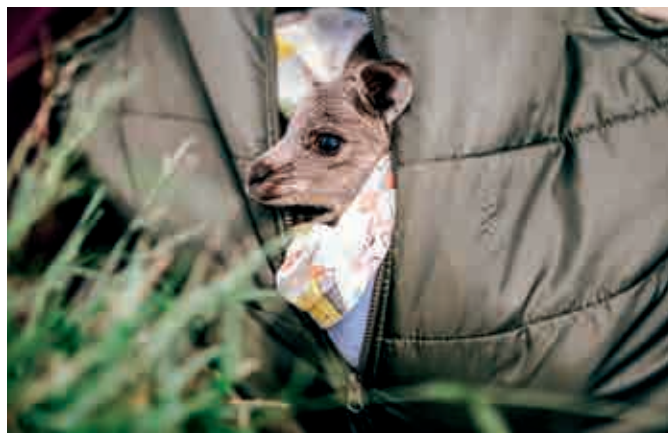
Workshops run 9.30am-3.30pm August 1, 15, 29 and September 12 & 26.

One-on-one workshops also available and group bookings welcome.

Book at 1910bc.com or stephen.hogwood@optusnet.com.au

ANIMAL RESCUE

Living in the bush, we often see injured and dead wildlife on the road. After last summer's bushfires did so much damage to the wilderness and its inhabitants, now is a good time to get some training to help as a first responder. WIRES (NSW Wildlife Information, Rescue and Education Service) has cared for and rescued wildlife for 30 years. But did you know they also train volunteers? Courses include an introductory training course and other more specialised species courses. Kickstart your training at the nearest training centre to the Highlands in Goulburn, on Sunday September 27 and help our native mates. wires.org.au





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