



Great escapes for the holiday season

WELCOME TO OUR holiday issue of **aura**. We just love summer with all its sports - cricket, sailing and of course, tennis. To celebrate this year's Australian Open, we showcase fashions on the tennis court and profile one of tennis' quiet achievers, Daphne Fancutt.

Our fifteen minutes with Jimeoin will surely convince you that he is a happy man. We catch up with famed jeweller John Calleija and reveal his plans to take Australian designs to the exclusive London market.

Glen Cowans shows us what lies beneath the ocean surface with his up-close and personal shots of sea life. It is truly a beautiful world beneath the waves.

We journey both near and far to bring you a kaleidoscope of fascinating destinations - after all, it is the holiday season. We take you to Tokyo, one of the largest and most energetic cities in the world while Diane and Michael Armstrong capture the vibrancy and unique culture of India.

John Heselwood boards Virgin Atlantic's fabulous new service to and from London and reveals what

awaits the erstwhile traveller with luxury in mind for those long haul trips across the globe..

Our road trips, weekenders and destinations span the length and breadth of the country from the quiet Queensland town of Stanthorpe and its cool climate wines to a beautifully restored hotel by the sea at Largs Bay in South Australia.

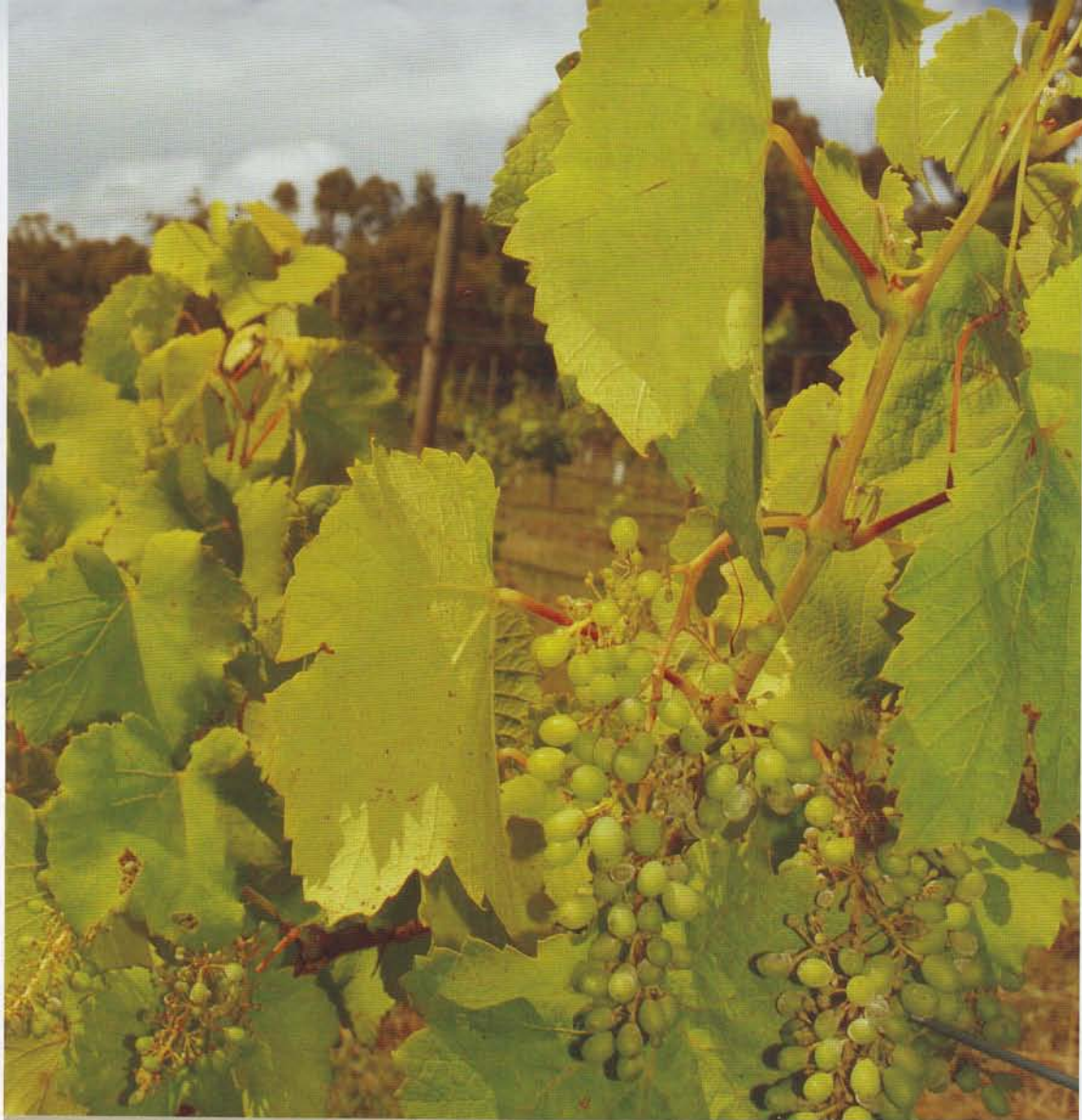
We also visit the Apple Isle and profile the quaint coastal township of Strahan.

There's also much to read in our home decor, technology and connoisseur sections and as usual Karen Phillips has the last word on the thought-provoking topic of personal branding.

Well, that's it from me, literally as this is my last issue as editor of **aura** magazine. I have thoroughly enjoyed presenting each edition with a colourful collection of articles which reflect the art of living.

Cia





a road trip to remember

STORY AND PHOTOGRAPHY CIA STUMM

PACKING MY OVERNIGHT bag and preparing to head to Stanthorpe, I made a rookie mistake. 'It's summer and the heat is searing,' I thought to myself, so I didn't pack a jumper. 'We're in a drought,' I also reasoned, so my umbrella was left behind also.

If my past travel experiences are anything to go by, then it seems like I almost invited bad weather along with me and sure enough, it was almost the second I arrived in Stanthorpe that a chill popped in the air and rain started tumbling down from the sky. But luckily for me, this time I had a backup plan and his name was Ewen Bell. "Here you go madam," Ewen said gallantly, holding an umbrella over my head while I stepped out of the car. "It seems like you brought some rain with you," he joked, not realising just how spot on he was.

The orchard and vineyard lined roads of Stanthorpe make for happy picturesque driving usually, but today, despite the rain, I was even happier than I was on my last journey to the Granite Belt. The reason for my glee was that I was being chauffeured around to all the wineries by my very own private driver, Ewen Bell, which meant that not only could I sit back and truly relax, but I could also indulge in a couple of extra glasses of wine. It also meant that for the first time, I would probably not get hopelessly lost while exploring an unfamiliar region.

Ewen, a very personable and helpful local with a booming Scottish accent, added more than one particularly useful element to our time at the Granite Belt. Not only did he know many of the winemakers personally, he also was able to point out interesting and historical landmarks during the drive to



punters yet also respected amongst connoisseurs. Symphony Hill's viticultural practices are world class. A detailed soil survey was undertaken pre-planting. This consisted of digging 45 pits with a backhoe within a 20 acre area. The soil profile at each pit was described in detail and laboratory tests performed to analyse the properties. The results of the survey were used to determine best locations for each variety planted and what soil amelioration was required pre-planting.

One of the men behind the magic, resident winemaker Mike Hayes, played host to us at the esteemed vineyard, explaining the winery's history and signature drops. Hayes is a third generation viticulturalist and winemaker. He has made wines on the Granite Belt and in various wine regions around Australia and New Zealand for the last 25 years. His passion for wine knows no bounds.

Though I honestly loved every wine I tasted at Symphony, the one I was particularly enamoured with was the shiraz and cabernet sauvignon blend called danying. The wine was named after the owners' daughter, Zara Danying, who they adopted from China in 2004 - the very month the grapes were handpicked and crushed.

'Dan' means the essence of red-like this wine - strong and vibrant. 'Ying' translates to a beautiful singing bird. Both sing a symphony, one with voice, one from the vines. Just as the wine is a blend of two varieties,

weaving their individual strength and beauty, so too is our family now a blend of Chinese and Australian cultures. The resulting wine is a beautiful blend of raspberry and blackberry, exotic spice such as nutmeg and cinnamon balanced with sweet cedar oak.

Ten per cent of sales of this wine are donated to the organisation, 'Asian Kids In Danger' which supports Asian orphans, slum children and women escaping prostitution. Naturally, I bought a couple of bottles.

With the back of Ewen's car now stacked high with bottles of wine, it was time to try something different. As a lavender lover, it was with much enthusiasm that I made a beeline for our next stop, the Aloomba Lavender Farm. Lavender is prominent in Stanthorpe and while I had become used to seeing gardens of the purple flowers on most properties, I was not prepared to see the spectacular vast fields of lavender surrounding Aloomba.

Here, we were taken on a personal tour of the farm and taught just about everything there is to know about growing and harvesting lavender and extracting the valuable oil. I left with a shopping bag full of lavender oil, bags of dried lavender and some lavender plants to plant in my own yard.

The sky had been overcast all morning and just as the heaven's opened and rain tumbled down, we arrived at our lunch (and afternoon shopping destination). Bella Rosa's Tea Rooms and Lots of Goodies is a

teahouse and an antique store, so it makes for the perfect way to spend a refined afternoon. Delve for treasures within the antique store and you will find quaint remnants from our past including old fashioned telephones and cash registers, elegantly printed tea sets and vases, and jewels and clutches that look like they came straight out of your fashionable grandmother's dresser.

Over at the tea rooms, though the staff were busy with the lunchtime rush, they ensured that we were well looked after. I was presented with an elaborately decorated tea pot and matching cup and saucer, filled with an aromatic blend of peppermint tea. For lunch I had creamy mushroom crepes and a potato and salmon crepe, garnished with the chef's special sauce (the secret is dill and mandarin sauce I was later told) and a side of fresh garden salad. For dessert, we were presented with an exquisite high tea cake tray, including everything from scones and cream to mini meringues and caramel tarts.

On the way home, though feeling tired and replete, I couldn't help but stop in at Pure Heaven Handmade Body Care Factory, a beauty and skincare label that has been making quite an impression with those in the know. With a string of awards under their belt, splurging on their all-natural products seemed like a good way to finish off my Granite Belt experience.

each location. And of course, he had an umbrella. His business, Granite Belt Winery Tours, is a revolutionary idea, and one that makes sense in an area that is becoming an increasingly popular gastronomic destination.

First stop was Robert Channon Winery, a vineyard that made headlines a few years ago after French champagne monolith Moët et Chandon argued their names were too similar. All the drama subsided however, and now all that is left is good wine.

The grounds of Robert Channon winery are impressive. Set amongst sprawling country-side and framed by a manicured rose garden, the eight hectare vineyard is fully enclosed with expensive netting, which protects against the strong winds, marauding birds and hail. A smart move considering that hail is a very real threat to wineries in the Granite Belt and has seen the end for many. Resident winemaker Mark Ravenscroft met us at the cellar door to talk all things Robert Channon and to give us a sample of their best years. By far, my favourite drop here was the 2006 Verdello, an iconic Queensland wine that made national headlines after winning a string of awards.

It wasn't the last time we were to be seeing Mark though. Ravenscroft, a South African-born winemaker, is a big player in the Granite Belt region, and is the winemaker for many different wineries in the area, including his own label and our next destination, Ravenscroft.

Ravenscroft Wines Estate is set high in the hills, at an altitude of 950 metres above sea level, 12 kilometres west of Stanthorpe. The cellar door is a charming western red cedar cottage surrounded by young vines, with views across the valley. It was opened in July 2004. Ravenscroft vines are still quite young, so until they mature properly, the winery purchases grapes from other producers.

Obviously, with such widespread respect and influence, I wasn't surprised that Mark Ravenscroft's signature blends were some of the best. My favourites were the 2006 Petit Verdot, the 2005 Reserve Cabernet and the 2005 Chardonnay. I picked up a bottle of each before leaving for our next stop.

Our final winery for the day was an intriguing one, Pyramids Road Wines. Though quite possibly the smallest winery in Queensland, we were particularly grateful that our tour guide Ewen suggested this one, as it is only one of the few remaining wineries to do everything by hand. There was something utterly romantic about tending to grapes with loving hands that made me especially curious to taste these wines. Pyramids Road only has two full-time staff, owners Sue and Warren Smith, however it is not unusual to find members of the community coming in to help with the various stages of

wine production. In fact, on the car ride over, Ewen explained to us that he would be spending the next day doing just that.

Built on an old stone fruit orchard, Pyramids Road Wines aims to produce high quality low volume handmade wines. My favourite drop here was Bernie's Blend, a wine dedicated to Bernie, Warren's father, whose help and encouragement assisted greatly in the establishment of Pyramids Road Wines. This four barrel blend is a selection of some of the best barrels from their 2005 vintage. The combination of two barrels of cabernet sauvignon, one shiraz and one mourvedre with a mix of 50% new French and American oak gives a wine of remarkable character, just like its namesake.

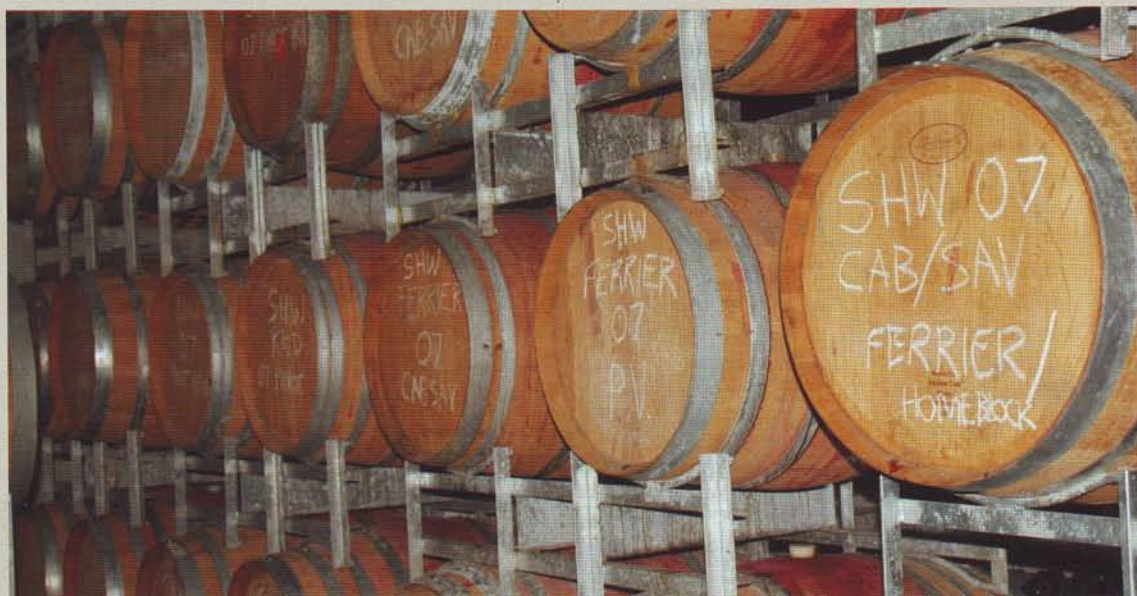
It had been a long day (and yes, 'tasting' all the different wines was starting to take its toll). We checked in to our very own luxury oasis at Alure Boutique Villas, where we enjoyed a cool and windy Stanthorpe night. Fully self-contained with a state-of-the-art kitchen, these charming little cottages have been built with luxury in mind. The bedroom is elevated and the large bed is adorned with expensive sheeting. There is a spa on the private terrace, as well as a fireplace and air conditioning. Every detail has been taken care of, from the white fluffy bathrobes to the extensive DVD library.

By the time I had settled in to Alure, there was a storm raging outside, so once I got the fire started, I snuggled back on the leather couch, switched on a movie and sampled some of the wine I had purchased that day. It was sublime. To top off a perfect but exhausting day, I had arranged for a gourmet restaurant quality meal to be prepared by Patty's on MacGregor and packed in a hamper for me to enjoy at home. The menu was Greek tonight, so I enjoyed an entree of marinated octopus, as well as tapas including dolmades, spanakopita, olives, tzatziki and pitta bread. For the main course, I had souvlaki and moussaka and a horiatiki salad with prawns. Finally, I polished it all off with a slice of semolina, a yoghurt syrup cake. I was certainly full, but as they say, when in Stanthorpe, do as the Stanthorpians do, and that is eat, drink and be very merry.

Awaking fresh the next morning to a freshly made breakfast (which was delivered to our door at the exact time requested by our lovely host, Suzie Sinclair), I was beginning to get used to this culinary lifestyle.

Ewen was back again to pick us up and show us the remaining destinations: the well-renowned Symphony Hill Winery; the sweet smelling Aloomba Lavender Farm; the Queensland College of Wine Tourism; and finally Bella Rosa's Tea Rooms and Lots of Goodies Antiques.

First stop, Symphony Hill, a winery that is popular amongst





suggested itinerary

day one

Upon arrival at Stanthorpe, enlist the services of tour guide **Ewan Young's Granite Belt Winery Tours**
Phone 0428 282 871

www.granitebeltwinerytours.com.au

Robert Channon Wines

Amiens Road/ Bradley Lane, Amiens

www.robertchannonwines.com

Ravens Croft Wines

274 Spring Creek Road, Stanthorpe

www.ravenscroftwines.com.au

Pyramids Road Wines

25 Wyberba Lane, Wyberba

www.pyramidsroad.com.au

Alure Boutique Villas

280 Mt Tully Road, Stanthorpe

www.alurestanthorpe.com.au

Patty's on McGregor

2 McGregor Terrace, Stanthorpe

Phone 07 4681 3463

day two

Aloomba Lavender

5425 Mt Lindesay Road, Liston

www.aloombalavender.com.au

Symphony Hill Wines

2017 Eukey Road, Ballandean

www.symphonyhill.com.au

Bella Rosa's Tea Rooms & Lots of Goodies Antiques

357 Granite Belt Drive, Thulimbah

www.bellarosas.com.au

Pure Heaven Handmade Body Care Factory

21 Old Caves Road, Stanthorpe

www.pureheaven.com.au

