

QUEENSLAND'S PREMIER WINE REGION

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Natural Attractions • Seasonal Events



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www.granitebeltwinecountry.com.au

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Courtesy Southern Downs & Granite Belt Regional Tourism

Chill out on the Granite Belt

You'd have to be living in a cave, cut off from Queensland's daily weather reports, not to have heard about the Granite Belt.

Famously – and regularly - referred to by the Bureau of Meteorology as the coldest place in Queensland, the Granite Belt was recently rebadged by a visiting ABC journalist as “Queensland's capital of cool.” Now I like that!

Certainly it is the winter months that have tourists beating a path to this destination, but for the cognoscenti it is the other three seasons which are the area's hidden treasure. Four real seasons in Queensland I hear you ask – well read on.

When coastal dwellers are sweltering on sticky, steamy summer nights, Granite Belt residents invariably sleep under a doonah. For them the summer evenings provide cool starlit nights. You see it's the altitude. Located on the eastern spine of the Great Dividing Range the Granite Belt sits at an altitude of more than 800 metres. Summer in the region provides a feast for lovers of stone fruit which develops flavours under the Queensland sunshine which our southern cousins can only envy.

As the summer moves to autumn the region's deciduous plants and fruit trees become a blaze of flame and gold – a visual feast. Autumn is also a time when the apples are harvested and vintage (grape harvest) gets underway. The region's 530 hectares of vineyards are a hive of activity, while winemakers at the more than 50 cellar doors prepare to receive the grapes for what will become some of Queensland's top drops.

It is not only the volume of vine plantings and number of cellar doors which support the claim of the Granite Belt as Queensland's premier wine region, but also the number of medals its producers win at wine shows. Cap that off with Stanthorpe

being home to the Queensland College of Wine Tourism; then this is arguably the state's wine capital.

Wine producers love the winter – the vines are in their annual period of dormancy, and they can get on with the task of finishing off their wines ready for spring release.

In spring when the fruit trees burst into an ocean of pink and white blossom, then you know that bud burst on the vines is just around the corner. So too is the annual celebration of the Spring Wine Festival Season. This is the time when new vintages are released at a series of breakfasts, lunches and dinner functions over almost two months from the end of September.

But the Granite Belt is more than wine, food and festivals, for many it has been a place to get close to nature. With four national parks in its backyard, it is a popular walking and camping destination for those who like to appreciate wildflowers and birdlife. For others it is the multicultural and artistic community that stimulates the senses and while here there is an excellent range of accommodation to suit every taste.

The Granite Belt is certainly an area of great diversity – in fact one might ask where else in Queensland could you get all this in one place. Located on the New England Highway within three hours drive of Brisbane and the Gold Coast, it is the perfect short break drive destination.

See www.granitebeltwinecountry.com.au or phone 1800 SO COOL.

Contact Stanthorpe Visitor Information Centre
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By Michele Cozzi