

Unwind at Warramba Homestead in the stunning Capertee Valley, where you can sip on an old-fashioned cuppa and say hello to the friendly resident herd of Highland cattle (right).

Escape to the country

Crisp country mornings, log fires, hikes in the fresh air and warming up afterwards with a steaming cuppa on a comfy sofa... yep, it's time for a rural retreat! From cosy cabins to stately homes, here are some of our favourite places for a regional getaway.

BY UTE JUNKER

PHOTOGRAPHY: WARRAMBA



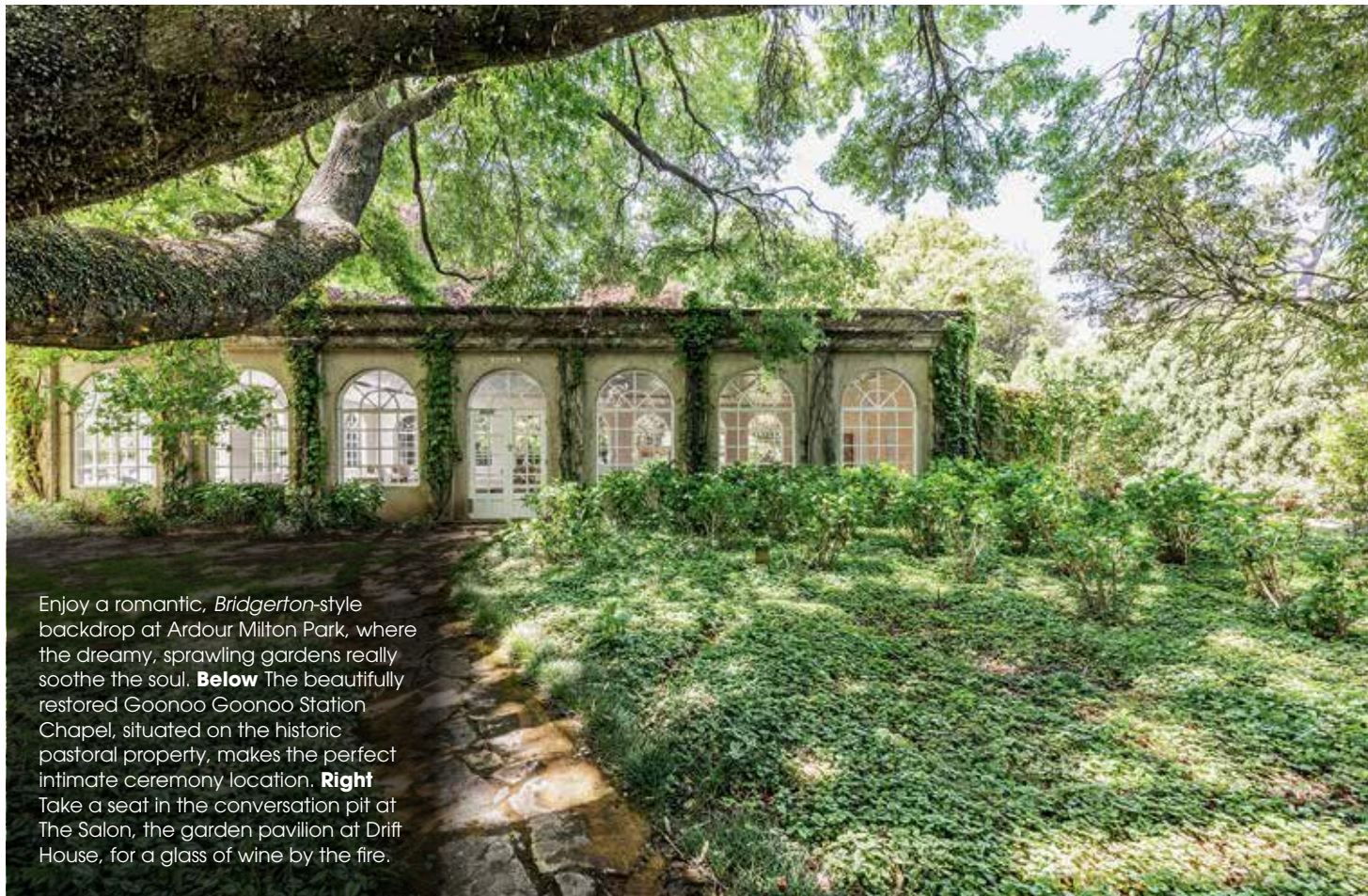
Explore *Sydney's* surrounds

WARRAMBA, CAPERTEE VALLEY

Here's something you may not know: the world biggest enclosed valley, corralled by sandstone cliffs, is the Capertee Valley, three hours out of Sydney. This is where you'll find Warramba (warramba.com.au), an 1890s homestead set amid 40 hectares of regenerated farmland, surrounded on all sides by national parks. It has everything you want in a rural getaway, from adorable Highland cattle to a fully equipped kitchen, as well as fire pits perfect for roasting marshmallows. The heated mineral pool, from where you can watch kangaroos hop past, is an added bonus. There are three guestrooms, but we recommend saying yes to the optional swag – on a clear night, nothing beats falling asleep beneath the country stars.

ARDOUR MILTON PARK, BOWRAL

There's something special about high tea. Is it the indulgence of it – the joy of a meal that falls outside our usual three-a-day parameters; the flexibility that allows you to indulge in anything from cucumber sandwiches to a freshly baked scone? Is it the fact that life always looks better when you have a cup of tea in front of you? Or is it that high tea is usually served in wonderfully serene surrounds? That is certainly a key part of the appeal at Ardour Milton Park (worldsapart.club), a stately Southern Highlands country house reborn as a welcoming hotel. The park-like setting, with outdoor terraces, lawns and plantings, is a joy, and the ►



Enjoy a romantic, *Bridgerton*-style backdrop at Ardour Milton Park, where the dreamy, sprawling gardens really soothe the soul. **Below** The beautifully restored Goonoo Goonoo Station Chapel, situated on the historic pastoral property, makes the perfect intimate ceremony location. **Right** Take a seat in the conversation pit at The Salon, the garden pavilion at Drift House, for a glass of wine by the fire.



sublime region offers plenty of ways to keep busy, whether you're browsing the area's antique shops, catching some contemporary art at the acclaimed Ngununggula gallery, or taking a stroll through Berrima, mainland Australia's best preserved Georgian village.

GOONOO GOONOO STATION, TAMWORTH

Forget the country music. What we love most about Tamworth is the striking New England scenery – well, that and Goonoo Goonoo Station (goonoogoonoo.com.au). Part of a 4430-hectare cattle station, Goonoo Goonoo offers a range of accommodation in its restored heritage buildings, from the compact Shearers Quarters rooms to the luxe five-bedroom Homestead, which has its own private pool. There are loads of appealing day trips in the area (we're partial to the pretty heritage town of Barraba, which is dotted with historic buildings and is part of the NSW Silo Art Trail), but you'll also want to book in a memorable dinner at the on-site Glasshouse Restaurant, with its glorious views to the Liverpool Ranges.



Make tracks from Melbourne

DRIFT HOUSE, PORT FAIRY

Many people think the highlight of the Great Ocean Road is the Twelve Apostles. We beg to differ. As spectacular as those limestone sea stacks are, our favourite part of this route lies 100 kilometres further down, near the very end of the road. The fishing village of Port Fairy is a gem, its wide streets lined with soaring Norfolk pines shading pretty 19th-century cottages. Drift House (drifthouse.com.au), a small-scale charmer with six guestrooms tucked into two old houses, is the town's most welcoming place to stay. There are lots of things to keep you busy whether it's looking out for breaching whales during migration season, cruising to the seal colony on Lady Julia Percy Island, browsing the many boutiques and galleries, or watching the boats unloading their catch of abalone and crayfish at what's still one of the state's busiest fishing ports. ►



LON RETREAT & SPA, BELLARINE PENINSULA

The world needs more people as generous as Claire Gemes. Blessed with an amazing retreat set on 80 hectares on the Bellarine Peninsula – a lovely landscape near the ocean enjoyed by six generations of her family – she decided to share it with everyone. That family haven has been reborn as Lon Retreat & Spa (lonretreat.com.au). Each one of its seven rooms –

Left Drift off like a dream in a king suite at Drift House, which blends historic heritage details with innovative contemporary design. **Below** Embrace simplicity and a homely ambiance at the light-filled Lon Retreat & Spa, which welcomes you with historic Tasmanian sandstone walls, locally sourced furniture, regional treats and a roaring fireplace.



PHOTOGRAPHY: (TOP LEFT) MARTINA GEMMOLA



Sample the delicious produce from Dairy Flat Farm at the famed Lake House Restaurant, Daylesford, or prepare your own tasty dish in your bespoke – and delightfully colourful – kitchen at the farm itself (below).

named after a type of cloud – is individually decorated: think concrete walls, slatted timber ceilings and woodburning stoves and fireplaces to keep you cosy on cool nights. Add some coastal strolls, and a session or two soaking in the natural mineral waters before enjoying a spa treatment, and you have a stay full of country comforts.

DAIRY FLAT FARM, DAYLESFORD

From the moment you turn into the silver birch-lined drive at Dairy Flat Farm (dairyflatfarmdaylesford.com.au), you know you've arrived somewhere special. A sister property to Daylesford's famed Lake House restaurant and hotel, this 15-hectare regenerative farm supplies much of the produce for the restaurant from its gardens and orchards, its olive groves and the on-site bakehouse. (Early risers can drop in first thing in the morning for a fresh-from-the-oven treat.) The six opulent suites are utterly luxurious, but it's the welcoming kitchen and living area, a chic jumble of colourful fabrics and furnishings, that is where you'll end up spending most of your time. The concierge is a wonder, preparing meals and organising excursions. ►



Look a little further

O QUARTERS,
ADELAIDE HILLS

The Adelaide Hills is the perfect getaway for lovers of glorious gardens, good food and wine – and if you stay in one of the three suites at O Quarters (birdinhand.com.au/stay), set amid the lush gardens of the Bird in Hand winery at Woodside and steps away from the acclaimed LVN restaurant, you have all three within easy reach. The region’s pretty villages offer many ways to amuse yourself, from strolling through The Cedars, the lovely home of famed landscape artists Hans and Nora Heysen, to browsing the shops and galleries in historic Hahndorf, or looking for bargains at the monthly Stirling Market. Don’t miss a pleasant walk through Mount Lofty Botanic Garden, one of the area’s highlights.

SPICERS TAMARIND,
MALENY, QUEENSLAND

In some ways, Spicers Tamarind (worldsapart.club) couldn’t be more Australian. The forest villas are surrounded by gumtrees, and you may well wake to find a kookaburra on your private deck. In other ways, however, there’s a distinct touch of Asia to the experience. You’ll notice it when you’re wandering through the lush tropical plantings on the seven-hectare property, or when you sprawl out on your personal daybed, catching up on that book you have been meaning to read. Most of all, however, you’ll feel it at the retreat’s acclaimed Tamarind restaurant, which blends flavours from Thailand and Korea, China and Japan, and at its on-site cooking school, guaranteed to bring out your inner *MasterChef*.

Top left Rest your head in a king-sized Sparkling Suite (complete with fireplace and luxurious freestanding bathtub) at O Quarters, and then enjoy an exquisite breakfast among the impeccably manicured garden (pictured below).



HEYSCAPE, DENMARK,
WESTERN AUSTRALIA

In the mood for a little seclusion? Head to Denmark in WA’s southwest, where Heyscape’s (heyscape.com.au) off-grid cabins are designed to make you feel a world away, even though these one- or two-bedroom cabins are only 15 minutes out of Denmark. Part of the regenerative Raintree farm estate, the cabins are free of extraneous extras. Everything here is top-notch, from the queen bed dressed with high-grade linen to the barbecue and the outdoor bathtubs. It’s a great base from which to visit some of the region’s top attractions, including the breathtaking Granite Skywalk and the towering tingle trees in the Valley of the Giants, which you can admire from a treetop walk 40 metres above the forest floor. **P**

Above Wake up to towering karri trees, turquoise waters and striking granite rocks in a premium homey cabin at Heyscape. **Left** Kick back in front of the crackling fire pit at Spicers Tamarind for a pre-dinner drink or complimentary toasted s’mores.

