

MARCH 2005

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THE AUSTRALIAN WAY

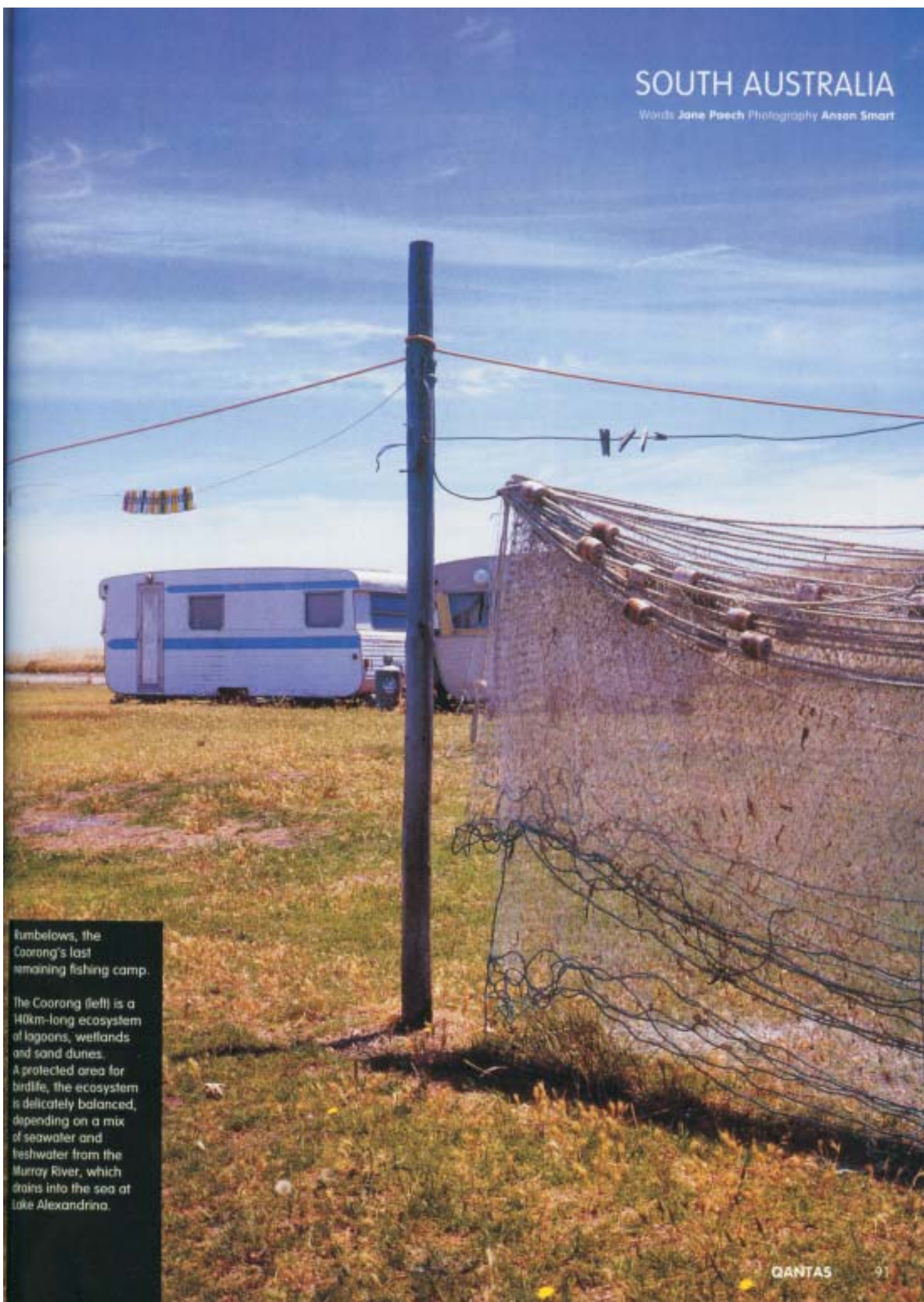
TIWI ART
A TRADITIONAL
WAY OF LIFE
ON THE
TIWI ISLANDS



STYLE FOR MEN NAGOYA VISUAL FX SAN DIEGO SERIOUS SURF SICILY OUTBACK ART LIMESTONE COAST

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

Words **Jane Paech** Photography **Anson Smart**



lumbeles, the Coorong's last remaining fishing camp.

The Coorong (left) is a 140km-long ecosystem of lagoons, wetlands and sand dunes. A protected area for birdlife, the ecosystem is delicately balanced, depending on a mix of seawater and freshwater from the Murray River, which drains into the sea at Lake Alexandrina.



From the Coorong to the Coonawarra, everywhere you look there is limestone. It is what unites the south-eastern corner of South Australia. Houses are built from it, roads made from it. Limestone is responsible for the craggy coastlines, sinkholes and wetlands, the fossil-filled Naracoorte Caves and Mount Gambier's mysterious Blue Lake. The water and the wine have also been touched by this ancient foundation of compacted shells and marine crustaceans. Lush pastures, crops and the region's famous terra rossa soil (in fact, decayed limestone) are supported by a plentiful supply of pure underground water filtered through limestone aquifers.

With fertile land and a high annual rainfall to buffer the water table, it's no wonder that produce is abundant and diverse. Prime lamb, beef cattle, dairy and grain have sustained the region for generations, and there are growing boutique industries as innovative locals plunge into exciting new ventures. Fresh regional tastes are appearing on menus, small producers are encouraging farm-gate

sales, and a roving farmers' market replete with regional produce has been established.

Wine lovers are also spoiled for choice. Although best known for the premium red wines of Coonawarra, the past decade has seen a number of new appellations surface in the Limestone Coast region. From cutting-edge cellar doors to outstanding restaurants and stylish accommodation, several establishments have started up in recent years, wrapped in small, tasteful packages.

And yet, while the Limestone Coast is emerging as a popular tourist destination, it remains relatively untouched. Sitting halfway between Adelaide and Melbourne on the road less travelled, it is relatively free of daytrippers and represents an authentic slice of rural Australia.

Start your tour at the northern tip of the Coorong, a 90-minute drive south-east of Adelaide. Stretching 140km from the mouth of the Murray River down to the northernmost shadows of Kingston SE, the reed-thin Coorong is a hauntingly beautiful chain of sheltered saline lagoons, wetlands and >



1 The navigation obelisk at Cape Dambey was built in 1852. Erosion of its rocky platform means that, one day, it will topple into the sea.

2 The former shearers' quarters at Paltalloch Station is now a rumpus room for guests.

3 The restaurant at Coorong Wilderness Lodge serves meals made with bush ingredients.

4 All roads lead to (and from) tiny Highbank winery, where organic production is the order of the day.

5 Carved emu egg at Camp Coorong.



pristine sand dunes that buffer the pounding waves of the Southern Ocean. One of the world's great bird sanctuaries, the Coorong National Park supports more than 200 species, including migratory birds from as far away as Siberia.

The Ngarrindjeri Aboriginal people have enjoyed the abundant fruits of this land and its waterways for hundreds of generations. To gain insight into their heritage, visit Camp Coorong, 10km south of Meningie. Run by Ngarrindjeri elders, it offers activities including nature walks and there is an interesting cultural museum.

A further 15km along the Princes Highway is Coorong Wilderness Lodge, a remote getaway also operated by local indigenous people. Activities include lagoon kayaking (the gentle, shallow waters make it ideal for first-timers), gathering and tasting traditional bush tucker, walking on ancient trails and hearing stories of the Dreamtime around the campfire. The best time to visit the lodge is from November to April, when the native fruits are ripe and it's warm enough for kayaking. Caravan and camping sites are available as well as basic bunkhouse accommodation.

While you're in the neighbourhood, pay a visit to local identity Shane Richards's roadside stall on

the highway between Camp Coorong and the Wilderness Lodge. Richards has been selling Coorong mullet, mulloway, flounder, fresh rabbits and local honey to passers-by from a red tin shed for 15 years. Push the call button for service and he'll fly down the hill in his ute to greet you.

To learn about the early European history of the area, stay a night or two at Pottaloch Station. Each of the three comfortable country-style cottages is fully self-contained and fragrant with roses picked from the homestead garden. The Station Hand's Cottage sits on Lake Alexandrina – ideal for bird-watchers – while the Boundary Rider's Cottage with its large lawn is great for young children. Sleeping eight, the Overseer's Cottage has a big eat-in kitchen and lake views.

Pottaloch was originally a property of 12,140ha and still possesses a huge working shearing shed. Take a guided tour led by Beth or Chris Cowan (the great-great grandson of early pastoral pioneer John Bowman) for a fascinating insight into life on an isolated sheep station more than a century ago.

An absolute must is a 4WD daytrip with Coorong Nature Tours, operated by naturalist and guide David Dadd. For 18 years, Dadd ran a local ferry, a solitary occupation that allowed him plenty of



1 Shane Richards has a one-stop shop for local seafood.
 2 The original homestead at Pottalloch Station.
 3 Pottalloch Station's owners, the Cowan family, run guided tours that give an insight into the history of the property. A visit to the general store is a step back in time.
 4 Villa Pescatore in Robe has the feel of a fishing cottage, but all the mod cons.
 5 Take an informative 4WD tour with local expert David Dodd.
 6 Net gains go well on the barbecue.

time to read up on the area's landscape, history, flora, fauna and birdlife. Leaving the bitumen, Dadd points out drifts of evening primrose, sandpipers, wild samphire and Rumbelows, the last remaining fishing camp in the area. By noon, Rumbelows is deserted, just nets drying in the sun, upturned boats and the odd pelican gliding effortlessly onto the water or wheeling in the wind.

Driving south of the Coorong, the mood changes as you enter the pretty seaside village of Robe, a popular holiday destination with a picture-postcard harbour. Drive along the 17km stretch of Long Beach, take a walk on the wild clifftops and watch the sun set over the obelisk at Cape Dombey. Built in 1852, this local landmark originally served as a daytime navigation guide for ships and as a storehouse for rockets used by local lifesaving crews who rescued people from shipwrecks.

The attractive township offers a wide range of accommodation, but for a stylish, upmarket retreat consider Robe Lifestyle Properties, a collection of six select beach houses. Each getaway has its own feel and is fully self-contained. The attention to detail is exceptional – for instance, Villa Pescatore marries the history of an original fisherman's cottage with a chic, contemporary interior.

In between swimming, surfing and spa baths, it's fun to browse the bric-a-brac shops and art galleries on Victoria Street. Wander through Wilson's at Robe gallery, which has exhibitions by Australian artists and craftspeople. Loaves & Fishes, a stylish homewares and decoration store, features ceramics and artworks by regional talents. Further on, drop into the Wild Mulberry Cafe for homemade cakes and Mahalia coffee. Local boutique coffee roasters Mahalia and Paul Layzell import beans from premier growing estates around the globe and their range is now available in many Limestone Coast cafes.

If the season is right (October to April), don't leave Robe without enjoying a feast of southern rock lobster, fished from the rugged limestone reefs of the Southern Ocean. Cooked lobsters (and fish and chips) can be bought directly from the boat haven where fishing boats bob at their moorings and seagulls circle. Alternatively, reserve a table at The Gallerie, a light, modern restaurant that does delicious things with local produce. In rock lobster season, you can enjoy the crustacean natural, grilled with chilli and garlic or as a classic thermidor. Any of them make great partners for a bottle of chilled, local white wine. >

1 Stewart Lewis shows off a couple of southern rock lobsters caught off the coast of Robe in Guichen Bay. The crustaceans, in season from October to April, are a Limestone Coast specialty.

2 Lay down a few bottles of Stonehaven wine.

3 The Mount Benson wine region leans firmly towards sauvignon blanc.



The emerging wine region of Mount Benson is right on Robe's doorstep. Blessed with red sandy loam over a free-draining limestone base, cool sea breezes and a long ripening season, Terra Rossa by the Sea (as the region is marketed) is receiving increasing recognition for producing elegant, well-structured varietal wines, with sauvignon blanc a rising star. The coastal appellation has 20 vineyards and five cellar doors, making for a pleasant afternoon of wine-tasting.

At Wangolina Station, visitors are welcome to picnic on the lawns with a glass of wine. The winery also promotes regional food, stocking a variety of local products including Ferguson lobster oil, muntie jam from Whynunga Bush Foods, Outback Pride quandong dessert sauce, and almonds from Alfalfa Products. Alfalfa's Janet Copping and Bert Onderstal produce biodynamic Baxendale almonds on their property near Cape Jaffa and wok-fry them with flavours such as honey, chilli and tamari.

Recent years have seen an upsurge in organic and biodynamic farming throughout the Limestone Coast. One such enterprise is Nolans Road. Five years ago, after much research and planning, Dee Nolan planted an olive grove at her family property, Farm Park, adjacent to a rambling organic garden overflowing with sweet-smelling strawberries, herbs and vegetables. The award-winning, certified-organic, virgin olive oil is hand-harvested and

bottled unfiltered. Organic, Matilda lentils and Kabuli chickpeas are also available under the Nolans Road label. (You can buy these products at Divine deli, Church Street, Penola, 08 8752 1122.)

The Limestone Coast Food Group has existed to promote the use of local, high-quality products and encourages restaurants to showcase regional flavours. It also runs a regular farmers' market that rotates between neighbouring towns. Succulent yabbie burgers sizzle on the barbecue. Music floats from violins played by a band of local students. Customers sample Kalangadoo organic apple juice and learn about Boobialla Bush Seasoning. Across the way, jars of cabernet jelly beckon (swirl a little in with the pan juices from a juicy steak) while, next door, Penola butcher David Meek invites passers-by to try his "Wine Stick", a smoky sausage made with lamb, sun-dried tomatoes, rosemary, olives, and cheddar cheese that goes down well with a gutsy Coonawarra red.

North of Penola, the celebrated cigar-shaped strip of rich terra rossa soil known as the Coonawarra produces some of Australia's best-regarded red wines. A day's wine-tasting is easy. Almost all of the 21 cellar doors flank the rose-lined Riddell Highway, and you may even have the place to yourself. There's a cellar-door experience for everyone – from Rymill Coonawarra, the showpiece of the region, to Highbank, a true family-run



'SOLEIL' LASSO

'AUBE' CROSSOVER

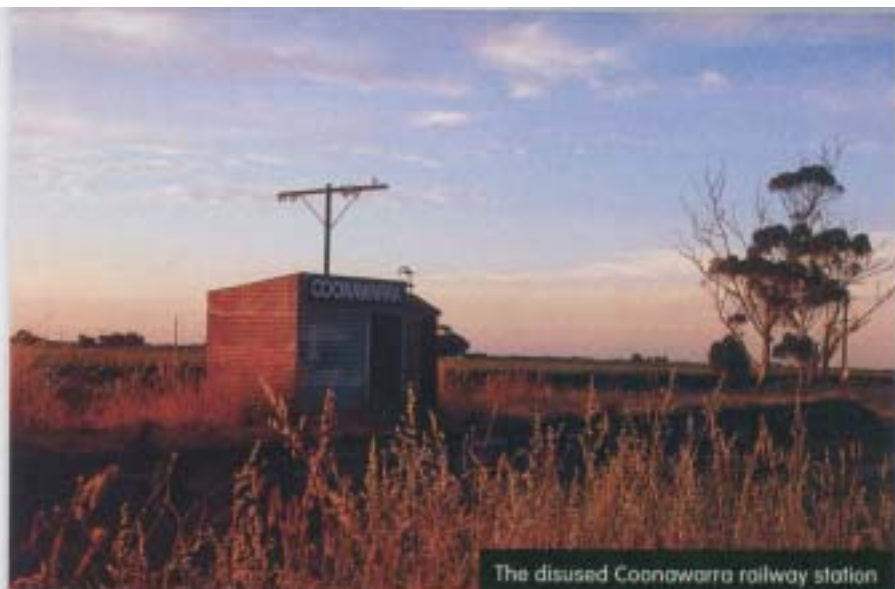


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CHARLES EDWARD JEWELLERS
SHOP H19 CARLTON CITY, 672 HAY ST MALL,
PERTH WA 6000. T +61 8 9327 3188



The disused Coonawarra railway station

LIMESTONE LOCATIONS

THE COORONG

Camp Coorong
Princes Highway,
Meningie.
(08) 8575 1557

Coorong Nature Tours
Dadd Road, Narrung.
(08) 8574 0037. www.coorongnaturetours.com

Coorong Wilderness Lodge
Princes Highway,
Meningie.
(08) 8575 6001
Poltalloch Station
Poltalloch Road,
Narrung.
(08) 8574 0043.
www.poltalloch.com.au

ROBE

Loaves & Fishes
27 Victoria Street.
(08) 8768 2724.
The Gallerie
2 Victoria Street.
(08) 8768 2256.
Robe Lifestyle Properties
PO Box 134, Robe, 5726.
(08) 8768 5044.
www.robe.sa.gov.au/robelifestyle
Wild Mulberry Cafe
46 Victoria Street.
(08) 8768 2488
Wilson's at Robe
5 Victoria Street.
(08) 8768 2459.

MOUNT BENSON

Cape Jaffa Wines
Limestone Coast Road.
(08) 8768 5053.
www.capejaffawines.com
Wangolina Station
Corner of Southern Ports
Highway and Limestone
Coast Road.
(08) 8768 6187.
www.wangolinastation.com.au

COONAWARRA

Balnaves of Coonawarra
Main Road.
(08) 8737 2946.
www.balnaves.com.au
Highbank
Riddoch Highway.
(08) 8736 3311.
www.highbank.com.au
Hollick/Upstairs at Hollick restaurant
Ravenswood Lane.
(08) 8737 2752.
www.hollick.com
Punters Corner Retreat
V&A Lane.
(08) 8737 2007.
www.punterscorner.com.au
Redfingers
Memorial Drive.
(08) 8736 3006.
Rymill Coonawarra
Riddoch Highway.
(08) 8736 5001.
www.rymill.com.au

Wynns Coonawarra Estate
Memorial Drive.
(08) 8736 2225.
www.wynns.com.au
Yalumba Menzies Vineyard & Retreat
Riddoch Highway.
(08) 8737 3603.
www.yalumba.com
Zema Estate
Riddoch Highway.
(08) 8736 3219.
www.zema.com.au

PENOLA

David Meek Butcher
66 Church Street.
(08) 8737 2330.

PADTHAWAY

Stonehaven Vineyards
Riddoch Highway.
(08) 8765 6166. www.stonehavenvineyards.com

FARMERS' MARKETS

Run by the Limestone Coast Food Group, the markets are held every second Sunday in changing locations. March 13, Penola. March 27, Mount Gambier. April 10, Millicent. April 17, Mount Gambier. Enquiries, call 0437 717 368. ➤



As seen on the wine label: the triple-gabled winery buildings at Wynns Coonawarra.

organic winery. Tastings are free and (with the occasional exception of High-bank) no appointment is necessary.

Break up the day with a leisurely lunch at Upstairs at Hollick. With spectacular views over the vines and distant gums, this winery restaurant serves excellent contemporary cuisine. For a casual meal, Redfingers offers a local tasting plate, grills, salads, homemade gourmet pies and Limestone Coast wines by the glass. You can even cook your own wagyu beef fillet on the barbie.

After all this eating and drinking, you'll need somewhere to stay. Nestled amid a sea of vines, Yalumba Menzies Retreat is an open-space, eco-friendly getaway made from rammed earth, timber and galvanised iron. Another idyllic escape is Punters Corner Retreat, an innovative, award-winning building that blends into the natural landscape, featuring a spacious living area, wall-to-wall glass and a mezzanine.

Drive north along the highway past Naracoorte and you arrive at the Stonehaven cellar door in the Padthaway wine region. Here, visitors can indulge in a delicious bit of food and wine matching: Limestone Coast smoked trout from Millicent is currently paired with 2000 Stonehaven Limited Vineyard Release Padthaway Chardonnay, while the 2000 Padthaway Shiraz meets a fine partner in David Meek's Wine Stick. As the flavours linger on the palate, take your time, enjoy and savour the experience – good advice for anyone visiting the Limestone Coast.

For more information on the Limestone Coast visit www.southaustralia.com



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