



# MAGIC MOUNTAIN

Ground yourself with a foodie escape in the mighty Grampians



**HIGH LIFE** (from far left) Grampians National Park, Vic; wine tasting at Best's Great Western; picnic with a view at the Royal Mail Hotel.



**W**hen the Victorian mountains are calling, as the great naturalist John Muir almost said, you must go. And the call of the Grampians is one worth hearing. This time, though, we're not planning a Muir-style wilderness sojourn; instead, we'll appreciate the beauty of those mountains from sea level, glass of local wine in hand.

After a flight from Sydney and a three-hour drive from Melbourne, it's bliss to arrive to a friendly welcome and home-cooked meal at Eurambien Historic Homestead, which has been restored to provide different types of accommodation. We stayed in Mrs Beggs Apartment, its grand proportions suited to the 1920s country-estate atmosphere. Breakfast is provided, along with the slightly surreal experience of sitting at the dining table eating a croissant, gazing lazily out of the window – and suddenly spotting a pheasant stalking the rose garden. Suppressing an urge to play up to the vintage house-party vibe and trill merrily, “Anyone for tennis?” I go instead for a morning stroll in the serene garden.

Unaccountably, Jeeves fails to bring the Bentley around, so we're forced to drive our own hire car. The disappointment is erased when we arrive at Stawell Aerodrome for an airborne winery jaunt with Grampians Helicopters. We soar above the national park and touch down amid the vines at Best's Great Western, a 150-year-old vineyard with a beautifully rustic cellar

door, all red-gum slab walls and wonky floorboards. Downstairs, the cellar itself is complete with ancient barrels and cobwebbed racks of vintage bottles. The whole place is redolent of history, including the vineyards, in which vines planted in 1867 still survive. Back upstairs at the bar, I revel in delicious varieties of shiraz, pinot and riesling, along with a tempting cheese platter.

Our next stop is Pierrepont Wines, where a wine tasting and fabulous homemade lunch soon cheer up my partner, who'd missed out at Best's (failing Jeeves, *someone's* got to drive). After a tour of the vines, we're off to Dunkeld and the Royal Mail Hotel, which was built in 1855, but has been beautifully modernised. Our chic, minimalist room looks out over a garden to the peaks of Mount Sturgeon and The Piccaninny, the southernmost tip of Grampians National Park, but there's one reason most people stay here: the food. The two-hatted restaurant serves degustations that are justly renowned, and our four-hour eating extravaganza leaves us grateful we have only 200 metres to walk to bed. A kitchen-garden tour the next morning is enlightening: an acre provides more than enough organic produce for the restaurant.

Local food, local wine, all with a view of marvellous mountains: even the ascetic John Muir would have been happy. **● HANNAH JAMES** *Grampians Grape Escape is on April 30 to May 1; [grampiansgrapeescape.com.au](http://grampiansgrapeescape.com.au).*

**■ FOLLOW HANNAH ON TWITTER @HFJAMES.**

PHOTOGRAPHY: ROB BLACKBURN

## DEGUSTATION DELIGHTS *The more courses, the merrier* BY ALLEY PASCOE

### ORD VALLEY MUSTER, WA



Travel by boat to a secret location in the East Kimberly for a native degustation forged by chef Paul Iskov. Hosted by *delicious.* magazine, May 22, \$334.60 per person; visit [ordvalleymuster.com.au](http://ordvalleymuster.com.au).

### STILLWATER, TAS



Sitting on the banks of Tamar River in Launceston, Stillwater's five-course “Trust the hand that feeds you” degustation stars local produce. Tuesday to Saturday, \$120 per person; visit [stillwater.com.au](http://stillwater.com.au).

## HAVE LUGGAGE, WILL TRAVEL

Rock your inner roadie with Globe-Trotter's limited-edition Rolling Stones capsule collection of luggage, from \$1639. It even includes a headphone case; visit [globe-trotter.com](http://globe-trotter.com).

