

# MARGARET RIVER'S MOVEABLE FEAST

Margaret River is well-known for its wine, but has much more to offer for those who love food, beautiful scenery and great places to stay **writes Floyd Cowan.**



Saturday morning we got up early and Drew Bernhardt, General Manager of Cape Lodge, who was hosting our stay, drove us into Margaret River to the Farmer's Market. The Market represents much of what is great about the region. Beginning at 8:00am the air is fresh and there is a festive mood as people meander in. It is easy going. There is no rush, just line-ups for coffee.

## **Lots of Fresh**

It is tourists and locals alike. Many of the locals are there to do their weekly shopping - and there is a lot of fresh to buy. Fresh flowers, fresh bread, fresh baguettes, veggies, honey, chocolate, eggs, organic wine and much more. Fresh coffee.

Drew, as he has been since we arrived, has been very generous with his time. David Bowden, an Australian freelance writer who lives in Kuala Lumpur, and

myself were on an 8-day self-drive trip that was organised and hosted by Western Australia Tourism, Margaret River Tourism and numerous hotels, restaurants and attractions from Perth to Swan Valley to Albany and now up to Margaret River.

## **Cape Lodge Luxury**

Cape Lodge was the pinnacle of all the places we stayed. Situated on





Cape Lodge

a sprawling estate where, in addition to the multiple award winning restaurant, there are 22 rooms and suites, a five bedroom luxury private residence, tennis court, swimming pool, two lakes and vineyards.

David, who was roomed at the opposite end of the estate from me, was already at the Cape Lodge Restaurant chatting with Drew, when I arrived. They had started on a Jeté Howard Parker Sparkling Rosé NV and were quick to pour me a glass.

"Few accommodations in this region have a restaurant," Drew told us, "so people will stay here because of the food."

We began dinner with a Chicken Parfe, then I had the venison which was very tender, and finished with Bahen Chocolate. Throughout there was excellent wine, such as the Glenmore 2005, a cabernet sauvignon.

"Sting stayed here," Drew mentioned. He wanted to buy the place." Which is very understandable - if you have that kind of money.

### All the Comforts

"Many people will walk a section of the Cape to Cape trail and then return to their hotel for the night. They like to hike, but they still want their creature comforts."

After dinner I returned the comforts this creature always enjoys. I was in the Lake View Suites that overlook one of two lakes that are surrounded by natural landscaping. All suites feature king-size, luxury bathrooms with separate spacious walk in showers and baths with underfloor heating. My room, which I spent so little time in, has a flat screen TV and DVD player in the lounge. It also had a hot tub that looked over the water, where I did take the time to soak.

If we're hiking all or part of the Cape to Cape trail this is the



Cape Lodge

place that I would want to return to. The 135km trail stretches between the lighthouse at Cape Naturalist in the north to the lighthouse in Cape Leeuwin in the south. Some people walk the entire length, while there are shorter routes that can also be explored.

### Cape to Coast

The next day we would stand on the rugged windblown coast and take in the fresh air rushing in from the Indian Ocean and look over the undulating trail that squirmed around large boulders, rusted rocks, softened by toughened flora with pink and purple flowers.

In the morning Brianna Delaporte met us in reception and drove us to the coast where we took pictures of the beautiful, rugged sea and





Coast

landscape. Brianna told us about the 'Injidup Spa'. "People sit in the water amongst the rocks and the surf rushes in and fills up the pool." We watched the foaming white water from a distance.

After exploring and photographing the coast we made our way inland to the new Wine Chapel at Burch Family Wines. In 2009 they were asked to join Australia's First Families of Wine (AFFW), a collective of 12 multi-generational family-owned wine producers. Together they represent 17 wine-growing regions across Australia and 48 generations of winemakers.

### Behind the Scenes

The Wine Chapel, with its private terrace with views over the Leston vineyard and the rolling hills of the Willyabrup region, is where you can learn how good their wine really is. You are invited to 'venture behind the scenes and discover the process from fruit to bottles with a tour through the winery before relaxing in your very own tasting room.' That is where you want to be - making your way through samples of their excellent products.

The tasting room light installation has been created from the 38 year old vines of Burch Family Wines Abercrombie vineyard. A featured cellar showcases museum wines including the very first Howard Park Riesling and Cabernet Sauvignon along with large format bottles. A commercial kitchen offers tasting plates and customised chef cooked lunches.

We tasted a number of white wines such as the 2013 Howard Park Great Southern Reisling with its silky texture and light yellow colour. The 2013 Sauvignon Blanc, which is a blend from two regions. I found it to be very aromatic and noticed something different in those depths - perhaps oak.



Wine Chapel



Wine Chapel

### Underbrush to Bark

Janice McDonald, Senior Winemaker, has been with Burch Family Wines since January 2011. She has worked in the industry for over 25 years and has been awarded the accolade of "Winemaker of the Year" in the Big Red Wine Book, 2010 - 2011 by Campbell Mattinson and Gary Walsh. Even before she joined the company she regarded Howard Park as one of Australia's most successful premium wine companies.

Moving on to the reds we began with a 2012 Mt Barrow pinot noir. There is a lot of length to it, but not enough to get it out of the country. It is only sold in Australia. My favourite was the 2011 Howard Park Scotsdale Shiraz. Writing about this seven months after I visited the region I needed to go back to refresh my memory. Reading a review that said: "Medium to deep garnet-purple in colour, the 2011 Scotsdale Shiraz opens with a nose of crushed black raspberries, mulberries and currants with touches of underbrush, Szechuan pepper and bark."



The Twiggy Car



Arivina lunch

This is exactly the type of red that I most enjoy, lots of flavour, deep colours. But I don't think I would've described it as having touches of underbrush. We enjoyed a good number of very good wines from Burch Family Wines. You really couldn't go wrong with any one of them.

### From Twiggy to Tony

We decided that lunch would be at Arivina Estate, which has a Car Gallery in addition to a great restaurant that was run by one of Australia's superstar Chefs, Tony Howell, who had been lured away from Cape Lodge.

We spent some time being fascinated by the Car Gallery that has an Aston Martin DB5 that has become one of the most iconic cars in the world thanks to being in the 1964 James Bond movie Goldfinger and then again in Thunderball, a year later. The Arivina 1965 Aston Martin DB5 is an early car, with original radio and with original metallic Olive Martini green paintwork, and patina interior original black leather, the car was in a German museum for more than two decades before making its way to Australia where it resides with a 1969 Lamborghini Miura S - The "Twiggy" Car.

The lime green Arivina Miura S was sold in 1969 to Twiggy, the British actress and supermodel. The car was painted in lime green with orange stripes at the factory at the request of Twiggy. There are at least 10 cars in the gallery.



Emily Bromell from Howard Park Wines

### A Long Long Lunch

Sandra Newland, daily operations coordinator for Arivina Estate, who has 24 years of experience in the Margaret River wine industry guided us about the property. We walked through the grounds where some of the produce is grown before returning to the restaurant for a succulent lunch that would last all afternoon.

A bit of advice, if the Chef comes to your table and says, "How about I bring you a selection of my favourite dishes," you have to consider whether you want to stick to your itinerary, or enjoy a magnificent afternoon imbibing in excellent food and perfectly paired wine.

We spent the afternoon indulging in the very best that Arivina / Margaret River has to offer while getting insight into the region from Sandra and Tony. Lunch consisted of Esperance Scallops, fresh asparagus with Japanese herb plum sauce before a lime coconut sorbet. The Australian beef was excellent.

### Temptress Tempranillo

When I had the 2013 Shiraz Tempranillo it was all I wanted to drink though we did sample other reds and whites. Different wine reviewers described it as having licoricey body of flavour, plump dark, juicy fruit, dusty savoury medium-bodied, ripe, sweet plummy fruit mix, lush with a cherry and savoury influence with a lick of liquorice and floral rose petal violet character.

While the other wines might not get so many descriptives, they were all superb. I just couldn't resist licking the licorice.

Wisely, Brianna limited herself to a glass of wine as she was driving. We were suppose to get to Swings Taphouse and Kitchen at 7:00, but didn't make it until 8:00pm. We needed as much time between lunch and dinner as we could get.

### Swings was Swinging

When we arrived it was alive with energy as people enjoyed their Friday evening out.

Some were just drinking while others were having dinner. We had to wait for a table to come free.

We were told that the goal in the kitchen of the Swings is to provide well cooked, unpretentious food, big on flavour, using great ingredients. A popular dish is the Italian wood-fired pizzas.

While the food is great what makes Swings unique is wine on tap. The wine is pressurised in a specially designed small keg preventing oxygen from touch the wine, eliminating waste and keeping quality consistent.



## Definitely *Dawn Under*

Most wines are ready to drink and these can be tapped without compromise. The wines, from Swings own vineyards were given a 5-star rating by James Halliday.

### An Early Evening

The thin crust pizza goes very well with the different wines we had from the tap. The chicken was tender and flavourful. What surprised me was how early things shut down in Australia. By 10:00pm most people had cleared out. They wanted to be up early to go surfing, or the market, biking or hiking.

After the visit to the Farmer's Market Saturday morning we returned to Cape Lodge where Executive Chef Michael Elfwing was conducting a cooking class. The classes are a regular event and usually attended by 12 to 14 people. "I will give you a few secrets that you will be able to replicate in your own kitchen."

Michael started with chicken livers, and I was surprised how interactive the session was with people asking questions and making comments. I wasn't particularly hungry, but when the aromas of the frying duck hit me, they were very tantalising. I was sure I wouldn't have any problem eating lunch.

Over lunch, that comes with wine, Katina who had paid AUS\$145.00 for the session, stated, "I could cook anyone of those recipes now." I was sure that I could eat any of them.



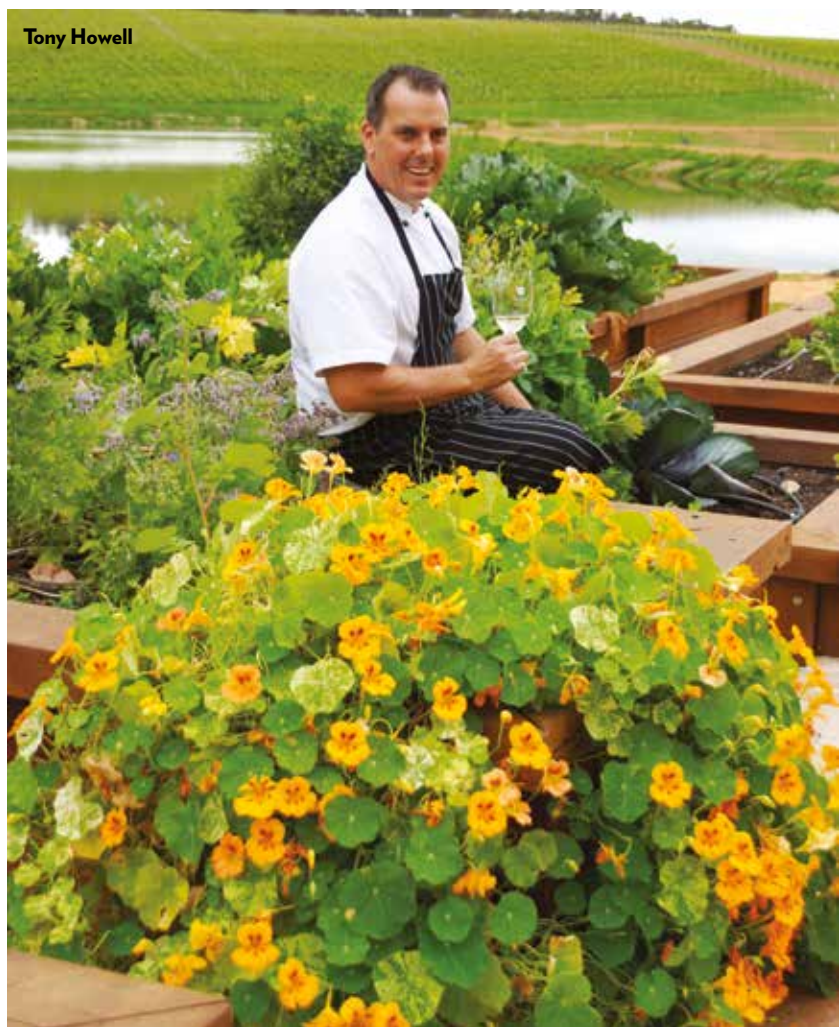
David & Brianna at Swings Taphouse and Kitchen



Executive Chef Michael Elfwing



The Market



Tony Howell



## Golf at Dunsborough

At noon we departed for Perth, but with a stopover at Dunsborough Lakes Golf Course along the way. David writes for golf publications and so takes every opportunity to learn about the local links.

Len couldn't have been a better host. He got us golf carts and we motored around the course that is owned by the members. We could see for ourselves that it is a well maintained course with broad fairways interspersed with many lakes and water features - which provide home to a wide variety of native birds.

For me it got very interesting when Len invited us back to his home at the Dunsborough Lakes Golf Course Estate. He was steps from his bedroom to a tee on the course. For a pro golfer who had started at the game when he was eight years old, what better retirement for an old pro who had a pretty interesting career.

## Suite Nights in Perth

We could've stayed all afternoon chatting with Len, but we still had to get to the Fraser Suites in Perth. We drove up the freeway with the GPS so insistent that we should use another route that we turned it off until we got into the outskirts of the city.

Fraser Suites is conveniently located in the central business district of with views of the tranquil and expansive Swan River. I found it quite a site. The interiors are sophisticatedly furnished with a modern elegant feel. All the conveniences expected in today's accommodation with excellent world-class facilities. And a welcome bottle of red wine to welcome us.

Chef Peter Evans says his food philosophy at Heirloom is based on the principle of using quality local ingredients, sourced by sustainable methods that evolve with the seasons.

## Winning with Wine


We had an excellent dinner. As David and I had acquired so many bottles of wine on the trip - given to us by kindly and generous people - we asked Brice Gower, Heirloom's Assistant Manager, if we could drink one of our own. He graciously agreed and so we gave him and Ashleigh, our efficient and engaging waitress, a bottle each. Airline weight limits.

In the morning we had time to visit nearby Langley Park, do some sight seeing and shopping before heading to the airport.

One of those that had bequeathed us a bottle of wine was Victoria Johnson

Marketing and Communications Coordinator at Augusta Margaret River Tourism Association. It was nice to finally meet up after years of email exchanges. It was her and her association, along with many good people working for Tourism Western Australia that made this trip work as well as it did.

## Margaret River Gourmet Escape

Internationally renowned chef, restaurateur and author Marco Pierre White will be the headline star at this year's Margaret River Gourmet Escape, to be held November 20 - 22, 2015. The event, which is Australia's premier culinary festival, will once again feature many of the world's leading food and wine personalities, including 19 international culinary identities. 

### POCKET GUIDE

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Willyabrup Brook



The Market