



BATHURST, A HISTORY IN MOTION

Bathurst has come of age in more ways than one. **Carla Grossetti** visits the town ahead of its 2015 bicentenary, and finds much to celebrate.

Bathurst's most recognised landmark is Mt Panorama. But look beyond that ribbon of asphalt when it empties of cars going up the hill and back again and you'll find a tranquil township that remains somewhat of a time capsule, with much of its rich history perfectly preserved in its beautiful buildings.

Bathurst has staked its claim as the site of the first gold discovery in Australia and, fascinatingly enough, in 2015, will celebrate its bicentenary, as the country's oldest inland colonial settlement.

Bathurst Regional Council Mayor Gary Rush says it's tremendously exciting for the local community to celebrate 200 years since the proclamation of the town's settlement on May 7, 1815.

"Most Australians know Bathurst and Mt Panorama through the establishment of the great race in October every year, but we want Australians to recognise Bathurst beyond its status as the premier motor racing precinct in the country," says Rush.

"Bathurst has wonderful history and heritage – be it built, social, cultural, natural or environmental – and we feel very blessed that we are in a position to be able to showcase that. We have so much to offer."

Bicentenary revving up

Mayor Rush says the bicentenary will present many opportunities for Bathurst to show its best side and offer insights into a township where art and culture are brilliantly conjoined. ♦



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While stalls showcasing local produce will celebrate the bicentenary year-round, the centrepiece of the activities will revolve around Proclamation Week, which will run from May 3-10. In the meantime, it's business as usual for the bricks-and-mortar establishments that are helping to put Bathurst on the culinary travel map.

While some visitors to Central NSW overlook Bathurst in favour of neighbouring Orange and Mudgee, the town's proximity to the Murray Darling Basin – one of Australia's most productive food bowls – puts it in reach of really great ingredients.

Cobblestone Lane chef and owner Heath Smith says it's that link between food and the farm that saw him return to Bathurst eight years ago.



The fork in the road

The 35-year-old was working at Bathers' Pavilion, in Sydney, when he had an epiphany: "I noticed that many of the ingredients that appeared on Sydney menus were grown in the Murray Darling Basin. It made perfect sense to open a country restaurant that was close to those key suppliers," he says.

The decision has paid off in spades with his restaurant, housed in the original 1850s Webb & Co emporium, earning acclaim for signature dishes such as the suckling pig served with pears, caramelised in cider and honey carrots or the smoked Mandagery Creek venison with pumpkin and pepita puree and delectable horseradish cream.

Cobblestone Lane's success has paved the way for other young creatives to colonise the rustic warehouse space, with the queues at hole-in-the-wall café Crema catching the eye of the caffeine-addled, while beverage emporium Webb & Co offers an alternative to the town's gritty pubs.

Action Man a load of bull

Shannon and Jesse Morgan have brought the small-bar revolution to town with Webb & Co, which is awash with memorabilia that tells a story about the city and the space. While Shannon, 23, works the floor, husband Jesse, 31, heads the bar, which has been fashioned from old wrought-iron signs from the Zigzag Railway and timber from the old pits at Mt Panorama.

Taking pride of place above the bar is Action Man, a beloved Speckle Park bull from Wattle Grove Stud that belonged to a local family who loved him so much, they wanted to have him immortalised.

Action Man is about more than just the art of taxidermy. He was the prime breeder at the local stud, where the big fella was considered to be part of the family. "He is a big advertisement"

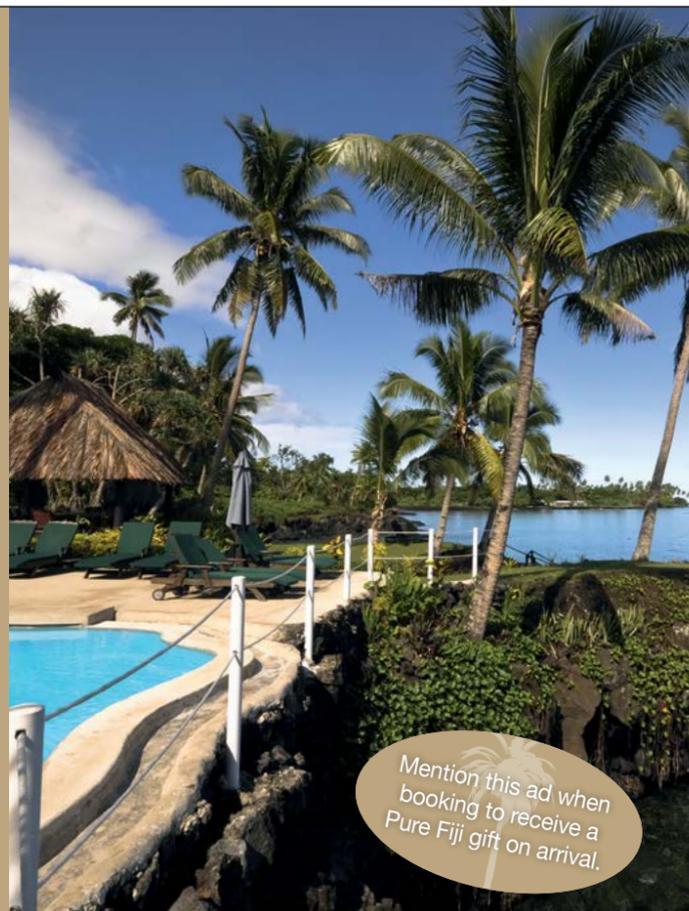
FAST FACT

The local Bathurst Aboriginal Land Council has applied to the Geographical Names Board for the dual naming of Mt Panorama/Wahluu to honour the Wiradjuri people.

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for living in the country. Action Man is a real fixture. But he also gives us the chance to share with customers the wider story of a fantastic local farming operation who are advocates for ethical and humane treatment of animals in farming," Shannon says.

"Action Man is like a mascot for change. Jesse and I grew up in the country and we wanted to bring a bit of the sophisticated city bar scene into Bathurst. We love it here and the food and beverage scene is something we are all, collectively, very proud of."

Amazing grazing

Customers can graze (under the watchful eye of Action Man) on snacks such as mini confit duck burgers, spicy chicken wings and beer-battered potato scallops, while enjoying Fish River Brewery ales on tap and gin made at Stone Pine Distillery, on the outskirts of town.

Stone Pine Distillery's Ian Hemp and his wife Bev, along with son Lewis, now 12, and Charlotte, now 10, moved from Scotland back to Bathurst, the scene of his childhood, in 2006. The 44-year-old, who is a biochemist and holds a post-graduate diploma in brewing and distilling, produces premium spirits and wines infused with a bouquet of native botanicals. While it was a leap of faith to relocate his wife and two kids to country Australia, Hemp says they have been warmly welcomed within the community. "I have such fond memories of my childhood in Bathurst. The place has changed quite a bit – it's getting more cafes, more bars and high-end places – but it's not losing its identity," he says. 📍

Below and above: Bathurst is steeped in tradition and culture.



Round-up

GET THERE

Bathurst is 200 kilometres west of Sydney. For flights, visit regionalexpress.com.au

STAY

Bishop's Court Estate Boutique Hotel

226 Seymour Street, Bathurst,
02 6332 4447, bishopscourtestate.com.au

The Dairy B&B

15 Waterworks Lane, Bathurst,
0412 933 213, milkhouse.com.au

EAT & DRINK

Cobblestone Lane

2/173-179 George Street, NSW
02 6331 2202, cobblestonelane.com.au

The Hub

52 Keppel Street, Bathurst
02 6332 1565, facebook.com/thehubbathurst

EXPLORE

Visit the Bathurst Information Centre for details on heritage walks and tours and for a map of the cellar doors. visitbathurst.com.au; winesofbathurst.com.au

Abercrombie Caves

Learn all about the Ribbon Gang who retreated to Abercrombie Caves before being tried and hanged in Ribbon Gang Lane. abercrombiecaves.com

MORE INFO

visitcentralnsw.com.au



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