

Where to eat and drink

While the region has long been a favourite of bushwalkers and adventurers, the food trails are fast gaining an equal footing, writes **Carla Grossetti**.

The Blue Mountains are known for their rugged good looks. It's like looking at *The Book of Earthly Wonders* on the page dedicated to craggy cliffs and verdant valleys. Whether shrouded in clouds or glowing golden in the sunset, the panorama of soaring sandstone ridges and purple-hued pinnacles is a reminder that nature takes centre stage here. But it's no longer just about the landscape: the historic region now attracts food tourists who are making the trip to enjoy its epicurean delights, too. Here is our guide to eating and drinking your way around the Blue Mountains.

BREAKFAST AND BRUNCH
2773 (19 Ross St, Glenbrook), located at the foot of the Blue Mountains, has a lovely courtyard that feels like an ode to the pastoral life. Tip the kids out of the car to meet Missy

Piggins and count the chickens while you sit at one of the long benches bonding with the waitress over whether to order the hipster fritters or cornflake-crumbed French toast.

Travel a further 30 kilometres west along the highway to the pretty little township of Leura, perched on the mountain's flanks. Here, you will find the **Red Door Cafe (134 Leura Mall, Leura)**, where the design brief reads "jumble sale" and the abiding food philosophy is underlined by a love of fresh produce and nourishing food. Join the crush of happy hippies for cups of cold-drip coffee and French toast with strawberries and maple syrup.

Bean-hunters love to blab about the standout brews to be had at the **Anonymous Cafe (237-238 Great Western Highway, Blackheath)**, which also turns out a terrific pickle and two-cheese toastie. Oh, and if you're on the go, grab a beef, bacon and cheese pie from **The Bakehouse on Wentworth (105 Wentworth St, Blackheath)**, the unofficial depot for everyone from slackpackers to cyclists located near the highest point of the mountains.

LUNCH

Start your engines with the house blend of Ethiopian and Brazilian beans at **Leura Garage (84 Leura Parade, Leura)**, the eco-minded diner that aims to source most of its produce within a 150-kilometre radius. While the feel of the former garage is stripped-back Scan-dustrial, the tapas menu designed by executive chef Regan Porteous has a

Mediterranean accent. Press pause for long enough to perch at the bar to enjoy share plates of calamari fritto and cattleman's cutlets.

Sean Moran and Michael Robertson of Sean's Panorama in Bondi also spread the gospel for living a more simple life at **Tomah Gardens Restaurant (Bell's Line of Road, Mount Tomah)**, a 45-minute drive away. After exploring the cool-climate garden, shovel down dishes such as golden squash, Willowbrae goat's curd and walnuts or free range pork and fennel pot pie.

Vesta (33 Govetts Leap Road, Blackheath) is another local eatery done good. The centrepiece, a 120-year-old scotch oven, has helped raise the region's food and drink credentials with signature dishes such as roast lamb with Portuguese cabbage, roast potatoes and caramelised onion.

AFTERNOON TEA

High tea at The Lounge at **Lilianfels Resort & Spa (5-19 Lilianfels Avenue, Katoomba)** is for those who enjoy the finer things in life: bone china, fresh flowers, plush upholstered chairs, era light fittings, linen tablecloths and elegance. Wait till the clouds part and spill sunshine into the Jamison Valley and then sit back and contemplate the country life over tea and trays of dainty finger sandwiches, fresh-baked scones and petit pastries.

You won't need to keep your pinky finger primed for afternoon tea at **Everglades Historic House & Gardens (37 Everglades Avenue, Leura)**, which is a much more



homely, casual affair. The 1930s mountain retreat, once treasured by Sydney's cognoscenti, remains a drawcard for its gardens and divine Devonshire tea.

DINNER

The warm, gently lit dining room at **Silk's Brasserie (128 Leura Mall, Leura)** has an energy that has kept it humming along for 20 years. But it's the food – a modern interpretation of French fare with a Moroccan twist – that supports local claims that this

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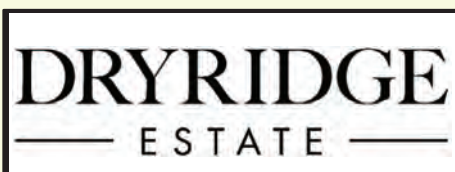
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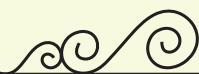
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loved-up Leura eatery was a game-changer. The French-Moroccan influence appears with dishes such as whole roasted spatchcock spiked with harissa and warm medjool tart with toasted fig and vanilla ice cream.

Bistro Niagara (92 Bathurst Rd, Katoomba) has cooked up a new look, dividing the space and rebranding as Palette Dining @ Niagara and the more kicked-back Upstairs Studio, which will feature local art on the walls, and comfy nooks filled with ottomans and banquettes. New owner Petrina

Kerr (ex-chef at Otto, Longrain) has put chef Samuel Tree (ex-Leura Garage) in charge of ensuring you are well fed. Head downstairs for hefty mains such as lamb shoulder, pomegranate molasses, labneh and figs, and upstairs for small plates such as grilled baby octopus and chickpea fritters paired with drinks chosen from a potent list.

Just a whisper away in Wentworth Falls is where you will find **La Famiglia (Shop 5, 38 Station St, Wentworth Falls)**. Plump for the pizza dubbed the Pork Fest, comprising maple-baked pineapple, smokey leg ham, buffalo mozzarella, balsamic onions and pork crackling and finish with affogato Amaretto.

DRINK

When the sky changes moods and is bruised black and blue, head to Champagne Charlies or The Old City Bank Bar attached to the **Carrington Hotel (15-47 Katoomba St, Katoomba)**. If you're planning a moonlit picnic, raid the pantry at Carrington Cellars (at the back of the hotel), where you can pick up everything from tubs of Bravo gelato to Pukara Estate pesto, Zokoko chocolates and top tipples such as Mountain Goat pale ale, Hillbilly Apple Cider and wines from western NSW.

Belly up to the Shanghai-inspired bar Salon du The and Cat's Alley at the zhuzhed-up **Hydro Majestic (52-88 Great Western Highway, Medlow Bath)**, a magical place to watch the sun sink into the rumples valley with a classic cocktail in hand.

Clockwise from left: Take in the views from the refurbished Wintergreen Room at the Hydro Majestic Hotel in Medlow Bath; 2773 in Glenbrook has a lovely courtyard that feels like an ode to the pastoral life; tuck into a hearty lamb shoulder at Palette Dining @ Niagara.



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