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Issue 11 Autumn 2009

# LUXURY

## HOLIDAYS & CORPORATE TRAVEL



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# Showcase Margaret River

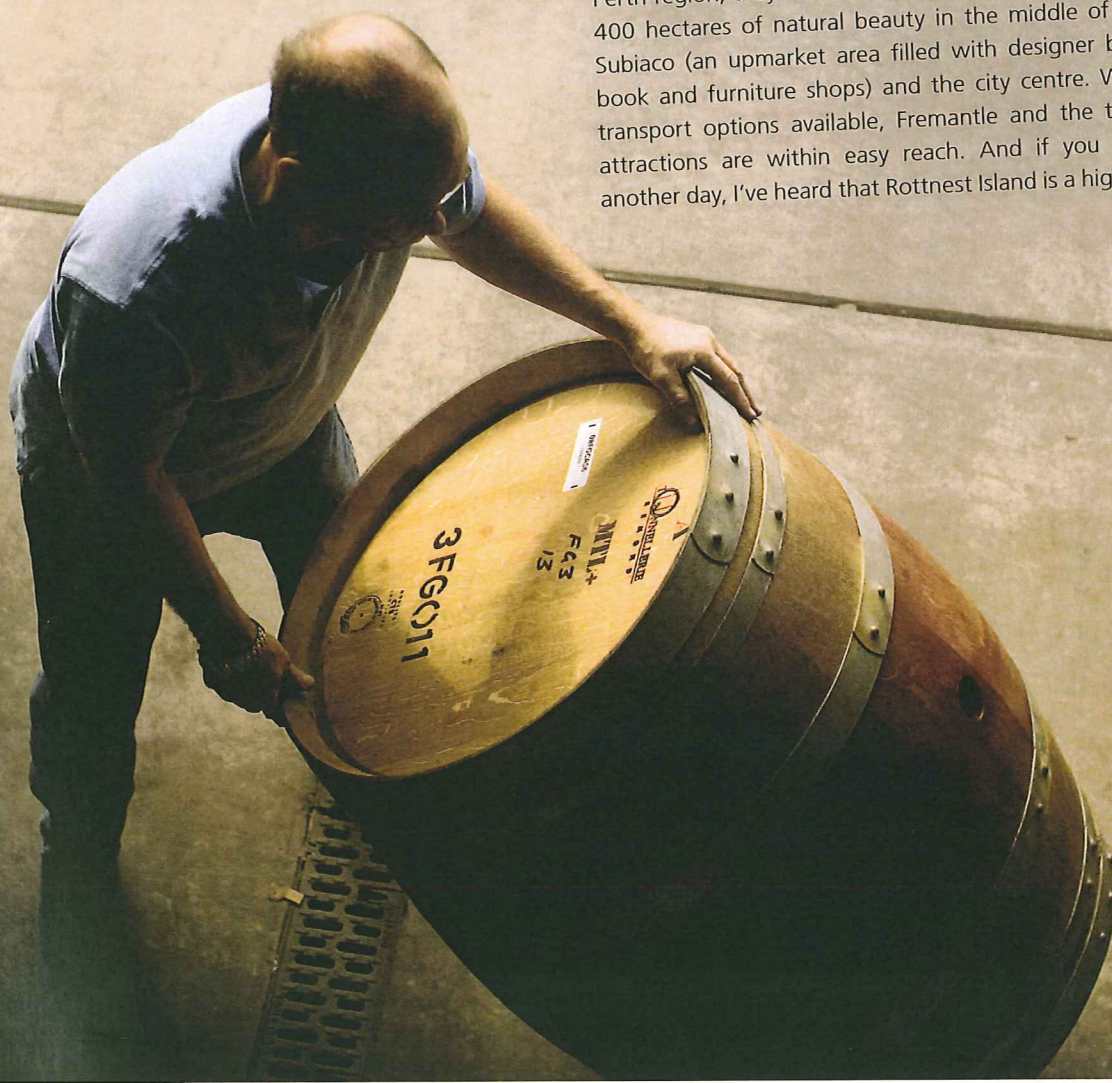
Western Australia is not always top of mind when New Zealanders think of travelling to Australia, except maybe to visit friends and family. Well, that is all about to change. **Melanie Hawkins** recently went on a road trip of exploration from Perth to the Margaret River region, undoubtedly one of Australia's finest wine growing regions and home to some other unexpected gems.

Now before you think that Perth is just too far away - well it essentially is further than some other Australian cities, but with Air New Zealand's direct service, it is just over 7 hours to get there from Auckland and 6 hours to get back. Perth is a thriving cosmopolitan city, with its most seductive and somewhat secretive trait being that it's the gateway to an incredible cross-section of fine cuisine, wine - and a touch of luxury, of course.

Arriving on a sunny 32C° day, I received a warm welcome from my driver, Marshall from Limousines Australia who escorted me to his sleek vehicle for the cruisy drive into the city. Being very

knowledgeable about the area, he talked about all that Perth has to offer including the many wonderful events that had been on recently - like Simply Red, Leonard Cohen and the upcoming International Arts Festival, to name a few. It looks like Perth is stepping up to compete with the likes of Melbourne as a destination to visit for cultural, entertainment and music shows.

A couple of days in Perth itself to kick-off your trip is well worth it. Base yourself at a boutique property like The Richardson, (newly opened) or The Outram. Both in the West Perth region, they have easy accessibility to Kings Park (over 400 hectares of natural beauty in the middle of the city), Subiaco (an upmarket area filled with designer boutiques, book and furniture shops) and the city centre. With many transport options available, Fremantle and the top tourist attractions are within easy reach. And if you can spare another day, I've heard that Rottnest Island is a highlight. It's





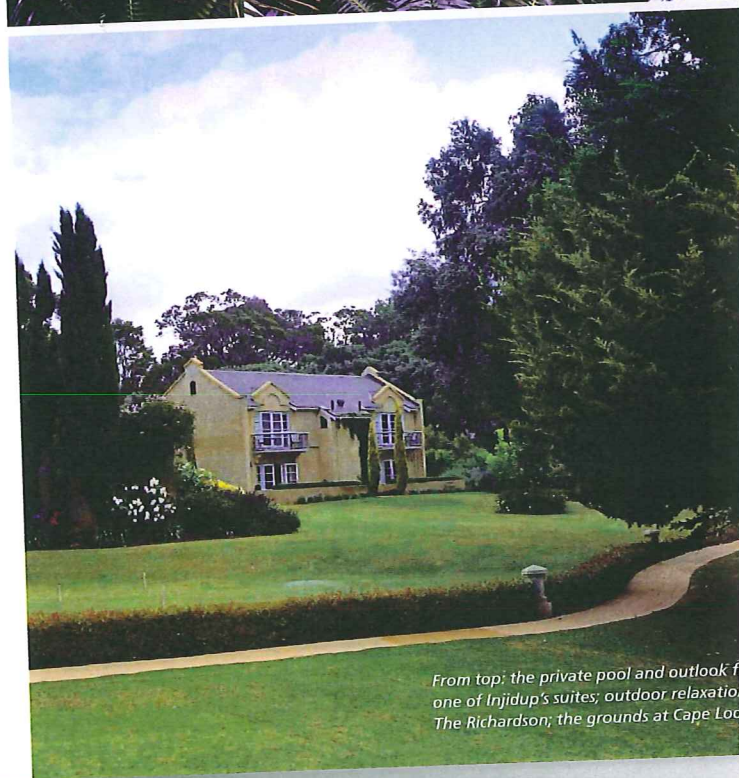
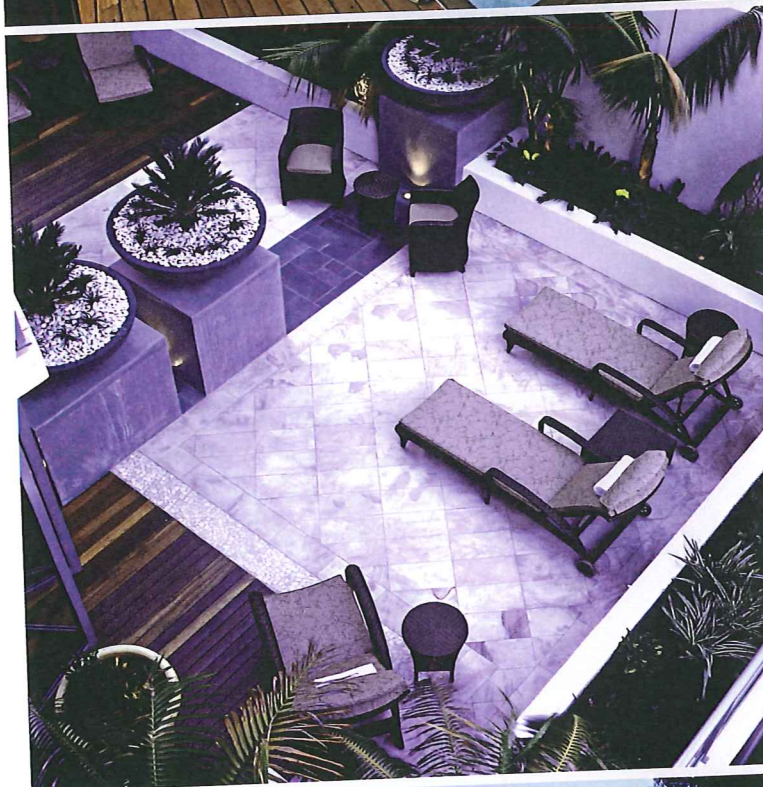
located 19km off the coast and is home to an abundance of tropical fish, coral and amazing wildlife. With virtually no cars on the island you can opt to explore by bike or hop-on/hop-off bus, which will take you to the many secluded bays and secret hideaways around the island so you really get back in touch with nature's beauty.

Saving that for another trip, I collected my hire car and began the 3-hour drive South. The driving was easy with long straight double lane roads most of the way.

First stop: Bussleton. This pretty little town is home to the Southern Hemisphere's longest jetty. Positioned off from a beautiful sandy swimming beach, take a stroll down it to admire the view backward and the ocean beyond.

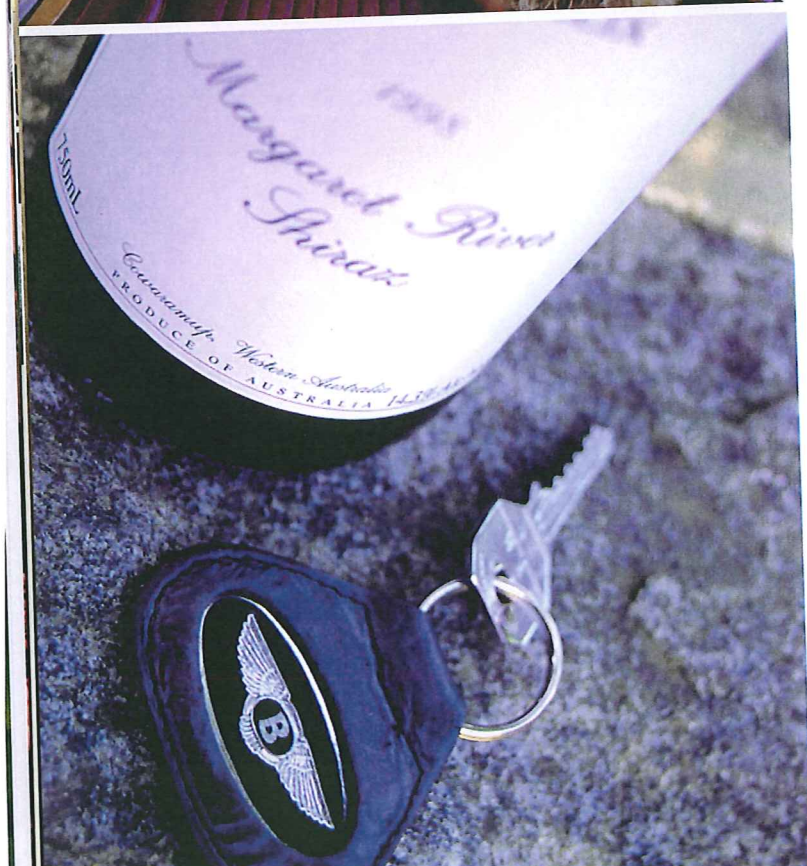
Onward towards Dunsborough, I turned onto Caves Road, which runs all the way down this part of the country. Moondance Lodge was where I was headed to meet with owner Geraldine Riley and experience the uniqueness that her lodge offers. With only eight luxury suites, Moondance is definitely a place to rejuvenate and enjoy the natural bush beauty that surrounds it. Geraldine shared with me her dedication to 'soulful travel' and the wellness treatments that are an essential component of the Moondance experience. We began an afternoon of peaceful meditation surrounded by nature and the resonating sounds of a didgeridoo being played by Josh Whiteland, grandson of the Matriarchal Elder and Cultural Custodian of the local Wardandi Tribe. Josh has a gentle, calming presence and it was a privilege to be able to hear his sacred tribal stories and learn more about the wonderful respect the Aboriginal people traditionally have for their environment. As we strolled through the nearby bush, Josh talked about some of the many plants and animals of the area and their various uses for medicinal, healing and culinary purposes. This time with Josh was enlightening and really left me feeling that little bit more connected with the area. It was a great one-on-one insight into Aboriginal culture from a non-commercial perspective. Absolutely unique, I'll retain fond memories of the experience.

For classic country club style, a stay at the award-winning Cape Lodge is hard to beat. With impeccable service and cuisine created by Executive Chef Tony Howell and his team that is decidedly refined and delicate, the freshest of produce is sourced and the creations are mouth-watering. With a menu that completely changes every day and wines from the Lodge's own vineyard, it is hard to resist a table overlooking one of the many lakes on the property while watching the panorama of changing colours as the sun sets. Cape Lodge comes complete with tennis court, swimming pool and beautifully manicured gardens. I enjoyed a Deluxe Forest Suite, which was extremely spacious and offered an outdoor balcony to just sit and marvel at the abundance of nature while listening to the sounds of the bush symphony. I was also fortunate enough to see a kangaroo bounding through the bush at first dawn and a group of the endangered White Tailed Black Cockatoos high up in some Karri trees. General Manager, Drew Bernhardt is your most charming host and



From top: the private pool and outlook from one of Injidup's suites; outdoor relaxation area at The Richardson; the grounds at Cape Lodge





with several Condé Nast Traveller awards, it's easy to see why Cape Lodge welcomes back many repeat guests.

The Margaret River and surrounds has long been known for its rolling surf breaks the Indian Ocean is revered for. This aesthetic feature shares itself with an ever-growing number of quality vineyards and constantly evolving artisan community, not to mention other premium products such as olive oil, cheese and chocolate. I was keen to explore so set out on a tour with a difference with Lifestyle Margaret River tour company founder, Nola Gaebler. She arrived in a pristine and beautifully sleek 1955 Bentley SI Saloon - I was in for a real treat. Nola exudes a real passion for the quintessential Margaret River lifestyle and her tours reflect this with a personalised experience that Nola creates based on secret locations and introductions to local identities and personalities. Part of what makes her tours special is that they often evolve as the day unfolds and she gets to know you better. These unexpected aspects of the day are all part of the heightened experience. I was fortunate to meet with Jah Roc Gallery owners Gary Bennett and David Paris who have an absolute passion for furniture making. Collaborating with other artists to create innovative collections with an ecologically responsible approach keeps pushing the development of their brand. A keen surfer for many years, Gary offered to take us for a quick off-road drive to the beach to check out the view. Today the ocean was flat but with it being a hot clear day we soaked up the sight. It was then that I realised the reason why this area has such a legendary reputation for its coastline.

Continuing on, we drove to a boutique vineyard that has made headlines and won two trophies and over 100 medals since their first vintage in the year 2000. Cape Grace is owned and run by Robert and Karen Karri-Davies who both have diverse and interesting backgrounds. So to meet and chat with them at the cellar door was wonderfully refreshing. I tasted their hand-crafted wine and learnt about the vineyard, which is actually on the farm where Dr Tom Cullity originally thought



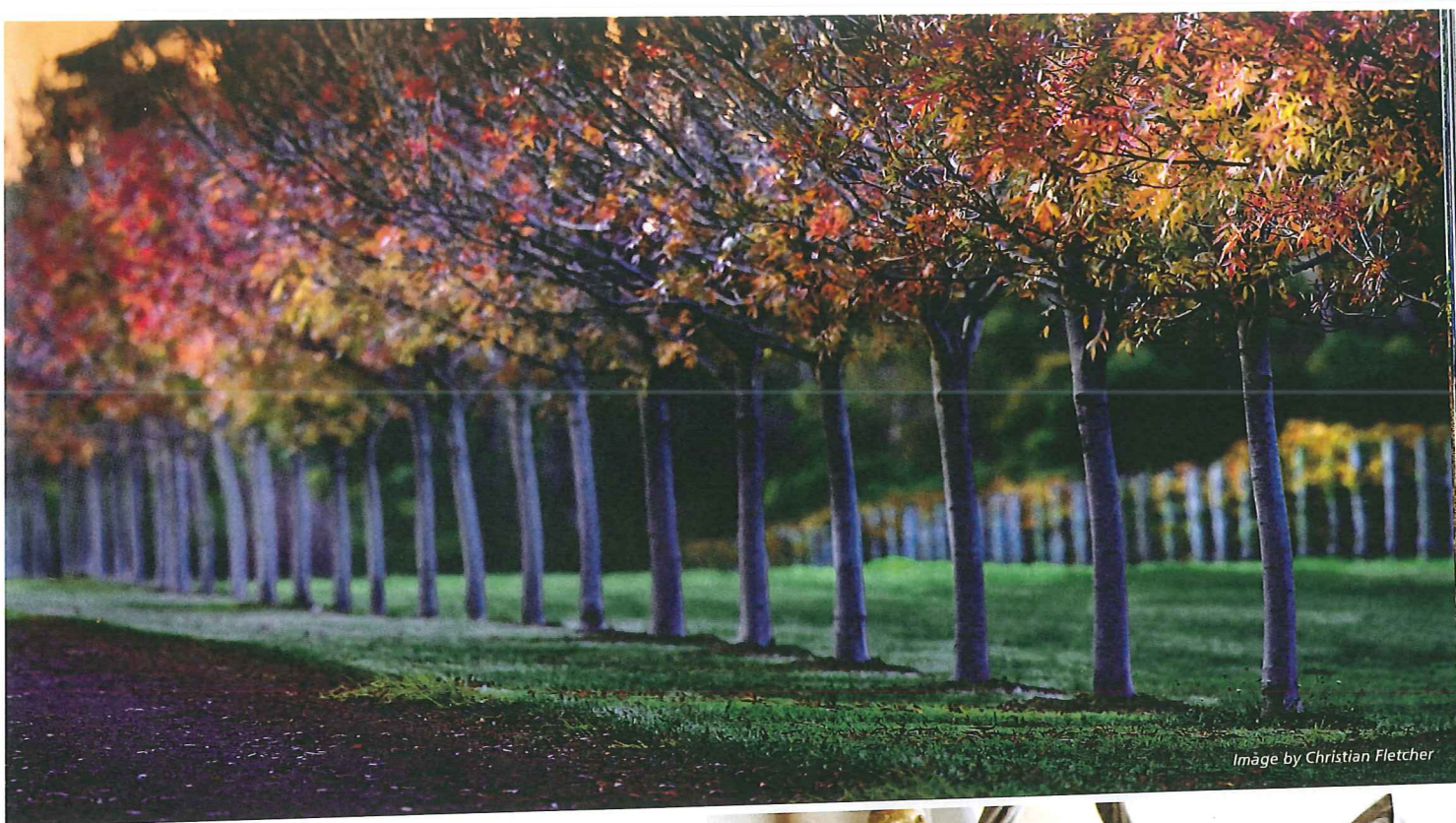


Image by Christian Fletcher

Vasse Felix should be situated – the first vineyard to produce a vintage in the area.

A delicious lunch at one of the founding vineyards, Cullen Wines, concluded my time with Nola. After lunch I then investigated the art of winemaking further to see first hand how this scientific and intimate art of creation is fuelled by so many factors including those of Mother Nature. Cullen Wines has a holistic approach to viticulture and operates organic farming alongside a series of Biodynamic preparations made from mineral, plant and animal substances. These practices and the observance of astronomical rhythms, results in the production of healthier crops. With several wine growing regions across Australia, Margaret River has certainly set itself high standards with many labels obtaining medal status at the various wine recognition awards. The gravelly loam soils over clay combined with the breezes from the Southern and Indian oceans make for a unique winemaking environment.

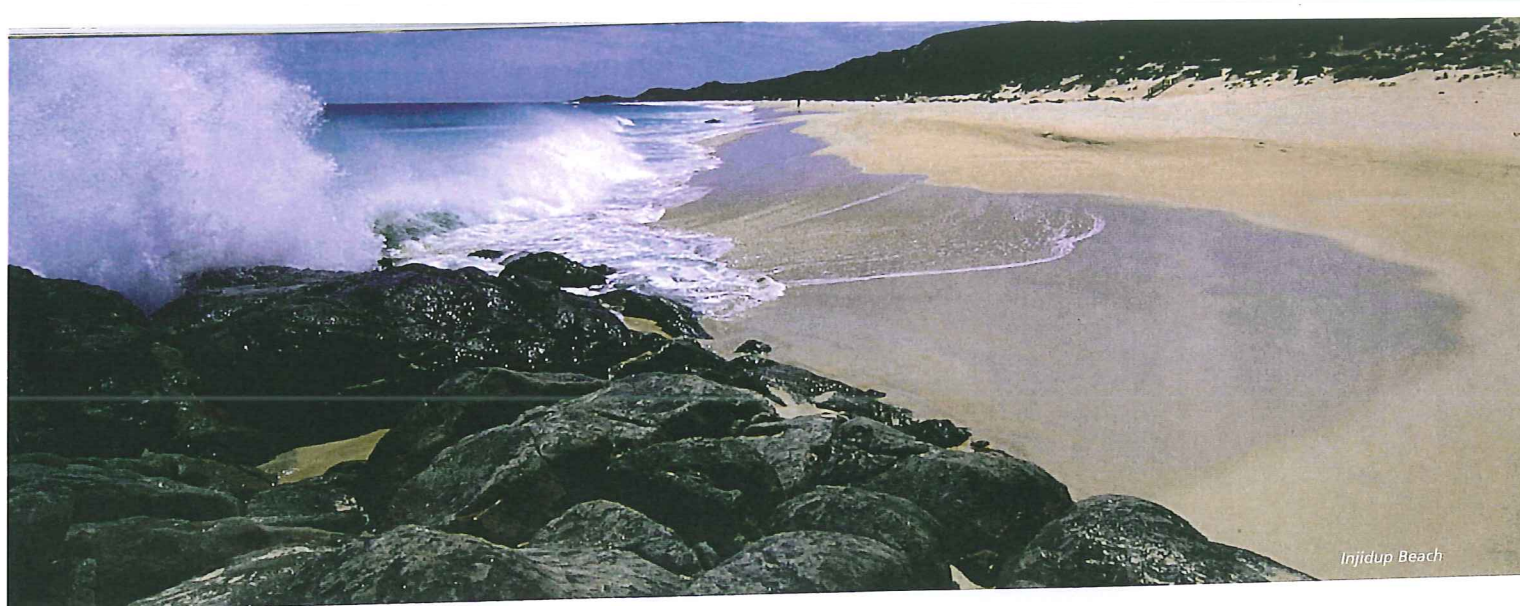
Next up, a stop in at the cellar door of Vasse Felix for a wine tasting. One of the largest established vineyards in the Margaret River region, it is owned and operated by the Holmes à Court family. Well-known for their limited production Heytesbury Chardonnay, Vasse Felix also hosts musical performances and displays art from the Holmes à Court private collection.

My next day in the region was to be spent with Sean Blocksidge, owner of The Margaret River Discovery Company. Sean offers a variety of tailored tour experiences, but today I was embarking on the aptly named 'Discovery Tour'. Sean's objective is to offer his guests a truly unique insight into the numerous aspects of region. And he achieves this effortlessly through his professional and authentic approach. We covered everything from getting up close and personal with the Margaret River herself to off-roading through the bush. We were fortunate to see wild kangaroos along the way plus some other wildlife. For me though, a particular highlight was our time at the exclusive Fraser Gallop vineyard. Not open to



Clockwise from top: stunning beauty at Fraser Gallop vineyard, Injidup's breakfast hamper, Robert Karri-Davies from Cape Grace vineyard, Vasse Felix wine sits alongside Nola Gaebler's Bentley, key, Nola driving in her 1955 classic





the public, we were privileged to meet with New Zealander Clive Otto, former Australian Winemaker of the Year. To talk to someone with such an esteemed winemaking repertoire was both informative and inspiring. Clive has such a down-to-earth, likeable persona we could have enjoyed his company for longer except for the arrival of the first pick from this year's harvest that put everybody into action. So instead I dined on a specially prepared gourmet lunch in the barrel room with Fraser Gallop wines to match. It was a memorable indulgence. Sean has created tours that are exceptionally well-designed with a real difference. And with all the unexpected aspects along the way, it made for an outstanding day.

That evening I checked into Injidup Spa Retreat, which is situated overlooking the stunning Injidup Bay. The retreat's ten private 2-bedroom suites are meticulously designed with admirable attention to detail. The soothing décor in the living spaces interacts effortlessly with the environment and nicely complements the panoramic outdoor coastal view. Each with its own private plunge pool, BBQ and concealed kitchen facilities, it would be easy to stay secluded and just enjoy. However, exploration is what this trip was all about so I headed down to sister property Smiths Beach Resort to check out Bouzy Champagne Bar, Bathers Restaurant and the much talked about Wine Deli. After enjoying the early evening with others in the bar, sipping delicious Champagne from the Bouzy region in France, it was time to sample Bathers' contemporary menu, which certainly didn't disappoint. The Wine Deli is large, well-stocked and is perfect for obtaining local and internationally sourced gourmet supplies.

After feasting on appetising goodies from my complimentary breakfast hamper the next day, I had to take a little time out, so succumbed to an indulgent Fusion Massage at the restful spa. The spa and its staff are heavenly and the worries of the world easily melt away – for an hour or so at least! I was really impressed with Injidup, it has all the makings of a world-class spa retreat with a modern Australian twist.

Then it was back on the road again to Perth, taking in some of the scenic spots along the way like the Cape Naturaliste Lighthouse; a great location for whale watching from September to December; Eagle Bay; a top spot for holiday homes of the Australian rich and famous and Bunker Bay.

I ended my trip visiting some of the hip and happening night

spots of Perth and taking in the open air Laya concert at the opening night of the Perth International Arts Festival, an event that is a joyous musical homage to Western Australia's connection to the Indian Ocean and its people. It was wonderful to hear the enchanting sounds of music being played by people from India, Indonesia, Maldives, Myanmar, Thailand and Sri Lanka and a notable way to conclude my stay.

Visiting this part of Australia for the first time, I've realised that Western Australia is a wonderful land of discovery just waiting to be uncovered. There is so much on offer, from pristine white sand beaches and wild bush beauty to world-class vineyards and accommodation. Margaret River has successfully blended the needs of the luxury traveller with the uniqueness of the surrounding environment to create a place that I for one will certainly be telling everyone about. ★

### Other Great Activities

**Cape to Cape Walk** – this breathtaking coastal walk covers 140km between Cape Naturaliste and Cape Leeuwin. Between August and September the region's wildflowers can also be enjoyed.

**Caving** – The Leeuwin – Naturaliste Ridge that runs through the Margaret River area hides a number of limestone caves that can be explored.

**Boranup Karri Forest** – reaching 60m tall or more, Karri trees over 100 years old reside in this beautiful forest just South of the Margaret River township.

### Fact File

#### Transport:

Air New Zealand  
[www.airnz.co.nz](http://www.airnz.co.nz)

Limousines Australia, Perth  
[www.limoaustralia.com.au](http://www.limoaustralia.com.au)

Thrifty Car Rental, Perth  
[www.thrifty.com.au](http://www.thrifty.com.au)

#### Accommodation:

The Richardson Hotel & Spa, Perth  
[www.therichardson.com.au](http://www.therichardson.com.au)

The Outram, Perth  
[www.wyndhamrap.com.au/resorts/theoutram](http://www.wyndhamrap.com.au/resorts/theoutram)

Moondance Lodge, Yallingup  
[www.moondancelodge.com](http://www.moondancelodge.com)

Cape Lodge, Yallingup  
[www.capelodge.com.au](http://www.capelodge.com.au)

Injidup Spa Retreat, Injidup Beach  
[www.injidupsparetreat.com.au](http://www.injidupsparetreat.com.au)

Smiths Beach Resort, Smiths Beach  
[www.smithsbeachresort.com.au](http://www.smithsbeachresort.com.au)

#### Luxury touring with a unique perspective:

Margaret River Discovery Co.  
[www.margaretriverdiscovery.com.au](http://www.margaretriverdiscovery.com.au)

Lifestyle Margaret River  
[www.lifestylemargaretriver.com.au](http://www.lifestylemargaretriver.com.au)

#### About the area:

Western Australia Tourism  
[www.westernaustralia.com](http://www.westernaustralia.com)

Margaret River Visitor Centre  
[www.margaretriver.com.au](http://www.margaretriver.com.au)



# Concierge An inside guide

## Margaret River Discovery Co. Tours

It's not every day that you are out in the bush admiring nature as I was recently, in the Margaret River region, and spending the day exploring it with The Margaret River Discovery Company founder, Sean Blocksidge. We were travelling through the Australian bush in 4-wheel drive style and Sean was telling us about the numerous species of flora and fauna that can be seen and found in this area – this region is home to over 2000 varieties of wild flowers! We were admiring the beauty of the old Karri trees (*Eucalyptus Diversicolor*), native to the area and one of the tallest growing hardwoods in the world. Sean stopped the vehicle and asked us to step outside as we were about to undertake a 'tasting' with a difference. With wine being the usual object of a tasting in this part of the country it was to our surprise that Sean revealed that it was not to be wine but a selection of honey to entice our tastebuds! First we tried honey from the Karri tree. A warm, mild tasting honey of amber colour. Next up was honey from the Jarrah tree, which has a stronger taste not unlike our own Manuka honey - both have strong antibacterial properties. Finally, honey from the Peppermint tree. Now this was unusual – a mix of sweet and minty flavours which is hard to



describe. The team at LUXURY are always on the lookout for the little unexpected things on our travels and tasting honey from the very trees that were surrounding us as we stood in the bush was a unique and memorable experience. ★

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**Website:** [www.margaretriverdiscovery.com.au](http://www.margaretriverdiscovery.com.au)

