



APPLES ARE AN IMPORTANT CROP FOR THE REGION



LOCAL PRESERVES



MT STIRLING OLIVES



HOME-MADE CHEESECAKE

## THERE IS A HUGE CHOICE OF PLACES TO STAY IN THE REGION, RANGING FROM TRADITIONAL MOTEL TO BED AND BREAKFASTS, RURAL RETREATS AND A MYRIAD OF SELF-CATERING COTTAGES

kitchen at the Barrel Room Café next to the cellar door.

The family also makes a range of GreedyMe preserves, including spicy tomato relish and chilli onion jam that can be sampled, and winery tours are held three times a day.

There is a huge choice of places to stay in the region, ranging from traditional motels (The Vines in Stanthorpe is a favourite) to bed and breakfasts, rural retreats and a myriad of self-catering cottages.

Among the most popular are the Vineyard Cottages and Café, Girraween Environmental Lodge, the ultra-modern cabins at Ridgemill Estate and Honeysuckle Cottages.

Among the cellar doors worth visting is Lucas Estate, a family operation at Severnlea where you can also sample local gourmet chutneys, olives and tapenades and preserves and check out the works of local artists (it also hosts concerts several times a year).

"We are passionate about wine but you need to add something to the experience for visitors," says winemaker

and artist Louise Samuel.

The high-tech boutique operation Symphony Hill is producing some outstanding wines and offers a friendly welcome, while the wines of Peter Stark at Boireann have reached cult status and are hard to find.

"The standards are being raised in the region every year," say Trevor and Carol Sharp of Amberley Edge. "Everyone is trying really hard to raise the bar."

Ballandean Estate, Heritage Wines and the Beverley Vineyard restaurant at Whiskey Gully are popular spots for lunch while Amanda's@Mason Wines serves all-day breakfasts.

Anna's in Stanthorpe is a traditional Italian, with Patty's on McGregor and Cooks, Gluttons, Gourmets also evening hangouts.

The Granite Belt hosts several festivals including the Spring Wine Festival held each October, and the Apple and Grape Harvest held biannually in early March.

Winter, known as Brass Monkey season, is a particularly popular time to visit with a range of Christmas in July festivities. ■

## TRAVELtips

### GETTING THERE

Regional Express (Rex) flies regularly from Sydney to Lismore and Ballina, both of which are within a three-hour drive of the Granite Belt. See [www.regionalexpress.com.au](http://www.regionalexpress.com.au)

### WHERE TO STAY

**Amberley Edge Vineyard B&B** is a cosy country homestead with modern amenities that overlooks the family's vines (two nights, with dinner, wine and breakfasts costs from \$399 a couple). Home-cooked breakfasts feature local produce and there's a log fire to keep guests warm in winter. All three bedrooms have en suite bathrooms. Phone (07) 4683 6203; [www.amberleyedge.com.au](http://www.amberleyedge.com.au)

**Granite Gardens Cottages** offers luxury getaways surrounded by rose gardens. The cottages here have corner spas, Laura Ashley linen, fluffy bathrobes and guests are greeted by fresh-cut flowers and a bottle of bubbly. Cottages are fully equipped and have log fires for winter warmth. A range of packages are available and there's fishing in the dam and a small golf course. Phone (07) 4683 5161; [www.granitegardens.com.au](http://www.granitegardens.com.au)

**The Vines Motel and Cottage** overlooks Quart Pot Creek and offers 26 motel units with air-conditioning, pay TV and queen-sized beds

with electric blankets. Two-night bubbles and bliss packages include country breakfasts, dinner, a vineyard lunch, a bottle of bubbly and afternoon tea from \$299 per person twin share. Phone (07) 4681 3844, or go to [www.thevinesmotel.com.au](http://www.thevinesmotel.com.au).



### WHERE TO EAT

**Anna's Restaurant.** This Italian restaurant is a long-standing Stanthorpe favourite. Dishes include spinach and ricotta cannelloni (\$16.90) and scallopine alla marsala (\$25.90), and there's a good

range of local wines on the list. Open Monday-Saturday for dinner with a gourmet Italian buffet on Friday and Saturday nights. Phone (07) 4681 1265; [www.annas.com.au](http://www.annas.com.au).

**Cooks, Gluttons and Gourmets** in downtown Stanthorpe, this is a popular spot serving modern Australian cuisine. Dishes include Greek-style baby barbecued octopus with garlic and onions (\$12.50) and pan-seared venison rump with mixed root vegetables (\$24.50). Open Tuesday-Sunday for dinner. Phone (07) 4681 2377.

**Ballandean Estate Barrel Room Café.** Enjoy lunch at the cellar door while surrounded by 130-year-old wine barrels. The food is hearty Italian staples like squid ink pasta with smoked salmon (\$15), or an antipasto platter for two (\$30). The café serves coffee and home cakes. Open seven days 9am-5pm. Phone (07) 4684 1226.

### FOR MORE DETAILS

Visit [www.thegranitebelt.com.au](http://www.thegranitebelt.com.au), and [www.southeastqueenslandcountry.com.au](http://www.southeastqueenslandcountry.com.au) Phone (02) 4938 3444.

### MORE INFORMATION

Visit [www.winecountry.com.au](http://www.winecountry.com.au) and [www.upperhuntercountry.com](http://www.upperhuntercountry.com)