

Sydney Observer

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Living the Art

CLAUDIA KARVAN

Summer SPECIAL

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Gift Guide
for Christmas

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Sydney Observer Christmas Giveaways

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- \$50 Bunnings Gift Voucher



2 Hampers with 12 of the 2025 Product of the Year Winners



Featured is a select range of 2025 Product of the Year winners including:

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- Spirax Study App Notebook
- TePe Choice Toothbrush
- Coles Finest Hazelnut Cookie
- Coles Overnight Chia Pudding – Berry & Coconut
- Coles Daley Street Instant Coffee
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- Coles Simply Tomato & Basil Pasta Sauce
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- Starbucks by Nespresso Flavoured Coffee Pods
- LeVel Lemonade & Cola



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A family pass for 4 for the Christmas Concert plus 5 Family Passes (2A and 2C, each) to visit zoo worth \$150.



5 Mov'in Bed Outdoor Cinema Tickets



20 Event Cinemas Double Passes

It is your chance to win one of the 10 double Gold Class or 10 double regular passes for movies.



It is Easy to Win

Simply email editor@kamdha.com with your name, address and telephone number by 19 December saying what prize you would like to win and why you should have it.

The best answers will have one of the special presents *Sydney Observer* gathered to enhance your Christmas celebration.



From the Editor

Hello and welcome our loyal Observers, to this special December/January issue. Special because *Sydney Observer* is feeling extra festive and generous, offering a stack of giveaways for your family this holiday season.

To accompany this, we are also showcasing some gift ideas in our Gift Guide section, alleviating the stress of the sometimes difficult task of picking the right kind of gifts for your loved ones.

For our profile we spoke with Claudia Karvan, veteran Australian actress and producer, ahead of the new series of *Bump*, the hit feel good television show. Claudia's fascinating life story led us to discuss how she integrates this into her work to create authentic, meaningful art which people can connect with.

We are also jam packed with travel this month, with a local camping guide, a Cairns trip, and a Swim Trek trip in Italy's Tremiti Islands.

Wishing everyone a prosperous Christmas and holiday season.

Jay Houhlias

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Chatswood	Lindfield	Roseville Chase	Wahroonga
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Gordon	Pymble	St Ives Chase	West Pymble
Killara	Roseville	Turramurra	Willoughby



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EVENT C I N E M A S

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Festive Cheer at Local Events

For those who celebrate the silly season, there are lots of Christmas-focused events taking place across the Ku-ring-gai area this December. On the 5th of the month there is Turramurra High School's Twilight Christmas market. Beaumont Road Public School in Killara is hosting carols on the 7th. For little ones there is a crafting afternoon activity at St Ives Library on December 13. There is a Christian service at St Swithun's in Pymble on the 22nd, and for those who are Jewish there is the Hanukkah on the Green Festival in St Ives on Christmas Day. Everyone is welcome to join the Hanukkah celebrations, which include amusement rides, carnival games, lighting of the giant Menorah and live music.



FOKE Fighting for Ku-ring-gai Trees

Ku-ring-gai has three national parks around us – Lane Cove, Garigal and Ku-ring-gai Chase. But all across the area are beautiful tree canopies. As per Planning NSW, Great Sydney has a target of 40% canopy cover by 2036. As of 2022, the canopy cover ratios were 21.7% across the area, meaning improvement is needed to meet that target in a decade's time. Friends of Ku-ring-gai's Environment, FOKE, have been focused on championing this issue, particularly amid the current Transport Oriented Development housing debate. They are a community group dedicated to the conservation and protection of our built and natural environment. To see their advocacy work, we recommend you visiting their website: www.foke.org.au.



Focus on Renewable Energy Sources

January 26 might be a public holiday in Australia, but it's also a day where the world focuses on a very important environmental issue. It's the International Day of Clean Energy, which is a call to raise awareness and mobilise action for clean energy. To limit the impacts of climate change, our country's reliance on fossil fuels has to change, say the experts. NSW now has approximately 13,500 megawatts of renewable energy generation capacity, which is around 53% of total generation capacity in our state. 53% of Ku-ring-gai's emissions come from electricity. Now thousands of locals are powering their homes, cars and bikes with clean energy thanks to the Ku-ring-gai Net Zero program. You can read more about it here: www.netzero.krg.nsw.gov.au/Home.

11 LUXURIOUS INDEPENDENT LIVING UNITS

Brand new residential complex for seniors, offering a range of spacious 1 and 2-bedroom apartments. Each residence is designed with function and practicality in mind. Boasting generous balconies, wide hallways, delightfully curated colour palettes, gorgeous bedrooms with floor to ceiling curtains and soft carpets. Open plan kitchens with quality European appliances make cooking and entertaining a breeze. Spacious contemporary bathrooms and ample storage throughout. Located in a favourable residential area in Asquith with shopping centres, transportation facilities and other social venues nearby. There are on-site services to help you live independently, or the peace of mind of on-call assistance if required.

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North Sydney Council Rates Drama

Our North Shore neighbours in the North Sydney Council district are preparing for potential rate hikes. It comes due to the redevelopment of the North Sydney Olympic Pool in Milson's Point, which has iconic views of the Sydney Harbour Bridge. The Pool's refurbishment is way over budget, with \$17 million needed in extra funding. The original project designs were expected to cost \$64 million. A rate rise is one potential way for the council to address the high cost.



Millions Spent on North Shore Listings

Plenty of expensive properties have sold for big bucks recently in the local region. A 1907 federation home in Mosman sold for the suburb's second highest figure of about \$17 million. A five-bedroom home in Willoughby sold at auction for \$6.1 million – what stunned property experts is the fact it sold for \$1 million over the reserve. In Gordon, an extravagant, newly-built mansion – fit with chandeliers, a cabana, sauna and pool – went under the hammer for \$10.88 million.

Merry Christmas
and
HAPPY NEW YEAR!

Paul Fletcher
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Northern Sydney War Memorial Replaced

After the original left honour roll was stolen from the Turramurra Memorial Park entrance gate in July, Ku-ring-gai Council has now reinstated a new roll commemorating World War One veterans.

There is now a bronze replica of the original left honour roll in time for Remembrance Day. It measures 2.1m tall by 60cm wide, weighs 120kg and contains the names of 67 local First World War soldiers, including seven who died serving their country.

“The theft of the original roll was an appalling and disgraceful act,” Ku-ring-gai Mayor Christine Kay said.

“Unfortunately, the original honour roll and the criminals who took it have not been

found. This left council with no option but to replace the honour roll.

“This ensures that, once again, visitors to this park will be able to read the names of local war heroes who served, and in some cases died, on the battlegrounds of Europe.”

The replacement honour roll has been painstakingly crafted to produce a high-quality memorial. A traditional and labour-intensive fabrication process was undertaken to give the new left honour roll a more aged appearance in keeping with the existing right honour roll.

The left honour roll commemorates Lieutenant Norman Dougall, who was awarded a Military Cross after bravely leading a counterattack at Louveral in France.



Digitised toy library for St Ives

Mothers have long-appreciated the toy libraries available at local libraries near them. Now a North Shore facility is becoming far easier for parents to access.

The toy library in St Ives is now offering parents a click and collect borrowing service to keep their kids entertained.

The service opened last month and is modelled on a similar service operating on the Northern Beaches, where families can borrow a wide range of educational and high-quality toys in return for a small weekly fee.

The Cubby House Toy Library now operates from 1A Acron Road St Ives on Mondays each week between 11:30am and 12 noon. It's available to parents through a click and collect service operated by the EarlyEd organisation.

A playgroup for children with disabilities also operates out of 1A Acron Road, which is open to families three days a week.

The St Ives toy library service was officially launched by Ku-ring-gai Council Mayor Christine Kay, who said it was a “great way for families to save money on buying toys and learn about the benefits of recycling”.

“Through the toy library, parents can access developmentally appropriate toys in a low cost and sustainable way.”

“The new service is an example of how we can reduce the cost of living for young families and provide a place for them to meet and get advice about their child's development.”

Additional toy libraries in the general area include Lane Cove Library and North Ryde Library. Families can sign up to join the Ku-ring-gai Council service at www.earlyed.com.au/join-the-toy-library.

The Impact of Domestic Violence

One in 10 men in NSW have had run-ins with police for domestic and family violence matters. The finding was revealed in a report from the Australian Institute of Criminology, which used data from NSW Police and birth data to determine the prevalence of gendered violence across the state.

The report found 9.6% of men had contact with police over domestic and family violence issues, compared with one in 33 women. NSW Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence Jodie Harrison said the research would be very useful.

“This new data helps build a clearer picture of who perpetrates domestic and family violence, and why they do so,” she said in a statement.

In Ku-ring-gai, domestic violence remains a pertinent issue - just like with any other district in Australia. Red Suburbs is a crime



map of Australia based on police data. They score each suburb out of 100 in terms of its level of criminality, the lower the score the safer the area is. The top suburbs in our local area where assault came up as having a high rate of reporting were Pymble, St Ives and Lindfield.

Institute of Criminology deputy director Rick Brown said this report was the

first of its kind to record the prevalence of violence in a population sample.

“By identifying and targeting those who commit domestic violence, especially early in their offending trajectory, we can not only reduce violence against intimate partners and family members but prevent crime more generally,” he said.

It comes following news that workers on the frontline of domestic and family violence will be asked about their experiences in a bid to better help victim-survivors.

A national survey of the family, domestic and sexual violence workforce is to be carried out to help determine what support is needed on the ground. The federal government will spend \$1.39 million on the survey.

If you or someone you know needs help, you can call 1800 RESPECT (1800 737 732).

Better planning between Roseville, Lindfield, Killara and Gordon stations



Have your say on five scenarios for new housing in these areas.

Ku-ring-gai Council is seeking community feedback on options to deliver new housing around Roseville, Lindfield, Killara and Gordon train stations.

Under the state government's policy, Ku-ring-gai is required to deliver 23,200 new homes in the next 15 years in these areas.

One of these options is based on the NSW Government's existing Transport Oriented Development (TOD) planning policy.

Four other options for new housing have been prepared by the Council, which seek to protect heritage and improve the urban tree canopy.

We are very keen to hear your opinion on this important matter. Visit krg.nsw.gov.au/housingfeedback to have your say.

You can give feedback between Friday 15 November and Tuesday 17 December 2024.

Enquiries

email: housing@krg.nsw.gov.au

phone: 9424 0000



A Son's Claim

by Wal Abramowicz

Your will sets out how your assets are to be distributed after you die. How much each beneficiary receives normally cannot be changed. One exception is if the court is persuaded that a wise and just will maker would have done otherwise.

A father had made several wills over the years. His final will was significantly different to his earlier wills. Instead of giving his son the whole estate, he divided it evenly between his son and his grandchildren. So instead of getting \$500,000, the son received \$100,000. The son argued that this was unfair, given his financial needs and close relationship with his father. The son was 69 years old and near retirement.

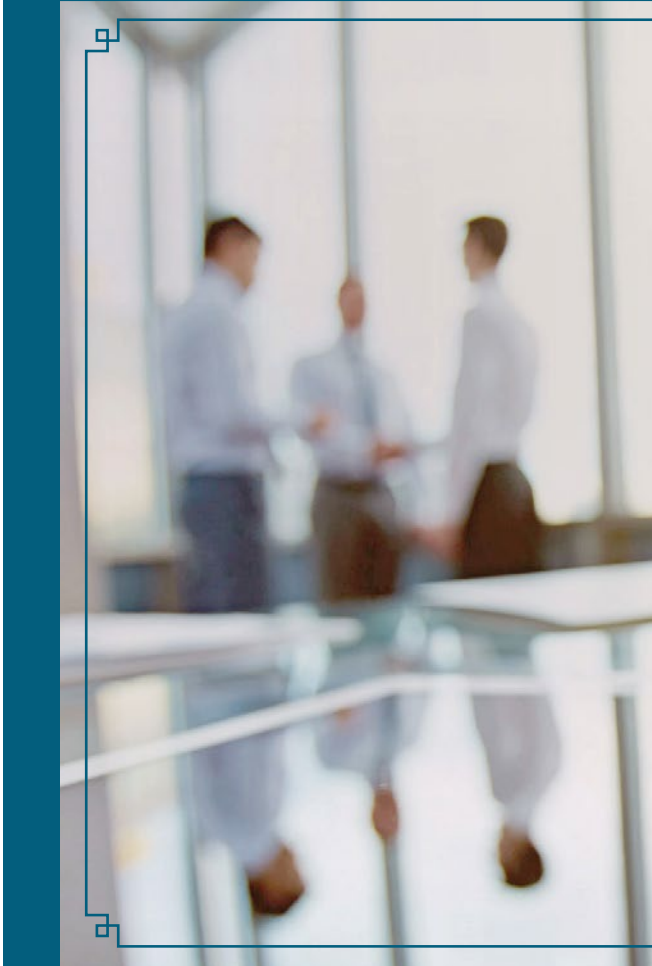
The son argued that he should get three times the amount. The amount he was to receive was not adequate for his maintenance and advancement in life. He highlighted that he had financial difficulties and a mortgage. Without further provision from the estate, he would have to use his retirement funds. He was a loving son throughout his fathers' life.

The lawyer who drafted the will gave evidence in court that the father had made a fair and thought-out decision. The father had given sufficient financial assistance to the son throughout his lifetime. The distribution of the estate was reasonable and considered the needs of all the beneficiaries.



The Court increased the amount given to him by an amount sufficient to pay his mortgage. The court decided that a wise and just will maker in the father's position would have done this. This doubled the amount given to the son.

Fox & Staniland Lawyers (foxstaniland.com.au) have a team of lawyers with extensive experience in making notional estate claims on behalf of claimants, defending notional estate claims on behalf of estates, and acting for clients in all aspects of contested estate litigation.



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*Parking available at the Gordon Centre and Ku-ring-gai Council on Dumaresq Street.

Colourful Chaos for a Cause

Just in time for the season of fun, frivolity and giving, the young primary students at Beaumont Road Public School took part in a Colour Fun Run to raise over \$25,000 for new computers and a new playground for their school.

On Friday 22 November, every student in the school waited patiently for their turn to race three laps around a course while being pelted with colourful powder, sprayed by water guns and soaked in bubbles by willing parents and teachers.

The event was a mix of the vibrant Indian festival of Holi, which celebrates good over evil by people throwing colours on each other, and a mini marathon for our tiniest runners!

After the students' mammoth effort, the top fundraisers from each class got to slime their School Principal, Ms Coles. That descended into craziness all round when Ms Coles decided to extract



revenge by turning the slime gun on the students.

While each child was able to choose prizes for their fundraising effort, a lovely learning opportunity was the chance to use those funds to donate to a cause such

as the Great Barrier Reef Foundation for coral planting or turtle protection, The Smith Family for reading support, Carbon Neutral for tree planting and OzHarvest for providing meals.

Well done to our local little legends!



Support Small Business this Christmas

by Matt Cross MP

You may have heard of Goodfields in Lindfield, one of many wonderful cafés we have on the North Shore.

I chatted with the owners, George and Anthony, about the impacts of the rising cost-of-living. Their expenses include rent, electricity, gas, employing staff and fresh produce – as well GST and workers' compensation premiums.

Small businesses are so much more than just paying bills. They are the heart of our community providing services, employing people and creating economic growth.

I'm urging all of us to please support small business this Christmas – from purchasing presents, to foods and drinks, or going out for a good time. They need and deserve our support.

Each month the NSW Small Business Commissioner releases a Momentum Survey. The latest found the following from small businesses:

- 34% have plans to grow, alter or expand operations;
- 16% expect revenue to increase; and
- 45% plan to expand and are looking to hire additional staff.



Although this gives us all hope, 82% of small businesses indicated they were concerned about the cost of business inputs.

I have a few ideas worth considering.

For starters, we need to cut red tape. According to the Institute of Public Affairs, this costs the Australian economy \$176 billion every year. Red tape reduction should include that for every new regulation, two regulations are repealed.

Secondly, workers compensation premiums need to be reduced. In the last year, premiums increased 8%. Icare needs to guarantee that every dollar

raised from premiums is put towards supporting injured workers.

Finally, we need a dedicated champion as Minister for Small Business. Government has an important role to play, and it begins by listening and understanding small businesses.

We all have a part to play. Please support small business this Christmas.

Matt Cross MP is a Member of the NSW Parliament representing Davidson on Sydney's North Shore and Northern Beaches.

Sparkling Joy in the Suburbs

With the smell of incense floating through the air, gems on skirts glistening, and the comforting hymn of prayers softly bouncing around the space, last month, St Ives Village Community Centre was transformed into the Desi destination of our dreams.

In light of Diwali (pardon the pun), our vibrant community gathered to honour the special festival symbolising the triumph of light over darkness. Hosted by the AASHA Australia Foundation, the celebration was graced by Mayor Cr Christine Kay, who participated in a traditional puja ceremony. The festivities were a feast for the senses, featuring lively dancing, mouth-watering delicacies, and the fine art of henna.



AASHA is dedicated to enhancing the wellbeing of senior citizens, empowering them to live independently in their own homes and communities. The organisation also ensures residents' cultural and social

needs are met, guaranteeing there's always something lively happening around town.

Learn more about the next event here aashaaustralia.org.au/events.

Hassall Park Upgrade

Hassall Park at St Ives has just been decked out with new equipment for all age groups and mobility levels.

The upgrades by Ku-ring-gai Council were funded by council and two NSW Government grants.

The list of upgrades are as follows:

- A playground with climbing equipment, including a bouldering pillar and caterpillar climber and slide, to help children develop motor skills.
- Sensory play equipment, including animal carvings and talk tube flowers, to encourage social interaction and sensory development among children.
- Dynamic play equipment, in the form of double swing and toddler swing, to promote co-ordination and social play.
- An accessible carousel, suitable for wheelchair users.
- An outdoor gym containing a cross-trainer and sit-up bench.
- Rubber softfall around the play and fitness equipment.
- A picnic shelter and BBQ area.
- Additional tree and shrub planting.



Running from the Hassall Park car park and Mona Vale Road, 485m of new pathways have been built to provide step-free access to the new facilities. These pathways also include new seating, bubblers, sports field fencing and landscaping.

The carpark has also been re-designed to accommodate an extra nine

vehicles. The next stage of the Hassall Park masterplan works will include an upgrade of the existing amenities building to provide community access to new unisex accessible and ambulant toilets.

Council is currently finalising tender documentation with a view to commence these works early next year.

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Ku-ring-gai Council Christmas and New Year operating hours

- Monday 23 December – 8.30am to 5pm
- Tuesday 24 December – 8:30am to 12:30pm
- Wednesday 25 December – closed
- Thursday 26 December – closed
- Friday 27 December – call centre open 8.30am to 5pm; customer service centre closed
- Monday 30 December – call centre open 8.30am to 5pm; customer service centre closed
- Tuesday 31 December – call centre open 8.30am to 5pm; customer service centre closed
- Wednesday 1 January – closed
- Thursday 2 January 2025 – back to normal hours

Ku-ring-gai Council wishes you and your family a safe and happy festive season.

krg.nsw.gov.au
Enquiries: 9424 0000

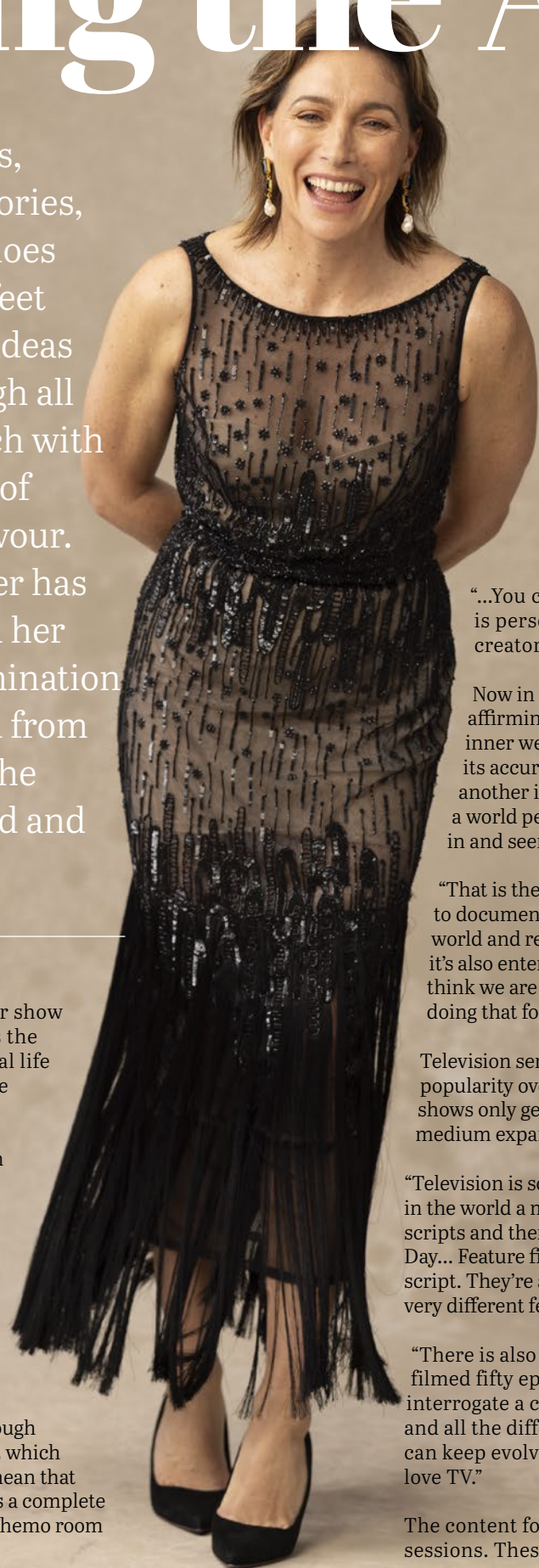


Claudia Karvan

Living the Art

by Jay Houhlias

She acts, she produces, she tells and builds stories, she even sometimes does headstands with her feet on the wall when the ideas aren't flowing. Through all that, she lives a life rich with exactly the right kind of fuel for artistic endeavour. Claudia Karvan's career has spanned decades, and her body of work is a culmination of lessons learnt, both from personal stories and the stories of those around and close to her.



"Creativity is passion and electricity."

"...You can feel the detail... feel something is personal and close to the writer or creator's hearts."

Now in its fifth season, *Bump* is a life affirming drama and its makeup is us, urban inner western Sydneysiders. Claudia believes its accurate depictions of how we are with one another is why it resonates. She aims to "make a world people will recognise and feel comfort in and seen."

"That is the purpose of culture and storytelling, to document how we are moving through the world and reflect ourselves back at us. Obviously it's also entertainment, but it's reflecting us. I think we are a sophisticated industry, and we are doing that for the most part really well..."

Television series' have seen an astounding rise in popularity over the last decade, with the calibre of shows only getting better and more intricate as the medium expands.

"Television is so fast... You can see something out in the world a month ago and we can weave it into scripts and then it will be on air into Stan on Boxing Day... Feature films take a much longer time to script. They're a one off, harder to finance – it's a very different feeling."

"There is also a level of intimacy you gain... We've filmed fifty episodes of *Bump*, and you can really interrogate a character and get to know an actor and all the different facets of that person, and you can keep evolving that character too – that's why I love TV."

The content for the show is drafted in writing sessions. These sessions, as Claudia describes

On the latest series of her show *Bump*, Claudia explains the connection between real life struggles and how these translate to screen.

"What we are going through in our own lives, all the writers on the show, and the producers and creatives, we funnel it back into the show."

"But obviously there is a layer of imagination to it. I think having that personal connection you can always feel it as an audience member..."

"Kelsey Munro's mother was going through chemo when we were plotting season 5 which was very emotional for her, but it did mean that for instance, episode three series five is a complete bubble episode where we are inside a chemo room like its groundhog day..."



them, are "intensely focus-based, quite personal, and filled with talking."

"On *Bump* there is usually five to eight of us in the room. The bigger the whiteboard the better... you're just scrawling ideas all around you so you can see the ideas up there and so you can have a graph... character graph, arc of the show, episode graphs... you are talking and sharing and entertaining each other and making each other laugh and building on each other's ideas, you're pitching..."

"There are days that are very frustrating where ideas just aren't flowing. Sometimes we might do mediation or a headstand or put our legs up on the wall. It's sort of part improvisation part discipline. It's brainstorming basically."

"We try not to do more than three days a week, and no more than two days in a row because our brains start hurting. We go for walks as well. Half of it is called brainstorming where you are broadly pitching... the other half is plotting... much more specific... how does this episode go?... whose story are we going to? Then we start blocking out scene by scene."

"I would say it's the most arduous part of the journey. Once you're on set it's a different type of work. It's longer hours but mentally, the hardest work happens in the story room."

"You're laying down the tracks for what will be the next year of your life. If you're not thorough, it's sort of like dropping a stitch when you're knitting a jumper, you have to go back and unravel it all again or you're always going to see that hole."

"I think when I was younger, one of the traps I fell into... is that if I'm not really stressed, and if I'm not tense, and not terrified, or if I'm not suffering from insomnia, then I'm not working hard enough – which was really false."



I then remarked how ironic it is that moments of creative brilliance sometimes come when you take a step back and do something different. Alleviating your mind from the creative task is sometimes the best way to ensure its continued productivity.

"It's silly to just keep flogging a dead horse. As a bunch of writers, you could sit in a writers' room from 9-5, and yes

you're doing those hours, but you've hit a wall, and you start coming up with really bad ideas. Often it's better to just finish at 2 o'clock... The creative world is very different to other industries like that."

The past few decades have come with a lot of evolving for the Australian film industry. While they no longer "Take another one for Kodak" at the end of a take, there have also been shifts in awareness as to "who is telling the story", creating a more diverse and representative environment. Claudia has been working since 1980, making her a rarity amongst an industry often favouring actors at their peak, or creators in vogue.

"I think when I was younger, one of the traps I fell into... is that if I'm not really stressed, and if I'm not tense, and not terrified, or if I'm not suffering from insomnia, then I'm not working hard enough – which was really false."

"And I guess it doesn't help if someone tells you something, you've got to learn it yourself unfortunately, that's one of the annoying things about being human."

"Creativity is passion and electricity and I guess you've got to just kind of push yourself to the envelope before you realise eventually it's unsustainable."

"Hopefully you've got people around you who are looking out for you and caring for you so you don't burn out too quick... before you realise you can also be very creative and calm at the same time."

Keeping creative and calm does sound nice. If it took someone like Claudia Karvan years to figure out that was the way, it must be worth putting into practice. Young or old, burnt out or just beginning to heat up, it seems you can find some solace in the fact one day, you may be looking back as Claudia did, wondering why you needed to be in such a frenzy.

Anyone for a headstand?

Head to www.stan.com.au/watch/bump to watch the new season of *Bump*.



Conscious Crusaders

Local Northern Beaches mum, Jemma, and her 7-year-old daughter, Maya, have created a new service that lets children swap traditional birthday gifts for donations to causes that matter.

The idea struck when Jemma and Maya noticed the high levels of waste generated at kids' parties and realised they could start a movement around more sustainable gifting. They found that many children, like Maya, are passionate about causes that protect the planet.

GenKind aims to transform the culture of kids' party gifting, making it more sustainable, meaningful, and easier on busy parents. It offers a simple way for parents to create impactful birthdays without the endless shopping trips or heaps of plastic-wrapped presents.

Through the platform, children can select causes they're passionate about, inviting friends and family to contribute donations instead of bringing toys or gifts. Causes range from protecting Australia's wildlife and oceans to reducing plastic waste, giving kids a personal way to make a difference with the support of their friends.

Founder Jemma explained, "We've attended so many parties where piles of gifts felt more overwhelming than



By making it easy for kids to support causes they love, GenKind is poised to create lasting change in how the next generation thinks about birthdays, gift-giving, and kindness.

joyful, both for us and the environment. GenKind is a lifesaver for parents who



want to keep the focus on celebration rather than consumption. Kids get to make an impact, and parents have one less thing to stress about."

By making it easy for kids to support causes they love, GenKind is poised to create lasting change in how the next generation thinks about birthdays, gift-giving, and kindness. With a fun, kid-friendly platform and a strong mission, it is helping families celebrate meaningfully, teaching children that giving back can be just as rewarding as receiving.

For more information and to get involved, visit www.genkind.club.



Uniformly Good for Everyone

School uniforms are three things; expensive, necessary, but grown out of quicker than you can get a handle on.

Susan Turner, founder of The Uniform Exchange located in Pymble, offers a solution for her North Shore customers as well as online across Australia.

At the Pymble store they stock good quality, used uniforms for 11 schools on the North Shore – Knox, Barker, Ravenswood, Brigidine College, Abbotsleigh, Roseville College The Kings School, Pymble Ladies College, Loreto Normanhurst, St Leos and Mount St Benedict.

For all other schools across Australia she offers a free online service for parents to buy and sell their used school items. www.theuniformexchange.com.au.

Susan grew up working on a family farm in England and also spent many years South Africa. This upbringing gave her an



Susan Turner, founder of The Uniform Exchange.

"unshakable passion to respect that all things must be used to their fullest capacity and nothing can be wasted."

"Over 19 years," Susan says, "I put three boys through private school in Johannesburg and arrived in Sydney in 2006 with my youngest son going into year 9. Here, I struggled to easily find a reliable supply of good quality, second hand uniforms and textbooks that were needed for the changing school years."

Students spend 10-12 years in the schooling system, and these years bring about the most physical changes, more so than any other period of life. They just grow, and keep growing.

This means constant replacement of uniforms due to changing sizes, as well as other factors like seasonal shifts and general wear and tear.

"According to the documentary *War on Waste*, approximately '6,000kg of clothing is dumped in landfills every 10 minutes' in Australia," Susan told *Sydney Observer*.

"My mission is that 'nothing goes in the bin' and my aim is to reuse every uniform and textbook we receive, either with our local parents or if possible, sent away to underprivileged children in disadvantaged countries all over the world."

"Reduce, reuse, recycle – it's the only way."

HOPE IS ACTIVE! An Action Plan To Achieve Goals

by Sarah Wainwright

HOPE is an optimistic state of mind that is based on an expectation of positive outcomes relating to personal or broader events and circumstances; "To expect with confidence, to cherish a desire with anticipation, and an expectation of or belief in fulfilment or success". (Merriam-Webster.com).

Importantly, hope is an active cognitive (thinking and reasoning) process that involves intentionally setting goals and working towards them with purpose. Research shows that hope is key to our existence, to our ability to persevere and achieve goals.

Hope is key to our physical and mental wellbeing as it can promote healthy lifestyle behaviours. Additionally, hope plays an important role in how people cope, as an individual's level of hope impacts choices and decisions (Shrikant, M., 2021, Arizona State University News).

Hope has an action plan and can be measured, including identifying the extent to which individuals feel they have control over achieving their values and goals.

Psychologist C. R. Snyder found that people with high levels of hope were able to come up with more ways to reach their goals, they were also more resourceful, inventive and adaptive should an obstacle come along that could stop them from achieving their goals, thus opening up more possibilities (Shrikant, M., 2021).

Hopeful people have a:

- A goal or wish
- A clear sense of what they want to achieve
- Motivation to implement their plan
- A strategy to achieve it

Dr Sue Ferguson, my alumni university lecturer and fellow *Sydney Observer* contributor shares her expertise, "Research has shown that children, teens, and young adults, as well as their parents can all benefit (both psychological and physical health) from having a hopeful attitude towards the future."

"My own research found that older adults also benefit from having higher hope. Therefore, grandparents can also both benefit from and help their grandchildren with hope exercises. Parents, teachers, and



other adults in a child's life can all help to foster hope in the younger generation."

"Visualising past successes, and how you got there, are commonly used to increase agency (your confidence that you can do the steps to reach your goal). Exercises related to problem-solving and planning ways to overcome barriers are common in hope-based interventions to promote pathways to your goal and agency."

Dr Ferguson offers an actionable plan, "Here are several ways we can help foster hope in ourselves and in others:

Encourage others to set goals for themselves

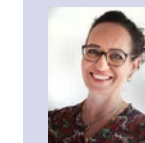
- Make sure all goals are meaningful (are based on their values)
- That goals are spread across different areas (such as health, work/ study related, helping others, or the environment)
- That goals are realistic/achievable
- Break them down into smaller goals that are more easily attainable, if necessary

- Pick one goal to start on
- Practice with them how to come up with pathways to goal achievement:
- Brainstorm different strategies/pathways you could use to work towards the goal.
- Think of potential barriers,
- Outline pathways to overcome these barriers to achieve their goals
- Describe how they can use their resources to help their progress for each goal they had set.

Build their sense of agency (the "I know I can do it") by vividly recalling and visualising past successes when they achieved their previous goals, identifying resources (such as support from family or friends) that led to these past successes, and recognising effective ways they dealt with past barriers.

- Get them working towards that goal.
- Celebrate their achievement with them!

Dr Ferguson adds, "Remember the saying, 'The past is in your head, the future is in your hands.'"



Sarah Wainwright, BSc (Psychology), Postgraduate Diploma (Psychology). Academic coach/mentor-tutor; writer; wife and mother of 4. Sarah is a Sydney-based parenting expert and shares her experience and observations @parentingandlifetips.



Social Engagement for Health

The world's population is growing, with greater connectivity, particularly digital connectivity, than ever before. However, the world is reportedly getting lonelier, and more socially isolated.

In Australia, approximately one in three people feel lonesome, if not all of the time, up from one in four since before the COVID-19 pandemic. Older adults and those in regional and remote areas are particularly at risk.

One of the key health risks of poor social connections is dementia. The World Health Organisation says that loneliness and social isolation increase the risk of developing dementia by a whopping 50%.

To combat this issue, researchers at UNSW Sydney's Centre for Healthy Brain Ageing (CHeBA) have launched a new online study addressing the role of social engagement in maintaining brain function and wellbeing: Maintaining Social Engagement.

Social health expert and Clinical Psychologist Dr Suraj Samtani says, "Evidence suggests that being socially active reduces risk of dementia by half... This is even after taking into account all other risk factors for dementia."

1 in 3 Australians over the age of 65 live in rural and remote areas of Australia. According to the 2023 Ending Loneliness Together Report, 35% of those people are lonely. These communities face challenges accessing services and experience significant geographic and resource barriers.

"Interacting with friends and family, but especially having a confidante, someone you trust, is a critical factor in not feeling lonely," says Dr Samtani. "Social connection for us is a basic human need, just like food and water."

Dr Samtani then goes on to talk about the difference between social isolation and loneliness.

"Being socially isolated is the physical state of having less interactions with other people. Loneliness is the emotional state of feeling disconnected from the people around us and feeling the need for more rewarding social connections."

Dr Samtani believes the health risks of social isolation and loneliness are comparable to excessive drinking and daily smoking - "Loneliness is as bad for our health as smoking 15 cigarettes a day."

According to the longest happiness study ever conducted, social connectivity can delay the start of physical health conditions by up to 15 years. The Harvard-led study found that our relationships with people have a powerful influence on health, and that close relationships are the key to maintaining happiness throughout our lives.

"Quality relationships protect us from dealing with life's minor and major troubles on our own," explains Dr Samtani. "Strong social connections are far more important than just having lots of connections. They help us to prevent or delay health issues - mental and physical."

CHeBA is seeking people aged 55+ with memory concerns to join the Maintaining Social Engagement Study. Register your interest at forms.office.com/r/98moZyYJBB.



The Art of Matchbox Collecting

Seniors - do you have any old matchboxes lying around your house? Many of us decades ago used to collect these boxes - often for personal use... But these days, matchboxes are a rare breed and aren't used as often thanks to our lighters. Interestingly though, matchboxes have become quite trendy.

One of our Sydney Observer team members was recently going through their late grandfather's matchbox collection. Inside were incredible matchboxes of all different varieties - some were Aussie, others were from his travels overseas. Highlights included some vintage Redheads, a lot of traditional Japanese artworks and also a Johnnie Walker vertical one.

Instead of letting your matchboxes collect dust, a great idea is to display them. You can pick up your preferred frame from your local department or discount store, and have some super glue or double sided tape handy too. Next, you arrange your matchboxes how you wish inside the frame, stick or glue down accordingly, and then voilà!

Matchbox Fun Facts

- The first matches and matchboxes began selling to the public in 1826.
- Some matchboxes are rare, therefore considered valuable to unique collectors.
- The price of a box of 50 matches used to be one shilling back in the day.

UNWRAPPING INDEPENDENCE Holiday Gifts for Seniors

by Rejimon Punchayil

The holiday season is a time for joy, love, and giving. But for many seniors, the festive period can be a mixed bag of emotions. While the spirit of Christmas fills the air, the physical challenges of aging can sometimes dampen the joy.

As you prepare to welcome your elderly loved ones this Christmas, consider making their visit as comfortable and enjoyable as possible. Begin by assessing your home's accessibility. Are there any potential hazards or obstacles that could hinder their mobility? Simple adjustments, such as installing grab bars or removing tripping hazards, can make a significant difference.

When it comes to gift-giving, think beyond traditional presents. While a thoughtful card or a box of chocolates is always appreciated, consider practical gifts that can enhance your loved one's quality of life.

A pair of comfortable foot warmers, a cozy sheep skin, or a cane with a stylish design can be both functional and fashionable. For those with mobility challenges, mobility scooters, rise recliners, and adjustable beds can provide much-needed comfort and independence. Please speak to one of the friendly Assistive



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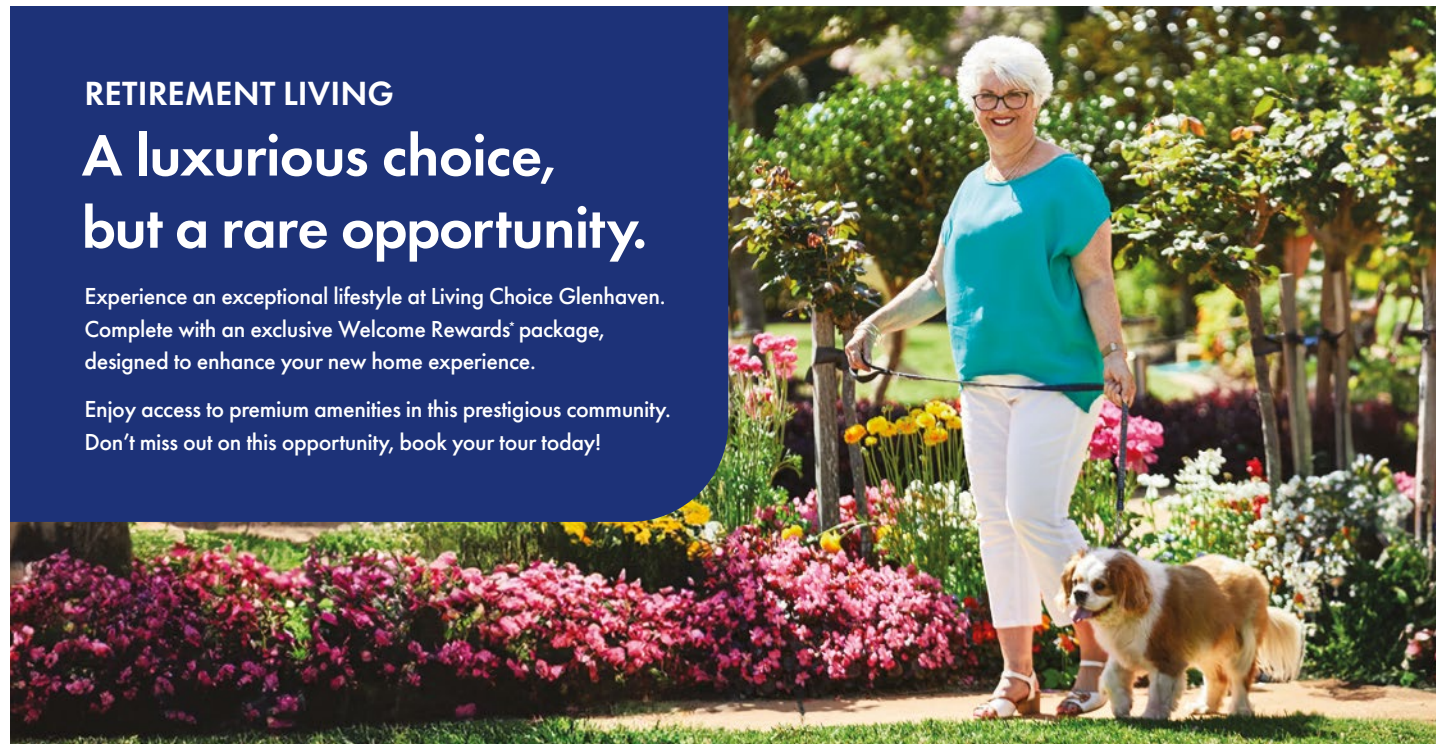
Remember, the true gift of Christmas lies in the act of giving. By taking the time to understand your loved one's needs and choosing thoughtful presents, you can make this holiday season truly memorable.

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Support for the Aged Care Act

During late November, bipartisan support for the Aged Care Act in parliament made a significant step forward in making sure palliative care is embedded within aged care.

The long-term advocacy of Palliative Care Australia and their members around Australia was reflected in the Bill that passed the Senate. This included:

- The right to equitable access to palliative care and end-of-life care for those in aged care and those seeking aged care.
- An End-of-Life pathway with additional resources to support palliative care at home.
- A shorter time frame for reporting on the operation of the Act, from 5 years to 3 years.

“The Aged Care Act has been a critical step in delivering on the recommendations of the Aged Care Royal Commission,” says Camilla Rowland, CEO, Palliative Care Australia (PCA).

“Now that that work is done, we need to focus on implementation – and making sure palliative care is part of the day-to-day work of aged care services.”

“Making palliative care core business for aged care is challenging,” Camila Rowland went on, “and we cannot yet say that access to palliative care in residential aged care has improved since the Royal Commission.”

“Just this week we have shared our 2025 Federal Election Platform with all parliamentarians. It lays out a blueprint to deepen and mature the reforms of the last three years and deliver better access to palliative care to our rapidly ageing population... This is something every Australian family will deal with; we simply must do better for our elders.”

Of the 185,000 People Living in Residential Aged Care:

- 92% would benefit from palliative care.
- Only 3% see a palliative care doctor in the first year following admission.
- Only one in 3 receive a GP health assessment in their first year.
- Only 0.1% entered for the purposes of receiving palliative care.



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Cash is King for Seniors

Cash has long been king for many seniors across Australia. And it's high time that the younger generations give our elders a pat on the back – because they were indeed right.

Think about the last time you paid for your goodies with a credit card/debit card. There's a good chance you had to pay a surcharge on top of the cost of your item(s) too.

According to the Reserve Bank of Australia, cash usage has generally been replaced with card payments. But that means added surcharges for consumers.

Take for example your morning newspaper, if you like purchasing a physical copy. Say it's \$5.50 – add on a 1.5% surcharge and it will be around \$5.58. A nice morning tea these days can cost up to \$25. Add on a 1.5% surcharge, and then it's about \$25.38. These surcharges might look small, but the cost certainly adds up.

There's another factor to consider too. Many local businesses now only allow transactions via card, rather than cash. This of course proves a challenge for many local seniors. And although online facilities are convenient for many of us, digital systems also pose risks during outages, storms and natural disasters, highlighting the importance of cash being an option during emergencies.

Recently, National Seniors Australia (NSA) launched their Keep Cash



Recently, National Seniors Australia (NSA) launched the Keep Cash campaign to ensure that seniors are not digitally excluded.

campaign, which is focused on this very issue. NSA has welcomed the federal government's proposed mandate for businesses to accept cash for essential items to support those who need to and prefer using this valid form of currency.

NSA Chief Executive Officer Chris Grice said: “When retailers refuse cash, it inconveniences customers and can lead to genuine hardship for those who rely on cash.”

“Not all seniors are comfortable using debit or credit cards, or banking online, because they're not tech savvy, they're fearful of potential scams and cash is what they've always known.”

Mr Grice added: “It is now up to the Treasurer and the banking regulators to ensure there is a solid program, in the best interest of older Australians, to make good on the mandate that has been proposed.”

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Decorating Your Zen Refuge

by Divya Rawat

Life can be hectic. We can all get so busy that we forget to unplug and unwind.

Some of us choose to unwind at the park, or the library, or in public spaces. The outdoors can get crowded at times and you might not be able to unwind fully in public spaces. You might need time for yourself. This is where Zen courtyards come in.

The Zen courtyard is a courtyard (unroofed area, partial walls or building) that creates a place for both introspection and grounding in human connection. The absence of crowds creates a space for silence, meditation, and resting the mind. These moments of complete silence helps the person move through the courtyard with a sense of mystery and discovery.

You can create your own Zen courtyard. If having a garden is not an option, you can use balconies, rooftops, courtyards, laneways and mini yards. The trick is knowing how to create spaces in these confined areas.

Here are some Zen ideas on how to create spaces in a confined manner:

1. Balcony Garden

You can make your balcony into a zen courtyard by using a container garden, for keeping small trees and shrubs. Container gardens help keep the soil contained, insulated, and well-drained. It also helps maintenance of the zen garden when removing dead leaves, watering, or pruning. You should also monitor your balcony before buying plants to where you get sunlight.



Balcony Garden.



Window Well Zen Garden.

2. Window Well Zen Garden

This architectural design is to let natural light into interior spaces, like a passive mini-zen garden. You can have a rock garden in there as the window well is filled with gravel. Doing this is a straightforward process. The gravel helps to avoid pooling water and potential flooding. Adding few small boulders or sculptural stones is recommended.

3. Courtyard Zen Garden

Zen courtyard gardens are outdoor spaces that bring the traditional Japanese gardens into smaller urban settings such as rooftops, offices, large terraces, and residential courtyards. They have natural elements like gravel, sand, rocks, water features, and wisely pruned plants.



Courtyard Zen Garden.

4. Laneway Zen Garden

These are traditional Japanese strolling gardens providing space for leisurely walks and observations. Their natural elements are streams, ponds, valleys, bridges, pavilions, and teahouses. If you can't afford a garden, you can still have a traditional Japanese strolling garden in a small space like raised beds or stacked rocks that can create an impression of hills and valleys.

These are some zen courtyard ideas you can use in your house or apartment for a more quiet, calm, and introspective atmosphere. This can help you relax and unwind at your own pace without a need for distractions or other people bothering you.

What to Plant this Summer Season

The temperatures are set to get pretty hot this summer season! With the warm weather though, comes different planting guidelines. For many of us the summer holidays give us ample opportunity to get amongst our gardens and give them the love and care they deserve. If you're unsure what is best to plant in your backyard, we have you covered.

WHAT TO PLANT IN DECEMBER AND JANUARY

Chillies - to ensure a reliable crop, chillies need a warm, sunny position outside. Some reliable varieties to grow include bird's eye, cayenne, cherry, long red and long green.

Carrots - sow in rows and mix the seeds with some sand first to space plants out. Choose shorter varieties for heavy soils.

Potatoes - if you have the space, potatoes are great to sow at this time. They typically take 12 to 16 weeks to grow until harvest. Plant in raised beds or well-drained soil.

Cucumbers - Lebanese mini cucumbers are the way to go. Enrich the soil with compost and a generous layer of mulch to



Red chillies.



Christmas carol.



Mini lebanese cucumber.

help retain moisture. Grow up a trellis in a sunny spot and avoid overhead watering to minimise fungal problems.

Flowers - some great varieties include aster, marigold, christmas rose, phlox, salvia, sweet William, verbena and zinnia.

Golden Gardening Tips

- Make sure to do what you can to help your plants thrive during December and January. Keep all beds, pots and containers well-mulched to help retain moisture. Flower Power recommends trying water-saving crystals in new plantings.
- Place sand in saucers under potted plants to stop mosquitoes breeding there.
- Concentrate on watering early in the morning, especially pot plants, veggies and fruit trees.

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MEDITERRANEAN STYLE Peace and Refinement Expressed Through Design

by Suzy Leoni

Let's talk about a style that captivates lovers of luxury and architecture. The Mediterranean style draws inspiration from European seaside villas. What makes this style special is its ability to evoke the relaxed coastal lifestyle all year round.

This architectural style became popular in the United States during the 1920s and takes cues from coastal homes in Spain, Italy, Greece, and Turkey. Inspired by the sea, it conveys the warmth and freshness of the region, with colours such as white, green, and blue commonly featured in its décor.

Influenced by the domes of Santorini, Greece, Mediterranean style décor is known for its rounded, organic forms rather than straight lines. This can be seen in furniture – such as tables and sofas – as well as in lighting fixtures and other decorative elements reminiscent of the coastal region, like corals, fishing nets, and starfish.

Often found in coastal hotels and resorts, the Mediterranean style lends a residential resort feel to homes. The designs feature open layouts, spacious kitchens, and a focus on outdoor living spaces, whether through exterior gardens or stunning internal courtyards.

This style includes distinctive decorative elements: façades are light-coloured, doors are large and striking, and features like wrought iron and planters add a unique character. What makes it particularly



Influenced by the domes of Santorini, Greece, Mediterranean style décor is known for its rounded, organic forms rather than straight lines.

appealing are the outdoor spaces, including lush courtyards and terraces adorned with greenery and beautiful fountains.

The design of these homes allows ventilation to flow freely, and the extensive use of natural materials like wood, wicker, and stone creates a light and cosy aesthetic. Investing in Mediterranean décor brings the coastal atmosphere into your home, offering

a perpetual beach-house vibe filled with peace and freshness.

The colour palette is neutral, with natural materials creating a warm, relaxing atmosphere. Combined with rustic elements, it provides a fresh, contemporary take on Mediterranean aesthetics. Traditionally white walls – reminiscent of Greek coastal architecture – often feature plaster or stone finishes, while floors are typically terracotta, wood, or ceramic. The all-white interiors reflect sunlight, enhancing brightness.

This style of bright, white spaces with colourful details isn't exclusive to Mediterranean countries; it's found worldwide and is set to grow in popularity this decade. This is due to its alignment with a new wave of minimalist living, embracing nature and drawing inspiration from landscapes. Mediterranean homes have long been havens of light and simplicity.

The Mediterranean style brings the serenity, freshness, and tranquillity of the beach directly into interior design. Whether in coastal or urban settings, this aesthetic is sought after by those wanting a clean, elegant space that evokes idyllic, paradise-like scenery.



Suzy Leoni is an interior designer, vet (cats and ultrasound postgraduate), and mother of two. As a designer, she specialises in planning family and professional environments.

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Yoga Poses to Try

Movement makes our bodies feel amazing and strong. Yoga is one great way to do this, with plenty of studios available across the North Shore. If you wish to do a bit of yoga in your own time in the comfort of your own home though, here are some simple poses to try.



Viada Karpovich/Pexels

Downward Dog

This one is famous for its inverted V shape that's made by the body while in the pose. You start downward dog by sitting on your yoga mat on all fours, with your hands shoulder-width apart and your knees hip-width apart. Next, you tuck your toes under and lift your knees off the mat, and also lift your hips up and back. The arms and legs then straighten (you can keep a slight bend in the knees if that's more comfortable!). You will then be in the inverted V position with your head looking down at the mat, relaxed between your arms.



cottonbro studio/Pexels

Cobra

This is another really popular pose, also known as Bhujangasana. It's one of the foundation yoga postures as it promotes spinal extension and enhances breathing. To start the cobra pose, lie down on your yoga mat with your tummy and forehead resting on the mat. Keep your legs extended behind you, hip-width apart. Place the palms of your hands flat on the floor beneath your shoulders, with your elbows tucked close to your body. Inhale and then press your hands gently into the mat as you lift your chest off. You keep your pelvis and thighs pressed into the mat, and then you lengthen your neck up slightly, feeling the stretch in your back.



cottonbro studio/Pexels

Warrior

Interestingly in yoga there are three different types of warrior poses. For simplicity though, we will focus on the warrior II pose. It's a standing position - you stand normally at the top of your mat and then you step your left foot back about 3 to 4 feet. Keep your feet parallel and angle your left toes slightly towards the upper left corner of the mat. This will help with balance. Next, you turn your right foot and knee to face the front of the mat. Bend your right knee and stack it over your right ankle to feel that stretch. Make sure to distribute the weight evenly between both legs and then inhale and raise your arms to either side. With your arms, aim to keep your shoulders down and your neck long as well as keeping your abdomen tight.



Viada Karpovich/Pexels

Child's

This is the perfect yoga pose to end on. It's quite a restorative posture, with the gentle bend promoting relaxation and mindfulness. To start this position, sit on your yoga mat on all fours. Next touch your big toes together and spread your knees apart to make this happen. You then sit back on your heels and fold forward, your arms stretching out in front of you with the palms down. You rest your head on the mat and enjoy the stretch from there.

How Long to Hold These Poses

Ultimately, it comes down to personal preference. The experts always say to know your pain limits and not to test them - stretch at your 70% rather than at your 100%. Sometimes a 30 second stretch done well and safely is the best course of action.



Invisalign, or "clear aligners" are becoming a popular alternative to conventional braces.

More Smiles, More Happiness

by Ian Sweeney

Your smile is a beautiful asset and many people believe a beautiful smile will advance their work, career and social prospects.

Cosmetic Dentistry concentrates on techniques designed to not only maintain maximum longevity of teeth; it focuses on ways to improve the overall aesthetic appearance of teeth.

There are many cosmetic options available, depending on each person's unique need. Examples of cosmetic treatments available include but are not limited to the following:

Tooth Whitening: By far, the simplest way to brighten a smile! Whitening is a non-invasive aesthetic treatment that can be performed within the dental office or at home. The professionally supplied "in-office" treatment, augmented with a home "touch up" kit gives wonderful, instantaneous results followed by an enduring smile.

Orthodontics: Invisalign, or "clear aligners" are becoming a popular alternative to conventional braces. A series of clear plastic aligners are worn over the top of your teeth. Each aligner moves the teeth a little bit, until eventually the desired effect is achieved. Clear aligners may not be suitable in every case. Fortunately, there are a number of other cosmetic orthodontic options available such as ceramic tooth -coloured brackets (instead of metal brackets on teeth), and braces on the "inside" surface of the teeth.

INVISALIGN GO

Have you had orthodontic treatment, but your teeth have relapsed? Are your front teeth rotated or uneven?

Invisalign Go is a clear aligner system that straightens teeth in a shorter amount of time and at a lower cost than traditional Invisalign. Invisalign Go can straighten teeth in as little as 3-6 months, compared to 2-3 years for traditional Invisalign and it uses less aligners. This means that it is the best system for minor imperfections and smaller misalignments. It also a very useful tool that can be used to align teeth before having more complex restorative procedures such as bleaching, crowns or veneers.

The aligners are virtually invisible and very easy to wear. They do need to be worn most of the time, only being removed for eating and brushing. They are very easy to cope with as an adult patient rather than traditional braces.

As with anything, cosmetic dental treatment is full of options and choices. Your beautiful smile may be achieved in a very different way to that of your best friend. To find out what is the best cosmetic treatment option for you, you should talk to one of our dentists.

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- ♥ Special Needs Patients
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☎ 02 9987 4477

Visit: www.northsidedental.com.au

Our Skincare Recommendations

Summer Fridays Cloud Dew Gel Cream Moisturiser, \$75

There's a reason why Summer Fridays is a brand with cult status among Sydney women. Their skincare and lip products are made with quality ingredients. This ultra lightweight vegan gel-cream provides the moisture surge we all need this summer. It's infused with three types of hyaluronic acid for non-stop hydration, ceramides, minerals and amino acids to help boost the skin's moisture barrier. MECCA stocks Summer Fridays products.



<https://www.mecca.com>

TANOLOGIST Self Tan Travel Water Medium, \$14.99

It's always great to opt for a safe way to tan this summer season - and it's by using TANOLOGIST products. Their self-tan water brightens, softens and hydrates skin with their signature trio of pink grapefruit, goji berry and juniper. The non-comedogenic formula is lightweight and won't clog pores, so it can be used on both the face and body. And the medium colour it provides is very natural-looking. Priceline Pharmacy stocks TANOLOGIST.



<https://www.priceline.com.au>

Trinny London Enzyme Balm Cleanser, \$60

This oil-based cleanser from lifestyle extraordinaire Trinny Woodall's brand Trinny London is a must. It's a balm consistency and helps to remove makeup and impurities. It's designed to give your skin a radiant glow. An 80ml bottle will last you a long time - trust us. You can buy online or visit one of her stores in Sydney.

<https://trinnylondon.com/au>



Ouai body crème, \$38

If your body is in need of some tender, love and care - this butter balm is fantastic. This whipped body crème from OUAi renews your skin with nourishing cupuacu butter, hydrating coconut oil, and skin conditioning squalane. Plus it absorbs quick so you don't need to worry about any greasy residue. The Melrose Place scent is especially beautiful and floral. Sephora stocks plenty of the OUAi products.

<https://theouai.com>



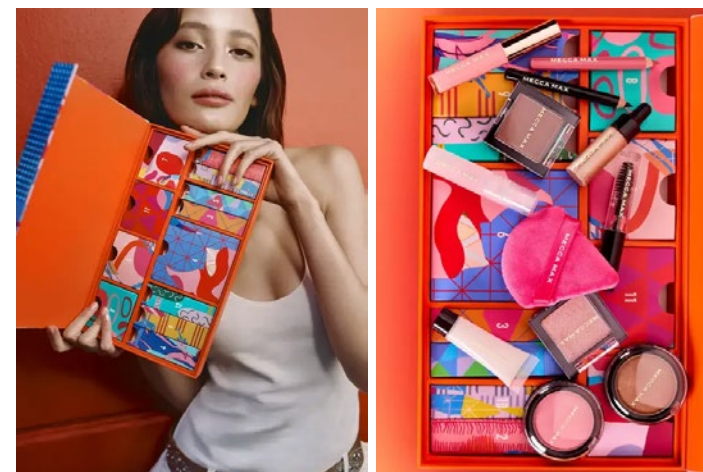
Best Beauty Advent Calendars

If you're looking to spoil yourself this festive season, purchasing a nice treat like a beauty advent calendar can bring a lot of joy. Plus, many of these gift packs go on sale post-Christmas - so if you're looking for a bargain on Boxing Day or summer sales, it's a great option. Here are the best advent calendars for all your skincare, makeup and lifestyle needs.

Above the Collar Men's Grooming, \$159

There's lots of great advent calendars for men. This kit offers curated grooming essentials such as shampoo, conditioner, eau de toilette, charcoal cleansers, hair wax, beard oil and more. With 24 items on offer, each day's gift will bring plenty of cheer.

bit.ly/so-above-collar-grooming



MECCA MAX minis, \$72

This is MECCA's take on beauty better by the dozen! Count down to summer with 12 beauty-filled treats to open day-by-day. Housed in a reusable makeup organiser, the holiday calendar is your daily dose of pigment-packed beauty in party-purse-friendly size for touch-ups on the go.

bit.ly/so-mecca-max-minis

Meal Timing and Your Health

A new Australian study published in *Diabetologia* has found that overnight eating may be increasing the risk of chronic health conditions.

Led by researchers from the University of South Australia, University of Adelaide and SAHMRI, the study involved a six-day trial with 55 adults in the healthy BMI range who don't usually work night shifts.

Participants were divided into three groups: those who fasted at night, those who had snacks, and those who ate full meals. They stayed awake for four nights and slept during the day, with a recovery day on day five to re-establish normal sleeping and eating cycles, and blood glucose testing on day six.

Prof Leonie Heilbronn, from SAHMRI and the University of Adelaide, found these results. "We found that blood glucose skyrocketed for those who ate full meals at night and those who snacked, while



the people who fasted at night showed an increase in insulin secretion which kept blood sugar levels balanced."

"We know shift workers are more likely to have diabetes, they're more likely to have heart disease, and they're more likely to be overweight. Our research suggests that meal timing could be a major contributor to those issues."

It is important to note that insulin sensitivity was disrupted among all participants which supports the evidence night eating causes circadian misalignment (going against your body's natural rhythms with the time of day).

"When you eat a meal, your body secretes insulin, and that insulin helps your muscles and other tissues to take up glucose. If you become resistant to insulin, then you can't take up that glucose as effectively into your muscles and if it continues, that potentially puts you at risk of diabetes."

Lead investigator UniSA Professor Siobhan Banks says not eating large meals while working night shifts and instead eating primarily during the day could be a straightforward intervention.

There will be future trials investigating whether eating only protein on a night shift is also a potential solution.

Palm Beach Collection, \$105

Often it can be quite overwhelming to pick a signature scent. One great way to find perfumes that you love - without having to invest in a whole large bottle - is to purchase a scent-focused advent calendar. This Palm Beach Collection set is particularly amazing, with body washes, room mists, an eau de parfum, a diffuser, candle and more.

bit.ly/so-iconic-palm-beach



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Camp Like a Local

Camping is something for the whole family to enjoy this summer season. If you're an avid camper or new to the hobby, here are some fantastic local spots to consider for your next trip. Because there is beautiful nature on our doorstep.



Berowra Valley National Park

North-west of Sydney is Berowra Valley National Park, which is just past Hornsby. There's plenty to see and do including Barnett's lookout and the Lyrebird Gully circuit. Crosslands Reserve is one great specific spot to camp in at the National Park. It's a beautiful natural setting that's ideal for picnics, camping and other outdoor activities. There are free electric barbecues, toilets, parking, a children's playground and bike track and more.



Lane Cove National Park

This North Shore spot has a range of camping options including a caravan park and cabins. Affordable and clean, campers can unwind after a fun-filled day of bushwalking, paddling or cycling. There are two different cabin types - studio and family sizes that are both surrounded by lush greenery. According to Lane Cove National Park, the abundant wildlife includes kookaburras, lorikeets, water dragons, ringtail and brushtail possums, owls and sugar gliders. Another recommendation is Lane Cove safari tent, which is described as "Sydney's most luxurious camping experience".



The Basin Campground, Ku-ring-gai

The Basin Campground is situated in Ku-ring-gai Chase National Park, making it the perfect quick and convenient getaway. One of the city's most popular beach camping spots, the park has stunning surroundings including a sheltered beach, inland lagoon and picnic area. The campground accommodates approximately 400 happy campers at once, meaning it has all the necessary facilities for an ideal stay. The amenities include picnic tables, BBQ facilities, drinking water, showers, toilets and a nice grassy area for tents.



Cockatoo Island

Similar to Lane Cove safari tent - if you're looking for a more upmarket experience, Cockatoo Island is the perfect destination for beginners at camping. Known as 'glamping', Cockatoo Island has an abundance of pre-made tents near the waterside. The tents contain camping beds, nice mattresses, linen, towels, sun lounges, cushions and a lantern - definitely a nice, clean way to camp! After being awakened by the sounds of native birds, campers can walk over to The Canteen for a hot breakfast and coffee combination, and then head to The Island Bar for a nice cocktail in the sun. To get there, patrons only need to take a short ferry ride from Circular Quay.



FATBOY SLIM

Centennial Vineyards, Bowral, NSW – Saturday, 15th March 2025

Don't miss your chance to "Eat, Sleep, Rave, Repeat" as the legendary Fatboy Slim takes the stage next March for his highly awaited "Fatboy Slim Loves Australia" tour.

"Like the crazy drunk uncle who turns up every Christmas, I'm coming back to my Aussie fam once again. Expect the usual inappropriate behaviour and interpretational dancing..." – Fatboy Slim.



MISSY HIGGINS

Centennial Vineyards, Bowral, NSW - Saturday, 30th November 2024

Missy Higgins is set to make her much-anticipated return to a day on the green with three exclusive encore performances of The Second Act Tour. Joining her for the Bowral show is the exceptionally talented Kate Miller-Heidke and Ruby Fields, adding even more excitement to an already impressive lineup. For more information, visit: <https://www.visitsouthernhighlands.com.au/whats-on/concerts-in-the-southern-highlands>.

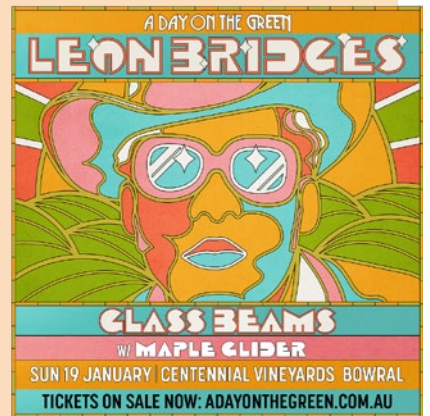
Summer Concerts at Southern Highlands

Say goodbye to city crowds and traffic and hello to laid-back festival energy in the Highlands. The regional town of Bowral is set to come alive this summer with an all-star lineup, including Fatboy Slim, Missy Higgins, Leon Bridges, and The Teskey Brothers.

Highlands, these performances will be nothing short of extraordinary.

'A Day on the Green' has captured the hearts of Australians, establishing itself as the ultimate outdoor concert experience. With over 530 performances and more than 4 million attendees to date, this series has perfected the art of blending world-class music, gourmet food, and fine wine in breathtaking locations.

Set against the breathtaking backdrop of Centennial Vineyards in the Southern



LEON BRIDGES – THE LEON TOUR

Centennial Vineyards, Bowral, NSW - Sunday, 19th January 2025

Leon Bridges is set to bring his signature smooth R&B sound to the Southern Highlands for a night of pure magic. Picture his soulful voice resonating through the hills as the sun sets – this will be an unforgettable experience.

Fans can look forward to timeless hits like River, Coming Home, and Beyond, along with new tracks from his latest album Leon.



THE TESKEY BROTHERS

Centennial Vineyards, Bowral, NSW - Sunday, 12th January 2025

Prepare for an unforgettable evening as five-time ARIA Award winners The Teskey Brothers take the stage for an exclusive outdoor performance. They will be joined by a hand-picked selection of both international and Australian special guests, making this a must-see event.

The lineup includes the beloved US indie rock band, Band of Horses, the Americana and folk sounds of Sierra Ferrell, the highly anticipated Australian debut of Irish country music's rising star CMAT, and the unique artistry of Australian multi-instrumentalist Charlie Needs Braces.



Sydney Festival 2025 Program

The Sydney Festival program for 2025 is out! Running 4–26 January, the month-long international arts festival is an opportunity to rediscover the city differently, from Sydney Town Hall's conversion into a Wild West pioneer town, to a salacious true crime tale staged in the docks of Darlinghurst Courthouse.



Dark Noon.

Across World Premiere productions, Australian exclusives and immersive experiences that reflect the city's identity, Sydney Festival is the home of world class theatre, must-see music and powerful performance this January.

With tickets officially on sale now, Sydney Festival is rewarding pre-planners, savvy shoppers and festival fanatics with an allocation of \$49 Early Bird tickets up for grabs across the entire ticketed program until 2 December (or sold out). With A Reserve seats available for just \$49, this limited offer celebrates Sydney Festival's milestone 49th anniversary whilst addressing cost of living pressure by encouraging festival-goers to book early, see multiple shows and secure a prime position.

Oceania, destiny and what we leave behind through to bold explorations of utopia and dystopia, Sydney Festival 2025 promises an exhilarating and thought-provoking journey through the arts with exceptional talent at the reins. This January, immerse yourself in a summer of unforgettable performances, groundbreaking new works, and exclusive experiences that reimagine the world around us."

The Hon. John Graham, Minister for the Arts, said, "Sydney Festival has timing on its side, delivering a burst of cultural expression and artistic activity from January 4 when the city is largely off work and ready to celebrate and explore during the long hot days and nights.

Featuring over 130 shows and events, including 22 World Premieres, 24 Australian exclusives, 43 locations, and over 50 free



A Model Murder.

events inclusive of more than 12 nights of free live music, Sydney Festival 2025 amasses an expansive roster of diverse local artists and renowned international names this summer.

Year on year, the Festival's annual program serves as a reflection of the questions, ideas and themes consuming the cultural zeitgeist, as brought to life in the words and works of its talented class of featured artists.

Across the city, Sydney Festival will play host to some of the hottest about shows of the season, from the highly anticipated World Premiere of Siegfried & Roy: The Unauthorised Opera and a deeply personal night of storytelling from Sydney icon William Yang, to an exciting new dance work by celebrated Australian choreographer Stephanie Lake, an eclectic run of live music gigs at the ACO On The Pier, and a blockbuster roster of powerhouse cabaret featuring Christie Whelan Browne, Rachael Beck and Katie Noonan.

Complementing the ticketed program, Sydney Festival's action-packed free program for 2025 will ensure a truly accessible and expanded summer of art for all. Throughout January, Sydneysiders and visitors will once again be enticed to take part in an exhilarating summer of art across 23 days of storytelling, knowledge sharing and cultural immersion.

Festival Director Olivia Ansell said, "Sydney Festival has long held summer's cultural pulse and this year is quite the heartbeat. Stories of



As You Like It.

Mov'in Bed Outdoor Bed Cinema

Picture yourself sinking into one of the 160 luxurious queen and king-sized beds, complete with plush pillows and cosy blankets, as the sun sets behind the sparkling Barangaroo skyline. Add handmade pizzas, homemade burgers, fresh coconuts, and drinks delivered straight to your bed, and you've got the ultimate summer night out.

Mov'In Bed, Sydney's favourite outdoor cinema, is here and will be running until March 23, 2025.

This event will transform Barangaroo's stunning Harbour Park into a beach with cloud-like bean beds, making it into the perfect movie-lovers paradise. Whether you're lounging with friends or cuddling up with a loved one, Mov'In Bed promises the ultimate movie night under the stars on Australia's largest outdoor screen.

You can get food and drinks delivered without leaving the comfort of your bed! You can scan the QR code on your bedside table and order freshly made Margherita, Pepperoni, Four Seasons, or Quattro Formaggi Pizzas, to their Gourmet Burgers, Fresh Coconuts, Frozen Cocktails, and local organic wines and candies.

Since launching in 2016, Mov'In Bed has been redefining outdoor cinema. It's back this year



Beetlejuice Beetlejuice is one of the movies for december. Check below another grate titles that will run at the end of the year.

with bigger beds, more films, and an all-new seasonal menu guaranteed to whisk you away to a beachside paradise.

This season's lineup is packed with blockbuster hits like Ridley Scott's *Gladiator II* and Todd Phillips' *The Joker: Folie à Deux*, starring Joaquin Phoenix and Lady Gaga. Also expect to see a curated mix of timeless classics, family favourites, and themed nights that will have everyone coming back for more.

Treat yourself to the ultimate West Hotel VIP area by upgrading to one of the 30 VIP King

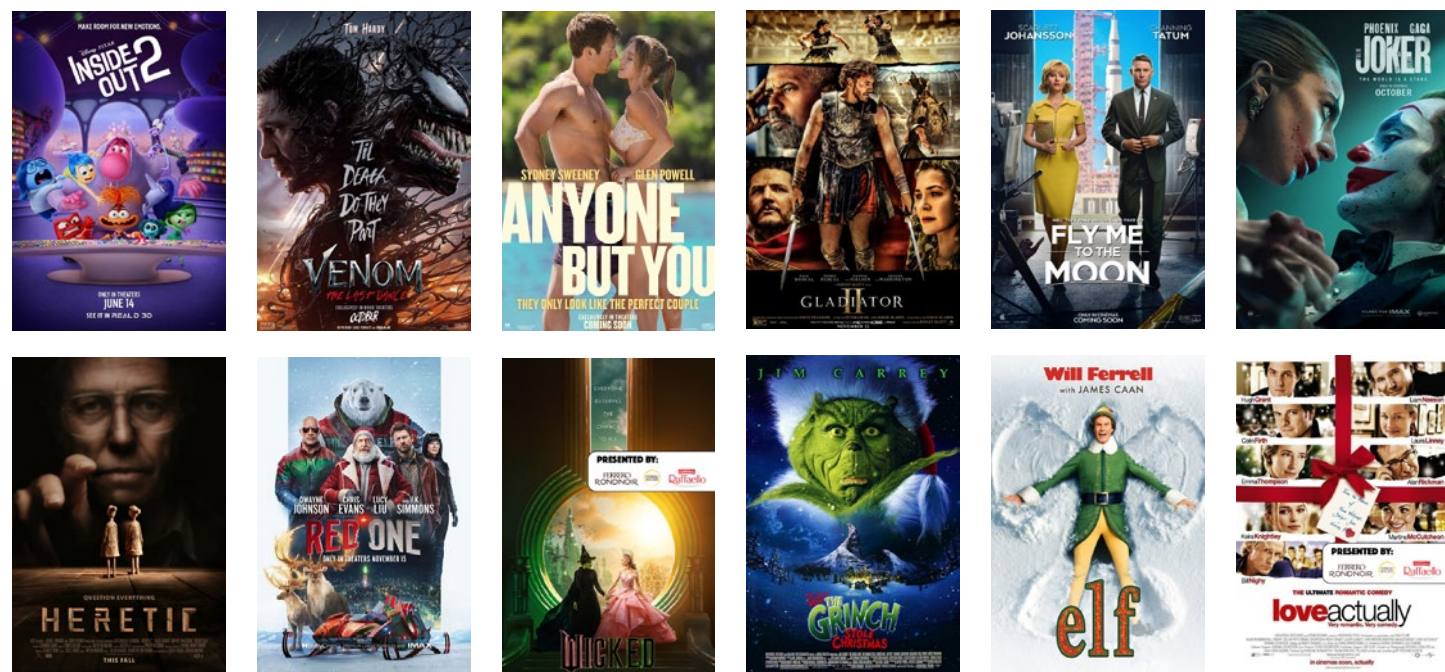
Beds, with butler service, bottomless popcorn, and a complimentary glass of sparkling wine for each guest.

Enjoy the convenience of food delivery straight to your bed through their exclusive collection point, featuring options from Uber Eats, DoorDash, and Menulog. Their Box Office staff will expertly plate and deliver your meal, ensuring a seamless dining experience while you relax in style.

There are only two tickets to grab per night for West Hotel's ultimate VIP experience. Watch your movie on West Hotel's signature mattress complete with bedside tables and your own fully-stocked bar fridge of complimentary soft drinks.

There are also budget friendly tickets, just 50 available each night, and you can enjoy Sydney's iconic Mov'In Bed without breaking the bank. Bring your own beach towel and settle down right on the sand to catch a movie under the stars in the heart of Barangaroo!

Whether you're planning a cosy date night, a lively gathering with friends, or simply seeking an unforgettable summer experience, Mov'In Bed has it all! For ticketing details and the full film schedule, visit www.movinbed.com.



www.sydneyfestival.org.au



JOLLY MARKET Sydney's European-inspired Christmas Night Market

Sydney's beloved Christmas night market, Le Jolly Market, returns from December 13-22 to celebrate the magic of the festive season.

This market will be taking over Belmore Park next to Central Station and Haymarket to offer visitors a unique holiday experience, complete with charming wooden huts, artisanal products, gourmet food, fine wines, and live music under the trees.

Entry is free for all!

This year, the Jolly Market proudly celebrates the best of Sydney and its surrounding regions. Over 35 stalls will showcase a curated selection of hand-made, locally-sourced products, including artisanal gifts, gourmet goods, and boutique distilleries and wineries offering samples and direct sales. Many items will be priced under \$20, providing the perfect chance to find special presents for friends and family without breaking the bank.

Event Director Vincent Hernandez said, "This year, we're focused on showcasing the craftsmanship and affordability of local businesses. As event organisers, we see it as our mission to support small artisans and makers who stand out for their quality and creativity, while ensuring a range of price points so that everyone can take home something memorable."



Each evening, guests will be treated to live music performances set against the backdrop of a towering, beautifully lit Christmas tree

Each evening, guests will be treated to live music performances set against the backdrop of a towering, beautifully lit Christmas tree. Whether singing along, dancing, or simply enjoying the festive tunes under a sky of twinkling lights, Le Jolly Market will transport everyone into the heart of Christmas joy.

"Le Jolly Market is all about celebrating the spirit of Christmas," Vincent Hernandez went on. "We wanted to craft



an experience where people could truly Shop, Wine & Dine in and have a good time. With delicious food, fine wines, and live music, there's something for everyone to embrace the festive season fully."

Sip on a glass of Champagne or enjoy an ice-cold Rosé as you explore a true foodie Christmas feast. Indulge in delights like lobster rolls, fresh Sydney rock oysters, gingerbread baked on-site, grilled scallops, melty cheese dishes, pasta served in a cheese wheel, and treats from the renowned Gnocchi Gnocchi Brothers. With five wine bars and over 40 specialty food vendors, you're in for a spectacular night out.

Le Jolly Market is open to the public from 5pm to 10pm each evening. This market is easily accessible, ensuring that no one misses out on this joyous celebration.

For more information, head to lejollymarket.com.au.

Summer Holiday Events for Kids

These summer holidays are set to be a magical time for students. There's Christmas, New Year's Eve, plus some fantastic fun in the sun during January. To make the most of time off school, we've rounded up some of the best child-friendly summer holiday events taking place over the next two months.



Camping and Cooking in the Bush

Join in for a special day-camping experience. Kids will get to pitch their own tents in the special bush campground and enjoy a day of adventures and challenges. They will learn outdoor skills such as compass-work and BBQ cooking.

When: 9 December.
Where: Ku-ring-gai Wildflower Garden.
Cost: \$75.
Info: www.krg.nsw.gov.au/Things-to-do/Whats-on/Camping-and-cooking-9-dec.

St Ives Treetops Adventure

This is a whole day of adventure! Start with a bushwalk to St Ives Treetops Adventure where children will spend 2 hours on the tree ropes course followed by a fauna encounter and games in the afternoon.

When: 20 December.
Where: Ku-ring-gai Wildflower Garden.
Cost: \$120.
Info: www.krg.nsw.gov.au/Things-to-do/Whats-on/Nature-adventurers-20-dec.

Craft Club at the Library

Does your child love a bit art, craft and creativity? Northbridge Library craft club takes place on the third Friday of the month from 3:30pm to 4:30pm. This activity is best suited for kids aged 5 to 10 and no bookings are required.

When: 20 December.
Where: Northbridge Library.
Cost: Free.
Info: libraries.willoughby.nsw.gov.au.



Kids Kung Fu class

Choy Lee Fut Kung Fu is not just a martial art in the Shaolin tradition, it is a complete training system ideal for developing discipline, concentration and balance. The Sydney school is Chinatown's oldest Kung Fu school. All instructors have 10 to 30 years of experience teaching locally, nationally and internationally.

When: 1, 8, 15 and 22 December.
Where: 1 Goulburn Street Haymarket.
Cost: \$15.
Info: whatson.cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au/events/childrens-kung-fu.

Art centre open day

Open Day at Ku-ring-gai Art Centre is a

chance for kids and families to get creative. Try out a range of fun, hands-on activities like drawing, writing, pottery and painting - all in a relaxed, friendly atmosphere.

When: 13 January.
Where: Ku-ring-gai Art Centre Roseville.
Cost: Free.
Info: www.krg.nsw.gov.au/Things-to-do/Whats-on/Art-Centre-Open-Day-for-kids.

Josephine Wants to Dance Musical

The beloved Australian picture book Josephine Wants To Dance bounces onto the Opera House stage. Josephine is a kangaroo who loves to dance. Her little brother, Joey, tells her kangaroos don't dance, they hop - but Josephine continues to point her toes and leap through the air.

When: 3 - 5 January.
Where: Sydney Opera House.
Cost: From \$29.
Info: whatson.cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au/events/josephine-wants-to-dance.

Alchemy of a Rainforest Exhibition

Step inside this immersive, sensory exhibition featuring spectacular rare and unusual tropical and subtropical rainforest plants. At this exhibition, the whole family will get to marvel in the complexity of the rainforest like never before.

When: All throughout December and January.
Where: The Royal Botanic Garden, Sydney.
Cost: Free.
Info: whatson.cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au/events/alchemy-of-a-rainforest-exhibition.

Gift Ideas for Your Loved Ones

At last, December! Last month, we gave a little nudge to the early birds getting a head start on their Christmas shopping. Now, we bring you two pages packed with even more gift ideas to suit every taste. Don't risk leaving a loved one empty-handed – happy shopping!



Balayage Care Kit (Blonde or Brunette), \$72.68

Say hello to healthy, hydrated, and refreshed multi-dimensional hair between salon visits. It includes the essential tools to use at home to enhance, preserve, and protect all types of balayage, ombre, foilyage, highlights/lowlights, face framing, root stretch, or root tap styles.

www.muvohair.com



Night Before Christmas 760g Candle, \$109

The magic of Christmas supersized in Glasshouse cult-favourite festive fragrance that every holiday lover should own. In a decorative vessel with illustrations by Eirian Chapman, that will bring extra sparkle to the festive season.

www.glasshousefragrances.com

Brightening Routine gift pack, \$298

Give the gift of radiant skin this festive season with mesoestetic's exclusive brightening routine gift pack. Designed to brighten, even out skin tone, and enhance your natural glow, this luxurious set includes our most coveted products formulated with advanced ingredients. Available at your nearest mesoestetic clinic/stockist.

- Contains:**
- brightening foam 100ml
 - ha densimatrix 30ml
 - age element brightening cream 50ml
 - age element brightening concentrate 5ml



Buckner Backpack, \$359.40

This leather backpack in mink brown features 1 back padded laptop zip compartment, 1 front zip pocket, 1 top zip pocket, 1 back luggage strap and 1 top handle with 2 backpack straps. Fossil leather products support responsible manufacturing via the Leather Working Group.

www.fossil.com/en-au/gifts/mens-gifts



Lennox Haircalf Leather Flap Crossbody Bag, \$299.40

Lennox is a timeless, beautifully crafted crossbody featuring Fossil signature gold-tone hardware, which draws on icons used throughout their history. It transcends trends with its leopard-print haircalf leather and contrasting black leather, sueded microfiber lining and multiple pockets.

www.fossil.com/en-au/gifts/womens-gifts

Walston Drinks Dispenser, 3 Litre, \$49.95

Serve your drinks in style with the Wilkie Brothers Drinks Dispensers. Perfect for entertaining and displaying a variety of refreshing drinks such as cocktails, juice or water. It is made of glass and uses a BPA free spigot.

wilkiebrothers.com.au



Honey Gift Hamper (Essentials), \$98

A delightful fusion of nature's golden elixir and handmade skincare products that celebrate the essence of the hive.

Gift Pack Contains:

- 500ml Local Honey
- Whipped Sugar Scrub 3. Goats Milk Soap
- Soap Saver Bag
- Crystallised Shea Lip Balm
- Jojoba Hand Moisturiser

www.theiamprojectaustralia.com.au



Sandalwood Body Oil & Incense Gift Set, \$110

Embark on a sensory sojourn through the heavenly scent of Indian Sandalwood Incense and the calming aroma of Royal Oil Body + Hair.

Contains:

- Royal Oil Body + Hair
- Indian Sandalwood Incense
- Vegan Leather Beauty Bag

heartwoodco.com.au

Helen Garner's *The Season*, \$34.99

It's footy season in Melbourne, and Helen Garner is following her grandson's under-16s team on every game and training session. With her sharp eye, her generous wit and her warm humour, Garner documents this pivotal moment, both as part of the story and as silent witness. *The Season* is an unexpected and exuberant book: a celebration of the nobility, grace and grit of team spirit, a reflection on the nature of masculinity, and a tribute to the game's power to thrill us.

www.textpublishing.com.au



MCoBeauty Fragrance Mist (240 ml), \$48.60

MCoBeauty FRAGRANCE MIST is a light and enticing spray that finishes every look, day or night. Spritz body and hair for an instant burst of refreshing fragrance that captures the essence of indulgence. Available in seven fragrances.

mcobeauty.com

Deluxe Self Care Gift Pack, \$108

Each item of this set is carefully crafted to pamper and rejuvenate, making it the perfect way to show your love and appreciation. Treat them to a spa-like experience at home with this thoughtfully curated collection.

Includes:

- 320 ml Champagne Candle (75 Hour Burn time)
- Strawberry Champagne
- Soap Bath Bomb, Whipped Body Butter
- Piccolo Rose

www.theiamprojectaustralia.com.au



Looking for a handmade luxury gift? Look no further!

Our exquisite bespoke Christmas gifts selection has something special for all tastes. **The I Am Project Australia is a local business** that takes positive self talk and affirmations one step further and puts beautiful reminders of your self worth in our labels and products. We take great care in hand making artisan soy wax clean burning candles, luxurious soaps, moisturisers and serums all made with premium quality natural plant based ingredients.

Located at 106 Pacific Highway, Roseville 2069.
Pop in or explore our range online at www.theiamprojectaustralia.com.au



Bar Infinita Gordon

Recently one of the *Sydney Observer* team decided to treat themselves and go on a date night to Gordon's hippest new food spot, Bar Infinita. Here is their review:

I have to start by saying, what a pleasure it was to have such a nice dining experience and not have to travel far. It's located opposite the Gordon Railway station, and although the venue itself is small, it's always bustling with happy diners.

The atmosphere was great. The drinks were good - a margarita and a negroni were consumed. Now, onto the food. We ordered the marinated olives, the house-made bread (a woodfired puffy flatbread glazed with rosemary oil and salt), the prosciutto plate and the burrata which came with blood orange, rhubarb chutney, hazelnut mousse and black garlic. That burrata dish was especially a standout, given it was a different take on the usual Italian classic.

Now onto mains. We opted for the chestnut reginette - the pasta had the perfect umami flavour with the beef cheek ragu and smoked bone marrow butter. My mouth is savouring just thinking about it. Our final savory dish was the 200gram Tajima grain-fed wagyu rump which was served with Brussels sprouts and a red wine jus. The meat was cooked perfectly to our liking, and we weren't surprised, considering Bar Infinita has a head chef from Naples and the restaurant is known for its woodfire



oven. Interestingly, the head chef got a taste for cooking with the embers of ironbark at their previous workplace - Sydney's Firedoor - and chose the Blue Mountains' ironbark to fuel his oven's flames.

For dessert, we had the tiramisu. To be honest - it was good, it just wasn't wow like the other dishes. But it was a delicious way to end a very tasty meal.

Yes, Bar Infinita is on the pricier side - but you're paying for quality produce, a stellar atmosphere and the chef's expertise. And that's why we'll definitely be back again and recommend it to our friends and family.



The Perfect Summer Salad

Summer is here - it's officially salad season. We're talking about salads that give some zing and freshness - salads that are the perfect accompaniment to any BBQ plans.

Welcome to the watermelon and feta salad.

Ingredients

- 2 cups of watermelon pieces, cubed.
- 1 cup of feta, cubed.
- 2 teaspoons of quality balsamic vinegar
- 1 teaspoon of olive oil.
- ¼ cup of chopped fresh mint.
- A slight drizzle of honey.
- 1 tablespoon of pepita seeds.
- Salt and pepper to taste.

Method

1. Assemble all your ingredients. First place the cubed watermelon and feta in a bowl and add the chopped mint too. Toss together.
2. In a smaller bowl, make the dressing. Combine the olive oil, balsamic vinegar and honey. Drizzle this dressing over the salad and mix.
3. Finish with the pepita seeds and however much salt and pepper suits your taste. Cover and let sit in the refrigerator for an hour before serving. Enjoy!



Best Local Food Spots with a View

This summer is the perfect time to soak up the stunning scenery that the North Shore has to offer. Whether it's beach, bushland or hills, being surrounded by nature while enjoying some delicious food is a great experience. We round up our favourite recommendations.



Lavendra, Lavender Bay

Indian food is a staple here in Sydney. Lavendra is a fantastic option to consider. It's an Indian restaurant at Lavender Bay in North Sydney. They focus on providing authentic South Asian food and their dine-in service is impeccable. Their Sydney harbour views are unique given their unusual vantage point, so it's a dining experience not to be missed.

lavendra.com.au



The Fernery, Mosman

For a fun rooftop bar, the Fernery in Mosman is exactly how it sounds - lush with greenery. From the rooftop, there are sweeping views of the harbour. It sits atop of Mosman Club, so you betcha it's a fan with locals. Their menu is particularly great if you're after spirits, a good craft beer or classic cocktails.

www.thefernerymosman.com.au



Ms Right, Roseville

This is a new addition to the local area and it's in one of our beautiful parks. Ms Right is a Chinese restaurant, open Wednesday to Sunday. They also have a takeaway kiosk and do a very nice high tea. The premises itself is Firs Estate Cottage, which is located on land which was once part of a 400-acre property granted to Daniel Dering Mathew in 1819, reputed to be the first trained architect to reach Australia.

www.msright.com.au

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Always a Trek

by Jay Houhlias

“So how many have you done?”
 “It’s my first,” I say, “yours too?”
 “This is my fourth.”

“Wow, really?”

I turned to the other people in the group, but none were as stunned as I at the answer.

“It’s my fifth,” one said
 “It’s only my second,” another said.
 “It’s my twelfth, I think, I lost count.”

“There is a big group of us and we do one every year. We booked a year in advance. You have to get in quick!”

This was my introduction to the culture at SwimTrek. They are a global company operating swimming tours around the world, allowing people to explore locations by water.

I’ve always been a swimmer. When I was younger, it was squad, doing laps in a chlorine pool and loathing my mother when she’d wake me at 4:45am for training.

Back then swimming was merely an important chore. I understood it was good for me but treated it like flossing or doing my homework. As I got older, I realised swimming could actually be fun. It could, under the right circumstances, make you feel good as opposed to burnt out and bleary eyed.

Nothing against the pool swimmers, but open ocean or river swimming is very different. Not only are open swimmers cooler and wilder, but the technique is far more loosey goosey as it constantly needs changing depending on the conditions, which direction your swimming, and of course, your mood.

This is what makes open swimming such a unique experience, even for those who have been swimming all their lives. They find something joyful in taking a practice, a fairly linear set of



In 2000, SwimTrek’s founder Simon Murie went to Turkey to do a Lord Byron inspired swim. He found it difficult to organise, and the swim itself took just under an hour. Fixing this imbalance between time organising and time swimming gave birth to SwimTrek. For more information, head to www.swimtrek.com.

skills they know so well, and overturning it, giving themselves the freedom to abandon what they know and adapt to what’s happening around them.

On the Adriatic side of Italy lay the Tremiti Islands. They are known for their beauty and among other things, their bizarre history including opera singers and active mine bombs.

Getting there was an adventure on its own; a flight, three trains and a ferry which operated on Tremiti time, which meant it came when it felt like it.

We met our guides Guilia and Margeaux, both swimmers and fit, exuberant individuals with the salt on their skin and the sun in their eyes.

The first morning we had our induction swim. It was where Guilia and Margeaux split us into groups based on ability. It was very important to me and my young buck ego so I swam hard trying to



Tanja Zollner



keep up with Margeaux. I thrashed and she glided and when we stopped, I did well not to breathe heavy.

I think it worked. I was placed in the pink group, which was the fastest, and best, obviously.

The groups matched everyone with the right kind of people. Some wanted to sightsee and dive, some wanted to push themselves with the exercise, others wanted a leisurely swim, and others were once decent swimmers and still wanted to cling to the dream of being able to do what they used to do in the water (at least one of them).

We spent the morning out swimming and on the boat, then we’d come back in for lunch and siesta, then we’d head back out in the afternoon for another swim. Siestas were obligatory. Southern Europe demands it of you. Even if you’re not sleepy, you find once you lie down, you sleep anyway. All the shops and cafes close during that time anyway, and so do you.

The combination of constant salt water and sun on your body gives you a layer of what I would call immunity. This immunity prevents you from ever smelling (not yet backed by science) and ensures by the end of the day, you’re always tired and can always sleep well.

Your body kind of calcifies as you just start blending in with the environment of ocean and sand. You stop sweating and constantly needing to clean and deodorise yourself. It’s nice, and contrary to what it sounds like, natural and clean.

Margeaux and Guilia were always liaising with the local fisherman for the best conditions. These fishermen know more than anyone

The intimacy of our trip made me wonder about all the other places SwimTrek operate tours in. Judging by the responses from some of our veteran team members, you can’t really go wrong with a SwimTrek trip, no matter the location or time of year.

about the island and the conditions that characterise it. This gave the trip a more local, sustainable feel. Not only did we have a program, but also real time feedback of what was happening.

I have rather annoying dietaries, and it was difficult for the Italian restaurant owners to fathom no dairy or gluten. They went above and beyond to get me gluten free pasta and bread. I tried explaining I didn’t have to eat the bread or pasta, and I could just have other things instead. I don’t think they understood though. You must have pasta, some form of pasta, you simply must.

We were set for some wild weather later in the week. But as the saying goes at SwimTrek (I think), ‘There’s always a trek.’ We hiked around the island where we got our fill of history. Guilia has spent her past six birthdays on Tremiti, so she knows the island as well as any. She knows all the restaurant owners and everybody that drives past stops and pokes their head out for a chat with her.

The intimacy of our trip made me wonder about all the other places SwimTrek operate tours in. Judging by the responses from some of our veteran team members, you can’t really go wrong with a SwimTrek trip, no matter the location or time of year.

You get used to the simplicity of it all. Wake up, eat, chat, swim, be in the sun, come back from lunch, nap, back out again, dinner, sleep and sleep well. It’s a good life and something everyone should experience for a time.

Before our tour had even finished, many of the group already begun making plans for the next tours they were going on.

“Jay,” I was told, “you’re coming to this one. Book it.”

And just like that, I had become part of the coveted group, the squad, the SwimTrek team who did swims every year and stayed in contact. That, more than anything, stayed with me long after we all said our goodbyes.

I started imagining the scenario for the introductions at my next SwimTrek. I’m thinking of swanning in and plonking myself down on my throne at the head of the table. Then, when asked the same question as last time, I’ll know exactly what to say.

“Yeah this is my second SwimTrek, and counting.”

Jay Houhlias is a writer and journalist currently travelling and freelancing. Follow more of his work at <https://jayhouhlias.substack.com>.

A Cairns Tropical Getaway

This summer season, if you really want to experience the warmth at its finest, it's well worth visiting Cairns during its tropical season.

Located in far north Queensland, Cairns is a spot that is the perfect gateway to the Great Barrier Reef. Highlight spots include Daydream Island, Hamilton Island and there are also day trips between Cairns and the reef. But for a short itinerary for your time in Cairns alone, we have you covered.



The Esplanade

For a cruisy morning stroll, look no further than Cairns' esplanade. It features the iconic Cairns Lagoon, looks out onto the cerulean ocean and the parklands are beautifully manicured. There's also some great coffee shops lining the path.



Kuranda

A great day trip for the family outside of Cairns is good ol' Kuranda. It has a very hippy atmosphere and the famous markets there are full of Byron Bay vibes... just in the middle of a rainforest.

Enjoy a Cocktail... or Two

There's a bunch of really great food and drink places in Cairns' CBD. Some highlights have to be the Cairns Hilton's Pina Colada and the Waterbar and Grill Steakhouse's South African twists on classic meat dishes.

Tubing Down the River

This is hands down the best activity to do, aside from snorkelling on the reef. Aussie Drifterz Tubing Tours have a great reputation, and their tours are super fun too. The tubing experience takes you over and down some of the prettiest rainforest rivers around Cairns – all while bouncing on small, white water rapids.



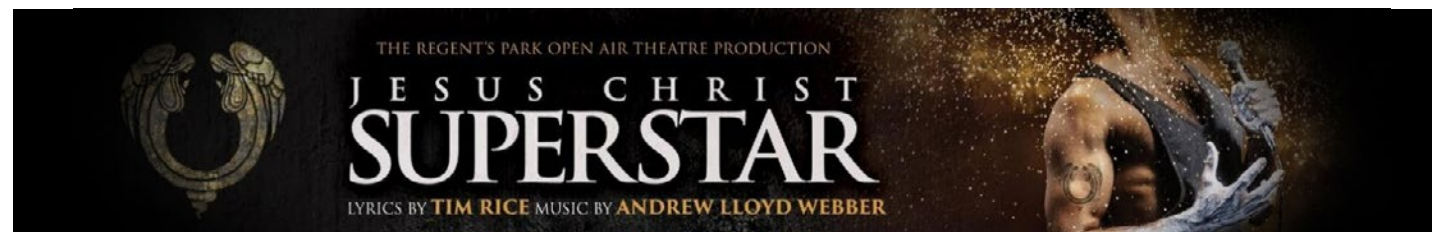
Waterfalls

There are a series of waterfalls in the Cairns region not to be missed. If you're going up to Kuranda on the rail, then you will get to see a bunch of gorgeous falls, including the most famous Barron Falls. Other recommendations have to be Josephine Falls and Millaa Millaa Falls.



The Botanic Gardens

With free entry and a garden teeming with tropical flowers, who wouldn't have the Cairns Botanic Gardens on their list! There's a range of different sections, beautiful walks and lots of informative posters dotted along.



MAHALIA BARNES "All I've Ever Known"

by Jay Houhlias

She was a musician before she was even born, with her family steeped in music. Mahalia Barnes, blues and soul vocalist, has been a thriving musician for years, collaborating with artists ranging from Bruce Springsteen to George Benson.

She is taking a new turn into musicals, and specifically, *Jesus Christ Superstar*, a rock score set during the final weeks in the life of Jesus Christ as seen through the eyes of Judas. *Sydney Observer* caught up with Mahalia for the latest.

"Life is absolutely crazy for me at the moment! I'm obviously in rehearsals for JCS but I'm also on tour with Cold Chisel and doing a bunch of other stuff in the background. An average day at the moment has been spent rehearsing and doing media, then several nights I'm flying or driving to do Chisel shows, then back early for the next rehearsal!"

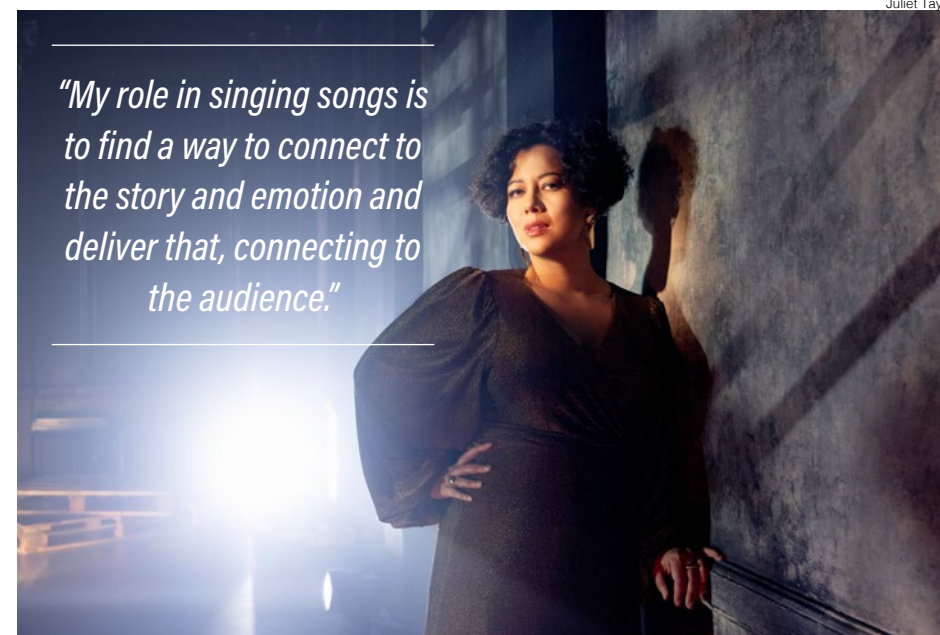
"I'm new to this world, so I'm still figuring out how it all feels, but the really big difference that I know and I'm actually looking forward to is that I'll be in one place for an extended period of time!"

"In the rock and roll touring world we spend a night here, sometimes a few nights, and then we move on to the next city. We stay in different hotels every night. For this show I'll be in Sydney for a few months, in Perth for a month, in Melbourne for a few months and in Brisbane for a month or so. It'll be nice I think!"

Mahalia is used to a different kind of schedule. She loves what she does, but she knows it's not for everyone and can be challenging. Juggling family time and being flexible are all part of it. She says, "You learn how to make it work... It's all I've ever known and I'm grateful I get to do it... best job in the world for me!"

"The other thing for me that I'm learning in this rehearsal process is how to be part of an ensemble/cast as opposed to

"My role in singing songs is to find a way to connect to the story and emotion and deliver that, connecting to the audience."



a band... I had to do some choreography – I'll clarify that I am not dancing (thankfully as I am not a dancer), but just learning where to be and when, how to get there, why, being a part of a bigger picture and story."

"I'm really just trying to learn what I need to do properly so as to not be in the way of the incredible ensemble who are working so hard and singing and dancing the whole time! I'm enjoying it."

Able to switch seamlessly between genres and connect with audiences, we asked Mahalia if her musical inclinations all come from the same place.

"I love a wide range of music, but primarily I do connect most with Soul, Blues and Rock'n'roll... but really my role in singing songs is to find a way to connect to the story and emotion and deliver that, connecting to the audience. I love interpreting songs... and these are great songs!"

"The songs and the music are the centre of this show and I love Mary's songs! When I sing it always comes from the same place, my heart, my soul, my

experience, my compassion, my empathy, what I see, what I dream, what I feel."

For those wanting to live the performer life, Mahalia had some words of advice.

"It's tough and there's no one right way to do it all, or a clear straight path... but it's the most rewarding job if you love it. Work hard, do it for yourself and connect to the music you make, whether it's your own, or someone else's, as a band leader or a musician for hire you can bring yourself to it.

"And I think it's important to remember," she added, "that if you believe in what you do and love what you do, it will connect with others, but that doesn't mean others will always love it! There will always be critics. Music is personal."

The Olivier Award-winning reimaged production of Tim Rice and Andrew Lloyd Webber's musical *Jesus Christ Superstar* is at Sydney's Capitol Theatre in now! It then heads to Perth's Crown Theatre from February and Melbourne's Princess Theatre from March. Head to www.jesuschristssuperstarmusical.com for more info.

Cinderella on New Year's Eve

A prince, a ball, a woman in flight. Will they find true love before midnight? If you are looking for opulence and lots of fun this New Year's Eve, one great option is to go to Sydney Opera House and watch opera. This production, performed in English, features gorgeous costumes in outrageous shapes and sizes.

When: 31 December.
Where: Joan Sutherland Theatre, Sydney
Cost: From \$200.
Info: www.sydneyoperahouse.com/opera-australia/2024-season/cinderella-nye.



sydneyoperahouse.com



Mov'in Bed Outdoor Cinema

Watch a movie under the stars in Barangaroo's lush precinct. Instead of just the usual picnic rug and bean bag spiel, Mov'in Bed cinema brings in a whopping 150 queen size beds with LED-lit bedside tables and comfy pillows. Iconic movies playing throughout the summer period include *Gladiator*, *Wicked* and *Fly Me to the Moon*.

When: Throughout December and January.
Where: Barangaroo.
Cost: From \$89.
Info: movinbed.com/sydney.



Twilight Christmas Market

The Turramurra High School Twilight Christmas Market is set to be a magical evening dedicated to celebrating the spirit of the season and supporting local small businesses. There will be stalls, activities and even lucky door prizes. Come along to find your unique Christmas gifts and enjoy the community fun.

When: 5 December.
Where: Turramurra High School.
Cost: Gold coin donation.
Info: www.krg.nsw.gov.au/Things-to-do/Turramurra-High-School-twilight-Christmas-market.



Carols at the San

Join The San for this year's San Carols event on the Village Green. Commencing from 5pm with kids activities, get your photo taken with San Bear and Santa and enjoy both the kids and main concerts followed by their spectacular fireworks display.

When: 8 December
Where: Sydney Adventist Hospital, Wahroonga.
Cost: Free.
Info: www.krg.nsw.gov.au/Things-to-do/Whats-on/Carols-at-the-San.



January 26 Lunch Cruise

Enjoy the public holiday aboard the MV Vagabond Spirit flagship with a 3.5-hour cruise on Sydney Harbour. Experience the electric atmosphere of the harbour as it comes to life with tall ships, yacht races, and recreational and charter boats flying their flags and banners proudly. Enjoy a delicious seafood and carvery buffet, with desserts, coffee and tea available.

When: 26 January.
Where: Sydney Harbour, exact pickup location to be confirmed.
Cost: \$110.
Info: www.vagabond.com.au/sydney-harbour-annual-events/australia-day-cruises/australia-day-lunch-cruise-mv-spirit.

capitoltheatre.com.au



Jesus Christ Superstar

The iconic global phenomenon, *Jesus Christ Superstar*, is now playing at the Capitol Theatre in Sydney. This mesmerising new production has received unprecedented acclaim and accolades during its US and UK tours, including an Olivier Award for Best Musical Revival.

When: From 1 December.
Where: Capitol Theatre, Sydney.
Cost: From \$69.90.
Info: www.capitoltheatre.com.au/jesus-christ-superstar.

World Food Markets

The Northern Beaches are hosting the World Food Markets in Freshwater. It will showcase a vibrant array of food trucks serving up dishes from around the globe and feature a great lineup of live entertainment.

When: 3 and 10 January.
Where: Freshwater Beach Park
Cost: Free entry.
Info: www.northernbeaches.nsw.gov.au/things-to-do/whats-on/world-food-markets-freshwater.

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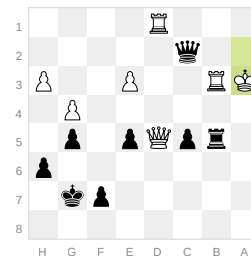
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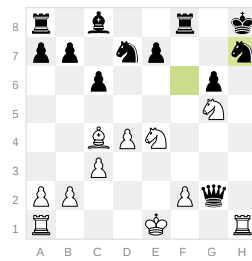
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Mate In One Move Puzzles



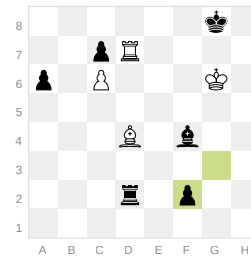
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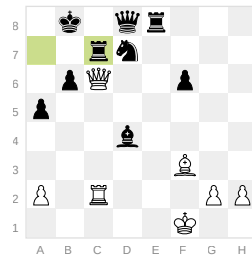
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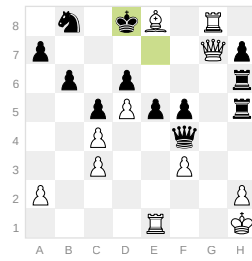
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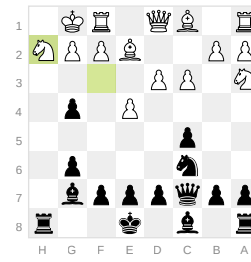
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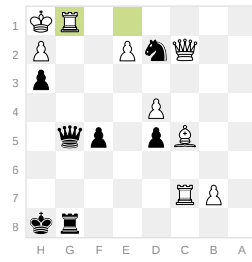
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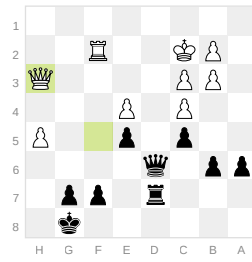
6. White to play



7. Black to play



8. Black to play



9. Black to play

SUDOKU

EASY

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	3				9	7	5	
			3				6	2
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INTERMEDIATE

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8	2	9						7
4								
		3				7		
		6		4			3	
9	4		7		8			

ANSWERS

TRIVIA
 1. 1901; 2. Tom Roberts; 3. Numbat; 4. Melbourne; 5. Diddgindoo; 6. Tasmania; 7. Mount Kosciuszko; 8. 1932; 9. Patrick White; 10. The Great Australian Bight; 11. Victoria; 12. Tasmania; 13. Robert O'Hara Burke; 14. Tasmanian Devil; 15. Kangaroo Island; 16. Blue Mountains National Park; 17. Robert Menzies; 18. Ballarat; 19. Nulbar; 20. Batavia.

MATE IN ONE MOVE PUZZLES
 1. Rb5# 2. Rxb7# 3. BxT7# 4. Rd8# 5. Qa8# 6. Bxh5# 7. Qxh2# 8. QxT1# 9. Qd1#

EASY

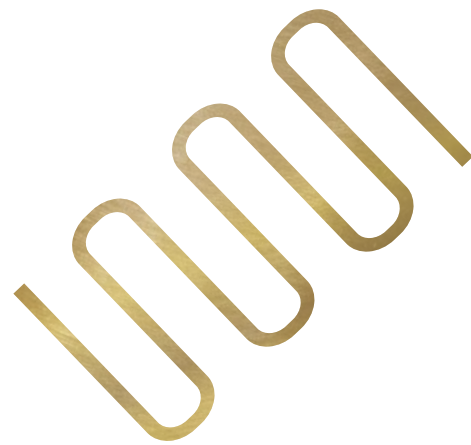
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9	6	8	7	4	3	5	2	1
2	7	5	4	3	1	2	7	8
8	6	9	5	4	3	1	2	7
3	5	1	9	2	7	8	4	6
4	6	1	7	2	8	5	9	3
8	2	6	9	4	3	5	6	1
9	1	4	2	7	3	8	5	6

INTERMEDIATE

9	1	4	2	7	3	8	5	6
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3	5	1	9	2	8	5	6	1
4	6	1	7	2	8	5	9	3
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9	1	4	2	7	3	8	5	6
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3	5	1	9	2	8	5	6	1
4	6	1	7	2	8	5	9	3
8	2	6	9	4	3	5	6	1
9	1	4	2	7	3	8	5	6

TRIVIA

1. What year did Australia become a federation?
2. Who painted the iconic Australian artwork Shearing the Rams?
3. What is the name of the Australian marsupial that has no pouch?
4. Which Australian city was originally named Batmania?
5. What is the name of the Indigenous Australian instrument that has a deep, resonant sound?
6. Which state is nicknamed the "Apple Isle"?
7. What is Australia's highest mainland peak?
8. In what year did the Sydney Harbour Bridge officially open?
9. Which Australian writer won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1973?
10. What is the name of the body of water where the Indian and Southern Oceans meet?
11. Who was the leader of the ill-fated Burke and Wills expedition?
12. What Australian city is home to the Shrine of Remembrance?
13. Which state is home to the Twelve Apostles?
14. Which Australian animal can only be found in Tasmania in the wild?
15. What is the largest sand island in the world, located in Queensland?
16. What is the name of the national park that includes the Three Sisters rock formation?
17. Who was Australia's longest-serving Prime Minister?
18. Which Australian gold rush town was known as "the richest place on earth" during the 1850s?
19. Which region's name means "no tree"?
20. What is the name of shipwreck that inspired the novel *Batavia*?



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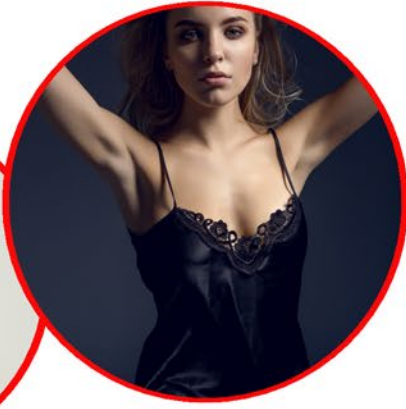


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