

Burra and the

Valley of Vines

South Australia offers great culture, great wine, great food, accommodation in historic cottages, plenty of heritage areas and antique shopping second to none. The Clare Valley and the old mining town of Burra are just a couple of pleasant hours from Adelaide

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Think of sun-soaked vineyards, gourmet food and wine festivals and a rich heritage trail studded with antique shops, and you have embarked on a journey to the Clare Valley and Burra, only two hours drive north of Adelaide. This delightful locale draws its fair share of interstate visitors as well. Travellers from the West often veer off the track to visit, while those from New South Wales mark it down as a prime stopover, especially those on the collector trail.

Day trippers can, with an early morning start, arrive mid morning and be back in Adelaide for dinner – enough time for a pleasant day of collectables fossicking, visiting the copper mine ruins and enjoying some of the culinary delights en route along with the local wine. Travel along the Main North Road, perhaps exploring Gawler, Auburn and Clare.

Gawler is a large prosperous town in the Barossa, with its rich Anglo-German heritage and over 2,000

vignerons producing some of Australia's finest wines. The region claims as one of its sons the late Colin Thiele, author of over 80 books, including *Storm Boy* and *Sun on the Stubble*, a novel about growing up in the Barossa Valley. With its ornate 19th century buildings, Gawler is a close cousin architecturally to Clare further to the north.

One of the major entry points to the Clare Valley is Auburn, the birthplace of poet C J Dennis, best known for *The Songs of the Sentimental Bloke*. Auburn is a quaint little town with shady lanes and leafy riverbanks, its bluestone 19th century architecture possessing real charm. Stroll around its many antique and art shops, then take afternoon tea at the Dennis Tearooms. Tateham's Restaurant and the Rising Sun Bistro Gallery provide culinary indulgences. Each September, Auburn presents its C J Dennis festival.

For the more adventurous, a bicycle ride of some 20 km along 'the Riesling Trail' from Auburn to Clare can be a leisurely way of taking in this scenic route, with numerous rests at winery cellar doors. Fine dining with splendid sweeping views of the valley adds to the spirit of the escapade, which wine writer James Halliday compared to a glimpse of Tuscany.

Clare is the administrative hub of the valley. Its imposing 19th century buildings should not belie its trendy entertainment venues and eateries. Surrounded by a landscape dotted with wineries the likes of Leasingham,

Seven Hills, Knapstein and Petaluma, Clare plays host to the Valley of the Vines Racing Carnival in March. It fires up again for the Clare Gourmet and Wine Festival, held in the first weekend of May, coinciding with Burra's Antique and Collectables Fair.

To the north, Jamestown is the annual site of the magical Bundaleer Forest weekend in March where music, culture and festivity unfold in an autumnal plantation forest. Baritone Teddy Tahu Rhodes was one of the stars of this year's line up.

Burra, a very special town, is a state heritage area, partly because of its significance as an early copper mining settlement but also because of its intact 19th-century streetscapes.

Entering the town from the south, visitors soon encounter Thorogood's Cider Brewery. Upon entry to the sweeping driveway an impressive, almost spiritual 'circle of stones' beckons, next to an old cider press – just to let you know you're on track. The Thorogoods have planted almost every tree on the property, including



1 Clare Valley, Burra, South Australia. Photograph courtesy South Australia Tourism

2 Gaslight Colelectables and Old Books, Market Square, Burra, South Australia. Photograph courtesy South Australia Tourism

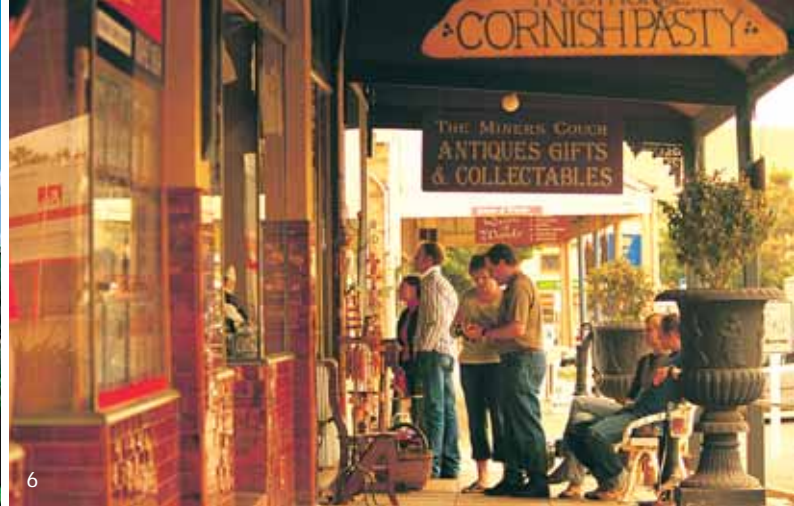
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the ample apple orchards, the source of their apple wines, champagnes and beers which Anthony and Sue served in the bar of this award-winning boutique cidery. They dispense tips on what to see and do in Burra.

Burra is steeped in history, with the mines bringing Cornish miners, Welsh smelters and German farmers from the Barossa, Chinese market gardeners and Chilean muleteers (brought over to transport produce to and fro the ports). The local cemetery conducts midnight tours that portray these multicultural beginnings. 'Passports' can be bought from the Information Centre in Market Square as a pass to all the Mining Museums, sections of the underground mines and to the Museum that houses newly discovered ancient skeletal remains of marsupial Diprotodons from Burra.

The town's heritage seems to have spawned a plethora of antique shops: Nobs & Snobs (with a historic connection to the two major mining companies), the Miner's Couch, Gaslight and many more. Gaslight is a successful café and antiques store with shelves of books for sale. Many a customer previews the books over a coffee, gazes around at the collectables on display and more often than not makes a purchase. Proprietors Dee and Brendon Greenslade say 'we are selling memories: people come in and want to take something home that sometimes evokes memories of their childhood.'

Brendon speaks of the community as an ideal blend, around half having multi-generational local ancestry and the remainder newcomers seeking a rural but urbane lifestyle, bringing new ideas and yet closely guarding the town's heritage. The Thorogood Cidery,



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5 Market Square, Burra, South Australia. Photograph courtesy South Australia Tourism

6 Commercial Street, Burra, South Australia. Photograph courtesy South Australia Tourism

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Gaslight Café and White Cedars restaurant are three such establishments. Serving mainly Balinese food, White Cedars restaurant, with its many artefacts, has a warm, cosmopolitan feel to it and has become a hit with the locals. White Cedars is run by Francis and his Indonesian partner Pudu, who occasionally entertains with traditional Balinese dancing.

Try Kooc O'Burra for fish 'n' chips, third generation Water for Cornish pasties, Polly's Tearooms, Paxton's Café and Queen of Wands, five local hotels and many others. Saltbush hogget is available at McPhee's butcher.

Redruth Gaol was the site of much of the film *Breaker Morant*. Paxton's Cottages face onto four streets in rows. While there are more up-market B&Bs, their Spartan nature provides a tangible link to the time when large families of miners inhabited them, with the less fortunate living in dug-outs nearby. All have wood fires which provide a cosy winter retreat.

'Jailhouse Rock' festival at Redruth Gaol in January attracts followers from far and wide and the Burra Fair in May brings many dealers from Adelaide and beyond to the Town Hall. The nearby school holds an accompanying 'Treasure Trove', while 'Best Place' local markets operates.

Though Burra has so much to see, not to be missed on the return to Adelaide is the tiny, picture book town of Mintaro, famous for its slate used state-wide and the nearby mansion, Martindale Hall, where *Picnic at Hanging Rock* was filmed. Luxurious accommodation is available on site.

Those who take the opportunity to visit these magical dales will surely be richly rewarded.