



RUTHERGLEN & BEECHWORTH  
VICTORIA

Walk, drink, dine

THIS HIGH COUNTRY RAMBLE IS A GOURMAND'S DELIGHT

A gentle afternoon walk along a gold-rush creek, ending at a waterfall, where a glass of wine and a platter of cheese awaits. Now that's one way to enjoy the great outdoors.

We'd informed friends we were off for a weekend of exertion as part of the Victorian High Country's Festival of Short Walks. They scoffed; Rutherglen, to name just one town on the festival circuit, is revered for its muscats and the quality of its wineries. Some unkindly suggested we would be staggering between cellar doors rather than hiking.

Instead, we find ourselves the very model of moderation – for the most part. The creek walk takes us just over 5km along Beechworth Gorge, with informative breaks to learn about the history of the area and take photos. This part of north-east Victoria was very much a player in the gold rush, and the idea of setting up camp with a hamper and panning for treasures in Reids Creek is appealing. But local wines and that cheese platter are waiting at the finish line, Woolshed Falls.

Afterwards we slow the pace further, finally resting our slightly aching feet in Beechworth at the luxurious Freeman on Ford B&B, housed in the former Oriental Bank building. The Victorian-style rooms provide every comfort, the hosts even offering port and chocolates in the lounge for guests seeking a nightcap.

A 4km stroll takes us from All Saints Estate in Wahgunyah, north of Rutherglen, along the banks of the Murray River to Grantham. The tranquillity and level terrain is matched with a glass of All Saints marsanne from vines that originally came from Tahbilk to meet a debt,



Gourmet grazing: Freeman on Ford B&B; one of its deluxe suites; Ox and Hound Bistro fare; La Maison St Arnaud. Opposite: walking in Beechworth



FRESH EGGS  
WITH BACON ARE  
MATCHED WITH  
'BREAKFAST WINE'

according to fourth-generation winery co-owner Eliza Brown. The majestic centrepiece of All Saints Estate, a heritage-listed castle built in 1864, belies the Brown siblings' warm, community-focused approach. Eliza is proud of their wines, and of the estate pigs that contribute to the pork belly and black pudding on the menu at the estate's well-regarded Terrace Restaurant. But she easily recommends another friend's vineyard for lunch tomorrow, summing up this local spirit with a portmanteau: "co-opetition".

Our plans for moderation hit the skids the following morning in Rutherglen, where we start with breakfast of omelettes at La Maison St Arnaud, a French Provincial-style B&B with two luxurious self-contained suites. Owner Kellie-Anne Briggs is a local champion in the kitchen, both her pesto and her fig and lemon jam having taken first prize in the local agricultural show. This year she's confident her cumquat and lime jam has a shot, or maybe her spiced cherry chutney.

Unable to leave without trying her marinated olives, we eventually make our way to our second breakfast at Lake Moodemere Estate, where sixth-generation wine producer Michael Chambers shows us how his dog Scout rounds up the sheep and herds them to the vines to eat weeds and fertilise the soil. I put my own farm skills to the test, collecting eggs from the four grand dames of the estate, Gladys, Rose, Daisy and Peggy. Fresh eggs with smoked bacon and damper are matched with a "breakfast wine" – the Lake Moodemere Tiara, a muscat blend. Dinner at The Ox and Hound Bistro in Beechworth – featuring local Tolpuddle goats cheese soufflé and a honey pannacotta with toffee and

muscat – further pushes the boundaries of moderation.

On our last morning, one last adventure: "Walk to the Source", hosted by Billson's Brewery, where craft beers, cordials, sodas and soft drinks are made using old-school recipes and local spring water. There's no time to enjoy the delights of Beechworth Bakery – perhaps we'll put our feet up with one of their famous Bee Sting pastries on a future walking tour of the town.

Perfect for: Ramblers and wine enthusiasts.

Must do: Have a look around town. There are plenty of attractions for history enthusiasts, including the Robert O'Hara Burke Memorial Museum and Ned Kelly Vault in Beechworth.

Dining: All Saints' Terrace Restaurant punches well above its weight with a menu matched to estate wines, such as duck confit with savoyarde potatoes, grilled radicchio and muscat vincotto jus paired with a 2017 St Leonards Vineyard Cabernet Franc. In Rutherglen, 1000 Pound does a great steak, or relax with a scone and the extensive tea selection at Moments & Memories Tea Room in Beechworth.

Getting there: Rutherglen and Beechworth are about three hours' drive from Melbourne or 35-40 minutes' drive from Albury airport.

Bottom line: Freeman on Ford from \$270 per room per night (beechworthluxurybedandbreakfast.com.au); La Maison St Arnaud from \$195 per room per night (rutherglenlamaisonstarnaud.com).

walkhighcountry.com.au