



## Queensland's hidden gems

BY ROB GEDDES

Most people's idea of Queensland involves north Queensland sun and surf and does not involve grapes; yet there is an exciting wine industry emerging in southern Queensland.

So let's peel back the Bundaberg curtain as Rob Geddes covers the kilometres and tastes the wines to find that Queensland really has a lot of exciting wines waiting to be discovered.

Surprising fact number one: Queensland makes good wine and you can find a good example of every wine that has made the Australian wine industry famous. You just have to know where to look!

Queensland quality wine starts with their high altitude cool climate vineyards on the Great Dividing Range at close to 1000 metres above sea level, where the grapes escape the tropical summer climate. Their spine of cool climate vines runs from the South Burnett in the north through Toowoomba and on to the Granite Belt on the NSW border.

Above:

Enjoying a drink with lunch

Travelling north-west of Brisbane

and inland from Hervey Bay is the South Burnett wine region, Australia's most northerly district with Kingaroy at its centre, and home to Clovelly and Barambah. Set amidst lush dairy country and cheese makers, Clovelly is making good Barbera, a red which seems to be well suited to the district. Lovers of full bodied reds will find their double pruned Shiraz exactly to their liking as it is richly flavoured with blackberry and raspberry fruit, full bodied and intense. Nearby Barambah is a recent success story with delicious medium bodied fresh wines from Semillon and Shiraz which are ideal with the local meats, cheeses and breads.

Farther south and only ninety minutes from Brisbane at Toowoomba is the exceptional Preston Peak winery and café produce a delicious range of wines including Shiraz and Chardonnay.

Sirromet is the jewel in Queensland's wine crown and the closest winery to Brisbane. With an exceptional restaurant, an art gallery and extensive facilities, they produce many quality wines including Verdelho, a juicy ripe Cabernet Sauvignon at \$20.00 and a remarkable Petite Verdot. Their sweet "sun wine" has to be tasted to be believed.

Nearby at Mt Tamborine National

Park is Witches Falls, a small producer using Granite Belt grapes to make a delightful creamy rich Chardonnay of great quality as well one of Australia's best examples of the rare white grape Marsanne. There is a delightful tasting room which is well run and having lots of good wines in very pretty location.

Over 90% of Queensland's wineries are in the Granite Belt, two and half hours from Brisbane perched high on the Great Dividing Range around the town of Stanthorpe.

Surprising fact number two: Visitors to the Granite Belt wine regions spent the third largest amount of money on wine there after Sunbury and Tasmania, buying on average 2.3 bottles of wine. Not much you say...? The average purchase is a bottle a visitor.

This region is a popular winter getaway with an exciting and strong food and wine culture. They are making a lot of good quality and good value wines.

The best way to tour the region is to pick up a 'Strange Bird Alternative Grape Varieties Trail' brochure which will take you to most of the wineries in the district and lead you to taste something different. Find out more before you leave from [www.granitebeltwinecountry.com.au](http://www.granitebeltwinecountry.com.au).

Keep your eye on Verdelho, Chardonnay and Shiraz as well as the specials outlined below:

Ballandean is the grandfather winery of the district and has some of the most delicious Italian food I have

ever tasted in their winery restaurant. As well as delicious Shiraz, they also have a lovely and unique late harvest Sylvaner which is one of the world's best and is an amazing liqueur Muscat.

Hidden Creek has a café and exciting examples of Tempranillo - the variety that made Spain famous in Rioja

Robinson has been making serious Cabernet Sauvignon for thirty years which will reward cellaring with solid quality every year.

Robert Channon Café and Vineyard is a must visit thanks to the delicious food and the remarkable wines. At this vineyard Verdelho achieves its potential and offers a richly textured wine with flavours from the Sauvignon Blanc, like passionfruit through to riper more pink lady apple and custard apple flavours.

Symphony Hill's vineyard is the highest in the region which frequently receives snow as well as major accolades. It has been the highest scoring Queensland Shiraz twice in recent years at the Sydney Show, winning a Gold Medal, beating wines from all over Australia.

Summit Estate is run by an Argentinean winemaker who is turning out remarkably sophisticated red wines including a delicious Malbec and Petit Verdot and a classic Pinot Shiraz blend, which is soft and round and so velvety to drink. This is a style that used to be popular in the Hunter Valley, and after you taste it you will see why.

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With so many Queensland affordable wine classics your visit will put a smile on your face.

**Preston Peak Cellar Door Café**  
Open: Wednesday-Sunday 10am-5pm  
31 Preston Peak Lane, Toowoomba  
Ph: 07 4630 9499 [www.prestonpeak.com](http://www.prestonpeak.com)

**Sirromet Winery**  
Open: Daily 10am-4pm.  
850 - 938 Mount Cotton Rd,  
Mount Cotton Ph: 07 3206 2999  
[www.sirromet.com](http://www.sirromet.com)

**Warrego Wines**  
Open: Daily 10am to 5pm.  
9 Seminary Rd, Marburg  
Ph: 07 5464 4400  
[www.warregowines.com.au](http://www.warregowines.com.au)

**Witches Falls Winery**  
Open: Daily 10am-4pm.  
79 Main Western Rd, Nth Tamborine  
Ph: 07 6545 2609  
[www.witchesfalls.com.au](http://www.witchesfalls.com.au)

**Ballandean Estate**  
Open: Daily 9am-5pm  
Sundown Rd, Ballandean  
Ph: 07 4684 1226  
[www.ballandean-estate.com.au](http://www.ballandean-estate.com.au)

**Hidden Creek Vineyard**  
Open: Weekdays 11am-3pm, Weekends 10am-4pm. Eukey Rd, Ballandean  
Ph: 07 4684 1383  
[www.hiddencreek.com.au](http://www.hiddencreek.com.au)

**Jimbour Wines**  
Open: Daily 10am-4pm  
86 Jimbour Station Rd, Jimbour  
Ph: 07 4663 6221  
[www.jimbourwines.com.au](http://www.jimbourwines.com.au)

**Robert Channon Wines**

Open: Weekends 10am-5pm,  
Weekdays 11am-4pm  
50 Amiens Rd, Stanthorpe  
Ph: 07 4683 3260

[www.robertchannonwines.com](http://www.robertchannonwines.com)  
**Robinsons Family Vineyard**  
Open: Saturday-Wednesday 10am-5pm & daily during school holidays.

151 Curtin Rd, Ballandean 4382  
Ph: 07 4684 1216  
[www.robinsonswines.com.au](http://www.robinsonswines.com.au)

**Pyramids Road Wines**  
Open: Thursday-Monday 10-4:30pm, daily during school holidays & P'Hols & by appointment.  
Pyramids Rd, Wyberba via Ballandean  
Ph: 07 4684 5151

[www.pyramidsroad.com.au](http://www.pyramidsroad.com.au)

**Summit Estate Wines**  
Open: Daily 10am-4:30pm  
291 Granite Belt Dr, Thulimbah  
Ph: 07 4683 2011

[www.summitestate.com.au](http://www.summitestate.com.au)

**Symphony Hill**

Open: Daily 10am-4pm.  
2017 Eukey Rd, Ballandean  
Ph: 07 4684 1388

[www.symphonyhill.com.au](http://www.symphonyhill.com.au)

**Barambah**

Open: Thursday-Sunday & P'Hols 10am-5pm  
79 Goschnicks Rd, Moppatdale  
Ph: 1 300 781 815

[www.barambah.com.au](http://www.barambah.com.au)

**Clovelly Vineyard Estate**

Open: Wednesday-Sunday 11am-6pm  
Steinhardt Rd, Moffatdale, via Murgon  
Ph: 07 3216 1088 [www.clovelly.com.au](http://www.clovelly.com.au)