

Western Australia



It is now time we head west coast across the Nullabor Plains, and the time it would take you to cross east to west in the US is roughly about the same time it will take to cross east to west in Australia. The road is long and gun barrel straight all the way across to Perth. If you fly, which most people do, you'll see a very picturesque and rough coastline. But driving along this road you would expect to see great ocean views, sheer cliff faces, kangaroos, emus and even the odd camel. The stretch across the Nullabor Plain is extremely remote with very sparse population. It is not for the ill prepared. It is always recommended when travelling across Australia to carry a gallon of water per person per day and ample fuel.

Perth's wine regions are considered by many as 'remote' because of the distance (over 1600 miles) from its closest neighbor South Australia, and even from Perth to the Margaret River wine region is a good three to four hour drive. Mind you some of the greatest scenery you will ever see awaits you in Western Australia, which Australians refer to as "W.A."

This would certainly go down as one of my favorite regions, because of its remoteness and the wonderful scenery on offer, a place certainly that is second to



none. The long winding tree-lined roads and the huge Karri trees in Walpole are sites to be seen. And the rugged coastline seems to attract tourists, especially surfers, all year round.

Since the 1800s when wine production began, West Australians have over time left their comfortable domains in the urban areas of the city of Perth to pursue the new flavor in the cooler areas down south. Interestingly enough, WA makes only about four percent of Australia's total production, but it is the quality of what they produce is what matters most.

The Western Australian wine industry as a group have a strong export focus and intend to increase their current export total of 13 percent of production to 60 to 70 percent. That speaks volumes in terms of the premium wine coming your way, so when your distributor representatives show you any wine from WA, you know the quality is going to be there!

Great Southern (Find out more - www.winediva.com.au/wineries/great-southern.asp)

This is about the most remote region you'll ever stumble upon. That will however never hold back an Aussie, and it certainly hasn't stopped a host of wine companies realizing the great potential of this stunning region located right down in the south west corner of Australia. Great Southern covers a big and diverse area capable of producing just about any wine style, all offering lip smacking flavor in spades.

Down here the Chardonnay has a grapefruit-like quality that is just delicious. Shiraz is fantastically peppery and spicy. Cabernet Sauvignon (often blended with friends Merlot et al) offers dense, powerful fruit with a complexity that cries out for bottle age. And Riesling - some of Australia's best - is refreshingly dry with juicy citrus flavors that are as close to perfect for a warm summer's day as you're likely to find. This place isn't called "Great" Southern for nothing.

Margaret River (Find out more - www.mrwines.com)

Imagine, mile after mile of the most beautiful sandy beaches and crystal clear water you've ever laid your eyes on. Gently rolling countryside and spectacular karri forests with trees as far and as high as you can see. To top this off someone puts in front of you glass after glass of the most mouth wateringly stunning flavors you have ever imagined. A dream you may say? Is this heaven or some sort of Nirvana? Nope, it's Margaret River.

Once you've been seduced by this region (as you're sure to be!), you just can't help but wax lyrical about how great it is. Problem is, you're torn between telling the world how much you love it and keeping it a secret so you can retire there in ten years after you make your millions.



Southern Starz, Inc. "Turning the Wine World Upside Down"

If ever there was a place that defined lifestyle, Margaret River could well be it. Here, you are just as likely to bump into a winemaker out in the swells of this famous stretch of surf as you are a doctor. Funny enough, chances are they will be one and the same. You see, 30 years or so ago, Margaret River was a sleepy little community with no clue as to the part it was going to play in the Australian wine industry. First, the flight from Sydney to Perth is over four hours by plane, then there's another three or four hours drive south. It is far removed from well over 95 percent of Australia's population. All this adds up to making Margaret River a remote region, indeed!

But enter John Gladstones, a viticulture expert, who in the 60s spotted and made public the potential he saw for wines in this part of the world. What followed was a proliferation of doctors-cum-winemakers who were as entranced by the beauty and magic of the region as the ever growing numbers of tourists are today - and they all just loved to surf. Wineries began to appear, first small and more recently larger, and the world was quickly entranced by the quality of the wines that started to emerge. And the rest, as they say, is history.

Margaret River lays claim to one of the most maritime climates in Australia. Mild winters with warm summers cooled by the ocean breezes off the Indian Ocean (those beaches working their magic again). It's a marvelous climate for growing grapes and even better for us mere mortals to enjoy the fruits of the vine, fine food and the great outdoors.

Chardonnay and Cabernet Sauvignon (again with his friend Merlot quite often) exemplify the power and elegance of the wines, and boast some of the best examples to be found in Australia. Expect to find intense, age worthy Chardonnays with wonderful finesse and incredibly deep, rich Cabernets, chock full of black fruit flavors. So what's my pick? For me, it's a Semillon Sauvignon Blanc blend on the beach watching the waves roll in with good food, great friends, and a fire as the sun sinks into the Indian Ocean....

Pemberton (<http://www.pembertontourist.com.au/>)

Pemberton is a region that has been the center of much debate and speculation. The former as to exact boundaries of the region, the latter regarding which varieties best suit this climate. Happily, it seems it is a win-win situation for Pemberton with a wide spectrum of varieties flourishing in the many climates of its beautifully rolling countryside. This is tall timber country, with magnificent tracts of gum tree forests dotting the landscape.

You'll find wines here that display wonderful finesse alongside brilliantly intense rich fruit flavors. Sounds like a bit of a conundrum doesn't it? The trick lies in Pemberton's relatively cool climate and long growing season with plenty of sunshine. The result? Elegant Chardonnay and Pinot Noir varieties that show plenty of finesse. Spicy, peppery Shiraz and Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot blends with pronounced cherry and blackcurrant fruit. So while everyone else argues what goes best where,



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we'll just sit back and enjoy the terrific wines that this region keeps producing year in, year out.



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Tasmania



We now take a hop, skip and a jump back over east and down to the southern most tip of Australia to the island state called, Tasmania. Yes, across Bass Strait, things start to get a little chilly, in fact very chilly. For instance, in the heat of summer (January) the average minimum is 40°F and the average maximum is 70°F.

The island was originally named Van Diemen's Land in honor of Anthony van Diemen, who founded the island during his voyage of discovery in 1642. But Tasmania's name was changed more than 200 years later in recognition of Abel Tasman, the man credited for removing the heinous penal colony that had been established there decades earlier.

The history of the grape in Tasmania is mostly a recent one. In fact it was in the 1970s that the modern times of Tasmanian wine was born. Tasmania now has over 80 vineyards and wineries; many of them are tiny. Enthusiastic winemakers make this one of many exciting regions in Australia. The variety of producers matches the variety of grapes grown and the industry has much to offer the consumer and visitor.

Generally speaking, the cool climate of Tasmania results in wines of light to medium body, of good (high) levels of natural acid, favoring the production of quality sparkling



wines. Due to the cool climate conditions top quality Chardonnay and Pinot Noir is a resultant.

To celebrate the wine and food culture of Tasmania the island hosts many great events throughout the year, including the Royal Hobart Wine Show held at the Hotel Grand Chancellor and the Royal Showgrounds in Hobart. Held in November it is a seven-day event with public tastings generally on the last day.

There is also a well-known yacht race, the “Sydney to Hobart,” which is run each year. This event kicks off the Taste of Tasmania, a seven-day festival of wine and food held down on the Hobart harbor front.

And now your Southern Starz Australian Education Program is complete. But your education on Australia is not! Continue to read and absorb information on this vast and varied country wherever you can.

Your fourth brainteaser is available at www.southernstarz.com/AusEd. If you are having serious difficulty, check up on the websites listed on the Australian Wine Bureau website (www.wineaustralia-usa.com) or failing that, give us a call at (866) 57-STARZ



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