



Jeremy Good at Cowaramup.

chocolate beer — the rich dark flavours coming from chocolate-roasted malts rather than the glass-and-a-half variety. It would team well with the tartness of a strawberry or raspberry dessert, and you'd be welcome to bring along some of your own if you liked, because Bush Shack has a BYO policy — bring your own food, that is, to

enjoy on the big open paddock-like front lawn.

The Colonial Brewing Co is spreading its roots with imperial ambitions to match its name. Having recently purchased a number of hostelrys in WA and Victoria, the Colonial Leisure Group is about to increase capacity four-fold to ensure the taps don't run dry.

Effervescent venue manager Richard Maloney tells me that the brewery motto is *festina lente* —

partner in a merry jig on my tastebuds in unison with the rum and raisin of the rich black porter. I take on the superbly bitter India Pale Ale (IPA) — the smack of fresh floral hops almost overpowering. I'm in heaven as the beer chases the salty antipasto. Head brewer Mal Secourable brews other great drops such as the soft, dry award-winning kolsch and a witbier, but I take away a "Growler" (a 2-litre resealable glass jar) of the IPA.

It's a perfect location to reflect on the diversity in the Margaret River region.

to hasten slowly — and claims Colonial is embracing the slow food concept: "We're not in the business of just selling beer. We want to educate people, making the world a better place, beer by beer."

Judging from my Brewer's Plate full of locally produced ingredients, the philosophy is already in place. Chicken chorizo, juicy Kalamata olives, plump capers and an almost molten fetta

Expat Pom and IT high-flyer turned brewer Jeremy Good is looking to make his Cowaramup Brewery beer available for people to take away, too. Regular requests mean that he's working towards putting his most popular beers, a golden pilsener low in bitterness, and a dry, dense hefeweizen, into distinctive bottles.

After 25 years of brewing at home, Jeremy and his partner Claire opened to the public in



Duckstein head brewer Paul Gasmier learnt his trade in Munich.

2006. Quietly spoken but enthusiastic, Good describes his ales as "English style with more earthy, spicy notes, rather than American style". His IPA is a little drier than other brewers', and his stout not too sweet, letting the creamy coffee flavour break through on to my palate.

As the evening draws in, Cowaramup's location comes into its own. The rammed earth brick harmonises with the countryside, views cascade down the hill to the paddocks and forest beyond. I'm watching a gaggle of geese meander across the lawn and

enjoying an SPA — Cowaramup's Special Pale Ale that has a subtle toasted flavour. It's a perfect location to reflect on the diversity in the Margaret River region.

People flock here for sensory experiences: to be dazzled by the unique wildflowers and forests; to try the staggering range of wines and eat the abundant fruits of the Mediterranean climate. Likewise, the breweries are worth looking for. They're not just places that produce beer: they're artisan's workshops, sorcerers' dens, sites where craftsmen combine natural ingredients with skill and panache.

Roaming the river

You don't need a car to explore the best of what Margaret River has to offer

DAN JORDAN

Most travellers know that if you want to experience the best of the South-West, you'll need some form of transport. A holiday in Margaret River without a car was an idea that I hadn't toyed with before, because it seemed so strange.

But we opted to explore what the town of Margaret River has to offer in itself. With a tour and one taxed road trip, I found that you can fill your day quicker than you imagine.

Accommodation in Margaret River is varied in price and range. From the backpackers to private serviced apartments there is a range to suit almost anyone.

As part of a romantic getaway Quest is going to be a good option because of the forest edge location and quiet atmospheric grounds. Being there in spring was perfect, just warm enough to swim in the pool and not too cool or wet to walk around the town and forest that surround the apartments. The studio apartments are perfect for two people and, because they overlook the forest, you can wake up to the beautiful chorus of the native birds each morning. Quest also features an art gallery where artist Karin

Luciano exhibits some of her work. If you feel the need to indulge while in Margaret River and food is your forte then Must is the place to go. For a quick tapas meal at the bar or something more substantial you know you will be getting the best. The winner of two 2009 Gold Plate Awards for best new restaurant and best licensed dining (country), Must has a great atmosphere and wine list. If you have the chance try the signature dish of dry-aged butterfield beef which comes with a bearnaise or green pepper jus and is served with small dishes containing French mustard, onion-cabernet jam and salsa verde. Another dish that tickled our tastebuds was the duck leg confit on aged balsamic lacquered pork belly ratatouille. The

rich flavours in this dish will melt in your mouth.

If you have spent any time in Margaret River you will have enjoyed a pint of beer or glass of wine at Settlers Tavern, a local haunt in the main township area on Bussell Highway. Voted to have the best pub wine list in Australia in a major national wine publication, this is the kind of place you go to if you really want to relax.

One of my favourite aspects of Settlers is the use of all local produce from the South-West region. From Margaret River wagyu beef to freshly caught Augusta fish you can enjoy your meal at the bar or in the dining area out the back.

While this trip was mainly car-free we decided to take a tour where we visited the Lake Cave, the jarrah and karri forests and a few of the many bays of the SW coast. Margaret River Tours offers a variety of very personal tours around the area if you are keen to get out of the town.

A trip to Margaret River is not complete without a visit to one of the many wineries in the area. My girlfriend and I opted for a lunch at

Vasse Felix and with the new spring menu on the cards it was second to none.

With the cellar tastings on the ground floor and the restaurant upstairs overlooking the vines, this really is the place for a long, very pleasant lunch. The tempura quail and duck liver parfait were good choices for entrees and for a main we had the braised pork belly and the Moroccan spiced lamb shoulder.

If you are on the hunt for a good coffee for your morning start while in Margaret River, head to The Urban Bean. At the southern end of the Bussell Highway strip, the cafe offers the perfect outdoor and indoor setting for a morning or afternoon coffee break and it also serves tasty light lunches, cheese plates and pastries.

Getting around Margaret River on foot you will soon discover there is more art than you can poke a stick at, with a broad range of styles and galleries.

Just as you arrive in the town you will pass Margaret River Gallery, which has paintings, sculptures, jewellery and furniture. There is also a workshop where jewellery is

designed and made so if you're on the lookout for something special then this is for you.

Next door to the gallery on Bussell Highway is a glassblowing studio. Most people will now know how glass is made but it is fascinating to watch the sculptor twirl and cool his art as it takes shape at the end of the blowpipe.

Inspired by desert and coastal landscapes the artist, Gerry Reilly, offers demonstrations.

There is one more place you must visit in Margaret River if you appreciate landscape photography as much as I do.

Renowned photographer Christian Fletcher has a gallery in the heart of town that features photography from around the South-West. Fletcher has a way of truly capturing the beauty of the region so I recommend a drop in here.

For most Perth locals Margaret River is a holiday where you do lots of driving and visit the town only for supplies and maybe a beer or a meal but if you take the time to look around there is plenty to do and you will fill your day easily enjoying the beauties of Margaret River.

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