



experience a new way to walk

4 day Cape to Cape (Margaret River) Walk

2 nights accommodation in a private pool villa at Injidup Spa Retreat

1 night accommodation at oceanfront Smiths Beach Resort

3 days guided walking with custom daypack provided

Gourmet food and wine, including feature dining experiences

Sunset drinks and didgeridoo experience

Return Perth to Margaret River transfers

\$2990 pp all inclusive¹

¹ Pricing is per person twin share and valid to 31 March 2016. See website for inclusions. Subject to availability.



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DRIVE_HUNTER VALLEY

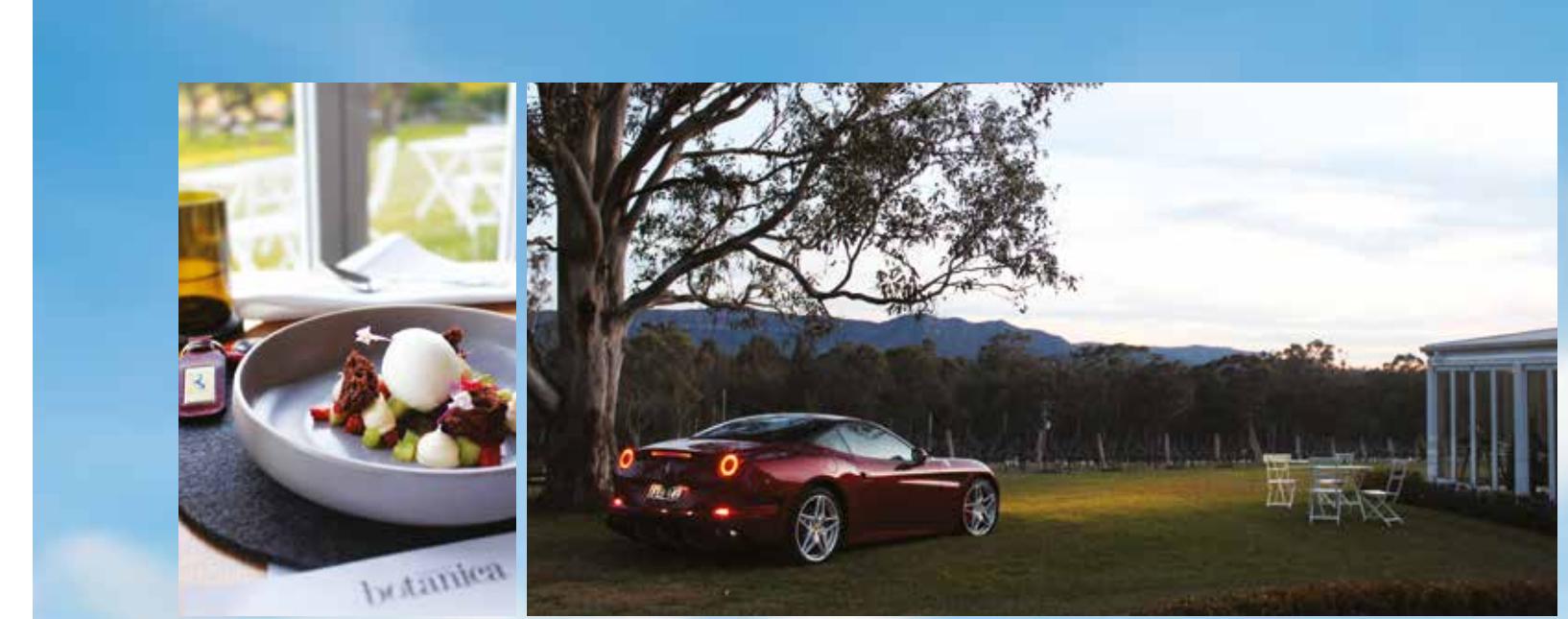
A
TASTE
OF
TOURING

Katrina Holden CHANNELS HER INNER MOVIE STAR AT THE WHEEL OF A FERRARI CALIFORNIA T CONVERTIBLE ON A WEEKEND VISIT TO THE BEAUTIFUL HUNTER VALLEY WINE REGION.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY KATRINA HOLDEN

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This page, clockwise from above left: Vanilla sabayon at Restaurant Botanica at Spicers Vineyards Estate; 'prancing horse' in front of Restaurant Botanica; cruising the Hunter. Opposite page, clockwise from top left: A welcome glass of red; behind the wheel in the Ferrari California T; cauliflower amuse buche at Botanica; sunset on Hermitage Road.

T'S THE COLOUR I NOTICE first as I slide behind the wheel of the convertible Ferrari California T for a leisurely two-hour drive from Sydney to the Hunter Valley. The car's *California Rosso* colour (an optional \$20,500 special paint) has a subdued maroon tint that catches the sunlight, reflecting magenta sparkles from its glossy exterior. I'm naively relieved it isn't blood-red, hoping to attract less attention. However, people smile, wave, admire – one man gives a thumbs-up. This is a Ferrari, after all, designed to stand out from the pack.

Before long, I'm hitting my stride in this luxury sports car, supremely comfortable in the *beige tradizione* leather interior, roof down on a beautiful winter's day. The 'prancing horse' guides me effortlessly along the freeway in sports mode, and I become ever more at ease with the 3.8L twin turbo V8 engine power of this burgundy-coloured beast beneath my fingers. I have a cream pashmina draped around my face and neck, although I hardly need



Driving into the tranquil heart of vineyards and country estates, I shift the car into 'comfort mode' so as not to disrupt the serenity.

it for warmth, as even though it is winter, the heated seats and the low-set design create a cocoon-like effect. However, the scarf stays as I imagine myself a vintage movie star, perhaps from California, out touring on the weekend.

The LED navigation display tracks our course. Our destination: Hermitage Road in Australia's oldest wine region, the Hunter Valley. We're booked in for lunch at Restaurant Botanica at luxury getaway Spicers Vineyards Estate. Driving into the tranquil heart of vineyards and country estates, I shift the car into 'comfort' mode so as not to disrupt the serenity.

Arriving, we tuck the Ferrari safely away, with the help of the rear parking sensors, and settle in for lunch. Botanica's natural interiors are warm, inviting and cosy, the large windows giving views of the vines and the dramatic escarpments of the Brokenback Mountains. As restaurant manager Clare seats us, I'm more than ready to relax and sample the modern European creations of head chef Josh Duncan.

Botanica sources many herbs and vegetables from its own kitchen





garden. After a serve of the house-made sourdough bread (a traditional recipe from San Francisco using organic stone flours), it's time for our entrée. The Chef's Garden salad (made from a collection of organic root spring vegetables and globe artichoke) resembles a bouquet of flowers, a bursting rainbow of colour and flavour.

The wine list is curated by Belinda and Mark Stapleton, (managing director and director/executive chef, respectively) who manage both the restaurant and accommodation to the standard for which the Spicers Retreats are renowned. The wine list is naturally made up of some of the Hunter's best vignerons including Tyrrell's, Thomas Wines, Scarborough and Brokenwood. From their own vines, Spicers also make a small batch of house wines utilising some

of the region's best winemakers.

Our mains follow, herb-roasted lamb rump and duck breast with white bean jus. They have a hearty appeal. For dessert, we cannot go past the milk chocolate, parfait, coffee, orange and fudge, artfully presented (as is the vanilla sabayon with cocoa and buttermilk) on a tiny tower of kiwi and strawberries.

Chatting with Josh Duncan as other patrons head outside to play

bocce on the lawn, I remark there's a refinement to his cuisine where despite the wintery ingredients, you're not overwhelmed. "There's a fundamental lightness to my technique," he explains. "That's why we're here, to challenge ourselves." Previously, Josh has worked at the renowned Burj Al Arab and at Jumeirah Emirates Towers in Dubai, at two Michelin-starred St Hubertus in Italy, and as

head chef at One&Only Hayman Island. With his family based in nearby Nelson Bay and with a new baby, he loves being close to home, with the opportunity to carve his own niche at the restaurant.

For a full weekend, an overnight stay at Spicers puts you among the best cellar doors in the Hunter Valley. If you want to give the Ferrari a well-earned rest, Spicers can organise a personalised and private wine tour.

However, after your drive, you might prefer to relax with a treatment at onsite Spa Anise – or just unwind by the fireplace in the luxury spa suites.

SPICERS VINEYARDS ESTATE

STAY HERE
Rates start from A\$459 per night including complimentary wine on arrival and a gourmet breakfast. spicersretreats.com/spicers-vineyards-estate

• FAST FACTS

FERRARI CALIFORNIA T

Price: A\$409,888 factory standard; to A\$549,387 with all optional extras

Engine: 90-degree direct fuel injection V8

Maximum power: 412KW (560cv) @7500 rpm

Transmission: F1 dual-clutch 7-speed transmission

Consumption: 10.5L/100 kilometres

0 to 100km/h: 3.6 seconds

A woman in a white swimsuit and a white sunhat is sitting in the edge of a large, clear blue infinity pool. She is looking out over a tropical landscape filled with many palm trees and the ocean. The sky is bright and clear. The overall atmosphere is one of relaxation and luxury.

THE JEWEL IN THE CROWN OF GLORIOUS TROPICAL NORTH QUEENSLAND

Alamanda Palm Cove by Lancemore provides the best of all that Tropical North Queensland has to offer.

When you stay at Alamanda Palm Cove by Lancemore, the days are sun-drenched and dreamy with the sand literally at your doorstep. The nights are long and languid and, with arguably the region's best restaurant and day spa onsite, all the ingredients are at hand for some guaranteed relaxation in the sun.

Offering the best of both worlds, Alamanda Palm Cove by Lancemore is great for families too, ranking as Australia's third Best Family Property in the 2015 Luxury Travel Gold List Awards.

Whether its romance, adventure, or a family retreat, enjoy the elegant simplicity of this beachside haven with all the comforts of modern living, offering up everything that you need for your next escape.

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