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OUTthere

MARK VAILE:

Rex's first regional
personality of the month

INSIDE

Powderfinger: Dream days
on Queensland's Coast

Escape: Fly-fishing in Tasmania

Food & Wine: Swan Valley



PLUS!

COUNTRY
BIZ

40-PAGE REGIONAL BUSINESS MAGAZINE INCLUDED INSIDE

GRAPEVINES IN THE SWAN VALLEY

SOPHISTICATED *Swan*

WORDS: WINSOR DOBBIN

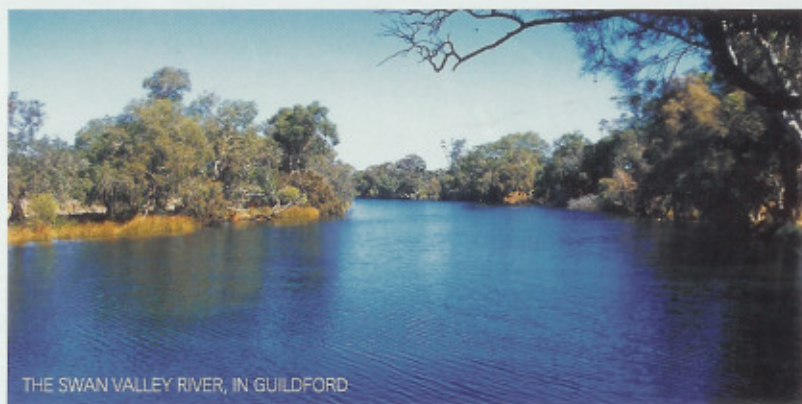
Situated just 30 minutes from Perth, the Swan Valley makes for the perfect daytripper or weekender, with stunning wine and food to accompany the beautiful scenery.

It's a gloriously sunny day in the Swan Valley and the locals are out in force. There's a couple of lively hen's night groups making an early afternoon start, giggling as they sample the wares at the Houghton cellar door. At Sandalford, there's a crowd of couples faced with the dilemma of whether to dine indoors or alfresco.

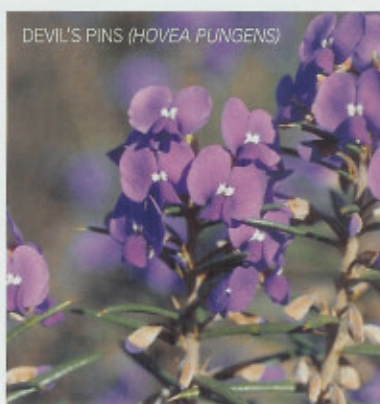
There are now half-a-dozen micro-breweries in the region – and that's where the younger guys are congregating to enjoy their social life.

There's something for everyone in the Swan – and being less than half an hour from downtown Perth, it's a popular day-trip destination for residents of the West Australian capital.

FOOD&wine Swan Valley, WA



THE SWAN VALLEY RIVER, IN GUILDFORD



DEVIL'S PINS (HOVEA PUNGENS)



SWAN VALLEY VINES

The Swan is one of Australia's oldest wine-producing regions; grapes have been grown here since the 1840s. The Food and Wine Trail is a 32-kilometre circular drive with the Swan River flowing through the middle. En route you'll discover around 40 cellar doors, the breweries, nougat and chocolate factories, fresh produce stalls and a range of restaurants and cafés. The region vies with the Adelaide Hills for the right to call itself the closest wine region to a city in the southern hemisphere.

There are the big names; Sandalford, which now uses largely Margaret River fruit but still makes wines at its historic Caversham winery, and historic Houghton, where you can also sample the value-for-money Moondah Brook range.



WINE TASTING AT HOUGHTON WINERY



LEMONS AND GRAPEVINES AT THE PACKING SHED ORCHARD

- 6 of the best -



SWAN VALLEY VINEYARDS



HOUGHTON

2006 Classic White

Houghton makes grander wines than this, but the White Classic, previously known as White Burgundy, is a regional icon that's been made since 1937. A classic blend of several white varieties, it is always crisp, always refreshing and always good value. A terrific wine for everyday drinking. Enjoy it young and well chilled. Great with fish and chips. **\$12.**



UPPER REACH WINERY

2005 Shiraz

Classy label this. Upper Reach is a relative newcomer, but winemaker Derek Pearse is doing a fine job on the evidence of this rich, spicy and intense shiraz. There's an aroma bomb on the nose and initial impressions are backed up by the ripe plum/berry and oak on the palate. Big, but well balanced. Enjoy it with shepherd's pie. **\$26.**



WINDY CREEK ESTATE

2005 Family Reserve Shiraz

This is a really good wine for the price. Very well put together with layers of flavours, it is almost in the cool-climate shiraz style with spicy notes and restrained oak counterbalancing the powerful currant and plum fruit flavours. A wine that is decidedly easy to drink. A good partner for roast lamb. **\$18.**



SANDALFORD

2007 Protégé Rosé

Sandalford produces excellent value wines across its Element and Protégé ranges and this is a ripping wine for enjoying chilled on a warm afternoon. Made from 100 per cent cabernet sauvignon grapes, it is lively and lifted with some delightful cherry and raspberry flavours on the palate. A versatile off-dry wine with immediate appeal. A good partner for a chicken salad. **\$22.**



JANE BROOK

2006 James Vineyard Chardonnay

White grapes did very well in the Swan Valley in 2006 and here's a very nice chardonnay with some distinctive varietal characters. There are some stone fruit flavours on the palate, subtle oak in a support role and nice acid on the finish. A wine of considerable subtlety and elegance, more restrained than many Australian chardonnay. Try it with pan-fried pork cutlets. **\$22.**



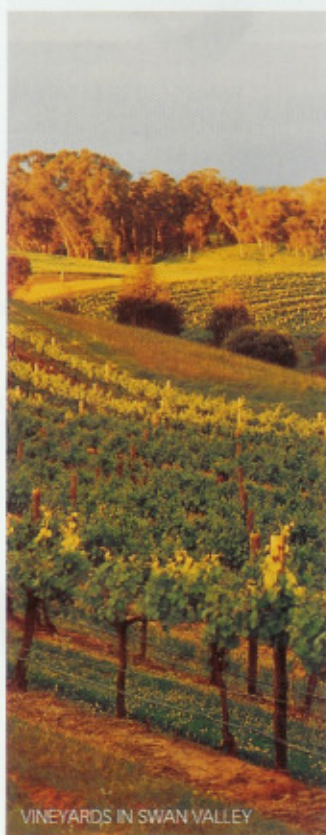
MOONDAH BROOK

2007 Verdelho

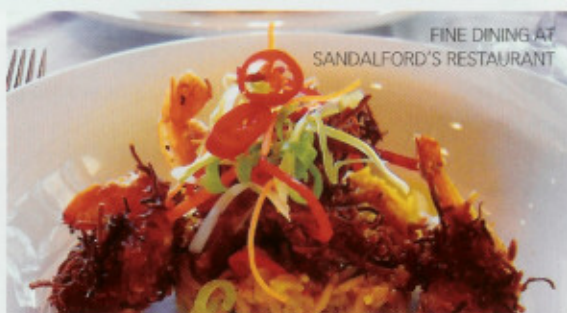
This is the label that helped make verdelho fashionable. It has an assertive nose and is zingy and acidic with tropical fruit and citrus flavours battling for supremacy on the palate. A wine for enjoying chilled on a hot summer day, it is versatile and would be good with picnics, seafood or spicy Asian dishes. Enjoy it with a bowl of stir-fried noodles. **\$15.**



JACARANDA RESTAURANT AT HOUGHTON WINE COMPANY, SWAN VALLEY



VINEYARDS IN SWAN VALLEY



FINE DINING AT SANDALFORD'S RESTAURANT



PICNIC SCENE IN THE FRED JACOBY PARK, IN THE DARLING RANGE



JACARANDA RESTAURANT AT HOUGHTON WINE COMPANY

But it is also worth venturing onto roads less travelled to try the wines of smaller producers such as Jane Brook, Paul Conti, RiverBank Estate (which is particularly proud of its new-release 2007 chenin blanc) and Talijancich (well-known for outstanding fortifieds). There are also boutique producers such as LedaSwan, Little River and Lamont's waiting to be explored.

The Swan Valley is a warm region; hence most of the premium producers now source fruit from Margaret River or the Great Southern, but there are some gems, particularly from cooler years like 2006, which produced some very good whites.

Swan grape growers are a versatile bunch, producing sparkling wines, fortified (Talijancich and John Kosovich), chenin blanc and chardonnay and a swag of shiraz (the 2005s are very good).

One wine made in very small quantities that is worth seeking out is the intensely flavoured Edgecombe Brothers 2004



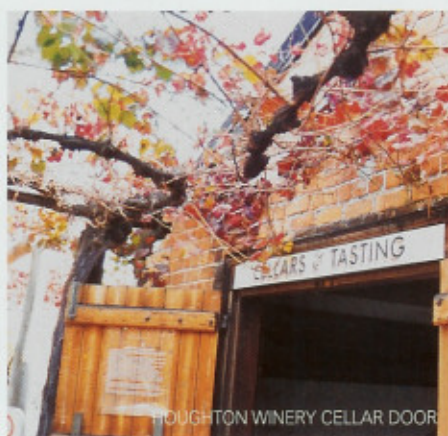
RIVERBANK ESTATE



SWAN VALLEY DUCKSTEIN
BREWERY RESTAURANT



PURPLE ENAMEL ORCHID



TOUGHTON WINERY CELLAR DOOR

50-Year-Old Vine Shiraz, made from gnarly old vines located next to the winery's Henley Brook cellar door.

Sandalford's restaurant is outstanding, one of the best winery restaurants I've come across, while other places to eat include RiverBank Estate and old stager Dear Friends.

Jane Brook Estate serves regional platters every day at lunchtime, while the Little River winery and restaurant at Henley Brook, where Frenchman Bruno de Tastes serves up French provincial cooking (think duck confit or beef Bourguignon) daily for lunch, is a favourite of local wine writer Ray Jordan.

The funky new Mash brewery has six beers available on tap, all brewed on site, and is also home to one of the region's most popular restaurants.

You can dine and sup in the restaurant, on the decking or al fresco. Other brew houses



SANDALFORD WINERY TOUR

TRAVELtips

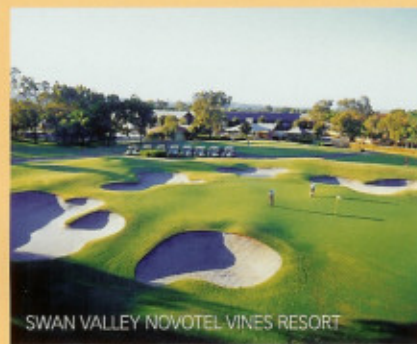
GETTING THERE:

The Swan Valley is a 20-to-30-minute drive from Perth CBD. Skywest, a partner airline of Regional Express (Rex), has flights from several destinations to Perth.

WHERE TO STAY:

Many visitors prefer to base themselves in Perth and avail themselves of the city restaurants at night. An ideal Perth location is the new **Richardson Hotel, Suites and Spa** in West Perth, just 400 metres from King's Park and midway between the downtown area and busy Subiaco. There are 74 rooms and suites in the boutique property, part of the Select Group, and all of them are spacious and luxurious. There's a business centre and in-room broadband along with a spa club, gymnasium, indoor swimming pool and the Opus restaurant and cocktail bar. The staff is top notch. Double rooms start from \$340 per night. 1300 368 952.

www.selecthotels.com/therichardson



SWAN VALLEY NOVOTEL VINES RESORT

Novotel Vines Resort is a golf resort in the foothills of the Darling Ranges and a very good base from which to explore the Swan Valley. It has 103 hotel rooms and 43 two- and three-bedroom self-contained apartments, swimming pool, heated outdoor spa and two championship golf courses. Muscats restaurant specialises in using local produce.

(08) 9297 3000. www.vines.com.au

Fauntleroy House is a classic bed and breakfast in Guildford, the gateway to the Swan Valley. A gracious old home, built in 1902, it has comfortable en suite bedrooms, a swimming pool and is surrounded by lush gardens. It's within walking distance of restaurants and cafés and a short drive from the wineries.

(08) 9379 0270.

www.fauntleroyhouse.com.au



AMONG THE ROWS OF VINES



HOUGHTON BARREL ROOM

include Elms In The Valley, Duckstein, Feral Brewing and Ironbark, while the Kimberley Rum Company, at Middle Swan, opened in October last year.

Foodies will enjoy a visit to the Mondo Nougat Factory, which offers visitors the chance not only to sample homemade cakes, biscotti, nougat and gelati but also to see the specialties being made.

Culture vultures will feast on the new Jabiru Art Gallery at Herne Hill. Open at weekends only, the gallery features Western Australian art sourced mainly from the remote Kimberley region, while browsing the antique shops of Guildford can yield some bargains. ■

FOODtips



SANDALFORD WINERY CHEF MARK FORD

WHERE TO EAT:

Sandalford Winery restaurant offers not only adventurous menus but also the opportunity to taste the wide range of wines produced under the label from both Swan Valley and Margaret River fruit. You can dine inside, or outside under some gnarly vines, and chef Mark Ford's food is terrific. Try the signature beef fillet, fat chips, field mushrooms and Béarnaise sauce (\$33.50). Sandalford schedules guided winery tours twice a day and offers a package of winery tour, blending exercises and a three-course lunch for \$95 per person.

(08) 93749374. www.sandalford.com
Riverbank Estate Winery and Restaurant at Caversham offers splendid views of the Swan and the chance to eat outside in a lovely courtyard area overlooking the vines. There's jazz in the vineyard each Saturday from 1-4pm and deluxe picnic



SWAN VALLEY NOVOTEL VINES, WINE AND GOLF

platters are available for \$45 for two. The à la carte menu specialises in local produce. Think dishes such as cardamom-crusted duck breast with roast parsnip and thyme mash, baby bok choy, orange and star anise sauce (\$28). The restaurant is open seven days a week from 11:30am-2:30pm for lunch. (08) 9377 1805. www.riverbankestate.com.au

Dear Friends bills itself as Western Australia's most-awarded restaurant, and it is a Swan Valley fixture. Overlooking the vineyards, it combines ambience with modern Australian cuisine and a very good wine list. The signature dish is the rabbit terrine – a combination of confit rabbit and chicken served with pistachio nuts and herbs. Sweet toothers will love the soft-centred chocolate pudding with spiced strawberries and Baileys anglaise. Open Wednesday to Sunday for lunch and dinner, except Saturday when closed for lunch. (08) 9279 2815. www.dearfriends.com.au

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

See www.westernaustralia.com or www.swanvalley.com.au



KANGAROO PAW