

The city of Marys

Maryborough makes for a magical getaway any time of the year as Chris Herden discovers

For a short weekender with a difference, you can't go past Maryborough on Queensland's Fraser Coast. Just a three hour drive from Brisbane on the Bruce Highway and only half an hour from Hervey Bay, it serves up many surprises for the stopover traveller.

My wife and I discovered the 'city of Marys' for a getaway that coincided with the annual Relish Fraser Coast Food and Wine Festival and the World's Greatest Pub Fest, both held on the June long weekend. But there is plenty to entertain and enlighten you any time of the year.

Maryborough is full of Marys! The Mary River meanders through it; Mary Delicious, a 1950s-inspired café and the Mary Ann steam engine - a fully functional replica of the state's first steam train, are just a few.

The city's most famous Mary, Mary Poppins, is brought to life by local charmer Carmel Murdoch, who in full period Poppins-like costume offers guided tours in which she recounts fascinating little episodes of the life of Poppins author, Pamela Lyndon Travers, who was born in Maryborough. With boundless energy Carmel walks backwards while she talks and she never misses a step.

"My father always taught me to look people in the eye," she says as she leads us through the wide streets at the centre of town. Her encyclopaedic knowledge and enthusiasm has us hanging on every word.

"The restored colonial building we are passing and which now serves as a bank is the former home of PL Travers. We believe



The town crier (left) with writer Chris Herden about to fire the cannon, and Mary Heritage.

champions Dan and Steph were a highlight of the 2013 event. The Relish photographic exhibition and an authentic steam-train ride on the Mary Ann meant that young and old could all savour the moment.

That evening we dined at Sales Restaurant at McNeveins Motel enjoying generous-sized hearty meals and good wine. Sunday, we enjoyed the World's Greatest Pub Fest. There's hours of fun watching a parade of quirky and colourful costume competitors and the

the time cannon is the same gun that the Mary Poppins author would have heard when she lived here," she says.

Each year during winter the town celebrates the iconic nanny with the world's only Mary Poppins Festival. Our historic walking tour includes a short visit to the Military & Colonial Museum which houses more than 6000 pieces of military memorabilia and we stop for tea at Mary Delicious where we are transported back in time by the old-fashioned lolly jars and delicious home-made fudge.

Saturday was a full day. Relish Fraser Coast, now in its second year, is an opportunity to not only meet the region's finest growers and producers but also indulge in the fruits of their labour. The old-town streetscapes and beautiful open parkland at Portside by the Mary River provides a stunning backdrop for the celebration of mouth-watering local area produce and fine wines from Queensland's premier winemakers. Gourmet food stalls, a food lovers cooking marquee with demonstrations by *My Kitchen Rules*

pubs - and there's almost 40 of them - offer free soft drinks for the designated driver. Although most people walk, there are regular shuttle buses.

There is something about Maryborough's colonial era architecture that lends itself to a good old fashioned pub crawl. As one of Queensland's oldest cities, Maryborough has a fascinating pub history and if the walls of the many hotels could talk you would hear stories of opium dens, smugglers, new settlers, stockmen and bold pioneers.

Now these tales have made it on to the world stage and have continued to grow since the first Guinness World Record for a pub crawl was set in Maryborough in 2005. Perhaps it all makes sense when you consider that George Furber, an early settler regarded as the founder of the city, was himself a publican. Whatever tittle you prefer, Maryborough is a merry... or should I say 'Mary' place with much to offer.

For more information visit www.visitfrasercoast.com/destinations/maryborough

Gold Coast Fun Deals

WHALE WATCHING
See the Humpback Whales on the Gold Coast!
Deals online now

QT GOLD COAST
2 night luxury stay, daily breakfast & a 45 minute facial or massage for two
from \$269* per person Min 2 night stay

CROWNE PLAZA SURFERS PARADISE
Enjoy the views from your private balcony. Located close to the beach
from \$139* per room per night No min night stay

WAVES BUFFET RESTAURANT
20% off International Seafood Buffet located in Watermark Hotel & Spa
20% off* Valid Sun-Fri dinner only

SAN SIMEON BEACHFRONT APARTMENTS
Escape to the Southern Gold Coast and save 20%
from \$140* per room per night Min 3 night stay

THUNDERBIRD PARK
\$59 Family Fossicking Pass for 2 adults & up to 3 children (Normally \$93)
save \$34*

Upcoming Events

THE ARTS CENTRE GOLD COAST 7 Sept
SWELL SCULPTURE FESTIVAL 13-22 Sept

THE SURFERS PARADISE KIDS WEEKEND 21-22 Sept
GOLD COAST SEVENS 12-13 Oct

www.yourcoast.com

* Conditions apply, visit website for details

FRESH ORGANIC PRODUCE DIRECT FROM THE GROWERS - PADDOCK TO PLATE

GET INTO ORGANICS

- Premium Refrigerated Home Delivery Service
- 25 Years of Experience
- Huge Range of Produce & Products
- Quality & Freshness Guaranteed
- Best Refrigerated Facilities
- Several Ordering Options
- Multiple Payment Options
- Friendly Personal Service

SPECIAL INTRODUCTORY OFFER!!

25% OFF* your invoice total on 2nd delivery if you spend \$65 or more on your first order.
*2nd order MUST also EXCEED \$65/MAXIMUM refund of \$50

ORGANIC and QUALITY FOODS
NATURALLY GOOD - FOOD FOR THE FUTURE.

Call us (07) 3275 3552 or visit us www.organicfoods.com.au

PROUD TO BE 100%

QUEENSLAND OWNED & OPERATED

bmag
Read Brisbane's Best