

## THE PERFECT 10 GEELONG



## Industrial relations

Wine, dine and wind down in the eclectic port city

PATRICIA MAUNDER

**1** Geelong's 19th-century nicknames were The Pivot, because it was both port and rail hub for Western District wheat and wool, and Sleepy Hollow. Through its heavy industry's rise and fall, the latter stuck, but lately Victoria's second city, an hour from central Melbourne, has been pivoting enthusiastically. The newest tenant at Federal Mills, part of the Ilha Pivot City redevelopment, is Anther distillery. Sebastian Reburn and Dervilla McGowan, who established seminal Melbourne cocktail bar 1806, have moved their gin business into one of the 1915 woollen mills' vast red-brick buildings. While half is transformed into Anther's lounge and events space opening next month, visitors can sample its award-winning spirits in the other. The cheery team pour mini-cocktail flights and lead informative yet relaxed tastings, from gin featuring native botanicals such as finger lime and lemon-scented gum to ruby-red cherry gin; anther.com.au

**2** The 1870s bluestone and red-brick buildings of the Fyansford Paper Mills are also evolving into an arts and dining precinct. In semi-bushland by the Barwon River, among relics such as rusty industrial scales and wagon wheels, visitors will find artist studios, a stringed-instrument workshop, The Papermill Gallery, playful curios in Dimora Designs, a cafe and Provenance Wines; its whitewashed space scored a mural by street artist RONE last month. The varied terroir of regional vineyards and several others further afield means Provenance offers everything from crisp blanc de blanc to aromatic shiraz. Choose from regular bar tastings, the new, more secluded food-matched tasting, or wine and dine on Nathan McIver's vegan, vegetarian and "protein" menus, which showcase fresh ingredients; provenancewines.com.au.

**3** RONE is back in his hometown for Geelong Gallery's survey of his 20-year international career (February 27-May 16). Renowned for transforming decayed spaces with murals and installations, including his 2019 Burnham Beeches mansion takeover in Sherbrooke, the artist created a site-specific installation for this exhibition. It's inspired by the ever-expanding gallery's original 1915 architecture, and works in the collection, such as Frederick McCubbin's A Bush Burial. This painting is among numerous notable works on permanent display, including landscapes by Fred Williams and Arthur Boyd, and new acqui-



sitions such as Mick Namarari Tjapaltjarri's Water Dreaming. The gallery's contemporary neighbour, Geelong Library and Heritage Centre, which features a deconstructed dome with pleated-glass facades, is also worth a look; geelonggallery.org.au; grlc.vic.gov.au.

**4** Geelong's hip strip is steps away. Little Malop Street, between Gheringhap and Moorabool streets, has long been a popular gathering place. Geelong Cellar Door, celebrating the region's wine, has raised the bar. Bottles line the walls from floor to ceiling and there are clues amid the vintage-inspired decor that Geelong led Australian viticulture until the 1870s. Savour the new breed with cheese and charcuterie platters. The 18th Amendment Bar's retro style is more overt. Framed Prohibition-era photos on golden flocked wallpaper are the backdrop for 1920s tipples with 2020s twists. This upstairs speakeasy's extensive drinks list, snacks, table service and dim lighting make lingering easy. Dining options include The Continental, a sleek little Italian closed longer than it's been open thanks to COVID-19, yet already expanding next door this month. OK Smash, the casual venture of local chef Aaron Turner, serves cheeseburgers and champagne; geelongcellardoor.com.au; the18thamendmentbar.com.au.

**5** From stints at elite European establishments, including Noma, to exiting his instant-hit regional restaurant Loam, Turner is now based in a dreary Geelong backstreet. The location makes sense for his physically inconspicuous, understated fine diner Igni, though being named Gourmet Traveller's best regional restaurant soon after opening in 2016 means it's always been a destination. Ikebana-style dried-flower arrangements are

the only visual extravagance amid a minimalist look of polished-concrete floor, blond-wood ceiling and sheer grey curtains. It's all about the food, prepared on a wood-fire grill in an open kitchen remarkable for its calmness and quiet. The degustation-only menu is a delicious balancing act, showcasing the honest flavours of ingredients and Turner's culinary sophistication; restaurantigni.com.

**6** Want a worthy souvenir of this UNESCO City of Design? Try a bespoke carpet runner produced on the rare 1910 Axminster loom that click-clacks at the National Wool Museum. The institution, housed in an 1872 woolstore, has two permanent exhibitions: The Wool Harvest, reopening next weekend with new elements, including traditional Aboriginal land management; and From Fleece to Fabric, which reveals the process of scouring, combing, spinning and weaving or knitting wool. Among the not-so-sheepish temporary exhibitions is Wildlife Photographer of the Year (until May 2). No need for a carpet? The gift shop has knitwear, including summer-light merino; geelongaustralia.com.au/nwm.

**7** The Waterfront district is Geelong's hotspot on sunny days. The freshwater paddling pool and semi-circular pier are highlights of Eastern Beach's original 1930s development, alongside a pavilion recently transformed into The Beach House. Enjoy cafe fare such as spicy crab scramble or sip cocktails on the newly opened upstairs balcony while watching the Melbourne-Geelong passenger ferry speed by (launched a year ago, it will share Corio Bay with Spirit of Tasmania when the interstate ferry relocates in 2022). Stroll to the ferris wheel, the handsomely restored 1890s carousel, mineral-springs pump and 100-plus boll-



Geelong Gallery, left; National Wool Museum, below left; Provenance Wines, above; scallops at The Continental, inset

ards representing past local characters. Some come alive with the Activate Geelong app's augmented reality; thebeachhousegeelong.com.au.

**8** The top shopping strip is Pakington Street ("Pako" to locals) in genteel, inner-suburban Newtown. Discover fashion, jewellery, candles, skincare, toys and more at boho Quirk Collective and Eclectica, which favours whimsical patterns and pastels. Wen & Ware Living offers magazine-worthy homewares and gifts, while Yarns on Pakington, Home in the Hamptons and The Herbal Apothecary live up to their names. Among numerous eateries, Singaporean-influenced Baah Lah! Dining's zingy flavours and unexpected textures are as distinctive as the ceramic dishes made by chef/owner Brian Anderson; baahlahdining.com.

**9** Work off the indulgence on the Surf Coast Walk, a 44km trail divided into 12 linked sections beginning 20 minutes' drive away at Point Impossible. The first section goes inland, with hardly a Southern Ocean glimpse until Fishermans Beach, so consider walking along broad sandy beaches instead. Soon after Fishermans' mosaic sundial is the next section, frequently shared with Torquay Esplanade holidaymakers. The third path through undulating moonah shrubs is classic Surf Coast. Refuel on Torquay's waterfront at Pholklore, where Hanoi street food meets chilled surf-town vibes. Other distractions include Bells Beach Brewing and the Australian National Surfing Museum; surfcoastwalk.com.au.



## BEST BEDS

**10** A short walk from the waterfront, gallery and Little Malop, Nomads Nest is a handy, homey base for singles and couples. Opened in 2019, this self-contained accommodation comprising two studios and two apartments looks brand new. The decor features framed urban-vintage prints, while earthy textures such as recycled wood, black leather and grey stone conjure uncomplicated, lived-in comfort. In the upstairs Moorabool apartment, metal pendant lights recall Aboriginal dilly bags and eel traps. Apart from views of Kardinia Park stadium's ultra-modern light towers, the outlook is low-rise cityscape. Geelong is still Sleepy Hollow in some ways, making it a welcome escape from the big smoke; nomadsnest.com.au.

Patricia Maunder was a guest of Tourism Greater Geelong & the Bellarine. ■ visitgeelongbellarine.com.au