

Writer's festivals: the perfect excuse to explore regional NSW this winter

ISSUED May 4, 2023: With autumn fading and the Easter and ANZAC Day long weekends behind us, many are now turning their thoughts to a winter break.

The good news is that 2023's cooler months are brimming with writing and cultural festivals that give book worms and culture vultures numerous mouth-watering reasons for an extended getaway in regional NSW.

After three frustrating years of lock downs and last-minute cancellations, many popular festivals are re-emerging in 2023 from their COVID hibernations. Others are springing up for the first time to feed a growing hunger for domestic travel with a twist of culture.

StoryFest, held in the Milton-Ulladulla region on the South Coast, is one festival bouncing back bigger and better in 2023. Between the 15th and 18th of June, this charming little community will light up with some of the biggest names in Australian literature, entertainment and broadcasting.

Celebrating storytelling in all its richness and diversity, StoryFest brings together a diverse cast of writers, filmmakers, musicians and slam poets, along with celebrity chefs and gardeners. Sharing the stage with award-winning authors like Pip Williams, Robbie Arnott, Peter FitzSimons and Holly Wainwright will be former *MasterChef Australia* winner Adam Liaw, ABC Radio broadcaster Richard Glover and co-creator of the hit ABC TV series *You Can't Ask That*, Kirk Docker.

The festival will also feature a special screening of the documentary feature film, *You Can Go Now* by writer, filmmaker and broadcaster Larissa Behrendt, as well as live performances from Clare Bowditch, Clementine Ford and Libby Donovan in the historic Milton Theatre.

Festival organiser Adam Jeffrey says events like StoryFest provide a unique opportunity to get out and explore the natural beauty and cultural richness right on our doorsteps.

"Our goal with StoryFest is to showcase the very best of local and Australian storytelling. But we also want to showcase this extraordinary part of NSW we are lucky to call home.

"We hope festival goers take the time to visit our wonderful local wineries, bars and restaurants while they're here, and feast on our fresh and delicious local produce.

"And, of course, visitors are spoiled for choice with pristine beaches, lakes and native forests to explore. It all adds up to a pretty mouth-watering weekend – or even week – away," Jeffrey says.

Events like StoryFest also offer a much-needed economic boon to regions that have been hit hard by rolling crises over in recent times.

“The last few years have been pretty devastating for our local businesses,” Jeffrey explains.

“First there were the black summer bushfires of 2019-20 that kept tourists away during the peak holiday period. Then just weeks later we were in COVID lockdowns.

“Shoalhaven Tourism estimated that the last StoryFest helped inject \$528,000 into the local economy at a time when our local cafes, bars, restaurants and tour operators desperately needed it. We’re proud of the contribution we make to our community in this way.

StoryFest will be once again proudly shining the spotlight on local businesses in 2023. With festival events to be held at local Cupitt’s Estate Winery and Restaurant, MilkHaus Café and Restaurant and the Ruse Cocktail Bar, visitors will have ample opportunity to sample the region’s culinary delights and warm hospitality.

Jeffrey says he hopes festivals like StoryFest also help to reshape perceptions of what a local holiday in regional NSW can be.

“For too long we’ve been taught to believe we have to get on a plane to have a unique cultural or culinary experience. I don’t think a lot of people realise how much our regional areas have to offer on those fronts these days. I hope we can play our part in changing that.”

StoryFest is just one of many regional writing and cultural festivals set to offer nourishment for the mind, body and soul this winter. It’s all making the prospect of a country getaway very difficult to resist.

For a comprehensive list of regional writers festivals visit:

<https://annafeatherstone.com/writing-resources/list-of-australian-writers-festivals-2023/>

For media interviews, please contact Adam Jeffrey

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Download images: <https://www.dropbox.com/sh/7oztcka42pr41n5/AABM0MA-MxylsRO9NVcOuivaa?dl=0>

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