

# Central West



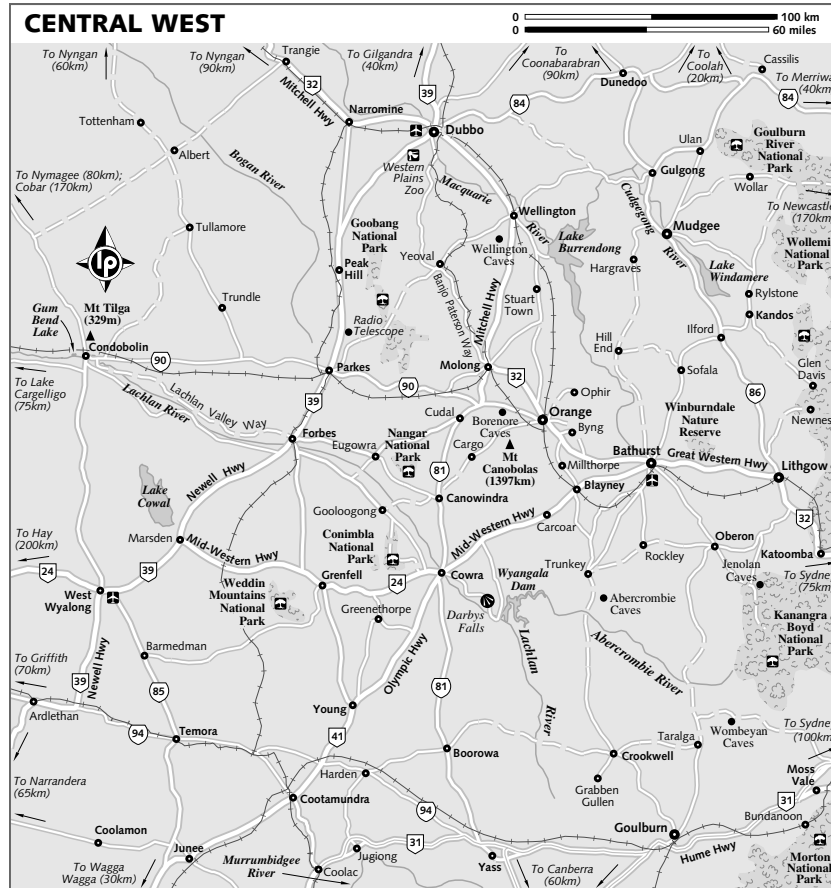
It was gold that began the Central West, and it's the history of gold that you feel every time you enter one of the region's fascinating Victorian-era towns. They're steeped in bushranger and gold rush history: streets lined with stately buildings, parks with well-tended English gardens, folk museums filled with memorabilia, and roads named after admired drovers. Stretching 400km inland from the Blue Mountains and gradually shifting from fields to vast plains, the Central West is unique in New South Wales (NSW) for its many close and fair-sized towns.

It started with Edward Hargraves, a clever man with an intense dislike for work. Returning empty-handed from the Californian goldfields, he was inspired by a government reward for discovering payable gold, so he headed west in 1851 and found gold in Lewis Ponds Creek. He named the field Ophir after the biblical city of gold. Within a week gold fever gripped the region; for the rest of the century tens of thousands of fossickers came to the Central West in the hope the streams and hillsides would yield enough of the promised metal to change their lives forever.

Then the agriculturalists moved in. These days, the Central West is 21st-century agribusiness. It is the university city of Bathurst, the public-service enclave of Orange, the thrusting new small businesses of Mudgee, tourist towns like Wellington and Parkes, and extraordinary places like Dubbo with its Western Plains Zoo. The Central West is solid, respectable and, above all, a re-affirming successful rural hub.

## HIGHLIGHTS

- Watch giraffes mate at Dubbo's **Western Plains Zoo** (p241)
- Scoff down fresh-baked cherry pie in **Young** (p247), the cherry capital of Australia
- Stroll in the serene Japanese Gardens in **Cowra** (p245)
- Talk to **Pieter Ven Gent** at his vineyard in Mudgee (p235), where you sit in old choir stalls, and the muscat is liquid gold
- Dream of being a moon-walker at the **Parkes Radio Telescope** (p243)
- Explore the subterranean wonderland of lakes, chambers and stalactites at **Wellington Caves** (p240)
- Swish silent as the breeze in a hot air balloon in **Canowindra** (p247)
- Stretch your neck to see the teeth of Tyrannosaurus Rex at the **Australian Fossil & Mineral Museum** (opposite) in Bathurst



## BATHURST

☎ 02 / pop 37,100

There are dinosaurs in Bathurst, but even though it's Australia's oldest inland settlement, it's no dinosaur of a town. It boasts European trees, a cool climate and stacks of places of architectural and historical interest. But best of all, Bathurst is the bastion of Australian motor sport, hosting numerous events.

## Orientation & Information

The city is laid out on a grand scale with a large grid of wide streets. William St between Durham and Keppel Sts is the main shopping area.

The **visitors centre** (☎ 6332 1444; Kendall Ave; www.bathurst.nsw.gov.au; ☎ 9am-5pm) is particularly

helpful. Internet is free at the **Bathurst Library** (☎ 6332 2130; 70-78 Keppel St), part of the Bathurst Regional Art Gallery.

## Sights & Activities

See Tyrannosaurus Rex, Australia's only complete skeleton, at the **Australian Fossil & Mineral Museum** (☎ 6331 5511; 224 Howick St; adult/child \$8/4; ☎ 10am-4pm Mon-Sat, 10am-2pm Sun). You'll also see the internationally renowned Somerville Collection, the personal collection of geologist Warren Somerville, with more than 6000 fossils from every period of the earth's history, some specimens being the only examples in the world. And the collection of crystal is stunning, plus there's the country's finest collection of fossils in amber, and opalised

dinosaur teeth. It's all there in the centre of town. Just fantastic.

The **Bathurst Regional Art Gallery** (☎ 6331 6066; 70-78 Keppel St; admission free; ☎ 10am-5pm Tue-Sat, 11am-2pm Sun) has a dynamic collection of work featuring local artists as well as exciting touring exhibitions. The work of Grace Cossington-Smith, whose paintings of the Sydney Harbour Bridge under construction defined the event for many Australians, is well represented but restricted; you must ask at the front desk.

The **courthouse** (1880), on Russell St, is the most impressive of Bathurst's many interesting old buildings. Local myth has it there was a mix-up of the plans with those intended for India's magnificent Court of Appeals! The **court** (☎ 9.30am-1pm & 2-4pm Mon-Fri) is the central

section of the building. In the east wing is the small **Historical Museum** (☎ 6332 4755; adult/child \$2/1; ☎ 10am-4pm Tue, Wed, Sat & Sun). **Machattie Park**, behind the courthouse, was once the site of the jail and is now a pleasant formal park known for its begonias, which flower from late summer to early autumn.

Ben Chifley, prime minister from 1945 to 1949, lived in Bathurst, and the modest **Chifley Home** (☎ 6332 1444; 10 Busby St; adult/child \$6/4; ☎ 11am-3pm Sat-Mon) is on display. The Chifley government's initiatives in welcoming European refugees as immigrants were important to Australia's cultural and economic development. Before entering politics Chifley had been a train driver and he maintained a simple lifestyle even when in office.

Rev-heads will enjoy the **National Motor Racing Museum** (☎ 6332 1872; Pit Straight; adult/child/family \$7/5/16; ☎ 9am-4.30pm).

## Activities

Bathurst has a stack of adventurous activities available, from caving to vintage joy flights, harness racing to motorcycle cruising.

The 6.2km **Mt Panorama Motor Racing Circuit** is the venue for one of Australia's most popular car races: the Bathurst Motorsport Spectacular in October, when the visitors centre runs a private-homestay scheme for the extra crowds. You can drive around the circuit, but it's a two-way public road with a 60km limit (boring!).

If that doesn't do it, take a three-wheeler joyride around the circuit, or in the Mt Panorama area, with **Panorama Trike Tours** (☎ 6331 9629, 0422 182 020; Pit Straight; spins from \$10), or glide across the area with **Bathurst Soaring Club** (☎ 4757 1824, 6337 1180; www.bathurstsoaring.org.au; 167 Freemantle Rd; ☎ 9am-9.30pm Mon-Sat). Prices are given on request.

## Sleeping

**Commercial Hotel** (☎ 6331 2712; 135 George St; www.geocities.com/commercialhotelbathurst; dm/s/d \$20/29/49) This quaint old pub has a cosy bar downstairs and small but inviting rooms upstairs, opening onto a veranda. There's darts, pool comps and trivia nights, the shared kitchen is well stocked, the pub grub is first-rate and there are good weekly deals available.

**Bathurst Panorama Holiday Park** (☎ 6331 8286; www.bathurstholidaypark.com.au; Great Western Hwy; camp site per adult \$26, cabins from \$60; 📍) This is the main caravan park, but during race periods other camping areas are opened.

**Accommodation Warehouse** (☎ 6332 2801; www.accomwarehouse.com.au; 121a Keppel St; s/d \$60/80; 📍) This soaring brick building with its arched windows and Juliet balconies has lovely self-contained apartments, or stylish rooms with shared kitchen.

**Blackdown Estate** (☎ 6331 7121; www.blackdownestate.com.au; 90 Eleven Mile Dr; d queen/ste \$150/170; 📍) This dreamy retreat off the road to Sofala has majestic rooms, claw-footed bathtubs and views across the historic outbuildings and lakes to the low ranges. The courtyards, formal gardens and romantic corners are a treasure.

## Eating

**Bernard's Bakery** (☎ 6331 2042; 81 George St; gourmet sandwiches \$7; ☎ 6.30am-6pm Mon-Fri, 7am-4pm Sat &

Sun) This is a local favourite with its crusty rolls and bacon-and-egg sandwiches, or grab yourself a pie for \$4.

**Guan Yin Vegetarian** (☎ 6332 5388; 166A William St; mains \$10-14; ☎ lunch Mon-Fri, dinner Wed-Fri) This cosy restaurant serves 'I can't believe it's not meat' dishes where vegetarian Mongolian beef is the order of the day.

**Restaurant 92** (☎ 6332 1757; 92 Bentinck St; mains \$8-15; ☎ 10am-3pm Mon-Sat & 6-11pm Tue-Sat) An up-market deli-cum-wine bar with a soothing atmosphere and a focus on local produce.

**Good Catch Café** (☎ 6331 1333; 85 George St; mains \$9-16; ☎ 11am-8.30pm Tue-Sun) This cheerful café sells a range of seafood and salads. Eat in or take away an attractive boxed meal.

**Ellie's Café** (☎ 6332 1707; 108 William St; mains \$11-15; ☎ 7.30am-6pm Mon-Wed, till late Thu-Sat, 8.30am-5pm Sun) Ellie's great range of hot meals, such as fish with tomato and olive tapenade, or the crepes and sandwiches, will set you up for more touring. It's comfortable inside, and the courtyard and veranda are just as popular.

**Ziegler's** (☎ 6332 1565; 52 Keppel St; mains \$16-24; ☎ 9am-10pm Tue-Sat, 9am-3pm Sun-Mon) The leafy courtyard at Ziegler's is the perfect place for coffee, which you can see being roasted. It also has tasty main dishes like crispy-skinned salmon on caponata with aioli.

**Crowded House** (☎ 6334 2300; www.crowdedhousecafe.com.au; 1 Ribbon Gang Lane off William St; mains \$16-30; ☎ 10am-3pm & 6-11pm Tue-Sat) From a restored 1850s church with soaring ceilings, the restaurant spills out onto a medieval courtyard dotted with olive trees and lavender bushes. The food is just as elegant and interesting as the surroundings.

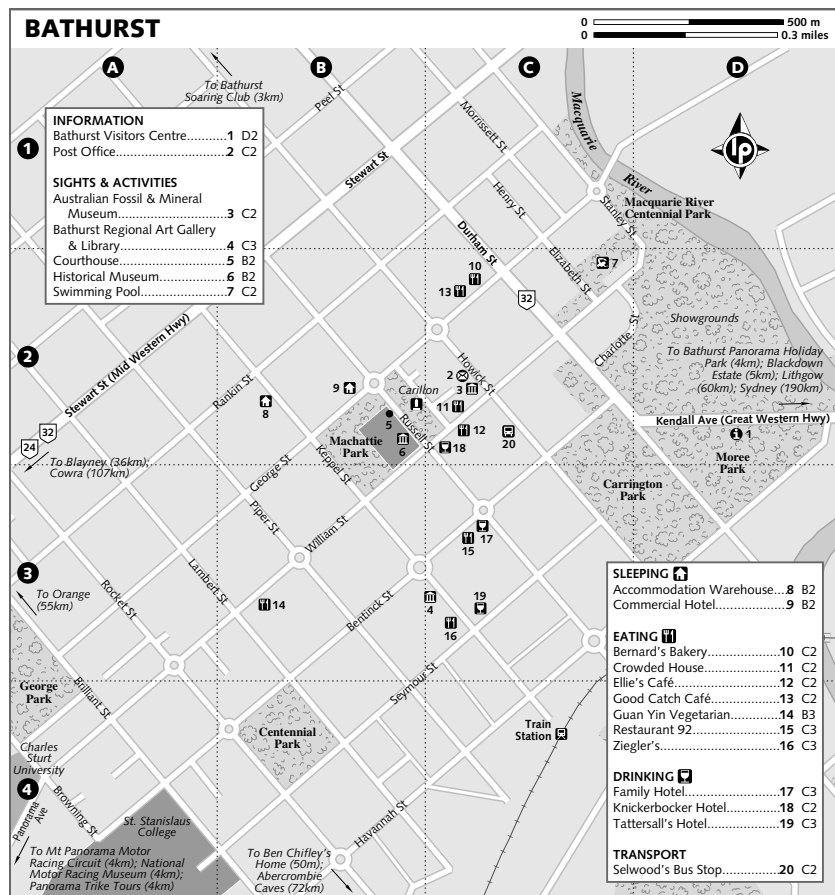
## Drinking

Bathurst is a student town and they know how to party.

**Knickerbocker Hotel** (☎ 6332 4500; 110 William St; ☎ to 11pm Mon-Thu, till late Fri-Sun) It has big screens for Fox Sports, a jukebox, cover bands, a mixed crowd of all ages and a smart beer garden.

**Family Hotel** (☎ 6331 1353; cnr Russell & Bentinck Sts) This hotel is exactly that, with a pleasant beer garden and an Italian-style bistro. There is free jazz on Thursday nights and local bands get the place rocking on Friday and Saturday.

**Tattersall's Hotel** (☎ 6331 5544; Keppel St) This little, low-slung, atmospheric pub is popular with the uni crowd for its cheap drinks.



## PRIDE & PRODUCE

Orange, Dubbo, Young, Mudgee, Cowra, Bathurst... the names trip off the tongue. Driving through the countryside in spring, your senses are overwhelmed by Young's cherry blossoms, young vines in Mudgee and lambs almost everywhere, the buzz of the native bees and the smell of newly cut forage. You know this area had a winter, that it was frosty and that it is over. New season, new hope.

These 'regions' are flexing their political muscle to ensure they have the same access to modern infrastructure as their city cousins. Now every small holder trades electronically, centres are being sympathetically renovated and new uses found for old buildings. If many of them are service- or tourist-oriented, it's because they're leading the way by providing opportunity and employment.

In early summer, stone fruits ripen, lambs fatten and vines bud. Each year sees new products, encouraged by both local and city chefs and gastronomes. Once asparagus was green and came in tins. Now it is white and purple and delivered daily to Sydney Markets in Flemington. Once there was leg of mutton, now there is lamb and baby goat. Once Mudgee and Orange wineries were an aberration, now they are appellation controlled. And there is cheese of every variety, virgin olive oil and verjuice.

The towns compete to provide the best services to visitors and take pride in their locality: there's tours of local wineries and honey producers; places to try the local produce; fish to be caught and smoked; museums and galleries; and restaurants and cafés inviting you to experience everything the past and the present has to offer.

The Central West is not in the heart of Australia, but it exudes an aura of being its heart.

## Getting There & Away

**Australian Rail Maps** ([www.railmaps.com.au](http://www.railmaps.com.au)) website has details of the services in the region; click on the relevant route. **Selwood's Coaches** (☎ 6362 7963) links Bathurst with Orange (\$9, 45 minutes) and Sydney (\$30, four hours) three times daily.

The quick **CountryLink** (☎ 13 22 32; [www.countrylink.info](http://www.countrylink.info)) XPT trains stop here on the daily Sydney (\$34, 3½ hours) and Dubbo (\$31, 1½ hours) service.

**Broken Hill Outback Explorer** stops here each Monday (\$88 to Broken Hill).

## Getting Around

**Taxis** (☎ 6331 1511, 13 22 32) run 24 hours a day. **Bathurst Coaches** runs a local bus service, which stops outside Bathurst Panorama Holiday Park every day except Sunday. Grab a timetable from the visitors centre.

## AROUND BATHURST

About 70km south of Bathurst along awesome winding roads are the famous **Abercrombie Caves** (☎ 02-6368 8603; [www.jenolancaves.org.au](http://www.jenolancaves.org.au); self-guided/guided tours \$13/16; ☎ 9am-5pm). The Grand Arch is one of the world's largest natural tunnels and even the side passages are huge. In the Hall of Terpsichore you can still dance on the dance floor installed by miners 120 years ago. Beneath all the limestone

is a river with a few particularly beautiful pools. There's swimming and **accommodation** (☎ 026368 8603; camp site per person/family \$7.50/18, cabin std/deluxe \$50/90) near the cave, with good facilities nearby.

**Sofala**, Australia's oldest surviving gold town and a quaint little place, has some unusually well-preserved timber buildings. The films *The Cars that Ate Paris* and *Sirens* were shot here.

Northwest of Sofala, pretty **Hill End** was the scene of an 1870s gold rush, then it became an artists' colony where Donald Friend lived and worked for years. Inside the old hospital is the **NPWS office** (☎ 02-6337 8206; Hospital Lane; ☎ 9.30am-12.30pm & 1.30-4.30pm) where you book for the two **NPWS camping grounds** (adult/child \$5/3) and a fascinating **museum** (admission \$2.50).

Hang out with the few residents at their local, the dusty but still regal **Royal Hotel** (☎ 02-6337 8261; Beyers Ave; s/d \$40/65), the only pub remaining of an original 52 in the district. The rooms are pleasant, amenities are shared, and downstairs is the **bistro** (mains \$16-24; ☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner).

Further northeast towards Mudgee, the small town of **Rylstone** features pretty sandstone buildings and access to **Wollemi National Park**.

## MUDGEE

☎ 02 / pop 8500

Mudgee, an Aboriginal word for 'nest in the hills', is the centre for the new regional gourmet food and wine industries. So it's a popular weekend getaway, combining attractive natural surroundings with gastronomic exploration. Local farms now specialise in sheep and goat's cheeses, olives, hazelnuts and, of course, the renowned Mudgee honey.

## Orientation & Information

Mudgee is about 120km north of Bathurst and Lithgow, on the banks of the Cudgegong River. Most wineries are north of the river. The main shopping street is Church St.

The **visitors centre** (☎ 1800 816 304, 6372 1020; [www.visitmudgeeregion.com.au](http://www.visitmudgeeregion.com.au); 84 Market St; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, to 3.30pm Sat, 9.30am-2pm Sun) is near the post office. If you're going wine tasting, grab a copy of the Mudgee-Gulgong visitors guide.

## Sights & Activities

### WINERIES

The vineyards are clustered in two groups north and southeast of town. This makes them ideal

for cycling between as long as you don't get the wobbles. The vintage is later than in the Hunter Valley because of Mudgee's higher altitude.

**Poet's Corner** (☎ 6372 2208; Craigmoor Rd; ☎ 10am-4.30pm) has produced a vintage annually since 1858, making it one of Australia's oldest. The atmospheric cellar holds musical evenings – ask at the visitors centre.

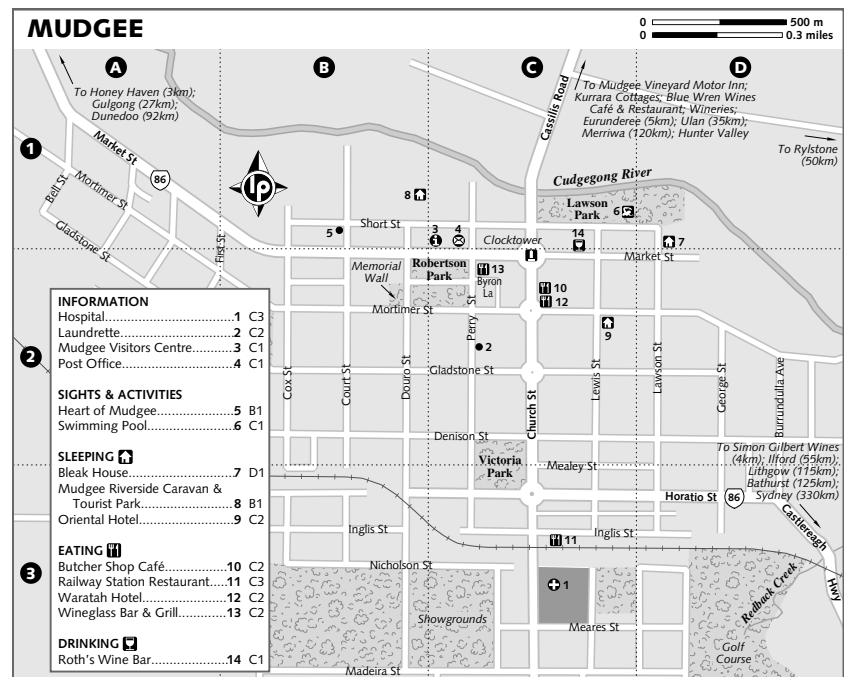
Get some old-fashioned winery atmosphere at **Pieter Ven Gent** (☎ 6373 3807; Black Springs Rd; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Sat, 10.30am-4pm Sun), where tastings can be taken in old chook stalls, and the muscat is nectar of the gods.

**Simon Gilbert Wines** (☎ 6373 1245; [www.simongilbertwines.com.au](http://www.simongilbertwines.com.au); Castlereagh Hwy; ☎ 9am-5pm) offers stunning views along the Cudgegong River Valley, along with its wine tasting. The winemakers platter (\$15) includes local produce to add to your taste treat.

See Festivals & Events (p236) for more winery-related events.

## OTHER ATTRACTIONS

If you really want to embrace the foodie experience, **Heart of Mudgee** (☎ 6372 3224; [www.mudgeehampers.com.au](http://www.mudgeehampers.com.au); cnr Court & Short Sts; ☎ 9am-4pm Thu-Tue)





is a good place to start. It showcases products produced by people living in Mudgee – the best the region has to offer – with a tasting table that runs down the middle of the shop.

If that wasn't enough, **Honey Haven** (☎ 6372 4478; cnr Gulgong & Hargraves Rds; ☎ 9am-5pm) has endless varieties to trial (the wonderfully named 'Beeagra' included!). Kids can watch the bees hard at work in their hive.

### Festivals & Events

In September, there's a fabulous **wine festival** ([www.mudgeewines.com.au](http://www.mudgeewines.com.au)) to celebrate the region's new-release wines, complete with wine show, tastings, food and concerts.

**Huntington Estate** (☎ 6373 3825; [www.huntingtonestate.com.au](http://www.huntingtonestate.com.au); Cassilis Rd; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, 10am-5pm Sat, to 3pm Sun) hosts the immensely popular **Huntington Music Festival** in early December, featuring the Australian Chamber Orchestra.

### Sleeping

If you come to Mudgee on a weekend or during the wine festival, you should book, and the rates are a bit higher. Ask at the visitors centre for a list of the many B&Bs in the valley.

**Mudgee Riverside Caravan & Tourist Park** (☎ 6372 2531; [www.mudgeeriverside.com.au](http://www.mudgeeriverside.com.au); 22 Short St; camp site per adult \$20, cabin/villa d \$60/72; ☎) It's right in the centre of everything yet it's green and leafy, with an aviary and as many birds outside the wire netting. There's mountain bike rental (\$15 half-day) and the cabins are self-contained.

**Oriental Hotel** (☎ 6372 1074; [www.orientalhotel.com.au](http://www.orientalhotel.com.au); cnr Lewis & Mortimer Sts; B&B s/d \$35/45) Help yourself to breakfast in a lovely breakfast room, or look out on the hills from the veranda. The rooms are spacious and the shared facilities bright and clean.

**Mudgee Vineyard Motor Inn** (☎ 6372 1022; 252 Henry Lawson Dr; s/d/f \$75/85/120; ☎) Located only a couple of minutes' drive from town, this is an attractive place in the heart of the vineyards, with pretty rooms and great views.

**Bleak House** (☎ 6372 4888; [www.geocities.com/bleakhousemudgee](http://www.geocities.com/bleakhousemudgee); 7 Lawson St; B&B d \$165; ☎) Built in 1860, it is anything but bleak with its gracious verandas, soaring ceilings and pretty gardens. The rooms are tastefully decorated and the scrumptious breakfast will have you powering through the vineyards.

**Kurrara Cottages** (☎ 6373 3734; [www.kurrara.com.au](http://www.kurrara.com.au); Henry Lawson Dr; 1-/2-bedroom B&B \$160/295; ☎) This is the place to come for romance and fluffy, white bathrobes. The self-contained cottages

are for couples only, some with spa baths, all set amid rolling hills and small lakes.

### Eating & Drinking

This is such a foodie town that you'll be around for a while trying out the many restaurants.

**Butcher Shop Café** (☎ 6372 7373; 49 Church St; mains \$7-15; ☎) breakfast & lunch daily, dinner Fri & Sat) A hip eatery in an old butchery, with stained glass and interesting artwork. Cameron, the chef, makes the best scrambled eggs with smoked salmon to start your day. Dinner is well-presented Mod Oz, including pastas and salads.

**Waratah Hotel** (☎ 6372 1842; cnr Market & Church Sts; mains \$11-18; ☎) lunch & dinner) Locals like this place with its long timber tables and chatty atmosphere. It's good value, with grand Greek, Caesar or green salads served with the freshly prepared mains.

**Blue Wren Wines Café & Restaurant** (☎ 6372 6205; Cassilis Rd; mains \$24-29; ☎) lunch, dinner Wed-Sat) An exceptional restaurant in an interesting space, Blue Wren is the place to indulge in dishes like Moroccan spiced lamb tagine. There is also a generous BYO policy – considering it is a winery.

**Roth's Wine Bar** (☎ 6372 1222; 30 Market St; ☎) noon-6.30pm Mon-Fri, 10am-noon Sat) After a day in the vineyards a late-afternoon tippie is probably the last thing on your mind, but Roth's is the oldest wine bar in NSW and the atmosphere is still there.

Other popular places to try the superb local food include the following:

**Railway Station Restaurant** (☎ 6372 0177; Inglis St; mains \$22-28; ☎) breakfast Sat & Sun, lunch daily, dinner Wed-Sun) Shawn cooks dishes such as Jamaican jerk chicken with apricot and fig pilaf.

**Wineglass Bar & Grill** (☎ 6372 3417; Cobb & Co Ct, cnr Market & Perry Sts; mains \$28-32) Where you can try dishes such as poached snapper with polenta.

### Getting There & Away

**CountryLink** (☎ 13 22 32; [www.countrylink.info](http://www.countrylink.info)) buses to Lithgow connect with Sydney trains (\$23, five hours 20 minutes, twice daily).

### GULGONG

☎ 02 / pop 2500

This little time-warp town was known as 'the hub of the world' during the roaring days of gold fever. It's narrow, old rambling streets lined with authentic old shops and miners' cottages was created almost overnight in the rush

that began in 1870. After 1880 the rush tapered off, but it left behind a well-established town that is today classified by the National Trust. Gulgong later called itself 'the town on the \$10 note', but since plastic \$10 notes, it isn't.

### Orientation & Information

Gulgong's main street is Herbert St, which leads south to Mudgee. Winding across town is Mayne St, a delightful old thoroughfare that becomes Wellington Rd down the hill. The **visitors centre** (☎ 6374 1202; [www.mudgee-gulgong.org](http://www.mudgee-gulgong.org); 109 Herbert St; ☎ 8am-1pm & 1.30-5pm Mon-Fri, 9.30am-2pm Sat & Sun) has guides to some terrific walks around the area.

### Sights & Activities

The **Gulgong Pioneer Museum** (☎ 6374 1513; 73 Herbert St; admission \$5; ☎ 9am-5pm) is one of the most eclectic country-town museums in the state. The huge collection of the important and the trivial borders on chaos, but it's all fascinating. Photographs of early Gulgong from the Holtermann Collection are displayed, and there are also pin-up photos of the stars who drove the diggers wild at the local opera. Music aficionados can get their fix a few doors down in the sight-and-sound section and might even get to play a record on the gramophone run by car batteries.

Author Henry Lawson spent part of his childhood in the area after his parents followed the rush to the goldfields. The **Henry Lawson Centre** (☎ 6374 2049; 147 Mayne St; adult/child \$4/2.50; ☎ 10am-3.30pm Wed-Sat, to 1pm Sun-Tue) looks at Lawson's early memories of Gulgong; this town was where he learned to dislike the squalor and brutalising hard work and poverty of the goldfields – a bitterness that never quite faded. There is a good selection of his works for sale.

Originally built from bark, the **opera house** (☎ 6374 1162; 99-101 Mayne St) is one of the oldest surviving theatres in Australia and still holds several performances a year. It was immortalised in Henry Lawson's poem, 'The Last View', and played host to such stars as Dame Nellie Melba.

Around the corner, Herbert St has some exciting galleries, like the **Cudgegong Gallery** (☎ 6374 1630; [www.cudgegonggallery.com.au](http://www.cudgegonggallery.com.au); 102 Herbert St; ☎ 10am-5.30pm) which features internationally recognised Australian artists.

**Gulgong Golf Club** (☎ 6374 1571) welcomes players to its nine-hole treed and grassy course be-

tween Tallawang Rd and Fisher Street. There are golf clubs for hire, and payment is by donation.

### Festivals & Events

The long weekend in June is the time for the big **Henry Lawson Festival** (☎ 6373 4623). There is music, dramatisation of Lawson stories at the opera house, and literary awards, some of them sponsored by Norwegian organisations – Lawson's father was a Norwegian immigrant.

Gulgong also hosts the popular **Gulgong Folk Festival** (☎ 6373 4623) over the New Year period with concerts, bush dances, jam sessions, street parades and more. In March, the **Gulgong Show** (☎ 6374 1225) has rodeos, wood chopping, animals and crafts.

### Sleeping & Eating

**Henry Lawson Van Park** (☎ 6374 1294; [www.henrylawsoncaravanpark.com.au](http://www.henrylawsoncaravanpark.com.au); 111 Mayne St; camp site per adult \$19, cabin std/deluxe \$36/63) Across from the Goldfields Motor Inn on the road to Wellington, this park spreads prettily among the trees. It also has an animal farm with friendly llamas and a great aviary.

**Goldfields Motor Inn** (☎ 6374 1111; [cballey@hwy.com.au](mailto:cballey@hwy.com.au); 112 Mayne St; std s/d \$58/74, self-contained s/d \$62/80; ☎) This place has the usual spacious clean rooms, but the views are fabulous, your hosts friendly, kitchens in the self-contained units are modern and the pool/barbecue area includes a sauna. It's a few minutes' walk up the hill to the centre of town. Ask about the family discounts.

**Stables Guesthouse** (☎ 6374 1668; [www.thestablesguesthouse.com.au](http://www.thestablesguesthouse.com.au); 149 Mayne St; B&B stable s/d \$85/130, heritage s/d \$100/160; ☎) A gentleman's residence in 1885, Stables is authentically renovated, with lovely gardens, gourmet breakfast and spacious dining rooms, all in the centre of town.

**Regional Ceramic Gallery** (☎ 6374 1202; 109 Herbert St; snacks \$7; ☎ 8am-4.30pm Mon-Fri, 9.30am-2pm Sat & Sun) This is a fascinating spot, with interesting works to look at while you sip excellent coffee and enjoy light snacks, focaccias and cakes.

**Meg's Kitchen** (☎ 6374 1166; 97 Mayne St; mains \$8-21; ☎) lunch & dinner) This delightful little den, tucked behind the Prince of Wales Hotel, has delicious food cooked by Meg herself. The creamy garlic prawns really excite the mouth, or there are takeaway homemade pizzas (\$7 to \$10).

**Larsen's Brasserie** (☎ 6374 2822; 137 Mayne St; mains \$14-25; ☎ 11am-2pm & 6-10pm Fri & Sat) Relax in the nice courtyard while enjoying some excellent homemade fare featuring the local produce and a fine selection of local wines.

### Getting There & Away

**CountryLink** (☎ 13 22 32; www.countrylink.info) runs two buses to Mudgee (\$5.50, 25 minutes, twice daily) from Gulgong.

### ORANGE

☎ 02 / pop 39,000

No, it doesn't grow oranges. It's in a fertile agricultural area, but the town was actually named in 1846 after Prince William of Orange. With four distinct seasons (due to an altitude of 950m), the city's parks and gardens are a kaleidoscope of colours throughout the year; cold winters bring occasional snowfalls.

### Orientation & Information

Suburban Orange sprawls over quite a large area, but the city centre, with its grid-pattern streets, is compact and easy to get around.

Summer St is the main street and the town centre begins just west of the train line.

The **visitors centre** (☎ 6393 8226; www.orange.nsw.gov.au; Byng St; ☎ 9am-5pm) has a range of handy brochures, including a walking tour of the city and winery tours around the district.

Internet access is available in many places. Try **DNA Coffee** (☎ 6363 1400; Orange City Centre, Anson St; per hr \$5; ☎ 7.30am-6pm Mon-Wed, to 11pm Thu-Sat, 8.30am-5pm Sun).

The autumn apple-picking season lasts for about six weeks. **Octec Employment Service** (☎ 6362 8169; www.octec.org.au; 247 Anson St) can help you find work in the area. Some orchards have accommodation.

### Sights & Activities

The excellent **Orange Regional Gallery** (☎ 6393 8136; Civic Sq; admission free; ☎ 10am-5pm Tue-Sat, 1-4pm Sun) has an ambitious, varied programme of exhibitions as well as works by modern Australian masters.

The **Botanic Gardens** (☎ 6361 5186; Kearneys Dr; admission free; ☎ 7.30am-dusk) is on Clover Hill (with good views between the trees), 2km north of the city. The gardens were established in 1981

to preserve the native woodlands of the area and to grow other plants suited to this cool climate. This is an interesting project, as most botanic gardens in the state were established long ago and are rigidly formal, echoing the gardens 'back home' in Britain.

Poet Banjo Paterson (who wrote the lyrics to 'Waltzing Matilda') was born on Narrambla Station near Orange in 1864. The site of the station is now **Banjo Paterson Memorial Park**, about 3km northeast of Orange on the Ophir road, with picnic facilities under the giant oak trees.

Orange has a reputation for distinctive cool-climate wines, with many award-winning vineyards around the town. Get your *Cellar Doors of Orange* booklet from the visitors centre. It gives you a summary of each vineyard then you can follow its maps in every direction.

Australia's first real gold rush took place at **Ophir**, 27km north of Orange along mostly unsealed roads. After the diggers left, deep mining was begun and continues today at Doctors Hill. A few fossickers still come here, and small finds by visitors aren't uncommon.

### Festivals & Events

**Orange Food Week** (www.orangefoodweek.com.au) is the city's annual celebration of all things epicurean and gustatory. Held during autumn, events range from cooking classes to **Opera in the Vineyard**. Then come back in October for **Orange Wine Week** (www.winesoforange.com.au) to celebrate wine with concerts, tastings, markets and vineyard tours.

**Orange National Field Days** (www.anfd.com.au/index.cfm), the largest in the state, are held in the middle of October. Here you can check out the latest farm machinery and watch events such as sheepdog trials.

The **visitors centre** (☎ freecall 1800 069 422) has info on where to stay, and free shuttlebus timetables during these festivals.

### Sleeping

**Colour City Caravan Park** (☎ 6362 7279; kpratt@orange.nsw.gov.au; cnr Margaret St & Leeds Pde; camp site \$19, cabin s/d \$44/52; ☎) Just at the northeast corner of the city centre, this squeaky-clean place is in a large grassed park with a great barbecue area. There's plenty of space for camping, and ask about the longer-term rates.

**Oriana Motor Inn** (☎ 6362 3066; www.orianamotorinn.com.au; 178 Woodward St; s/d \$64/82; ☎) A pleas-

ant set of units, it's set back in a spacious garden and just a stroll down from the centre of town.

**Duntryleague Guesthouse** (☎ 6362 3822; www.duntryleague.com.au; Woodward St; s/d \$110/135; ☎) A grand mansion built in 1876, now run B&B-style with grand rooms, four-poster beds and the Orange golf course right there in the grounds.

**Aranca Bed & Breakfast** (☎ 6365 3305; www.aranca.com.au; Wrights Lane; s/d \$145/185; ☎) The rooms are luxurious, the views are stunning and the breakfast delicious. It is set amid rolling hills, a delightful five-minute drive that takes you close to the wineries and golf courses.

### Eating

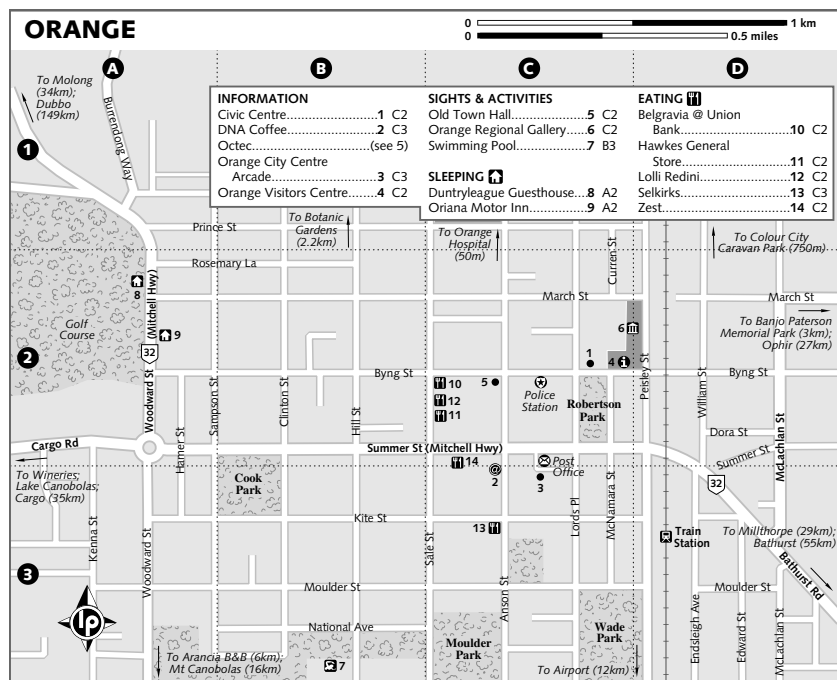
**Zest** (☎ 6360 4860; Orange Arcade, Summer St; snacks \$4-11; ☎ 8am-6pm Mon-Fri, 10am-3pm Sat & Sun) All glass and shine, the food shines too, with fresh salads and sandwiches to go with fresh-squeezed juices.

**Hawkes General Store** (☎ 6362 5851; 46 Sale St; mains \$6-14; ☎ 9.30am-5.30pm Mon-Fri, 10am-1.30pm Sat) This is a popular meeting place for those who like to shop for knick-knacks while they wait for the coffee – there's an excellent selection plus light meals and a pretty outdoor area to laze in.

**Belgravia @ Union Bank** (☎ 6360 0495; cnr Sale & Byng Sts; mains \$18; ☎ 10am-8pm Sun-Thu, till late Fri & Sat) This exciting new cellar door and wine bar in the centre of town has a range of tapas and other tasty snacks, great décor, excellent service and great weekly events such as music in the courtyard on Friday and old movies in the kitchen each Wednesday.

**Lolli Redini** (☎ 6361 7748; 48 Sale St; mains \$22-33; ☎ dinner Tue-Sat) It could be Italian, but Mod Oz prevails in this atmospheric timber-and-soft-light romantic spot, with slow-cooked wagyu beef cheeks, roasted beetroot and parsnip purée very hard to pass. Beware, the desserts are equally imaginative and tempting. Fortunately it also opens for lunch in summer.

**Selkirks** (☎ 6361 1179; 179 Anson St; 2/3-courses \$66/77; ☎ dinner Tue-Sat) In a lovely old sandstone house, this is one of NSW's premier restaurants. The menu follows the seasons, and Michael Manners, your chef who is passionate about the region's food, presents a balanced mix of fine dishes, recommending a particular local wine with each. Don't miss the dessert platter – absolute bliss.



## Getting There & Away

**Regional Express Airlines** (Rex; ☎ 13 17 13) flies to Sydney daily. The airport is 13km southeast of Orange.

**Selwoods** (☎ 6362 7963; www.selwoods.com.au) buses leave for Sydney (\$39, four hours 15 minutes) and Bathurst (\$9, 45 minutes) from the train station three times daily. **CountryLink** (☎ 13 22 32; www.countrylink.info) trains go to Sydney (\$41, five hours) and Dubbo (\$20, one hour 45 minutes) daily.

## WELLINGTON

☎ 02 / pop 5200

This thriving town at the junction of the Bell and Macquarie Rivers was the first settlement established west of Bathurst. With its steep green hills overlooking the town, and the wide Bell River running through, it's a very pleasant spot. But more than that, it has the amazing limestone caves with the world's largest stalagmite, a phosphate mine complex, significant fossil sites, a Japanese garden, and the parks and water sports at Lake Burrendong, a lake so big it contains 3½ times the volume of water in Sydney Harbour.

## Orientation & Information

The town meanders along the east bank of the Bell River, which joins the Macquarie River just north of the town centre. Nanima Cres curves past Bell River; Cameron Park runs down to the river from Nanima Cres, and across the river is the pleasant Pioneer Park.

In Cameron Park is the very helpful **visitors centre** (☎ 6845 1733; www.wellington.nsw.gov.au; ☎ 9am-5pm) which has a brochure with attractions, activities and festivals.

## Sights & Activities

The **Wellington Caves & Phosphate Mine** (☎ 6845 1733; adult/child 1 cave \$14/9, 2 caves or cave & mine \$24/17; ☎ tours daily; ♿ ♿) were discovered in 1830 by a colonist, George Ranken, who accidentally fell into one of the caves. These exquisite and unusual formations, plus subterranean waters, marsupial fossils and 'living fossils', are an absolute highlight. Cathedral Cave is famous for its majestic 32m-wide and 15m-high stalagmite! The phosphate mine is wheelchair-friendly.

Across the road from the caves is **Japanese Garden** (admission free; ☎ 9am-4pm), a gift from Wellington's Japanese sister city, Osawano.

You'll be entranced by the **Burrendong Botanic Garden & Arboretum** (☎ 6846 7454; www.burrendongarboretum.org; admission per car \$4; ☎ 7.30am-sunset), an area overlooking Lake Burrendong that's been transformed into a wonderland of native vegetation – 50,000 plants and the largest range in Australia. The colour and variety is spectacular, especially the Western Australian collection, and so is fern gully, an oasis of rainforest plants that have flourished across Australia for millions of years.

## Festivals & Events

The horse-racing carnival in March culminates in the running of the town's answer to the Golden Slipper (Australia's premier event for two-year-olds), the **Wellington Boot** (☎ 0427 732 710). At the same time there is the annual **Wellington Vintage Fair** (☎ 6845 1736), the largest swap meet in NSW – certainly the place to come if you are into antique motors. For a special December, come to **Carols in the Cathedral Cave** (☎ freecall 1800 621 614).

## Sleeping & Eating

**Wellington Caves Holiday Complex** (☎ 6845 2970; www.wellington.nsw.gov.au/tourism; Caves Rd; camp site per adult \$21, cabin/unit \$52/68; ♿ ♿) It's a buzz to camp out at the caves, with camp sites and cabins hidden between the trees around a golf course. The attractive cabins range from basic to self-contained brick units.

**Hermitage Hill Resort** (☎ 6845 4469; www.hermitagehill.com.au; 135 Maxwell St; guesthouse/cottage \$89/165; ♿ ♿) A stunning complex of heritage buildings and classic gardens, the main house features wide verandas with views over the town and nearby Mt Arthur. There's fun shared areas with wide-screen TV, spa baths in some rooms, and an excellent restaurant; Red Rosellas (mains \$20 to \$30; open for lunch and dinner) is the place for romance, or a dining delight any time, with its classic décor and interesting dishes on the menu, such as chicken breast in bacon on a rosemary skewer.

**Cactus Café & Gallery** (☎ 6845 4647; 33-5 Warrne St; dishes \$5-11; ☎ 10am-4pm Wed-Sun). It's nothing like being in school, drinking coffee in the former Sacred Hearts Infants School built in 1929-30 in the Spanish Mission style. The gallery features local artists and there are Mexican handcrafts for sale, as well as home-cooked meals using seasonal produce.

**Lion of Waterloo Tavern** (☎ 6845 3636; cnr Gipps & Montefiores Sts; mains \$12-20; ☎ lunch & dinner) Located

in a really old hotel – you need to duck to get in the door – that takes you back in time while you enjoy fab food like Waterloo chicken, washed down with local wines or well-priced beers.

## Getting There & Away

**CountryLink** (☎ 13 22 32; www.countrylink.info) Dubbo XPT service stops daily at Wellington on its way to and from Sydney (\$62, 6½ hours).

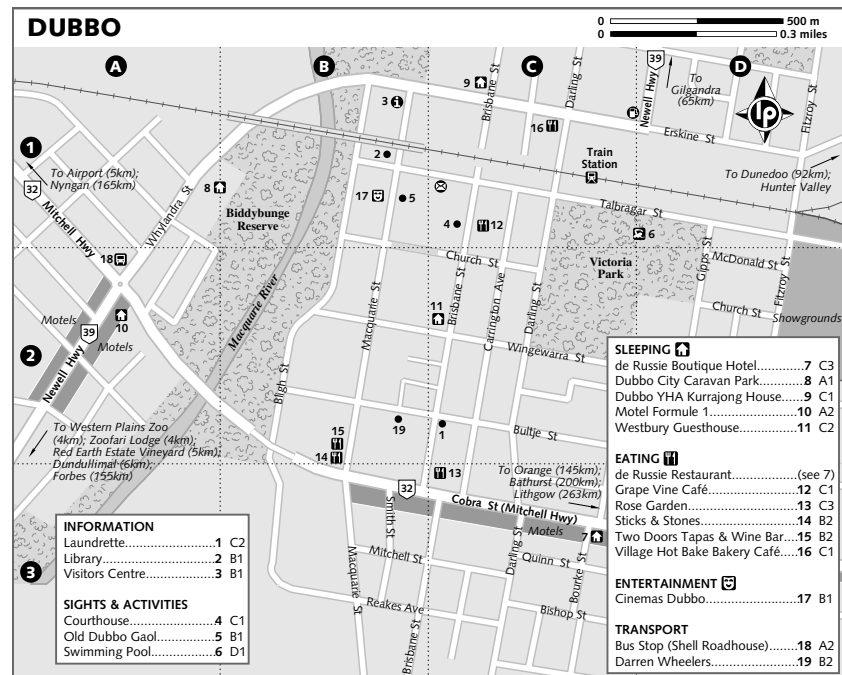
## DUBBO

☎ 02 / pop 40,000

Home to the grand Western Plains Zoo, Dubbo is also a rural centre and transport crossroads on the northern fringe of the Central West region. One of the larger towns in the state, busy but clean and attractive, it's here you'll find plenty of attractions and great shops before you head north or west into the outback.

## Orientation & Information

Dubbo's grid-pattern city centre lies just east of the Macquarie River, with parkland bordering both banks of the river.





quiet and solemn. Then there's the rare black rhinos, flown in from Zimbabwe as part of an international project to save these magnificent beasts from extinction. You can almost cuddle the fat little puddings. The exciting Asian Wetlands exhibit brings you up close to crazy, acrobatic otters and other wildlife found in a Nepalese village. The Bengal tigers alone are worth the admission price. You can walk the 6km, hire a bike (\$13) or join the crawling line of cars. Guided morning zoo walks start at 6.45am (\$3) every Saturday and Sunday.

Be met by a warder and taken off to **Old Dubbo Gaol** (☎ 6801 4460; 90 Macquarie St; adult/child \$12/5; ☎ 9am-4.30pm). Fortunately it's now a museum. 'Animatronic' characters tell their stories – you hear from a condemned man due to meet with the gallows. It's rather creepy but imparts an authentic feel for life in the 1800s.

Dubbo has some lovely old country-town buildings such as the **courthouse** (Brisbane St), an impressive neoclassical edifice. The visitors centre has maps for both a heritage walk and a heritage drive.

**Cinemas Dubbo** (☎ 6881 8600; 49 Macquarie St; adult/child/family \$12.50/10.50/38) has five theatres and shows all the first-release movies.

About 2km beyond the Western Plains Zoo, **Dundullimal** (☎ 6884 9984; Obley Rd; adult/child \$6/3; ☎ 10am-5pm), is a timber-slab homestead built in the 1840s. Slab houses, made from rough-cut tree trunks laid vertically around the frame, were the earliest form of permanent European housing in the newly settled areas of NSW.

Dubbo has a full range of activities, like cinemas, tenpin bowling, golf, cycleways and boomerang-throwing lessons. The visitors centre has the details, if you can tear yourself away from the vineyards, such as **Red Earth Estate Vineyard** (☎ 6885 6676; www.redearthestate.com.au; 18 Camp Rd; ☎ 10am-5pm Thu-Tue), just past the zoo, where you can taste for free or kick back with a grand platter of cheeses and fruits (\$18).

## Sleeping BUDGET

**Dubbo YHA Kurrajong House** (☎ 6882 0922; dubbolyha@iinet.net.au; cnr Brisbane St & Newell Hwy; camp site per adult \$8, dm/s/d/f \$23/30/46/55; ☎) A homey little fan-cooled place with open verandas. It fills up quickly, as the hosts have a reputation for being friendly and accommodating. Bike hire (\$8) is available.

**Motel Formule 1** (☎ 6882 9311; cnr Mitchell & Newell Hwys; d/q \$49/69; ☎) Cheap and cheerful, it's a great option with firm, comfortable beds, even though the rooms are a tad squashy.

**Dubbo City Caravan Park** (☎ 6882 4820; www.dubbo caravanpark.com.au; Whylandra St; camp site per adult \$24, cabin std/deluxe \$46/92; ☎) Right on the riverbank and an easy walk across the bridge into town, this is a busy spot set around an attractive pool. The barbecue area, kids' playground and camp kitchen are all excellent, and the cabins nestle privately between the trees.

## MIDRANGE

There's so many motels along Cobra and Whylandra Sts that the night is bright with their neon signs.

**de Russie Boutique Hotel** (☎ 6882 7888; www.de russiehotels.com.au; 95 Cobra St; s/d \$88/95; ☎) This very new B&B is just delightful, with architectural features that make you forget you're even in a motel. The continental breakfast is good and there's wireless internet available.

**Westbury Guesthouse** (☎ 6884 9445; westbury dubbo@bigpond.com; cnr Brisbane & Wingewarra Sts; s/d \$90/110; ☎) This lovely old heritage home (1910) has spacious rooms, all with ensembles, and the shared lounge and kitchen are comfortable. Ask about the rates for longer-term stays.

## TOP END

**Zoofari Lodge** (☎ 6881 1488; www.zoofari.com.au; Western Plains Zoo; s/d \$318/530; ☎) For an African safari experience, spend the night in total luxury just steps from the savannah. Charges include two days in the park with bicycles and exclusive tours, fine dining, discounts and a night under canvas.

## Eating

**Village Hot Bake Bakery Café** (☎ 6884 5454; 113 Darling St; snacks \$4-10; ☎ 6am-6pm Mon-Fri) The awards on the wall prove it has Australia's best pies, but don't mention the best big breakfast (\$10).

**Grape Vine Café** (☎ 6884 7354; 144 Brisbane St; mains \$11-15) Enjoy soup, pastas, focaccias, cakes, all tasty fresh snacks and meals in a coffee house atmosphere. Take your cup out the back to the lovely courtyard.

**Two Doors Tapas & Wine Bar** (☎ 6884 4338; 215b Macquarie St; mains \$14-16; ☎ dinner) Enjoy a great range of tapas, or just kick back with a drink in a leafy courtyard below street level.

**Rose Garden** (☎ 6882 8322, 208 Brisbane St; mains \$14-17; ☎ lunch & dinner) A local institution in Dubbo, this is a cosy spot with good Thai cuisine, richly coloured décor and very friendly staff.

**Sticks & Stones** (☎ 6885 4852; 215 Macquarie St; mains \$14-19; ☎ dinner) The wood-fired pizzas are gourmet and the pastas are pretty good too in this happy, atmospheric restaurant. If you're hungry, you'll love the country-style servings.

**de Russie Restaurant** (☎ 6882 7888; 93 Cobra St; mains \$23-25; ☎ dinner Mon-Sat) For a special meal, this pretty restaurant is perfect. Chef Wade Holding has a light touch, preparing beautifully balanced meals like braised duck with black grapes.

## Getting There & Around

**QantasLink** (☎ 13 13 13) and **Regional Express Airlines** (Rex; ☎ 13 17 13) have regular flights to Dubbo.

**CountryLink** (☎ 13 22 32; www.countrylink.info) runs the XPT train, and one coach service, to/from Sydney (\$60 to \$78, 6½ hours) daily.

**Darren Wheelers** (☎ 6882 9899; 25 Bultje St; ☎ closed Sun) rents mountain bikes for \$15 per day.

## PARKES

☎ 02 / pop 10,500

A visitor to the Parkes gold diggings by NSW premier Sir Henry Parkes in 1871 prompted the locals to change the name of their village from Currajong and name the main street after Parkes' wife, Clarinda. It's said that Sir Henry later influenced the decision to route the railway through the town.

Today, Parkes is happy to be known as the home of the radio telescope, made famous by the film *The Dish*. The town is still the sleepy charming place that was portrayed there. There's a festival in July called the Astrofest, held at the Dish; contact **CSIRO telescope** (☎ 6861 1700) for information.

## Orientation & Information

From the south, the Newell Hwy takes a twisting route through the centre of Parkes, becoming Grenfell St, Welcome St and finally joining Clarinda St, the main shopping street, to begin its run north to Dubbo. This is a three-way intersection, with Dalton St, the road running west to Condobolin, also joining Clarinda St here. South of this intersection, Clarinda St curves eastwards and becomes the main route to Orange.

The **visitors centre** (☎ 6863 8860; www.visitparkes.com.au; cnr Newell Hwy & Thomas St; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri,

10am-4pm Sat & Sun) is in Kelly Reserve. Parkes Shire **library** (☎ 6861 2309; Bogan St; ☎ 10am-7pm Mon-Fri, to noon Sat) has internet access.

## Sights & Activities MUSEUMS

Along the Newell Hwy on the Dubbo side of town the **Sir Henry Parkes Museum** (☎ 6862 3509; adult \$5; ☎ 10am-3.30pm Mon-Sat) is more like someone's house than a traditional exhibition space, but it has some Parkes memorabilia and more than 5000 pieces of antique machinery. A reconstruction of Moat House Cottage in Coventry, where Parkes was born in 1815, contains a gallery and an audiovisual story of Federation.

## PARKES RADIO TELESCOPE

The Radio Telescope, built by the CSIRO in 1961, is 6km east of the Newell Hwy, about 20km north of Parkes. As one of the world's most powerful telescopes it has helped Australian radio astronomers become leaders in their field, and brought pictures of the *Apollo 11* moon landing to an audience of 600 million people. The telescope has also played a vital role in detecting thousands of new galaxies at the edge of the known universe. More than half the known pulsars (rapidly spinning 'cores' of dead stars) have been discovered at Parkes.

Although the telescope is off-limits, you can get close enough for a good look, and the renovated **visitors centre** (☎ 6861 1777; www.csiro.au/parkesdish; admission free; ☎ 8.30am-4.15pm) has hands-on displays and screens that show you what the astronomers see. **3-D films** (adult/child \$6.50/5.00) such as *Journey to Mars* screen throughout the day. The **Dish Café** (☎ 6862 1566; Parkes Radio Telescope, Telescope Rd; meals \$6-12; ☎ 8.30am-4.15pm), in the shade of the telescope, makes great coffee, does breakfasts like Meteor Muesli and Dish Big Breakfast, and known for the excellent lunches, is like Space Station Steak Sandwich, served with rocket fuel if you want.

## Festivals & Events

The **Parkes 2PK Country Music Spectacular** (www.country.com.au) with concerts and street entertainment, and **Antique Motorbike Rally** (☎ 6862 2547) for vintage and classic motorcycles built before 1964, both bring the crowds for the Labour Day long weekend in early October. But perhaps the most unusual event is the

annual **Parkes Elvis Revival Festival** (☎ 6863 8860; www.visitparkes.com.au/elvis.htm), held in conjunction with Elvis' birthday on the second weekend in January. There's Elvis lookalike, soundalike, and even movealike competitions.

### Sleeping & Eating

**Currajong Tourist Cara Park** (☎ 6862 3400; Newell Hwy; camp site per adult \$20, cabin/cottage \$45/75; ♿ ♿) Just a few metres north of the visitors centre is this small, quiet and pretty place, with a spacious aviary to keep you entranced.

**Spanish Lantern Motor Inn** (☎ 6862 3388; www.spanishlantern.com.au; Newell Hwy; s/d \$64/74; ♿ ♿) This is great value, and your friendly hosts, John and Pam, know lots about the area.

**Bushmans Motor Inn** (☎ 6862 2199; Currajong Rd; r \$99-110; ♿ ♿) The motel is settled into a lovely garden around a central court and overlooks a lush paddock at the back.

**Bella's Caffè Espresso** (☎ 6862 4212; 245 Clarinda St; mains \$8-18; ☎ 8am-6pm Mon-Fri, to 2pm Sat & Sun) This small but shiny new coffee stop has excellent stir-fries, soups and snacks. The staff are as bubbly as the espresso machine.

**Marty's Restaurant** (☎ 6863 4333; Newell Hwy; mains \$17-25; ☎ 7-9am & 6-9pm Mon-Sat) Located in the Country Comfort hotel, this is a peaceful spot for a home-cooked meal like corned silverside with potato bake. The drinks menu features local wines – try the Limestone Creek Vineyard range.

### Getting There & Away

**Regional Express Airlines** (Rex; ☎ 13 17 13) has daily flights to Sydney (excluding Sunday).

**CountryLink** (☎ 13 22 32) buses connect to trains departing Orange and Lithgow for Sydney (\$57, 6½ hours, twice daily). The *Indian Pacific* between Sydney and Perth stops here, and the *Broken Hill Outback Explorer* also stops on Monday, en route to Sydney.

### FORBES

☎ 02 / pop 9975

Perched on the banks of the Lachlan River, Forbes is one of NSW's prettiest towns, retaining much of its 19th-century flavour thanks to its beautifully restored buildings. It is also famous for its connections with Ben Hall, a landowner who became Australia's first official bushranger, and who was betrayed and shot near Forbes. Visit the town's cemetery where people still leave notes on his grave.

The first Europeans to set foot on the future town site were members of explorer John Oxley's party in 1817. Oxley was so unimpressed with the clay soil, poor timber and swamps that he concluded, 'It is impossible to imagine a worse country.' Pity he wasn't here in the 1860s to see the gold rush, when more than 8000kg of gold was found!

### Orientation & Information

Forbes has two main roads: Dowling St (Newell Hwy) and, parallel, Rankin St. The cheerful **visitors centre** (☎ 6852 4155) in the old train station at the northern end of town also exhibits works by local artists. The **NPWS office** (☎ 6851 4429; 83 Lachlan St; ☎ 8.30am-4.30pm Mon-Fri) has information about national parks in the region.

Internet access is available at **Western Internet Services** (☎ 6851 1624; Lachlan St; per hr \$5; ♿ Mon-Sat).

### Sights & Activities

Forbes' wide streets are lined with grand 19th-century gold-funded buildings including the **Town Hall** (1891) and **courthouse** (1880). At the tower atop the **Albion Hotel** on Lachlan St a watch was kept for Cobb & Co coaches.

The Albion also contains the interesting **Bushrangers Hall of Fame** (☎ 6851 1881; 135 Lachlan St; adult/child \$5/3; ☎ 10am-6pm), which has guided tours of old underground tunnels used to transfer gold from banks into waiting coaches. On the corner of Court and Lachlan Sts is the **post office** (1879-81) which has an unusual three-storey clock tower.

Osborne Hall on Cross St was the dance hall of the Osborne Hotel and now houses the **Forbes Museum** (☎ 6852 1694; adult/child \$2/1; ☎ 3-5pm Oct-May, 2-4pm Jun-Sep) of local history, with Ben Hall relics.

Just off the Newell Hwy about 4km south of Forbes, **Gum Swamp** is an enchanting wetland area that is home to many species of birds. There's a hide to watch them from. While sunset and sunrise are the best viewing times, it is an idyllic spot at any hour.

### Sleeping & Eating

**Forbes Apex Riverside Tourist Park** (☎ 6852 2694; www.touristpark.com.au; 88 Remond St; camp site per adult \$24, cabin std/luxury \$50/90; ♿ ♿) Running down to the Lachlan River, southwest of town, this fishing haven has lovely grassy areas, plenty of shade trees and modern amenities.

**Vandenberg Hotel** (☎ 6852 2015; info@vandenberghotel.com.au; 7 Court St; s/d/f \$30/40/50) This impressive pub has grand old rooms along a wide corridor. Rooms have a fridge and TV, and most open onto a balcony overlooking Victoria Park.

**Ben Hall Motor Inn** (☎ 6851 2345; 5-7 Cross St; r \$70; ♿) It's a budget motel only in price. The rooms are spacious and it's all quite charming.

**Mezzanine Style** (☎ 6851 4056; 23 Rankin St; mains \$5-11; ☎ 9am-5.30pm) Indeed a mezzanine, from where you look over a funky furniture and book shop. Choose a luscious meal like sweet chilli chicken burger from the blackboard menu.

**Forbes Inn Restaurant** (☎ 6851 6888; 43 Rankin St; mains \$18-26; ☎ lunch daily, dinner Tue-Sat) Upstairs in the Forbes Inn is this elegant, award-winning, fine dining restaurant with old favourites like grilled lamb cutlets using local produce.

### Getting There & Away

**CountryLink** (☎ 13 22 32) buses connect to trains to Sydney (\$57, eight hours, twice daily).

### COWRA

☎ 02 / pop 13,147

Ever since August 1944, when 1000 Japanese prisoners broke out of a POW camp here (231 of them died, along with four Australians), Cowra has aligned itself with Japan and with the cause of furthering world peace. The break-out is immortalised in the film *Die Like the Carp!*

### Orientation & Information

Cowra straggles up the side of a steep hill above Lachlan River, its main street, Kendall St, abuzz with alluring shops.

#### DOWN THE LACHLAN

'I had written him a letter which I had, for want of better  
Knowledge, sent to where I met him down the Lachlan, years ago'

Banjo Paterson

The scenic Lachlan Valley Way runs by the Lachlan River from Forbes to **Condobolin**, the main service centre and home town of Australian singer Shannon Noll. There are several camping sites and fishing spots along the winding road.

The 40-hectare **Gum Bend Lake**, 3km west of Condobolin, is the area's water playground; however, it is sometimes closed in summer due to low water levels. About 8km north of 'Condo' is **Mt Tilga**, officially the geographical centre of NSW.

North of Condobolin, the farmland begins to blur into the outback, with several routes heading north to the Barrier Hwy (if you have a decent map). And for the rest of Banjo Paterson's poem, go to <http://oldpoetry.com> and search for 'Clancy of the Overflow'.

The **visitors centre** (☎ 6342 4333; www.cowratourism.com.au; Olympic Park, Mid Western Hwy; ☎ 9am-5pm) has a great introduction to the break-out, with a strange but fascinating hologram film on the subject. The **Japanese War Cemetery** (Doncaster Dve) is 5km north of town, off Binni Creek Rd. A nearby **memorial** marks the site of the break-out, and you can still see the camp foundations.

### Sights & Activities

Built as a token of Cowra's connection with Japanese POWs (but with no overt mention of the war or the break-out), the **Japanese Garden** (☎ 6341 2233; Binni Creek Rd; adult/child \$8.50/5; ☎ 8.30am-5pm) and the attached cultural centre on Bellevue Hill are well worth visiting. The large garden, serene and beautifully maintained, was a gift from the Japanese government. The cultural centre is a peaceful place, with displays that include a collection of *ukiyo-e* paintings depicting everyday events in pre-industrial Japan. A **sakura** (cherry blossom festival) is held around the second weekend in October.

Nearby is the **Bellevue Hill Flora & Fauna Reserve**, a complete contrast to the formality of its neighbour.

The darkest place for star-gazing in all of Australia is **Darby Falls Observatory** (☎ 6345 1900; Mt McDonald Rd; adult/child \$10/7; ☎ 7-10pm, 8.30-11pm during daylight saving). From town, take Darby Falls Rd for 22km and turn onto Mt McDonald Rd, then follow the signs. Turn off your headlights as soon as you see the red fairy lights leading up to the observatory.

Kids will enjoy the **War, Rail & Rural Fun Museum** (☎ 6342 2801; www.caravancitycowra.com.au; Mid



Western Hwy; adult/child \$9/7; ☎ 9am-5pm) with its working steam engines, hands-on railway and farming displays, and the POW camp. They'll also enjoy a visit to **Smokehouse Deli** (☎ 6341 1489; Mid Western Hwy; ☎ 9.30am-6pm Wed-Mon) where you can feed and catch trout and watch your catch being smoked, ready to eat or take away with you. It's in a massive container shed, where you can also sample the local produce and buy up big as it's all fresh direct to you.

Each August, Lachlan Valley Railway celebrates the rail travel of yesteryear with **Vintage Train Rides** (☎ 6342 5101; Cowra railway station).

### WINERIES

There are some excellent wineries in the area for wine tasting and trying the local produce; the visitors centre has a guide to cellar doors, and **Ideal Tours** (☎ 6341 3350; www.australianacorn.com; 1 Kendal St) runs bus tours of the area. Right in town is the **Mill** (☎ 6341 4141; www.windowrie.com.au; 6 Vaux St; ☎ 10am-6pm), Cowra's oldest building, where its millstone first turned in 1861. Now it's a well-regarded winery – try the region's famous chardonnay.

### Sleeping & Eating

**Cowra Van Park** (☎ 6340 2110; Lachlan St; camp site \$22, cabin std/deluxe \$60/70) Shady and green, and overlooking the lovely Lachlan, this is really handy to everything.

**Imperial Hotel** (☎ 6341 2588; 16 Kendal St; s/d \$40/50, d with bathroom \$80) This is one of several old pubs in Cowra that offer comfortable rooms. But inside the Imperial the rooms are crisply modern and motel-like.

**Breakout Motel** (☎ 6342 6111; www.breakoutmotel.com.au; 181 Kendal St; s/d \$88/98; ☎) This very modern and quite delightful place, right in the centre of things, uses slate, blue and beige amid its covered walkways to set a peaceful atmosphere.

**Vineyard Motel** (☎ 6342 3641; vineyard@dodo.com.au; Chardonnay Rd; s/d \$90/100 d incl spa \$110; ☎) Located just 4km out of town, this place overlooks the lush Lachlan Valley. Surrounded by fields of grapevines, it's secluded and peaceful, with wide vine-covered verandas for a romantic feel.

**Naked Lady** (☎ 6341 1455; mains \$9-17; ☎) breakfast & lunch) Gourmet delights, like lamb kofta skewers with baba ganoush, are served at this cheerful eatery, where you are surrounded by waterfalls and statues.

**Neila** (☎ 6341 2188; 5 Kendal St; mains \$29; ☎) dinner Thu-Sat) This small gem on Cowra's main drag fuses regional goodies with Mod Oz creativity. It's decidedly laid-back, but the food certainly isn't – try the caramelised pork hock with green papaya and cashew-nut salad.

### Getting There & Away

**CountryLink** (☎ 13 22 32) has a twice-daily service to Sydney (\$58, 5½ hours).

### AROUND COWRA

About 40km west of Cowra, **Grenfell** is a quiet country town with a curvy Main St and some beautiful old buildings. Henry Lawson was born here in 1867 and a memorial marking his birthplace is off the highway at the eastern edge of town. The annual **Henry Lawson Arts Festival** (www.henrylawsonfestival.asn.au) is held around the writer's birthday on 17 June. For something completely different, Grenfell hosts the **National Guinea Pig Races** (www.lisp.com.au/grenfell) during Easter and in June.

Nineteen kilometres southwest of Grenfell, **Weddin National Park** (8361 hectares) is a rugged place with lots of wildlife, Aboriginal sites and some good walking tracks. **Holy Camp** in the northwest and **Seatons Camp** in the northeast are camping areas; both have road access and you can walk between them. The NPWS office in Forbes (p244) has more information.

### YOUNG

☎ 02 / pop 11,957

Colourful hills of cherry orchards – pink, red, green – tell you you're coming into Young, Australia's 'cherry capital' on the edge of the western slopes of the Great Dividing Range. Nicole Jasprizza, who arrived during the gold rush, first planted cherries here in 1860. His orchard was an immediate success and expanded rapidly. Today there are about 130 orchards producing a large proportion of Australia's crop. Prunes are also an important local industry, but 'prune capital' doesn't have quite the same ring.

The notorious White Australia policy of Australia's early years had its origins near Young – goldfield riots at Lambing Flat in 1861 led to the government restriction on Chinese immigration.

### Orientation & Information

Entering town from the south, the Olympic Hwy becomes Short St, then enters Main St,

turns east into Boorowa, the main shopping strip, north into Zouch, where the best restaurants are, and continues across the railway line north up to Cowra. The **visitors centre** (☎ 6382 3394; 2 Short St; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, 9.30am-4pm Sat & Sun) is near the creek as you enter town.

The cherry harvest is in November and December. In January other stone fruits are harvested and in February the prune harvest begins. The **Ready Workforce office** (☎ 6382 1403; 187 Boorowa St; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri) can help you find fruit-picking work.

### Sights & Activities

#### WINERIES

This area produced wine grapes from the 1880s until the 1930s, when the more profitable cherry orchards took over. In the 1970s the Barwang vineyard was established, and there are now about 15 small vineyards in the area producing award-winning cool-climate wines. The visitors centre has a booklet. Two that are excellent are **Lindsay's Woodonga Hill** (☎ 6389 2972; 1101 Cowra Rd; ☎ 9am-5pm) northeast of Young, and **Chalkers Crossing** (☎ 6382 6900; www.chalkerscrossing.com.au; 387 Henry Lawson Way; ☎ 10am-4pm) is north.

#### OTHER ATTRACTIONS

The **Lambing Flat Folk Museum** (☎ 6382 2248; Campbell St; adult/child \$4/1; ☎ 10am-4pm) displays artefacts from the goldfields including the remarkable 'Roll Up' banner carried by European miners in protest against the Chinese in 1861. The Sydney Chinese community raised money to build the **Chinese Tribute Garden** (Pitstone Rd; admission free; ☎ daily), a tranquil spot featuring a pagoda and dam, to remember

the contribution the Chinese miners made, including an ingenious troughlike structure to transport the water up to 3km away.

Pick your own fruit – the visitors centre staff has a list of orchards. If you fancy some horse riding, try the **Lirambenda Riding Club** (☎ 6383 4237; Old Forbes Rd; ☎ by appt). **JD's Jam Factory** (☎ 6382 4060; Grenfell Rd; admission free; ☎ 8am-6pm) is a small jam factory that started life as a roadside stall and now supplies companies like SPC and Yoplait. Sample or buy some of the produce, just don't leave Young without trying their glorious cherry pie.

A spectacular garden that you can wander through for a small fee is **Jacaranda Hill** (☎ 6382 4657; Noonan Rd).

### Festivals & Events

Young's two main festivals (☎ 6382 3394; www.visityoung.com.au) are the **Cherry Festival**, held on the first weekend in December, with markets, heritage train rides, street art and a cherry-pip competition, and the **Lambing Flat Festival**, held mid-April, with a legendary bush dance, historic re-enactments, street dances and much more fun. If you want to see the trees in blossom, come in early October.

### Sleeping & Eating

**Young Tourist Park** (☎ 6382 2190; Zouch St; camp site per adult \$20, cabin std/deluxe \$60/77; ☎) A new camp kitchen and drive-through sites with bathrooms for caravans make this a comfortable option. It's run by a young couple who welcome pets, and it's just a short stroll over the railway line into town.

**Empire Hotel** (☎ 6382 1665; www.empirehotelyoung.com; cnr Lovell & Main Sts; s/d/f \$30/50/60). Another grand old pub, which has plenty of pleasant

#### DETOUR: LET'S GO BALLOONING

Canowindra is the Ballooning capital of Australia, because of its gentle winds and attractive countryside. Several outfits offer flights including **Aussie Balloontrek** (☎ 6364 0211; www.aussieballoontrek.com.au; Nanami Ln, Canowindra; 30min/1hr flights from \$160/280). And there's a barbecue breakfast and champagne along with the view.

On Anzac Day weekend, **Marti's Balloon Fiesta** (☎ 6344 2422; www.martisfiesta.com.au) sees up to 50 hot air balloons competing.

Canowindra's main thoroughfare, Gaskill St, follows the crooked route of the old bullock track and every building is heritage listed. The **Age of Fishes Museum** (☎ 6344 1008; cnr Gaskill & Ferguson Sts; admission \$7.70; ☎ 10am-4pm) displays the fish fossil collection which made Canowindra world famous in 1956 for the 360 million year old fossil find. Ask about going on a fossil dig.

From Cowra, follow the signs to **Canowindra**, to the north of the Lachlan River. Continue north to Orange, through fields of yellow canola and budding vineyards.

rooms, each with TVs and kettles, and shiny, clean shared facilities.

**Goldrush Motel** (☎ 6382 3444; goldrush@bigpond.net.au; 6 Campbell St; s/d/f \$65/85/110; 🚗 🚲) A friendly place with cheery rooms, free Astar, a great barbecue and playground, and a self-contained cottage (2-/8-person \$100/250).

**Marina Homestead B&B & Alpaca Farm** (☎ 6382 6770; Moppity Rd; B&B d \$120) No wonder the alpacas are content. There's a beautiful rambling garden around this historic homestead, all rooms have private bathrooms, the sitting room has a wood fire, and breakfast features local produce. It's just 5km southeast of town.

**Country Providore** (☎ 6382 7255; 143 Boorowa St; mains \$8-16; 🕒 8.30am-6pm Mon-Fri, to 2pm Sat) This is a busy licensed place with attractive giftware on display. Take your meal outside if you prefer, and there's a takeaway menu.

**Zouch** (☎ 6382 2775; 26 Zouch St; mains \$19-29; 🕒 lunch daily, dinner Thu-Sat) The old Masonic Hall houses this charming restaurant that serves lashings of exotic country cooking using local fruit, veg, meat and oil, and features an extensive range of local wines.

**Café de Jour** (☎ 6382 1413; cnr Lovell & Zouch Sts; mains \$21-27; 🕒 lunch & dinner Tue-Sat) This is a lovely restaurant with great atmosphere, where Stephen and Kelly present meals with a finesse well acknowledged by food critics. The chicken breast pocketed with prawn and crab farce is like a work of art.

### Getting There & Away

Buses stop at the old train station on Lovell St. **Fraser's Coaches** (☎ 13 22 32; www.fraserscoaches.com.au) runs a daily service between Cootamundra and Dubbo, which connects with the XPT train to Melbourne (\$72).