

SQ Country Conversations

Conversation Starters – February 19, 2024

This edition of SQ Country Conversations we take you on an adventure. Starting in Stanthorpe, the town that stole Queensland's spotlight in Wotif's Top Town Awards and this weekend the pick of the crop as the Stanthorpe Apple & Grape Harvest Festival begins. On to Goondiwindi for the gruelling 'Hell of the West Festival' triathlon. Spend this weekend in a field of blooming sunflowers at Warraba Sunflowers and Ten Chain Farm, finishing in Toowoomba to experience a lunar light Eclipse. Find joy exploring Southern Queensland Country. #sqcountry

Wotif's Aussie Top Towns Awards name Stanthorpe #1 in Queensland

- Where: Stanthorpe, Southern Downs and Granite Belt – 2.5hours west of Brisbane where summer nights are cool, and winter means warm nights by the fire.
- The only Queensland destination on the list, Stanthorpe has landed #3 in Australia in the Wotif Aussie Town of the Year Awards announced last week.
- According to Wotif, 43% of Aussies planning a domestic holiday are looking for somewhere new within Australia with a good deal a major persuader in choosing where to travel. The Aussie Town of the Year Awards are selected based on accommodation affordability, quality and traveller feedback.
- Echoing the trend to swap a coastal getaway for a country escape, Stanthorpe is a mecca for foodies, adventure seekers and luxury lovers. An award-winning wine destination with over 50 cellar doors delivering both known and emerging wine varietals, it's also home to practically all of Queensland's summer fruits and boasts the most dramatic crop of granite boulders in hike-worthy Girraween National Park. Add to that apple and strawberry picking in warmer months, truffle hunts in winter, the town's heritage stops, and festivals that celebrate harvest and the seasons and you've plenty of reasons to explore why Stanthorpe tops the list for Queensland.
- Peter Homan, CEO of Southern Queensland Country Tourism said "We are thrilled that Stanthorpe has been recognised as Queensland's only finalist and #3 nationally in the Wotif Aussie Town of the Year Awards 2024. It's a prestigious honour for Stanthorpe and the region having come through tough times recently from drought to fire and floods. Our country region presents a story of resilience and our operators in the Stanthorpe area are proving that with exceptional experiences from wine tastings and vineyard tours to hiking adventures and great events. Our accommodation blends in beautifully with these experiences covering motels to glamping and farm-stays to luxury wine-barrel shaped villas. It's all here. We are extremely proud to be a part of Wotif's Aussie Top Towns, with this year being the second in a row for Southern Queensland Country to feature in the top 10.
- Media release and images in the Dropbox folder – see link below.
- For comment and interviews from Southern Queensland Country's CEO Peter Homan, connect via the contacts below.

SQ Country Conversations

Conversation Starters – February 19, 2024 continued

Crushing it since 1966 - Queensland's summer fruit harvest event returns

- Location: Stanthorpe, on the southern end of the Southern Downs & Granite Belt – 2.5hr drive from Brisbane CBD.
- Dates: Friday 23 February to Sunday 3 March 2024
- Come join the excitement as the Granite Belt bursts into life for harvest season! Immerse yourself in delicious food and exquisite wines at the renowned Stanthorpe Apple & Grape Harvest Festival happening over 10 days from February 23rd to March 3rd.
- Held every two years, what began as the Apple Harvest Festival in 1966 quickly evolved into a celebration of the whole summer fruit harvest on Queensland's Granite Belt. Now Stanthorpe Apple & Grape Harvest Festival is one of Queensland's longest running and most successful festivals, with crowds of over 60,000 expected during the event period.
- Each event a theme is agreed to bring the festival to life. This year the theme is resilience, following a series of recent weather events impacting farmers. The theme hopes to raise awareness and educate visitors on the region's agricultural heritage.
- Festival festivities include both free and ticketed events with the first weekend including the opening Street Party, 2024 Australian National Busking Championship: South-East Queensland Finals, two Long Lunch events and pick your own apples sessions at Nicoletti's Orchard. Midweek attendees can witness Paddock to Plate cooking demonstrations, meet local farmers and hear the stories behind the delicious produce. Whilst the main and final weekend, March 1st – 3rd, allows visitors to enjoy the Granite Belt in one location with 17 local wineries, breweries, distilleries, and food producers at Queensland Country Bank's 3-day Food & Wine Fiesta. Plus – there's the Channel 7 Grand Parade and Rebel Fm Street Carnival and the famed Grape Crush happening Friday and Saturday in the Piazza.
- View full program: [Stanthorpe Apple & Grape Harvest Festival 2024](#)
- Visit us - [Southern Queensland Country's 'Savour Tasting Trails'](#) will be at the event Saturday 2nd March
- Keen to explore more? [Here's 10 things to do in Stanthorpe plus your guide to making the most of summer in Stanthorpe](#)
- Images in the Dropbox folder, see link below.
- Events in the Southern Queensland Country region are a draw-card for visitors and a major contributor to the local economy. Interviews on this event and the value of regional events are available with CEO Peter Homan. See contacts below to arrange.

SQ Country Conversations

Conversation Starters – February 19, 2024 continued

The heat is on as Goondiwindi prepares for Hell of the West 2024

- Location: Goondiwindi, 350km south west from Brisbane's CBD on the Macintyre River.
- Dates: Saturday 23 and Sunday 24 March 2024
- Goondiwindi's 'Festival of Hell' is back to test the toughest of the tough in hellish conditions across a 102km course.
- The main event, known as Queensland's toughest triathlon, jump-starts on the Sunday with a 2km swim in the Macintyre River, an 80km bike ride along Goondiwindi's quiet country roads finishing with a 20km run along the Macintyre to the finish.
- The two-day event supports competitors of all levels, abilities and ages with a Super Saturday program including a 5km or 10km run on a flat course, the Hell Kids Tri event and the Hell Firestarter Tri for novices keen to test their fitness level.
- The Goondiwindi event first took shape in 1989 as an Olympic distance event clocking up 51.5km over the course. Wanting to ensure the event would continue and attract competitors from across Australia, the summer-timed event course length was expanded to 102km earning the title of the 'toughest triathlon in Queensland'.
- Today the event draws elite and up-and-coming competitors from across Australia and the world, attracting sports-enthusiasts to the town and supporting its visitor economy. The two-day program ensures stays of one to three days and the opportunity for visitors to explore the town – from art trails to boutique shopping, country bakeries to famed country pubs. Or jump on a farm and town tour that includes a stop to see cotton plants in bloom.
- Click for more details on the [Hell of the West Weekend](#)
- Explore further with [4 days on the Goondiwindi Art Trail](#) taking in Inglewood, Texas and Goondiwindi or [explore these 10 things to do whilst in town](#).
- Get to Goondiwindi with this [3 day itinerary taking in Toowoomba and Warwick](#) or begin the journey [from the Gold Coast with this itinerary](#)
- Images in the Dropbox folder, see link below.
- Events in the Southern Queensland Country region are a draw-card for visitors and a major contributor to the local economy. Interviews on this event and the value of regional events are available with CEO Peter Homan. See contacts below to arrange.

SQ Country Conversations

Conversation Starters – February 19, 2024 continued

Queensland Country in bloom as sunflowers light up the landscape

- Two locations:
 - [Warraba Sunflowers](#), off Watts Siding Rd in Cambooya – 29km south of Toowoomba
 - [Ten Chain Farm](#), Flagstone Creek in the Lockyer Valley – 25km east of Toowoomba
- When: this weekend. Different times apply per location.
 - Warraba Sunflowers opens Saturday 24 and Sunday 25 February from 8am to 5pm
 - Ten Chain Farm hosts a Family Picnic Day with the Flowers, Sunday 25 February 9am to 3pm
- Bring your bestie, the gal pals, or the whole family including the dog (well behaved, of course) for a day among the happiest flowers on earth. BYO picnic, unfurl the blanket and enjoy the sunshine. With their big booming yellow flower heads there's so much to love for being amongst these blooming beauties.
- Peter Homan, CEO of Southern Queensland Country Tourism, said "nothing says happiness and fun like a field of sunflowers, and with two fields opening their gates to visitors this weekend there's double the reason for visitors to explore our region"
- [Tickets for Warraba Sunflowers](#) include option to pick as many sunflowers as you wish. BYO secateurs.
- Here's how to get your [tickets for Ten Chain Farm – Family Picnic Day with the Flowers](#)
- More ideas on [how to make the most of harvest season as a family in Southern Queensland Country](#).



SQ Country Conversations

Conversation Starters – February 19, 2024 continued

Toowoomba to experience a luna light Eclipse over the school holidays

- Where: [Queens Park, Toowoomba](#) – 1.5hrs from Brisbane, 2hrs from Gold Coast or 2hr45min from Sunshine Coast.
- When: launches Friday 22 March, running through to 13 April 2024.
- Perfectly timed for school holidays, Toowoomba's Queens Park Botanic Gardens will take on a new look by night transformed into a magical Luna Light Journey. A family-friendly event, the gardens come alive with holograms, lasers, interactive projections and lush soundscapes.
- The event is produced by Laservision, creators of sensory experiences including Brisbane's Enchanted Garden and Reef Lights at Cairns Festival along with global shows including 'A Symphony of Lights' across Hong Kong harbour recognised by the Guinness Book of Records as the world's largest light and sound performance show.
- 'Eclipse Toowoomba' is a unique outdoor experience, Laservision CEO Shannon Brooks said "we are excited to bring Eclipse to Toowoomba, one of many Luna Light Journey's we've produced recently to mass acclaim and sold-out nights in cities across Australia." Working alongside SQCT major stakeholder Toowoomba Regional Council, Mr Brooks shared "the team can't wait to see a smile on the faces of young and old as they walk through the gate".
- The event is inclusive for all, with paved walkways and a low-sensory session every evening at 6pm with fewer numbers and more ambient lighting.
- More information on [Eclipse Toowoomba](#) here including [link to ticket sales](#).
- Make it a weekend with this [Getaway Guide to Toowoomba](#)
- Images and full media release available via the Dropbox link below.
- Interested media are invited to attend a Media walk-through to preview the journey ahead of the launch. For more details including meet-up location and timing, connect your SQCT via the contacts below.

Dropbox link:

<https://www.dropbox.com/t/sgnXOOk8ePtCNH8W>

Deb Holland | Marketing Manager
deb@sqct.com.au | 0447 321 989

Sheree Gillies | Marketing Communications Coordinator
sheree@sqct.com.au | 0437 008 712

<http://www.sqct.com.au>



@SouthernQueenslandCountry



@sqcountry | #sqcountry



@sqcountry



@Southern Queensland Country Tourism