

# SQ Country Conversations

Conversation Starters – June 29, 2023

## Visitors from SEQ flock to Southern Queensland Country, boosting the tourism economy

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- For release: 28 June 2023:
- Latest tourism data shows the love affair with the nature-abundant region continues to grow strong with a new record for visitor numbers from the Gold Coast, and continued growth from Brisbane markets, contributing toward the region's tourism economy. OVE hit a new record for Southern Queensland Country at \$1.3 billion over the 12 months to March 2023.
- Southern Queensland Country key points:
  - OVE - \$1.3 billion for Southern Queensland Country, up 41.8% over the year
  - Visitor numbers – 2.7 million, up 17.8% year on year
  - Visitor nights – 7.3 million, up 11.3% year on year
  - Average length of stay 2.7 nights; average spend per night \$177; average spend per visitor \$476
- As Tourism Research Australia data for the year to March 2023 confirming Queensland as Australia's top holiday region for domestic visitors, Southern Queensland Country hits a new record for domestic OVE at \$1.3 billion, a growth of 41.8% over the year and a strong 52.9% up on 2019. The growth was supported by an increase in visitation at 2.7 million (up 17.8%) staying 7.3 million nights (up 11.3%) and spending on average \$476 per visitor (up 20.4%).
- Topping the list was Brisbane, with 1.1 million making the drive to Queensland's southern countryside and a record 254,000 Gold Coasters
- Holiday visit numbers also grew with 937,000 holiday-makers (up 9.8%) making new memories in the Southern Queensland Country region.
- Interstate visitor numbers also hit a new record at 502,000 (up 110.5% over the year) as did total number of nights spent at 200,000 (up 115.8% year on year).
- "A pleasing result off the back of increased interest in nature-based tourism. Southern Queensland Country is an easily accessible, and affordable option so close to Brisbane and the Gold Coast. Our experiences are fabulous, our product offering keeps getting better and better and now, coming into our winter and spring events season we expect to see our domestic visitor numbers grow further" CEO Peter Homan.
- Media enquiries and interview opportunities with CEO Peter Homan are welcome via the contacts below.
- Full domestic data results in Dropbox folder – see link below.

## **SQ Country Conversations**

*Conversation Starters – June 29, 2023 continued*

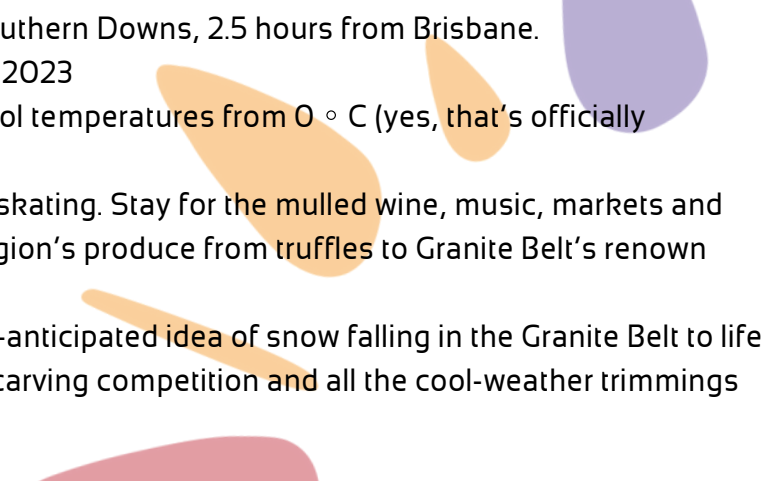
### **Nature-abundant Somerset joins the Southern Queensland Country portfolio**

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- For release 29 June 2023:
- Southern Queensland Country Tourism welcomes Somerset to its country region portfolio from July 1st. Renown for its quaint country towns, unique events, active outdoor experiences and quality produce giving rise to farm-to-fork flavours on menus throughout the region, Somerset is a natural addition to Southern Queensland Country's vibrant and nature abundant region.
- Supported by Tourism and Events Queensland and Somerset Regional Council, the addition of the Somerset region to Southern Queensland Country extends the Regional Tourism Organisation's footprint to include the countryside fringing Brisbane and the Sunshine Coast's backyards. Incorporating the country towns of Lowood, Fernvale, Kilcoy, Toogoolawah and Esk, Somerset region also boasts some of Southern Queensland's favourite fishing holes Lakes Somerset, Wivenhoe and Atkinson plus 80% (that's over 100km) of the Brisbane Valley Rail Trail.
- "A one-hour drive west from Brisbane or the Sunshine Coast, Somerset is a welcome addition to Southern Queensland Country. Somerset boasts a strong drive market attracted to the region's magnificent natural assets connecting beautifully with our existing partner Council regions" stated SQCT CEO Peter Homan. "Plus, the quality and provenance of the region produce adds strength the our food story, one of the many reasons visitors are attracted to our region".
- Media enquiries and interview opportunities with CEO Peter Homan are welcome via the contacts below.

### **It's snowing in Queensland – at Snowflakes in Stanthorpe this weekend!**

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- Location: Stanthorpe, Granite Belt in the Southern Downs, 2.5 hours from Brisbane.
  - When: This Friday 30 June to Sunday 2 July 2023
  - Weather forecast: Expect blue skies and cool temperatures from 0 ° C (yes, that's officially 'freezing')
  - Come for the snow, ice-sculptures and ice-skating. Stay for the mulled wine, music, markets and International Food Festival featuring the region's produce from truffles to Granite Belt's renown wines.
  - Snowflakes in Stanthorpe brings the much-anticipated idea of snow falling in the Granite Belt to life with a snow machine, ice-skating rink, ice-carving competition and all the cool-weather trimmings you'd expect in a true winter wonderland.
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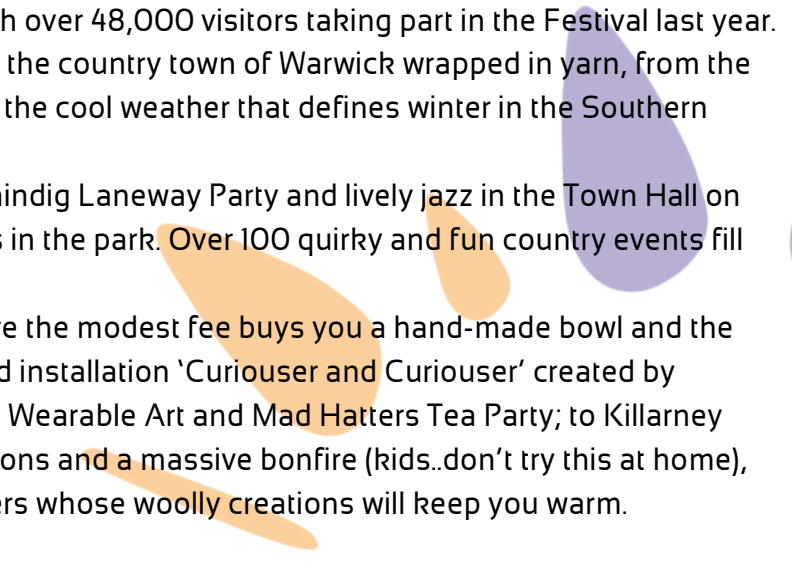
### Snowflakes in Stanthorpe continued...

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- A grass-roots event, the emphasis is on family and community with kid-friendly activities every day throughout the festival. In fact, most of the events, performances and entertainment are offered for free! Free laser light show and lantern parade, laugh along with the Larrikin Puppets, dance to the Drummers. Make an igloo and get into the snow!..there's tobogganing and igloo-making, build your own snowman and play in the giant snow globes. In fact only a twirl on the ice-skating rink has a price tag attached.
- With the town of Stanthorpe fully decked with decorations created by local school kids, guests are encouraging to pay the love forward with gold coin donations, shopping at the markets and indulging in the food and wine events, supporting the local businesses. Last festival over \$30,000 was raised to support local community groups – this year the aim is to beat that record.
- Find the full schedule and info on Ice-skating tickets - [visit Snowflakes in Stanthorpe here](#)
- Images and media pack available in the Dropbox folder – see link below.

### Jumpers & Jazz in July is Queensland's quirkiest winter festival

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- Location: Warwick, Southern Downs – 2hr drive from Brisbane.
  - When: 10-day program from 20 to 30 July 2023
  - What started as a Warwick streetscaping project back in 2004 has evolved into a 10-day celebration of the quirky, the fun and the wonderful with over 48,000 visitors taking part in the Festival last year.
  - Jumpers – Creativity and colour collide with the country town of Warwick wrapped in yarn, from the trees to the Town Hall bringing a warmth to the cool weather that defines winter in the Southern Downs.
  - Jazz – Jumping off with the 'Jumpin' Jazz Shindig Laneway Party and lively jazz in the Town Hall on the first Friday night to Twilight Jazz n Blues in the park. Over 100 quirky and fun country events fill the 10-day schedule end to end.
  - Quirky starts with Potters Soup Night, where the modest fee buys you a hand-made bowl and the soup; Alice's whimsical wonderland themed installation 'Curiouser and Curiouser' created by Warwick's talented Yarntopians; Warwick's Wearable Art and Mad Hatters Tea Party; to Killarney Bonfire night with fire-breathing drum-dragons and a massive bonfire (kids..don't try this at home), and unique crafts from spinners and weavers whose woolly creations will keep you warm.
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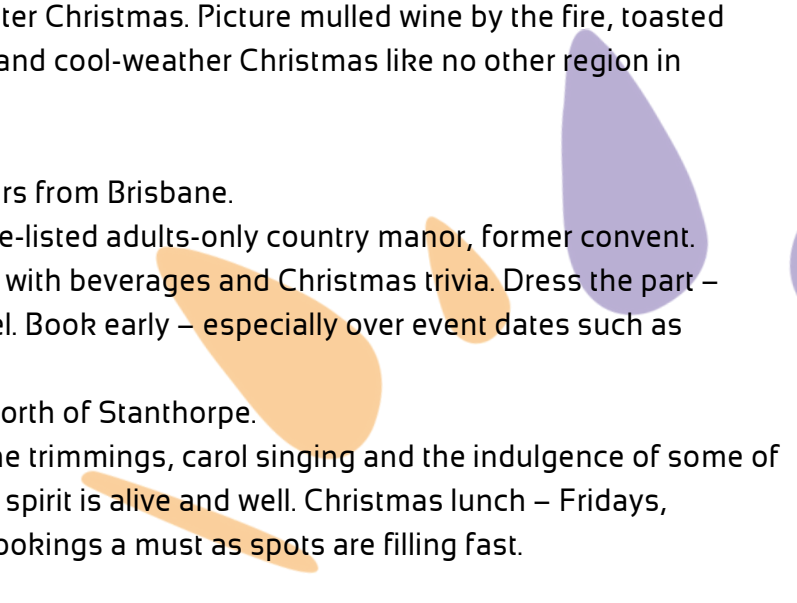
### **Jumper & Jazz in July continued...**

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- The freshest country produce are a main-stay (as is the mulled wine) throughout the festival – there's Lazy Long Lunches at Lazy Cow Farm, the Celebration of Local Flavours and Picnic in the Park on the final weekend, morning teas at St Mary's, Jazzy Breakfasts and cooking demonstrations from celebrity chef Matt Golinski.
- Plus – the Grand Automobile Display on the first Sunday 23rd and markets: Suitcase Rummage on Saturday 29th and Potters Market on the final Sunday 30th.
- Explore beyond the town with festival activities across the Southern Downs – spin a yarn at Glengallan Homestead and take a house tour before or after your scones, jam and cream; nab a crafty bargain at Mt Colliery Country Craft Market; hop in the car to explore Allora on a guided town tour or jump on a heritage steam train tour from Warwick to Hendon on the Downs Explorer.
- The program is huge. Find [more ideas, details of all the festival events and ticket information here](#)
- Images and media pack available in the Dropbox folder – see link below.

### **Cool weather = Christmas in July on the Southern Downs & Granite Belt**

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- When: Throughout July
  - Where: Various venues across the Southern Downs & Granite Belt – see below.
  - Dig out your ugly Christmas jumper, beanie and scarf and head west from Brisbane into Southern Queensland Country to celebrate a real winter Christmas. Picture mulled wine by the fire, toasted marshmallows and smores .. we do winter, and cool-weather Christmas like no other region in Queensland.
  - Christmas in July top picks:
    - Abbey Boutique Hotel, Warwick - 2 hours from Brisbane.  
Christmas in July dinners in this heritage-listed adults-only country manor, former convent. Indulge in a 3-course set dinner service with beverages and Christmas trivia. Dress the part – think red & green, or sparkles with tinsel. Book early – especially over event dates such as Jumpers and Jazz in July.
    - Heritage Estate Winery in Cottonvale, north of Stanthorpe.  
Traditional Christmas dinners with all the trimmings, carol singing and the indulgence of some of the region's finest wines the Christmas spirit is alive and well. Christmas lunch – Fridays, Saturdays, Sundays throughout July. Bookings a must as spots are filling fast.
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### **Christmas in July continued...**

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- Girraween Country Inn, near Girraween National Park.  
Hearty local flavours with mains from the smoker (vego and vegan options the exception), Christmas dinner is served nightly .. yes, every single night throughout July. Stop for dinner only or relax and stay the night. EV drivers can relax even more with EV charging station for guests.
- Sabo's on Severn, Glen Aplin near Stanthorpe.  
Twinkling lights, snowflakes and decorated trees, Christmas dinner at Sabo's is truly a treat. Booking Saturday nights through July this is a popular place to be, and already there are few spots left.  
If you miss out, don't stress. Liz is flinging open the doors to her cooking school 'Cooked from Scratch' with four Christmas Cookie Decorating classes workshops throughout July. Be quick!
- Granite Belt Brewery, Stanthorpe.  
Join in the 'Spots and Stripes' theme – whether that's your winter pj's or a fancy spotted frock, Christmas in July is a family affair at Granite Belt Brewery.  
4 dates - Wednesday 19th, Saturday 22nd, Wednesday 26th and Saturday 29th July. Cedar cabins at Granite Belt Retreat (same location) also available.
- Ballandean Estate Wines, Ballandean.  
Join the Puglisi family to celebrate the season (early) with – A Barrelroom Christmas in July. Serving mulled wine on arrival, the Barrelroom will be decked with festive decorations and serving their signature Christmas platter and dessert alongside a wine tasting experience.  
Lunch: One date, Saturday 15th July. Two sessions - 11.45am or 2.15pm.
- For more: [Celebrate Christmas in July | Southern Queensland Country](#).

### **Country meets convoy as CMCA descends on Dalby, Western Downs**

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- When: 8 - 14 October 2023.
  - Where: Dalby, Western Downs a 2.5hr drive west from Brisbane.
  - Hitch up the van, stock up the RV as Australia's largest caravan and campervan rally rolls into Dalby in the Western Downs this October.
  - Run by the Campervan & Motorhome Club of Australia (CMCA), around 700 homes-on-wheels and over 1000 visitors will descend on the Western Downs to explore, dine, and enjoy a full program of arts, education and entertainment.
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### CMCA descends on the Western Downs continued

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- CMCA rallies connect with the local community working with schools, sporting clubs and charities, using local services plus raising funds through the Rally Ball and Open Day.
- From golf to bowls, training sessions promoting RV safety to poets breakfasts and happy hours – the rally will boost the tourism economy, supporting the region’s tourism operators and business owners. Whilst most will bring their homes with them, accommodation providers also benefit housing supporters, staff and tag-along friends.
- Saturday 14 October is Open Day, with the RV lifestyle on show with everyone welcome to come along. And whilst Open Day is a great way to share the experience of RV life, it’s exploring the natural assets, history and heritage of the Western Downs and the friendly country welcome that defines this region that will be remembered for Rally participants and curious visitors.
- Media enquiries welcome via the contacts below, or direct via Theresa Oakenfull at Western Downs Regional Council at [theressa.oakenfull@wdrc.gov.au](mailto:theressa.oakenfull@wdrc.gov.au) or 0408 195 015.


#### Dropbox link:

<https://www.dropbox.com/t/OoFTszSuqxRO0vlu>


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