

Weekend Reset

A Family Escape To Esk

Looking for wide open spaces for your littlest faces these holidays? Ditch the devices and rediscover life's simple pleasures with these screen-free escapes and experiences in Somerset.

Just over an hour from Brisbane, the Somerset region offers something increasingly rare: space to breathe, time to slow down and experiences that feel both nostalgic and refreshingly real. At the heart of it all sits Esk, a quietly charming country town that has become a go-to for families seeking an easy, low-stress escape close to home. This is the kind of weekend where bikes replace backseats, markets replace shopping centres and the biggest decision of the day is whether to swim, ride or simply sit still for a while. It's not about packing your itinerary with activities. It's about giving your family the space to reconnect — with each other and with the outdoors.

Enjoy this two-night escape that the entire family will enjoy – no passports or heavy planning required!

Day 1: Brisbane to Esk

- Leave Brisbane mid-morning, coffee in hand, and settle into a relaxed drive west.
- Make your first stop at Fernvale to stock up on fresh breads and sweet treats. The Old Fernvale Bakery is something of a local icon, known for its fresh breads and buttery, flaky pastries and pies. Grab a few pies, maybe something indulgent for later, and let the kids stretch their legs before continuing on.
- From here, it's a short and scenic drive to Esk. Check in at the Esk Caravan Park which will be your base for the next two nights. Whether you're in a van or a cabin, the park is easy to settle into and well suited for families. There's plenty of open space, a good playground and heated pools, including an adults-only option.
- The park is the perfect location to base yourself from as you explore the Brisbane Valley Rail Trail, or other villages within Somerset. With everything pretty much provided (including Tesla charging facilities), the only thing you will need to do is pack the kids, the bikes and an esky to stock up on regional produce and treats while in town.

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Day 1: continued

- Once you've unpacked and found your rhythm, take a short stroll into town. A stop at the Esk Fruit Shop is essential for stocking up on fresh produce — perfect for casual meals back at the park. If you're planning to make the most of the pizza ovens later, this is where you'll find your toppings sorted.
- Serious foodies might like to take the short drive to Brisbane Valley Meats (along Gatton Esk Road). This bespoke butchery is well regarded regionally for its quality of meat and cuts with customers known to drive from outside of region for their products. The perfect spot to pick up steaks and other meat products for your stay and ensuring this weekend's BBQ at the caravan park will be something memorable.
- Back at the park, the afternoon is yours to enjoy. The kids can swim, explore or simply run free. They will love the local lorikeet feeding at 4pm which always draws a crowd.
- Dinner tonight is deliberately low-key. Fire up the park's pizza ovens and let everyone create their own masterpiece. It's casual, interactive and a great way to connect with other families staying nearby. Conversations happen easily here, often stretching into the evening as the sky fades and you rest up for the night.

Day 2: Explore Esk

- Enjoy a leisurely start to the day with a stroll through the Esk Country Markets located just 400m from the Caravan Park. These markets are everything you want from a regional experience — vibrant but unpretentious, filled with local makers, growers and creatives.
- Browse the stalls, meet regional providers and pick up fresh produce and unique treasures along the way.
- Return your market finds to the van before picking up your bikes and taking the short 700m ride up to Brisbane Valley Roasters for a mid-morning coffee and cake. The pathway to the café is flat and well maintained so makes for a short and easy ride. Once there, the kids will be able to see how coffee is roasted and enjoy a small but fascinating insight into how coffee comes to life.
- While the adults savour a well-earned coffee, the kids will be drawn to the sweet treats on offer.
- Ride back to the caravan park via the rail trail, taking your time to enjoy the scenery.
- Leave the kids to enjoy the park's onsite facilities while you enjoy a good book by the pool.
- For lunch, head to Nash's Gallery and Café. Set within a historic home, this space is filled with colour and creativity and the menu offers both sweet and savoury dishes sure to keep all members of the family happy. It's relaxed, unpretentious and exactly what you want from a local café.

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Day 2: continued

- With bellies full, explore Esk's charming main street which is well worth the wander. This is where the town's personality really shines. Boutique stores line the street, offering everything from homewares to gifts and fashion and a few unexpected finds.
- The House of Kalu Babu and Nicola's Boutique are great destinations for homewares and fashion finds.
- As the day winds down, head to the Grand Hotel for dinner. This is country hospitality at its best — warm, welcoming and completely unfussy. Expect hearty meals, generous portions and the kind of classic pub atmosphere that makes everyone feel at home. It's the perfect stop after a day exploring Somerset – relaxed, welcoming and completely child friendly.
- After dinner, take the short drive to Toogoolawah for the Toogoolawah pictures. The kids will love this old-time movie hall with its authentic sling back canvas chairs and fresh popcorn. It's simple, charming and a reminder that not all entertainment needs to be high-tech to be memorable.
- Return back to the Caravan Park for the night.

Day 3: A Scenic Send Off

- Be sure to book a late checkout with the park so that you can enjoy a full final day in Esk before heading off and still being home by 5pm. Have breakfast and then pack up ready for departure.
- If your family enjoys cycling, the Brisbane Valley Rail Trail offers a fantastic option for your last morning in region. Head off towards Toogoolawah for a scenic ride through the countryside. This 19km leg of the trail should take about 50 minutes each way and will see you interesting landscapes and a number of old rail bridges including the Coak Creek Railway Bridge. If your tiny peddlers won't make that distance or aren't yet ready for the gravel, stick closer to town and try the Horse Bypass loop for a shorter cycling experience.
- Prefer water over wheels? Spend the morning at Hamon Cove, just a 10-minute drive south of Esk.This hidden gem is the perfect spot for a laid-back morning. Pack a picnic, launch a kayak or paddleboard or throw a line in. It also has a boat ramp if you bought the tinnie, providing the perfect time for a few hours on the water.
- Enjoy a late lunch at a local café upon your return before stopping in at the Esk Bowls and Community Club for a game of barefoot bowls (from 2pm on Thursdays and Sundays).
- Return to the caravan park to checkout and head back towards Brisbane. You should be crossing the Wivenhoe Dam wall just in time for one spectacular sunset. A fitting finale to your time in Somerset.

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Keen to wander wider while in Esk?

Here are some additional experiences to explore while you are here, all just a short drive from Esk:

- Drop a line in or swim at Lake Wivenhoe. Spend the morning swimming, fishing or kayaking before enjoying an afternoon picnic by the water's edge.
- Take a Llama and Lattes Walk with Ottaba Llamas. This fun family activity will see you join a Llama Walk through the town of Esk. The kids will love their experience where they will walk a llama along the Sandy Creek trail and through town before enjoying a café visit with their new llama friend.
- Explore the Brisbane River via kayak (launch from O'Sheas crossing 15 minutes from Esk)
- Take a trip to Toogoolawah, just 15 minutes from Esk. Stroll the main street shops, stop in at Picnic Society for beautiful grazing items to make a picnic and let the kids cool down with a splash at the new Toogoolawah Pool and splashpad before heading back to Esk (closed during the cooler months).
- Stop into The Condensery | Somerset Regional Art Gallery while in Toogoolawah to explore their exhibitions from visiting and local artists.
- Time your visit around the Esk Garden Fair. Held in June, this event is a great fair for gardening enthusiasts and your little green thumbs. With live music, workshops and demonstrations, guest speakers and more, it's a great day out for the entire family and all within walking distance of the Esk Caravan Park.