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NSW Winter Weekender | Cultured Canowindra

Suffering from a decidedly soggy case of the sniffles we bypassed the ambitious original plan to let Brünhilde (the beloved KTM 900 mortorbike) stretch her wheels and opted to hire a car. We got a pretty good deal through Thrifty with a few insurance upgrades thrown in and a 15% discount thanks to my membership with NRMA (just book online to reap the rewards, otherwise it's 10% over the phone) and roared over the Blue Mountains in a nifty Suzuki Swift.

Our destination was Canowindra. Only 4 hours from Sydney, Canowindra has the misfortune of a perpetually mispronounced appellation. Out-of-towners are spotted instantly for asking; “How far to Cann-oh-win-dra?” Where locals and those in-the-know realise that it should be: Ca-nouwn-dra. (Obsv.)



We pulled into Orange to breakfast at [Factory Espresso](#). This mod-oz brunch spot would be right at home in Newtown or Prahran. Housed in an old mechanical workshop, it is complete with a coffee roastery out the back and they serve house-brewed blends such as *The Godfather* and *Decaf Redux* which you can try as a syphon, cold drip and pour over coffee experience. I had the tapioca porridge, he had the eggs.

A little intimidated by some local wineries “bookings only” policy for cellar-door tastings, we found Canobolas-Smith (between Orange and Canowindra) for a taste of the local fruits of the vine. Murray Smith, I later learnt, was one of the early pioneers of the wine-growing scene in Orange. He's been at it since the 1980's but has kept the place a friendly, hands-on operation. The viticulturist amused us with tales of the Australian wine tasting scene while we sipped his spectacular chardonnay. I bought a bottle for \$40 which left me feeling a little robbed but it did taste great.



The superstar standout treat of the trip was pulling up into [Belubula Cottage](#), overlooking the Belubula Valley, just outside town. This place was recommended to me by the owners of taste Canowindra but my expectations were not high, so imagine my surprise and delight when the manageress, Marg, emailed me asking my favourite foods for breakfast! I

should have known then I was in for something special.

We entered the little self-contained cottage to cosy heating and a kitchen full of treats like marshmallows and drinking chocolate, freshly bakes bread and butter, a stack full of Country Style magazines and bath salts just waiting to be sprinkled into the clawed bathtub which overlooks the bucolic vista outside. The place was heaven and redefines country hospitality. Marg had thought of absolutely everything, from plush robes hanging in the bedroom (think about it, when was the last time your hotel gave you that) to cooking spices to go with the eggs and bacon she popped in the fridge. I have not stayed *anywhere* like this for years and couldn't recommend it more highly.



Then, finally, we arrived (via the local, and only, cabbie in town) at [Taste](#). A cultural hub in the rolling hills of the Central West, this is the place to taste the region's best wines, enjoy gourmet food, arts and music, Bob and Marg Craven have created a perfect little niche. We had booked tickets to see the [Deborah Conway and Willy Zygier](#) show and dinner they were hosting, and we weren't disappointed. Treated to the best seats in the house, we listened to the pair sing and play their way through their new album [Stories of Ghosts](#). Conway's acerbic humour and sarcasm are nicely counter-weighted by Willy's chill-factor but they are both a very entertaining pair. Washed down with a local red, we were escorted back home by our friend the taxi man, and curled up in our cast iron bed to fall asleep listening to the rain gently drum the roof.

Story by *Estelle Pigot*

Tags: [Belubula Cottage](#), [bob craven](#), [conobolas smith wine](#), [deborah conway](#), [Estelle Pigot](#), [taste canowindra](#), [willy zygier](#)

This entry was posted on Tuesday, July 30th, 2013 at 1:33 pm and is filed under [Australian Food & Wine](#), [Australian Music](#), [Australian Travel](#), [Featured Restaurants](#). You can follow any responses to this entry through the [RSS 2.0](#) feed. You can [leave a response](#), or [trackback](#) from your own site.

- [Bob Craven](#) says:
[19.08.13 at 9:11AM](#)

It's easy to provide sunshine to those who emit it – merely hold up the mirror! Estelle is one of the most charming, considerate and grateful guests we have entertained! Knows how to enjoy herself!

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