

*A mutual love of cars sees our editor Pip and her 18-year-old son Ollie, out for a winters day drive, proving there are many ways to connect in in the Yarra Valley.*





WORDS BY Lindy Schneider and Elly Laughton | PHOTOGRAPHY Ollie Young

# Winter Drive

FOLLOWING THE WINTERSUN – DRIVES IN THE YARRA VALLEY

A mutual love of cars sees our editor Pip and her 18-year-old son Ollie, out for a winters day drive, proving there are many ways to connect in the Yarra Valley.

It's a wonderful thing when your adult children enjoy fine food as much as you do. A day out taste-testing the delicacies of the Yarra Valley, and road testing a seriously luxurious car, provided a shared experience that stocked our pantry while we enjoyed each other's company.

A decent brew always gets the day off to a great beginning and it's impossible to be in the St Huberts area of the Yarra Valley without stopping in a Meletos. The vista from the restaurant was picture perfect – blue skies on a beautiful crisp winters day, with mists bending down to touch the golden autumn leaves of late harvest vines. Coffee and a delectable Danish pastry were a perfect start to our travels.

It's equally impossible to leave Meletos without dropping into The Providore adjacent. Proprietor and fine food lover Ryan Fraser met us at the door with just-baked loaves of crusty sourdough bread still warm from the oven. This bread, together with his house-made olive

oil (prepared with olives grown in his own garden), is a staple in our pantry, so I always buy at least two of each! The Providore is gourmet heaven if you are looking to stock your pantry with the scrumptious and the hard to find.

The morning is cool and I am grateful for the cashmere wrap I am wearing, but even as we leave the carpark at Meletos, the wintersun is warming our faces with the promise of a glorious day. We drive all of five minutes up the road to our next stop.

The Yarra Valley Dairy is cheese heaven and we arrive late morning with a serious craving for a cheese platter and glass of sparkles for brunch. Over the years, we have got to know our favourites – the Saffy, a saffron infused Persian fetta, the Ashed Pyramid goats cheese and the semi-hard Bulls Eye are just a few examples – but it is also a treat to taste test the latest vintages and creations of these masterful cheesemakers. It pays to have an insulated cool pack in the car to keep your inevitable purchases cold for the drive home.

From the dairy, we head towards Yarra Glen turning right just before the town with destination TarraWarra in our



GPS. The 15-minute drive towards Healesville takes us past numerous vineyards and expansive rolling pastures that evidence the rich and fecund soil that makes the produce grown here so abundant and flavoursome.

TarraWarra is really two experiences in one – the TarraWarra Museum of Art is internationally renowned and the carefully curated exhibitions are well worth a visit regardless of what kind of an art lover you are. You could also say there is 'art present' in the TarraWarra Estate winery and restaurant and this is where we settle in for a couple of hours, taken through a glorious wine tasting by the very knowledgeable Craig and feasting on a seasonally inspired nibble platter while relaxing on the Peppercorn Deck. A few bottles for the cellar at home are purchased but I know they might never see the ageing that they could – they are much too much of a temptation!

Our last stop for the day is Coombe Yarra Valley, but while we are so close to Healesville we first venture the 10-minute drive to Four Pillars Gin eager to track down a bottle of their latest Bloody Shiraz Gin 2018 release at the distillery door. We joined the mailing list with our fingers crossed we can get it a little earlier than the June 1 release date. And the cellar door for Payten and Jones is right across the road – how could we not pay our respects?

Back in our divinely appointed car (there is even directional heating to keep our necks warm with the roof down), we head west on the open road driving the 15 minutes to Coombe Yarra Valley, completing a driving 'loop' of around 40 kilometres and pointing us in the direction of home (or the city if that's your final destination). It's late afternoon and we are given a tour of the highly acclaimed garden at the Melba Estate and

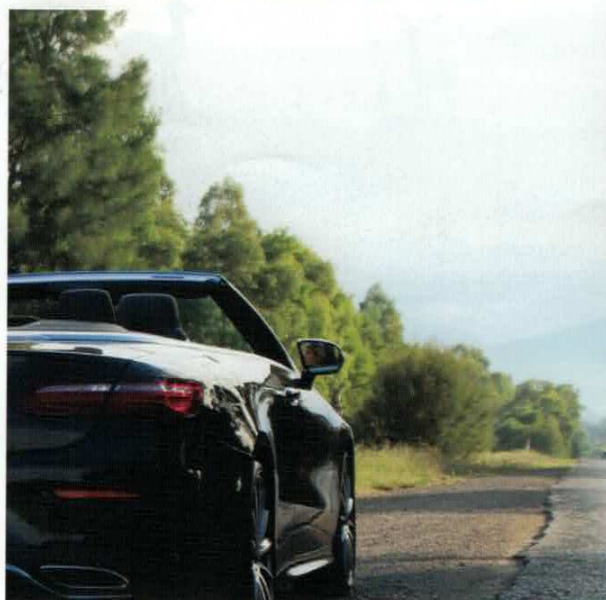
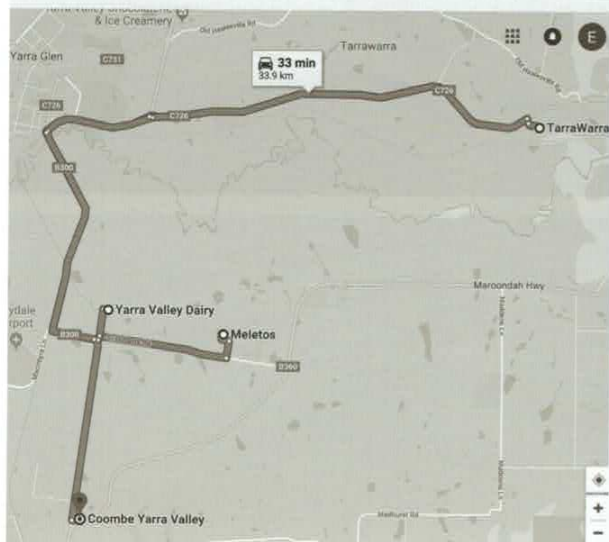


*This page (below) Cheese heaven (Above) Buying the family's favourite artisan sourdough, and olive oil*

*Opposite (Top) Taking a breath of fresh air as we approach TarraWarra (Right) the sweeping driveway at TarraWarra (Left) Admiring the views from Healesville-Kooweerup Road, towards Yarra Glen.*











later on treated to a view of the sunset from the roof of Dame Nellie Melba's house – a very special experience. We also manage to eat more, enjoying a High Tea with elegant finger sandwiches; freshly baked scones with house made jams and clotted cream; and a selection of cakes and desserts complemented with a glass of Coombe Farm Nellie Melba Blanc de blancs. Another coffee bookends a perfect day out for mother, and son.

Enjoy this first drive itinerary in our new series of delightful country drives showcasing destinations and experiences that will have you smiling all the way home.

Special thanks to Ringwood Mercedes for providing us with a test drive of the new Mercedes-Benz E300 Cabriolet — a truly luxurious experience.



((Opposite top) Feeling privileged to experience the luxury of the Mercedes, hood down.

Above (right) The iconic stags in Dame Nellie Melba's garden at Coombe Estate and Valley views.







## MORE DRIVE IDEAS

No matter what entrance you take to the Yarra Valley and Dandenong Ranges, there's beauty in every direction, and an abundance of trails to follow. From the fresh produce, to wine tasting and sampling, to breathtaking views and landscapes.

If you are wandering in from Warrandyte, then heading out through Wonga Park and making your way down the treelined streets leading towards the Yarra Farm Fresh strawberry paddock is a wonderful way to start. Pick yourself up some delicious fresh fruits, vegetables, and other locally sourced goods. This delightful home to all things fresh and locally sourced is open all season round.

With your arms full of delicious produce, make your way down the incredible driveway of Yarra Farm Fresh, and out to where you will arrive at a fork in the road.

Turning right will take you to the beautiful Yarra Valley Dairy and turning left will take you to the Chateau Yering, where you are greeted with truly remarkable views of vineyard vistas, and a welcoming cellar door.

Only a short drive from here takes you to Yarra Glen where there is much to see. Heading on towards Healesville

allows you to detour and treat yourself to a delicious chocolatey treat from the Yarra Valley Chocolaterie and Ice Creamery. Or you can stop by for a tasting at Zonzo Estate, then head next door to browse the current exhibitions at Art at Linden Gate.

Hopefully you have prepared your tastebuds for a quick stop at Peyton & Jones for a sample of their delicious wine, before heading to the main street of Healesville.

Stroll along the buzzing street and browse the plethora of beautiful and diverse stores, everything from clothing, to books, to flowers to hair salons.

Giant Steps, Innocent Bystander, or the Healesville Hotel are just a few options to choose from to sit down for a relaxing lunch.

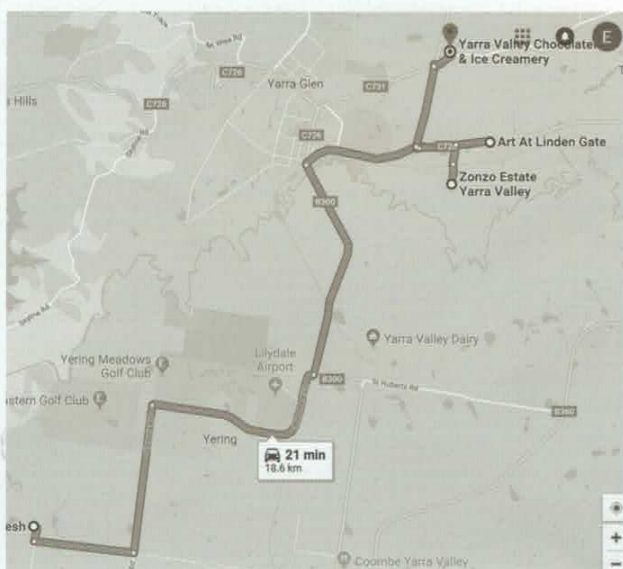
From the loaded streets of Healesville, it's an easy drive onwards for further exploration of the region, or find straight forward access to the city or home.

This is just one of the fabulous pockets worthy of your day in the Yarra Valley and Dandenong Ranges. Be sure to add these stops to your next weekend drive.■

*(Opposite) The drive to Yarra Farm Fresh (Below)  
Stopping to pick up fresh local produce*







## FARM FRESH YARRA VALLEY PRODUCE

736-738 Maroondah Highway, Coldstream

Specialises in quality produce sourced from local farmers and boutique growers – the very best the valley has to offer. Winter harvest includes locally grown rhubarb, apples, heirloom pumpkins, and Brussels Sprouts.



Art at Linden Gate