

It's not much more than *ONE STREET*, which makes what's tucked away in the *LITTLE VILLAGE* of *TRENTHAM* all the more surprising.

WORDS MARGARET BARCA

# VILLAGE IN VOGUE



THE AIR IS CRISP and clear, there's a faint warbling in the trees, parrots swoop past and ducks waddle across the street. Tucked between Daylesford and Woodend, Trentham may be a toy-town size and a tad off-grid, but it still packs a punch. It sprang up after gold was discovered in the district in the 1850s. The timber industry and later potato growing have buoyed the town since then, but while there are pick-up trucks and beanies about, these days you're just as likely to find an artist or a writer at the pub as a farmer.

Who knows how word gets out? But it does. First you have someone looking for studio space, then a renowned chef opens a restaurant, the hotel starts serving the region's fine wine, design-savvy weekenders start appearing. And everyone holds their breath hoping the town is still a secret. Welcome to Trentham.

On the ridge of the Great Dividing Range – high enough to have three or four flurries of snow a year – the town sits on the edge of the eucalypt and wildlife-rich Wombat State Forest. If it's fresh air you're after, there's the lake or the sheer-drop of Trentham Falls for picnics, as well as bushwalks, riding trails and cycling routes aplenty. Trentham is well placed for forays into the Macedon-Daylesford region's busier food, wine and spa hubs. Or you can just batten down the hatches and enjoy the town's own treasures.

The main thoroughfare, High Street, has a hint of the Wild West with its quaint shopfronts and, at one end of town, the low-slung timber of The Cosmopolitan Hotel ([tbecosmopolitanhotel.com.au](http://tbecosmopolitanhotel.com.au)), circa 1866, shadowed by a giant, craggy pine tree. Although badly →

PHOTOGRAPHY: KATIE WILTON FOR SHUDGE EATS (TRENTHAM COLLECTIVE)

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: *Trentham Collective*, where European-style cooking meets small town Australia; *The cafe's* large Victorian windows make for a bright and airy space; *The interior of The Estate Trentham* is filled with a curated collection of pieces from flea markets to country stores; *The Estate's* leafy garden can be foraged for vegetables and fruits. OPPOSITE: *The beautiful old white-washed façade of The Estate Trentham.*

damaged by fire a few years ago, the façade of 'The Cosmo' is largely intact, and certainly the pub's spirit is. Stop in for a pizza in front of the open fire, or spend a lazy summer Sunday listening to live music in the garden. At the pub's Cellar & Store – wonky walls, glittering chandelier – you can sample some fine regional wines (the Macedon sparklings are superb).

Across the road, the stylishly minimal Phillip & Lea ([phillipandlea.com.au](http://phillipandlea.com.au)) sells fine quality implements and tools for 'the cook, gardener, baker, hunter and forager', from oversized whisks and copper pans to garden trowels. As owner Chris Mauger explains: "Our ethos is that cookery starts in the field, the patch, the orchard, the waterways..."

Another person adhering to that philosophy is chef/gardener and cooking legend, Annie Smithers. Annie closed her multi-award-winning Bistrot in nearby Kyneton to scale back from fine dining and open a more relaxed French-style country restaurant. These days at Trentham's petite du Fermier ([dufermier.com.au](http://dufermier.com.au)), Annie's changing menu



CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: *Trentham Collective* occupies an historic NAB building; Dine with minimal fuss in the pared-back dining area; The café's mother-and-son owners' bad furniture custom made; Catherine Abel's Art Store, one of many galleries in town.

bread emerging from the 19th-century Scotch oven. The bakery's pastries, pies and soup served at the café are top-notch, so much so *MasterChef's* George Calombaris declared it "the best bakery in the world". Ask about the

## At Red Beard Historic Bakery there's the heady smell of organic sourdough bread emerging from the 19th-century Scotch oven.

reflects the seasons, her much-loved garden and local produce. Make sure to book well in advance – it's seriously popular. And, like many things in Trentham, it's only open Friday to Monday.

Just down the lane from du Fermier, at Red Beard Historic Bakery ([redbeardbakery.com.au](http://redbeardbakery.com.au)) there's the heady smell of organic sourdough

sourdough-baking workshops, too. Either John or Al Reid, who co-founded Red Beard, lead the dough-to-elbow, hands-on workshops, which run on Sundays from 10am. You get the history, science and soul of bread-making; you also get to make your own loaves and take them home.

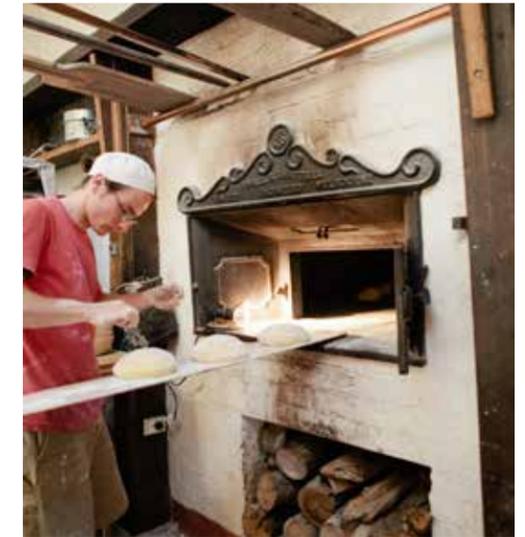
Also worth checking out is Chaplin's Barista Bar & Nosh ([chaplinstrentham.com.au](http://chaplinstrentham.com.au)) with its chirpy staff and red leather booths, while Trentham Collective ([trenthamcollective.com](http://trenthamcollective.com)) is a stylish place to fuel up on a healthy salad or house-made cakes (try the zesty flourless citrus cake).

On High Street, browsers will find Jargon (03 5424 1668), where Helen McRae's handmade, prize-winning teddy bears and rag dolls fill the shelves to overflowing. Helen and her husband love Trentham and are a veritable fount of local knowledge. "We've been here 30 years – we're the oldest shop in town," she tells me as she pulls out a photo album of themselves in their "hippy days" fixing the building.

A more recent addition, opened in 2014, The Spotted Pony (03 5424 1609) is the store →



PHOTOGRAPHY: KATIE WILTON FOR SMUDGE EATS (TRENTHAM COLLECTIVE); LISA COHEN (THE BARN); CATHERINE ABEL (GALLERY); MARGARET BARCA (REDBEARD BAKERY)



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: *The children's section at Dr B's Bookstore*; *Red Beard Bakery's charming old oven*; *Kitchen utensils are taken very seriously at Phillip & Lea, which supplies tools for hunters and foragers.*



*Once sprawled on the cushion-piled sofa, with the room toasty from the wood fire, it will be hard to tear yourself away.*

for natural fibre fashion and heavenly cashmere knits, while Dr B's Bookstore (0421 225 999) is rich browsing territory, with plenty of coffee table tomes. Window posters reveal Trentham's busy cultural life – art classes, writing workshops, a film society. There are several art galleries including Catherine Abel's eponymous gallery in Market Street ([catherineabelstore.com](http://catherineabelstore.com)). Catherine began painting professionally when she was living in

Paris and exhibits internationally. She is self-taught, which makes the finesse of her works and her richly imaginative Art Deco-style paintings and striking portraits all the more remarkable. She says her recent lyrical landscapes are "inspired by Trentham's seasons – each is so distinct in colour and mood".

Amble further up Market Street to the Green Store ([thegreenstore.com.au](http://thegreenstore.com.au)) for a cute selection of gloves, socks, scarves and beanies and leave time to explore Wooden Duck Antiques ([woodenduck.com.au](http://woodenduck.com.au)) with its cool, retro collectables.

Trentham has attracted some stylish holiday digs, too, with interior design maven Lynda Gardener's The Estate Trentham ([theestatetrentham.com.au](http://theestatetrentham.com.au)) the perfect bolthole for a country weekend, blending Scandi style and rustic charm with a bowerbird's assemblage of *objets trouvés* and her signature attention to detail.

Lynda explains there are several reasons she chose Trentham, including the beautiful drive –

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: Welcome to Trentham; The Estate Trentham's beds are draped in bespoke linen; A rusting bicycle becomes an impromptu flowerpot; The Estate's white-on-white entertaining space that is The Barn. OPPOSITE: The Estate's bathroom is farmhouse chic at its finest.

PHOTOGRAPHY: MARGARET BARCA (VILLAGE SIGN); LISA COHEN (THE BARN)



"From Woodend it's a postcard, picture-perfect drive all the way to the house. And it's the idyllic country town; small but not too small, with one of every thing you need... and a real community. It's a very special place indeed".

Her weatherboard house, a stroll from High Street, is all white and rich warm greys, with dark timber floors, crushed linens, rugs, baskets, quirky stools, old-world paintings and lots of books and magazines. There are fireplaces (set and ready to light) and the cutest-ever bedrooms – tiny but with incredibly comfortable beds and electric blankets for winter (it gets mighty nippy in this neck of the woods). The farmhouse kitchen has everything you need and a veggie garden for picking fresh herbs.

Once sprawled on the cushion-piled sofa, with the room toasty from the wood fire, or in summer with the French doors flung open onto the garden, it will be hard to tear yourself away. But you must. Trentham is there to be discovered and you'd better enjoy it before word gets out. **AT**

## DETAILS

### Getting there

Trentham is 97 kilometres from Melbourne, just over an hour's drive north-west.

### Staying there

#### THE ESTATE TRENTHAM

A two-night weekend for one couple starts from \$690 including breakfast provisions. [theestatetrentham.com.au](http://theestatetrentham.com.au)