

A man and a woman are standing in a vineyard, smiling and holding wine glasses. The woman is wearing a brown hat and sunglasses, and the man is wearing a dark polo shirt. They are surrounded by rows of grapevines with green and some reddish leaves. The background shows rolling hills under a cloudy sky.

MOMENTS THAT MATTER, SHARED IN Stanthorpe

A four-day itinerary for lovers of every kind

*Some places aren't defined by their size,
but by the moments they create.*

High on the Great Dividing Range, just two-and-a-half hours south-west of Brisbane, Stanthorpe, home to less than 5,500 people, is one of those places, where time softens, the air feels cooler, and the moments you share seem to linger a little longer.

This is a town shaped by contrast: ancient granite landscapes and refined cellar doors, crisp country mornings and fireside evenings, simple pleasures elevated by a deep connection to place. Here, luxury isn't loud, it's found in space, stillness, and the freedom to slow down.

This four-day escape is designed for lovers of every kind, seeking more than just a getaway. It's an invitation to reconnect, through shared meals, quiet landscapes, and unhurried experiences that feel both indulgent and grounded in Queensland Country.

From orchard mornings to vineyard afternoons, from long lunches to stargazing beneath impossibly clear skies, every moment invites you to be present. To breathe deeply. To rediscover the joy of time spent together.

Because in Stanthorpe, it's not about doing more... it's about feeling more.



Day 1. Orchard Beginnings

Morning Moments

Your Stanthorpe story begins in the orchards, the heart of the town's rich agricultural heritage, and home Queensland's entire apple crop, following the flavours of the new Apple Pie Trail.

At *Nicoletti Orchards*, a third-generation family farm, rows of apple trees stretch across the landscape, their branches heavy with fruit in season. Between January and May, you're invited to wander the orchard together, picking apples straight from the tree. There's something quietly romantic about this experience, sunlight filtering through the leaves, the crisp snap of fruit

in your hand, and the simple joy of sharing something so grounded and real. It's an invitation to slow down, to reconnect, and to savour the moment.

A short drive away, *Stanthorpe Cheese* offers the perfect next stop. Here, small-batch artisan cheeses are crafted from a single herd of purebred Jersey cows, with flavours that shift gently with the seasons. Inside the *Jersey Girls Café*, select a tasting board and take your time, pair creamy brie or aged cheddar with local chutneys and preserves, and begin curating your own Stanthorpe picnic, one delicious choice at a time.

Afternoon Delights

For lunch, make your way to *Vincenzo's Café, Bar & Deli*, a long-standing local favourite where Italian-inspired dishes hero regional produce. Settle in for a relaxed meal, then wander through the deli, selecting olives, cured meats and a bottle of local wine for later. Just outside, the iconic Big Apple stands proudly, pause for a photo together, a simple keepsake from your time in Queensland's apple capital.

Just across the road, *Sutton's Juice Factory*, set on a working apple orchard, invites you to indulge in one of Stanthorpe's most iconic treats, Mrs Sutton's famous 24-apple pie. Served warm, it's a nostalgic taste of the region that feels both comforting and unforgettable. Pair it with a fresh apple juice or crisp cider, grown and crafted on site, for the full experience.

With your appetite satisfied, your retreat beckons, where hosts Mark and Donna welcome you to a secluded eco-luxury retreat, they've thoughtfully

brought to life. Set across 300 acres of protected bushland, *Earth and Soul Retreat* blends creativity with practicality in perfect balance.

Choose an architecturally designed, off-grid cabin created for connection. Think outdoor baths beneath open skies, rammed earth walls glowing beside a crackling fire, and expansive decks opening onto uninterrupted bushland. Here, nature takes centre stage, inviting you to slow down, switch off, and simply be together.

As the afternoon light softens, take a gentle wander through the surrounding granite landscape. The Tree of Life Spiritual Walk offers a peaceful path to slow your pace even further. Pause along the way, take in the stillness, and watch as the sky shifts through soft hues of gold and amber. It's a moment to breathe deeply, to be present, and to reconnect - both with nature and each other.



Evening Unwind

As evening approaches, wander along the Apple Pie Trail to *Granite Belt Brewery* for a relaxed candle-lit dinner. Set amongst bushland just outside town, this welcoming microbrewery pairs creative brews, such as the Apple & Rhubarb Sour and crisp apple ciders, with a menu that celebrates fresh, regional ingredients. It's casual, warm, and the perfect way to ease into your first night.

As darkness settles, the stars begin to appear, one by one, until the sky is filled with a brilliance rarely seen in the city. Return to your cabin, light the fire, and let the evening unfold slowly. Here, wrapped in warmth and quiet, your Stanthorpe escape truly begins.

Day 2. Meet the Makers



Slow Mornings

Ease into the morning slowly, the kind that invites you to linger. Start with coffee and pastries on the main street at *Zest Pastries*, where local talent Stephen Lambert, born and raised in Stanthorpe, has returned home after honing his craft in Switzerland. His European-trained techniques shine in every bite. A flaky croissant, still warm, paired with a perfectly brewed coffee, sets a gentle rhythm for the day ahead. It's a moment to pause, savour the flavours of Stanthorpe, and ease into the day, unhurried, simple, and best shared.

From here, take time to explore Stanthorpe's town centre at your own pace. Wander together through boutique stores and country outlets, pausing to discover murals, public art and quiet corners that tell the story of the town. Along the way, meet the makers and artists behind the region's creativity, often found in-store or nearby, happy to share their craft and stories.

Step inside the *Stanthorpe Regional Art Gallery*, home to the renowned Stanthorpe Art Prize, one of Australia's highly regarded longest-running regional art

awards, showcasing works from leading and emerging artists nationwide. There's a quiet charm here, revealed slowly through small details, warm smiles, and unexpected conversations.

Follow the scenic Quart Pot Creek walk, where the gentle sound of flowing water and birdsong creates a peaceful backdrop. Pause at the iconic Big Thermometer for a light-hearted photo, then continue to the *Stanthorpe Visitor Information Centre*. Here, local volunteers share their knowledge with genuine warmth, offering insights that only come from lived experience. Be sure to collect a Strange Bird Wine Trail map, tomorrow's adventure begins here.

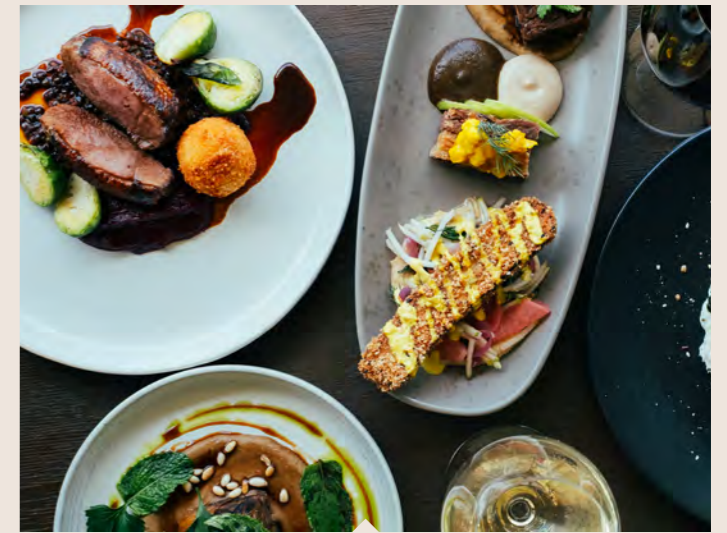
From town, venture out to meet the region's makers and growers. At *Ashbern Farms* (October to May), wander the rows and pick strawberries straight from the vine, sun-warmed, seriously sweet, and impossibly fresh. Share them as you go, juice on your fingertips, laughter in the air. Don't leave without a scoop of their strawberry ice cream, we promise, it's the freshest, most luscious ice-cream you'll ever taste.

As lunch rolls into the afternoon

For lunch, settle in at *Jamworks Gourmet Foods*, a place that celebrates the flavours of the region with heart and authenticity. The resident jam makers Steph and Christine will serve you a generous meal crafted from local ingredients. Then browse the shelves lined with handmade jams, chutneys and relishes. Choose a few favourites to take home as small reminders of a place and moment you'll want to return to.

The afternoon unfolds with a visit to *Washpool Supply Co*, where founder and formulator, Melissa Thomas, her daughter and local artisans have handcrafted skincare products to capture the essence of Stanthorpe. Soft, natural scents, drawn from the region's harvest, create a sensory experience that feels both indulgent and grounding.

Just around the corner at *Kent Saddlery*, meet Lyle and Helen Kent, where craftsmanship takes centre stage. Watch, inhale the rich scent of leather, and experience the artistry of handcrafted pieces, from belts, bags, boots and hats, created onsite with care and intention. Each item is designed to last, just like the memories you're making. It's a true reflection of the region itself: authentic, enduring, and quietly refined, where tradition, skill and story are stitched into every piece.



Evening Retreat

As the day winds down, return to *Earth and Soul Retreat* to rest and refresh. As the light softens and the air cools, the evening begins.

Varias beckons for a dinner that is warm, intimate and inviting with a table set for two. A perfect setting to end the day, share the chef's Medley of Mains, paired with a local wine, and let the conversation linger.

Following dinner, settle in by the open-air fire underneath the stars at your cabin in full privacy. Here, time stretches a little longer, enough to savour the moment, and each other.



Day 3. The Art of Wine

Morning Delights

Begin your morning slowly, the kind that invites you to stay wrapped in the moment just a little longer. Enjoy breakfast on the verandah, a warm cup in hand, wrapped in a blanket as the cool country air drifts gently across the landscape. It's quiet, unhurried - just you, the view, and the promise of a day to savour together.

Today is all about wine, but more than that, it's about connection to place, to people, and to each other. For couples wanting to fully unwind, consider booking a guided wine tour, allowing you to relax into each tasting without distraction. For those who prefer to explore at their own pace, the road ahead is yours to wander.

Begin at *Ridgemill Estate*, where the experience is as much about storytelling as it is about the wine in your glass. Here, you'll be introduced to the 'Strange Birds' by resident winemaker, Peter McGlahsan, discovering rare and alternative wine varieties that thrive in this unique cool-climate region. As you taste, Peter will share the stories behind each bottle, deepening your connection not just to the wine, but to the land it comes from.

Continue along the country road until a striking fence of hand-laid granite boulders signals your arrival at *Tobin Wines*. Here, an old-world philosophy and small-batch production create wines of depth and character. Tastings feel intimate and unhurried, inviting you to slow down, ask questions, and linger a little longer over each pour, savouring both the wine and the moment.



Afternoon Indulgence

It's time for a leisurely lunch, make your way to *Ballandean Estate Wines*, Queensland's oldest operating winery, just a short stroll from Tobin Wines. Settle into the Barrelroom Wine Lounge, where leather lounges, aged barrels and a crackling fire set the scene for a long, relaxed afternoon.

Share a generous grazing platter paired with estate wines, poured by Leeanne Puglisi, daughter of the "Father of Queensland Wine," Angelo Puglisi. Here, time slips quietly by, and conversation flows as effortlessly as the wine.

In the afternoon, discover one of the region's newest cellar doors, *New Tricks Winery*. Find a spot on the patio or lay out a picnic blanket, glass in hand, and take in sweeping views across the valley, rows of vines stretching endlessly below. It's the kind of place that invites you to pause, breathe, and simply be together.

On your way back, take the scenic Highland Drive, where rolling vineyards and cellar doors invite spontaneous stops and unplanned moments. Pause at the *Ballandean Pyramid*, painstakingly hand-built from local granite and rising approximately 15 metres high for a keepsake photo. Continue along to *The Ginyard*, a boutique distillery set among the vines. Here, handcrafted gin is served in a relaxed, light-filled setting. Sip slowly as alpacas wander nearby, an experience that feels both playful and quietly refined.

As Day Turns to Night

As you ease into dinner, your reservation at one of Stanthorpe's most sought-after tables, *Essen*, awaits. Under the guidance of head chef and owner, Clarissa Pabst, the seasonal set menu becomes an intimate expression of locally grown produce, so thoughtfully crafted, beautifully paced, and deeply connected to this place.

Each dish tells a story, each course unfolding like a shared moment to savour. Settle in, and let the evening stretch gently on, an experience designed not just to dine, but to celebrate time together in the most delicious way.

Gently return to your retreat, where the stars above and the stillness of the bush promises one of the most restful nights, you'll ever experience.

Day 4.

In Nature We Linger

Morning Glory

Sleep in at *Earth and Soul Retreat* and awake to the morning light as it filters softly through the trees urging you both to linger, wrapped in the quiet luxury of doing nothing at all. It's the kind of place that makes it hard to leave.

On your final morning, ease gently into the day with breakfast at *Brinx Café & Deli*. A local favourite, it's known for artisan coffee, house-made bagels and a warm, welcoming atmosphere. Settle in, take your time, and savour those last slow moments of your Stanthorpe escape, there's no need to rush just yet.

From here, make your way to *Girraween National Park*, where the region's natural beauty is on full display. Towering granite formations rise from the earth, creating a landscape that feels both ancient and awe-inspiring. The air is crisp, the light soft, and the stillness invites you to slow your pace even further.

Stroll side by side along winding bush trails, where each step reveals something new, wildflowers in bloom, granite balancing impossibly against the sky, or a quiet lookout perfect for a pause.

For those seeking a little adventure, take on *The Pyramid* and be rewarded with sweeping panoramic views across the Granite Belt. Prefer something gentler? The Bald Rock Creek circuit offers a peaceful alternative, with shaded paths and tranquil spots along the water to stop, breathe, and simply take it all in.

Here, the journey matters just as much as the destination, shared steps, quiet moments, and a sense of calm that stays with you long after you leave.

After your walk, reward yourselves with a stop at *Heavenly Chocolate*. Tucked among the bushland, this hidden gem offers rich, handcrafted chocolates and indulgent European-style hot drinks, the perfect way to warm up and treat yourselves before the journey home.



One Last Pour

For a final winery experience, make your way to *Balancing Heart Vineyard*, where romance is woven into every detail. Settle in for a relaxed lunch of woodfired pizza paired with a glass of local wine, overlooking the vines. Wander the grounds on a self-guided tour, meet the friendly vineyard animals, including the gentle, affectionate Highland cows, and take in the peaceful rhythm of the property.

Pause at the vineyard's signature, naturally formed heart-shaped rock, a quiet symbol of connection woven into the landscape. For a truly memorable finale, hire a rowboat and drift across the dam beside the cellar door, just the two of you, surrounded by still water, open sky and the soft beauty of the landscape.

Before departing Stanthorpe, take time for one last stop at the *Granite Belt Christmas Farm*, owned by local tree farmers Brad and Katrina Fraser. No matter the season, it offers a sense of joy and nostalgia. From festive treats and locally grown produce to the simple pleasure of wandering together through rows of Christmas trees, it's a light-hearted and memorable way to end your stay.

As you begin the drive home, you'll carry more than just what you've collected along the way. You'll take with you slow mornings, shared meals, quiet conversations, and moments of stillness. Because it's these moments that matter most, the ones that stay with you, long after the journey ends. And in time, you'll find yourselves drawn back to Stanthorpe, to experience them all over again.



Where's Stanthorpe?

You'll find Stanthorpe in the heart of Granite Belt Wine Country in the Southern Downs just two-and-a-half hours drive, south-west of Brisbane and within 3-and-a-half hours' drive of the Gold Coast and Byron Bay.

Travel Essentials

Stanthorpe's elevated climate means you'll experience warm, sunlit days and refreshingly cool nights, so layering is key. Don't forget to pack something warm, even in summer, as temperatures drop more quickly here than along the coast. Comfortable walking shoes are a must for wandering vineyards, boutique stores and bushland trails, while relaxed, stylish pieces will take you seamlessly from cellar doors to long lunches and evening dining.

Seasonally, expect summer (December–February) averages of 14.6–28.8°C, autumn (March–May) 8.8–21.9°C, winter (June–July) a crisp 1.8–17.2°C, and spring (September–November) 7.8–22.3°C. Winter in particular calls for cosy layers, while summer still rewards those who come prepared for cooler evenings.

A hat, sunscreen and water bottle are essentials year-round, especially when exploring under wide open skies. For winery and orchard visits, consider bringing a cooler bag for any fresh produce, delicacies and wines you'd like to take home. Most importantly, pack a sense of curiosity and a willingness to slow down.

