

# SALife

The best of Adelaide and South Australia September 2006

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## MALE ORDER:

CHOOSING A LOOK  
FOR YOUR LOVER

ROSS ADLER:

**THE STATE WE'RE IN**

WHY YOU CAN'T JUDGE  
A WINE BY ITS MEDALS



TIES THAT BIND:  
**SURVIVING**





Home *away from* home

# LAPPING UP *the river life*

WORDS PAUL MURRELL PHOTOGRAPHS KATE ELMES

**W**ATCHING THE SUN RISE OVER the narrow strip of water between Goolwa and Hindmarsh Island is unforgettable. Viewed from the comfort of your own bed, it becomes sublime. The ducks obviously enjoy it too, because they waddle onto the deck of *The Boathouse* at Birks Harbour, waggle their tails and make themselves right at home.

*The Boathouse's* owners Wendy and Phillip Watson discovered the charms of Goolwa earlier than most. They bought what had been a derelict boathouse and turned it into a B&B with character and style. They also bought the *Fairy Queen*, the original wooden boat once owned by local identity, the late Hector Semascho. It's moored a few metres away from *The Boathouse's* front windows.

Goolwa, like most riverfront towns, is undergoing a revival. A few years ago, it was impossible to eat breakfast out or find a decent coffee after 7pm in this sleepy little river port. Now it's a perfect bolthole for stressed Adelaideans – and even driving through the Fleurieu Peninsula to reach Goolwa offers its share of pleasant surprises. A short pause in the journey had us tasting wine at the Currency Creek Winery cellar door, and debating whether to return for a remarkably cheap \$20 three course Friday night dinner (including matched wines). A little further down the road, the impressive façade of Chris Norris's *Kingsbrook* property (now open to public visitors) tempted us inside for nibbles and another glass of red.

Driving along the Goolwa foreshore towards Birks Harbour, it's easy to delude yourself that this is your very own secret hideaway. After we let ourselves into *The Boathouse*, we take in the tasteful surrounds – boating paraphernalia, the gentle lapping of the water and the tinkling of shackles on boats moored at the marina. Wendy provides a welcoming selection of Strathalbyn olive oil and dukkah, fresh fruit, chocolates, crackers, fresh ground coffee, a selection of different teas and a complimentary bottle of Angus Wines' 2004 Semillon. We opt for a soothing cup of tea, followed by an appetite-enhancing walk along the riverside boardwalk. Dinner at a local pub rounds out a most pleasant evening.

Next morning, we breakfast on *The Boathouse's* sun-soaked deck before heading off to the Murray mouth; Ninety Mile Beach unfurls in one direction, the sweep of the Coorong stretches in the other. We unconvincingly play bird-watcher at Scab Creek, hoping to identify eastern curlew, bar-tailed godwit and red knot, plus all five species of cormorant. Then we buy some fish straight off the boats for an evening barbecue.

Back on the deck at Birks Harbour, we sip Semillon and contemplate a visit to the winery tomorrow. Before bed, my wife decides to indulge herself with a soaking bath, taking advantage of the provided Small Indulgences aromatherapy pack.

Sunday dawns. Pelicans are airing their wings on pier pylons and those friendly ducks have arrived for breakfast. Wendy assures us they understand English, and will move along

if asked, but we appreciate their company so don't bother to test her theory. And with a noon checkout, there's no need to hurry. We linger over freshly brewed coffee, fresh bread and Wendy's cumquat marmalade.

As a recommendation on our departure, we detour to enjoy lunch at Blue's Restaurant on Main Goolwa Rd, Middleton. Excellent food and ambience put us in a languid Mediterranean mood, bringing the weekend to a perfect conclusion. The only regret was that many things we planned to do, we simply didn't have time for: A flight in a genuine fighter plane, a ride on the Cockle Train, a whale watching flight, and so many possible walks, wineries and restaurants. And I also regret not towing the boat down for a little sailing (a mooring, if required, is included in the tariff). Still, all these unfulfilled plans provide an ideal excuse to book another, perhaps longer, stay at *The Boathouse*. 

*Acknowledgement:* SALife stayed at The Boathouse at Birks Harbour as a guest of Wendy and Phillip Watson. It is located on Liverpool Rd, Goolwa. Tariff is \$199 per night for two people, based on a two-night stay. For more information or to make a booking, phone 08 8555 0338 or visit [www.birksharbour.com.au](http://www.birksharbour.com.au)

Angus Wines is open on the first weekend of each month, or by appointment. Phone 08 8555 2320.

Blues Restaurant is on Main Goolwa Rd, Middleton. Phone 08 8554 1800.





