

Escape

1.11.09

1.com.au

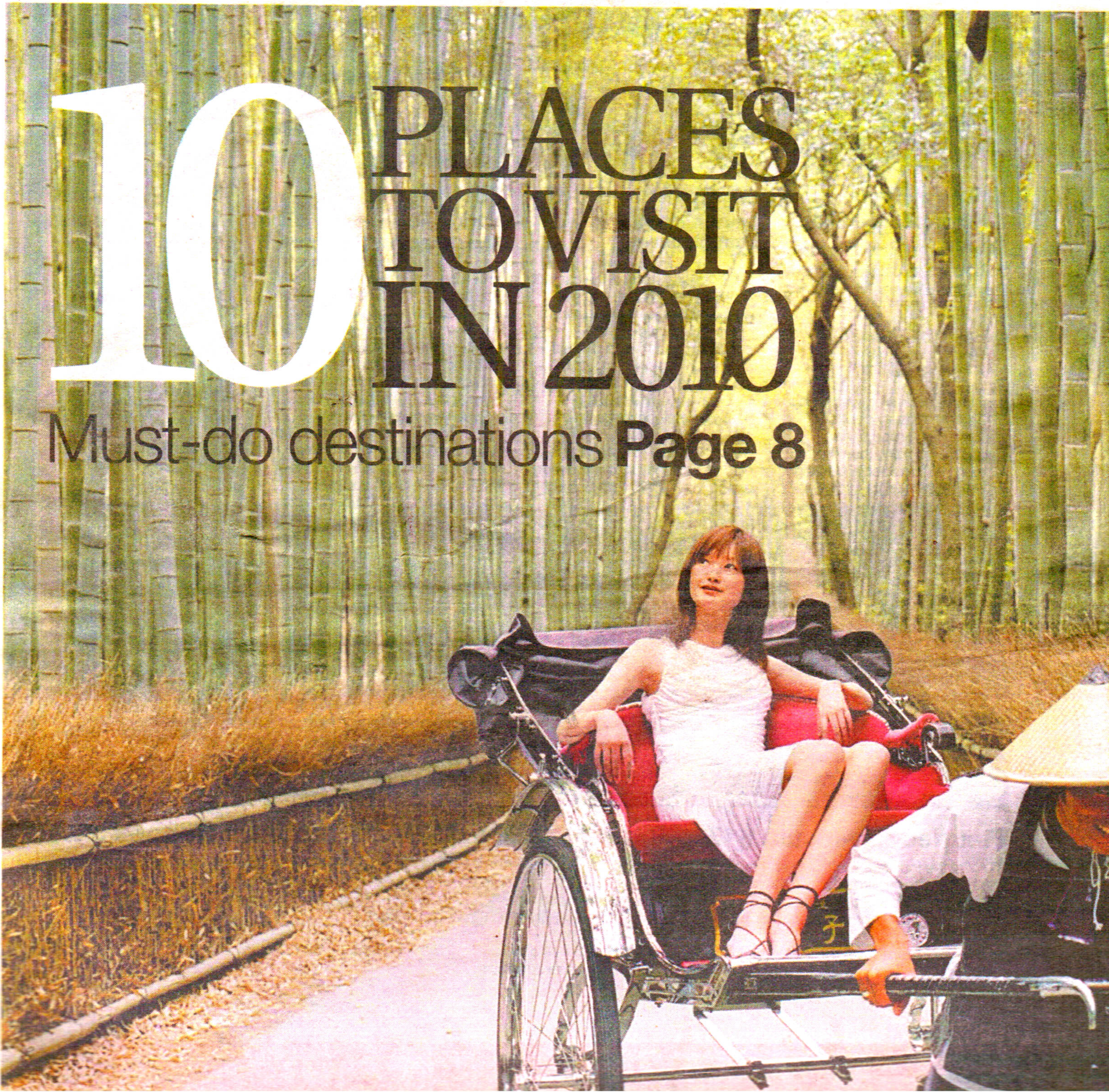


Travel Challenge Page 2

Five of the best travel books Page 14

10 PLACES TO VISIT IN 2010

Must-do destinations Page 8



Suite life Goolwa SA

Historical Boathouse leaves guests in oar

Kara Murphy

ONE of the vintage wooden boats docked at private Birks Harbour Marina in the historic river port of Goolwa, 85km south of Adelaide, sports the name *Terrible* on her sail. But there isn't anything terrible about this harbour's Boathouse.

Established in the 1920s by Napier Birks, the former slipway is now a single guest house with fabulous views of the River Murray from its interior but especially from its sizeable deck, which opens on to the marina.

In 2001, Wendy and Phillip Watson, who live in the pretty cottage across the road, bought Birks Harbour Marina and renovated the Boathouse, opening it to guests in October the same year.

We like

As one guest aptly noted in the comments book, the Watsons have definitely thought of everything.

Guests have all the kitchen appliances they need for cooking in, a selection of romantic DVDs and videos for watching on the flat screen TV is provided and room rates include a gourmet continental breakfast hamper.

The fridge was stocked with more complimentary products (a litre of



NAUTICAL AIR: The main room of the Boathouse (above and top right) overlooks Birks Harbour Marina while the large deck overlooks and connects to the marina.

milk, a bottle of premium local white wine, a Tasmanian smoked salmon dip, and plunger coffee) and cupboards stored instant coffee and an assortment of teas.

Another lovely touch is the pamper pack, which included a couple of handmade body care gifts made in South Australia and, along with the

claw bath, inspired me to ignore the separate shower and slow down for a soak.

The room

The stylish interior includes vaulted ceilings throughout a lengthy open-plan living area decorated in wicker,



Pictures: Kara Murphy

sand and cream; maritime features such as drapes suspended by oars; a combustion wood heater and reverse-cycle airconditioner.

It also features local artwork and books – for example, a signed copy of Alastair Wood's *Poor Man River*, which begins with a vivid description of the Coorong, a coastal lagoon that

stretches about 130km from the nearby mouth of the River Murray.

Not so keen

I wasn't a fan of the property's name being on its exterior because it left me with an initial impression that the accommodation was more public than it actually is. Then again, we knew we'd come to the right place.

The damage

The rate is \$225 a night/\$1230 a week for two adults, including a continental breakfast hamper, wine, nibbles and aromatherapy bathroom pack. Extra people cost \$45 a person a night.

If your dates are already booked, try Napier Birks' original circa-1910 stone homestead, Birks River House, across the street from the Boathouse. A recent, stylish renovation has converted it into two self-contained retreats: the Garden (sleeping up to four) and the Riverview (sleeping up to two). Both are \$250 a night.

Details

Birks Harbour Boathouse, 138B Liverpool Rd, Goolwa, South Australia. Ph (08) 8555 0338 birksharbour@iinet.net.au www.birksharbour.com.au

My holiday

Travel guru **KEITH CONLON**, of Channel 9's *Postcards*, reveals his top getaways

Do you have a favourite holiday destination in SA?

The Boat House, which really is an old boatshed converted into a perfect B&B. It sits out on the water at Goolwa so regardless of the weather you're always out there with the ducks and the pelicans, the wind and the rain, or the sun – it's just amazing.

Is this the scene of your most memorable holidays?

It's up there, but our holiday in Sabah, Malaysia, last year was wild in its colour and exotica.

Sutera Harbour Resort in Kota Kinabalu was a luxuriant base for experiencing the wonder of coming close to wild orang-utans in the forest, snorkelling among schools of tropical fish, riding on a steam train through rice paddies and water buffalo, wandering traditional village markets and more.

What is the best place you have been to for work?

Outside of Australia, Georgetown, in Penang. It was designed by Colonel Light's father, Captain Francis Light, 50 years before William put his stamp here.

Georgetown is a seemingly impossible mix of cultures and religions all living in harmony and, as a result, it's a spectacularly visual city.

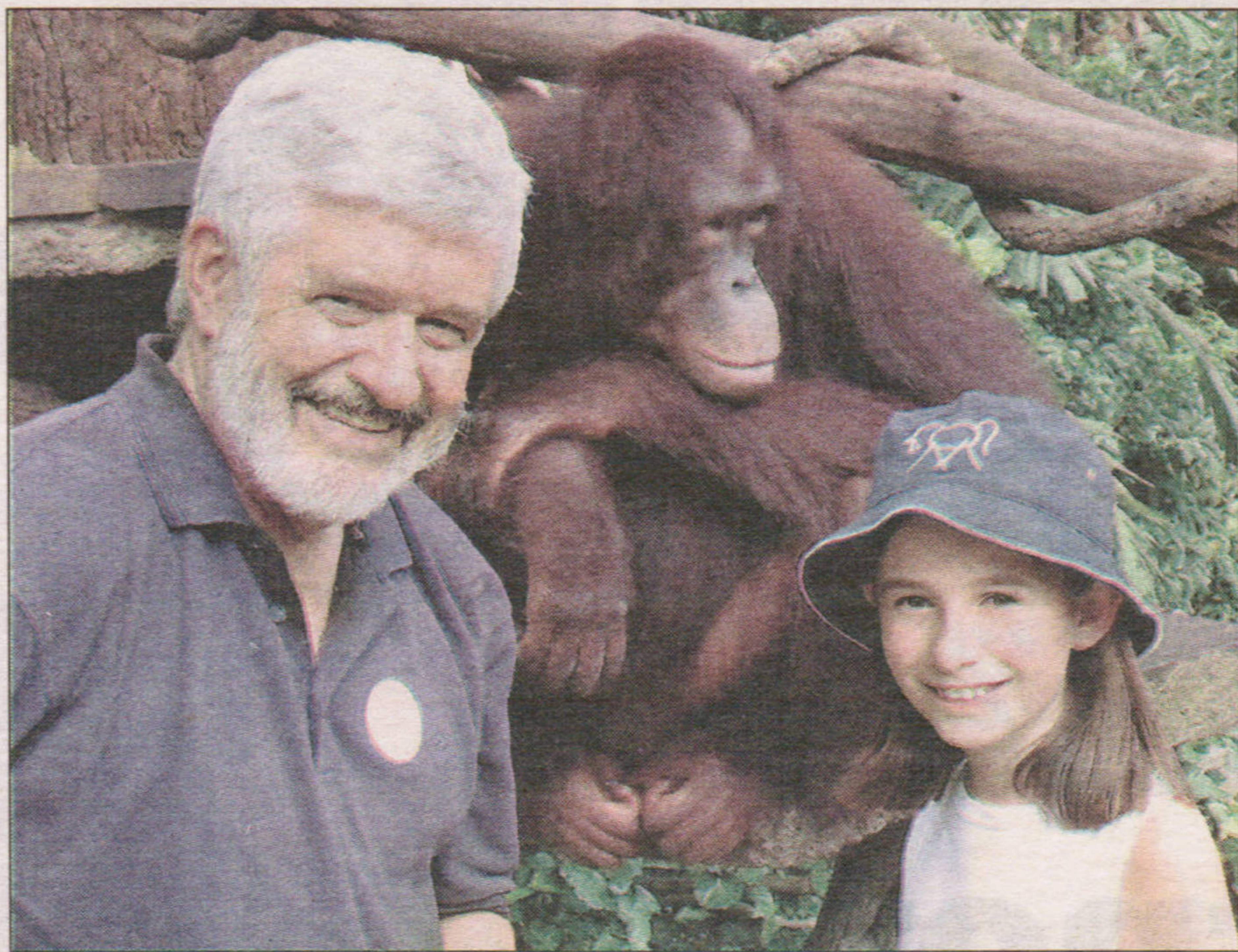
The food is remarkable and the people are always smiling. It's a very relaxed and cultured place.

Our trip to Cooper Creek in the Outback last year just blew me away. It's impossible to imagine just how beautiful this ribbon of life is without going there.

It's in stark contrast to its surrounds, going from red gibber pebbles to a maze of wildlife. It looks a little like a giant lagoon on the Murray.

Where is your favourite holiday spot in Australia?

Excluding South Australia, probably Melbourne. The culture, footy and fine foods make it a great city and it's terrific to combine a visit with going to watch the Adelaide Crows play at the Dome.



CLOSE UP: Keith Conlon and daughter Matilda at Singapore Zoo

What is your idea of the ultimate getaway?

Flinders Chase or close to it. There are remote bays on Kangaroo Island that we could return to time and time again. I enjoy the sense of isolation and the breathtaking coastline. Good for the soul.

Where did you go on your most recent trip?

At short notice, we booked as a family in to Peppers, at Marananga, which has lovely new units overlooking rolling vineyards. We went for a wander to the Barossa farmers' market on Saturday morning and to an old book shop, new cheese shop and a couple of

inviting cellar doors which we found down back roads. It was an idyllic weekend.

Do you prefer to holiday domestically or abroad?

I can't choose between the two. We still have a long list of places to see in SA alone and, of course, the rest of the world is largely unexplored – well, by us at least.

What do you never leave behind on holidays?

A guidebook, a bird book, my faithful old Nikon and my new digital camera, binoculars, a map and preferably a good bottle of red.