

country flavours

For a genuine taste of life in the country, you can't go past the local watering hole.

[words Andrew Schurgott]

There's much more to a country pub than beer. It's where communities come together, where sports teams celebrate wins and drown losses, and where talk of harvests, vintages and fuel prices flows with the changing seasons.

Hundreds of pubs grace regional South Australia, from Port Macdonnell's **Victoria Hotel** in the south to **Mungerannie Hotel** on the Birdsville Track, each with its characters and charm, long tales and local yarns. So what sets a country pub apart?

It's got to look the part, sure, whether it's a tin shed held together by old beer and petrol posters (think the **William Creek Hotel**), or the grand, historic, two-storey landmarks, from the **Mount Gambier Hotel** in the south to the **Tumby Bay Hotel** in the west. Perhaps it's that sense of timelessness – like the lonely **Cradock Hotel**.

The setting plays a part, too, be it views of jetty and foreshore (**Port Broughton Hotel**) or Outback plains (**Prairie Hotel**, Parachilna), or just the slowly passing traffic of country life (**Wilmington Hotel**).

More important, though, is that feeling of welcome when the door swings open: the **Central Hotel** in Riverton and the **Caltowie Hotel** show how it's done.

Often there's a sense of history and community, too: at pubs such as the **Hawker Hotel**, you'll see noticeboards dotted with photos, footy tipping results and other memorabilia. At the historic **Overland Corner Hotel** outside Barmera, you can see the bar where preacher and bushranger



Pull up a stool at the **Three Brothers' Arms**, which has 50+ English beers available.

Captain Moonlight quenched his thirst while on the run from police. Or the **Loxton Hotel**, which takes it a step further by being owned by the community, channelling its profits into local charities, projects and events.

The food might be classic pub grub (try the **Commercial Hotel** in Jamestown) or high-end fare (**Three Brothers' Arms** in Macclesfield), but it's tasty and filling; no postage stamp-sized appetisers. Schnitzels at the front bar and a Sunday roast, salad bar and games for the kids in the restaurant.

And you will uncover some of the state's best wine lists (**The Victory Hotel** at Sellicks Beach) and local beers on tap (**The Greenock Creek Tavern**).

The best country pubs are not just a place to pass through, but a destination in themselves. They have that special ambience of a home away from home, an oasis at the end of a long drive where locals and travellers mix and one thing is always certain: the beer is cold.



The **William Creek Hotel** is covered in memorabilia from visitors past and serves a population of just five people.

top 5

Bordertown Hotel

79 East Tce, Bordertown 8752 1016 bordertownhotel.com.au This classic country corner pub has a laid-back, welcoming feel and big, open dining rooms, pool tables and a quaint 'Galah' bar. There's an impressive selection of wines, good coffee and cheap accommodation for those passing through.

Grand Tasman Hotel

94 Tasman Tce, Port Lincoln 8682 2133 grandtasmanhotel.com.au On the foreshore of one of the state's busiest towns, this sprawling hotel overlooks beautiful Boston Bay. It's a favourite among holidaying families and locals, with a restaurant serving sumptuous seafood, accommodation, front bar and nightclub that kicks on into the wee hours.

Innamincka Hotel

2 South Tce, Innamincka 8675 9901 theoutback.com.au You'll likely encounter some colourful characters at this outback watering hole, from farmers and truckies to backpackers and grey nomads, all sharing a cold beer and tales of their adventures. The resident chef serves some of SA's best regional produce, too.

Rising Sun Hotel

19 Main North Rd, Auburn, Clare 8849 2015 From the deck overlooking the historic town of Auburn to the cosy restaurant, long front bar, classic accommodation and welcoming staff, this lovingly restored 160-year-old hotel is an example of what all old country pubs could be. An absolute gem.

Royal Oak Hotel Clarendon

Grants Gully Rd, Clarendon 8383 6113 The Clarry buzzes year-round with locals taking advantage of alfresco drinking in summer and open fires in winter. Stop in at the à la carte restaurant, which is built into old water tanks set in the hillside.

also check out

Blinman Hotel Mine Rd, Blinman 8648 4867

blinmanhotel.com.au

Renmark Hotel Motel Murray Ave, Renmark 8586 6755 renmarkhotel.com.au

Rising Sun Hotel 30 Edward St, Pt Wakefield 8867 1023

Streaky Bay Hotel 33 Alfred Tce, Streaky Bay 8626 1008 streakybayhotel.com.au

The Tanunda Hotel 51 Murray St, Tanunda 8563 2030 tanundapub.com