

Celebrating SPRING

Adventure and culture, hand in hand, with a backdrop of staggering mountain peaks jutting up from the ocean. That's what you can expect at the Spring Festival on Lord Howe Island from September 29 to October 4.

Spring. The blossoming of new life. Nature, suddenly colourful, flourishing with flora and fauna. A heady scent of pollen in the warming air, whipping off the bright coast. Ah, Spring.

To hold a festival in spring strikes us as the most logical thing in the world. Spring deserves to be celebrated. After a long cold winter, most of us will find ourselves very ready to rediscover all of the things that make life brilliant.

And what are those things? If you're holding this magazine, one answer is bound to be adventure. The other, less obvious answer might be: everything life-affirming. A cup of wine. An expertly prepared meal. A boppy, soulful tune, that you find yourself jiving to. Laughter, among newfound friends.

The Lord Howe Spring festival brings together all of these life-affirming things, and combines them with the most life-affirming of all: adventure.

PUSHING THE BOUNDARIES

"A good adventure holiday is one where your boundaries have been pushed," says Luke Hanson of Lord Howe's Pinetrees Lodge. For one, the island's festivals push boundaries by shifting away from conventional, rigid planning.

The adventurous windows during these days are free-form and amorphous, determined on the fly by the visitor's tastes and prevailing conditions. However the elements that may make them up are glorious. Composing them on the fly is something like a collaborative artwork, between yourself and the environment.

"On any given day the scuba diving is amazing, the snorkelling is amazing, the surfing is amazing," Luke says. "There's seven amazing peaks you can climb, including Mt Gower, which is one of the hardest day walks in Australia."

"Even on a normal day at Pinetrees, you sit down at breakfast; you've got your breakfast/lunch menu on the table, and we also give you a recommended activities list for the day. During festivals we're extra proactive about ensuring visitors can undertake adventure activities. Once we know what's going to happen with the conditions, we put people in the best place."



LEFT TO RIGHT: The crystal clear waters of the lagoon; previous festivals have proved a blast; heading off to explore the mountains; smooth spring nights out on the water; cowabunga, dude.

This Spring Festival is very much about release from winter, Luke from Pinetrees can confirm.

“The people who show up in September and October, they’re ready for warmth,” he says. “They’re ready for warm water. They’re ready for swimming.”

And while Lord Howe may itself not need a grand release from chills, having a level climate year-round, it does provide the perfect platform for a mainlander’s escape: “Lord Howe is kind of this eternal spring. Our climate rarely gets below 18 degrees in the day, and very rarely gets above 27.”

And Luke has proof. While it is hard for him to grow tomatoes or summer produce, he has no issues reaping tonnes of spring veggies, such as loose-leaf lettuce and zucchinis, all year round.

ADVENTURE FITNESS

But Lord Howe does have a winter hiatus of sorts, with Pinetrees being closed over winter months. This gives Luke and the team, including his wife Dani, the opportunity to generate new ideas.

One of these ideas is the Adventure Fitness Program that will be launched alongside the Spring Festival. Luke was bubbling with enthusiasm as he relayed how, while planning a trip to the Dolomites, he discovered the emulable ‘lifestyle hotels’ of Italy, which offer amazing fitness programs, taking hospitality way beyond a bed to sleep in.

Such programs are something Pinetress has informally been doing for a while, but now, this Spring, they’ll launch this venture in earnest.

“The whole idea of adventure fitness is that you’re moving away from pools and gyms and equipment,” Luke says. “It’s about asking, why go to the pool when you can ocean swim? Why get on the walking machine when you can go for a trail run?”

The program will be designed by Trevor Hendy, the former World and Australian Ironman Champion. It’ll run for five days, be self-guided, and have three different levels: gentle, intermediate and challenging.

“There will be a proper, coaching sports science angle to it all,” Luke says. “For that challenging level, there might be three activities a day. Every one of them is energetic, every one of them is



going to get your heart rate up, but every one of them is going to take you to amazing places.”

There will also, for the first time, be a full-time yoga instructor on the staff, allowing adventurers to start their days in the right way.

ECOLOGICAL INSIGHTS

To round out the festival, there is a new ‘behind the scenes’ conservation tour. Visitors can discover how the locals

manage to be self-sufficient, despite being so far away from mainland services, and about their efforts to preserve the unique environment.

For example, Pinetress has recently installed a desalination plant, to purify bore water, and is currently in the process of going carbon-neutral.

“We’re putting in a big solar power system,” Luke says. “For one it’s philosophical. You want to do the right thing and leave the planet in a better

place for the next generation. But also, for us, it’s a no-brainer. We pay five times the domestic rate for power here on the island.”

You can also find out about the local’s efforts to preserve the endangered ecological system of Sallywood Swamp Forest – and their intention to actually double its ground cover. After all, “It’s not often you can double the last remaining stand of a certain forest type in the world.”

The Spring Festival

Dates: September 29 to October 4

What to expect:

- The launch of the Adventure Fitness Program.
- Adventure activities with experienced Lord Howe guides.
- Snorkelling cruise on the Lord Howe Lagoon.
- Picnic cruise to North Bay.
- Performances by Juzzie Smith, the roots musician, one man band, street performer and rhythmic juggler.
- Cooking master classes with Tom Kime, with tasting of at least four dishes in each class.

- ‘Behind the scenes’ conservation tourism tour.
- Six nights accommodation at Pinetrees Lodge, the No. 1 Hotel in Australia for 2017 & 2018, and No. 2 for 2019 (according to TripAdvisor).
- Breakfasts, lunches, afternoon teas and four course dinners.
- Island airport transfers also included.

Cost: starting from \$3102 per person twin share in a Transit Hill Room, excluding airfares.

For more information: head to www.pinetrees.com.au, call (02) 9262 6585, or email info@pinetrees.com.au.

