

TRAVEL

Follow your heart

Days on a beach doing nothing much at all? If that sounds a bit dull, then dive into an immersive holiday and indulge your personal passion

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This weekend, away from city distractions and the pull of work and family, a group of keen writers has converged on the Red Feather Inn at Hadsden. Participants in this writers' retreat with author Maggie Mackellar are spending three days surrendering to the stories in their minds - and putting them onto the page with expert guidance.

Hosted by Me Time Experiences, the workshop is one of many absorbing learning experiences on offer this summer. Me Time's Sharon Ashlin says learning can make for a relaxing and enriching holiday. Ashlin founded Me Time a year ago with her sister Pauline Roche and as well as writing they have hosted sessions on singing and photography. She says a workshop retreat is a "safe place" to explore your capabilities and follow your passions. "The goal isn't to become a professional by the end, but to indulge in your own interests and learn something new about yourself with the chance to test different skills - and enjoy some 'me' time."

From yoga to food photography, there are plenty of holiday classes and workshops popping up around the state.

FOOD

The Red Feather Inn's cooking school and the Agrarian Kitchen at Lachlan, in the Derwent Valley, may have put high-end foodie classes on the Tasmanian map, but there are lots of options.

SOMETHING FISHY

The new Kiss a Fish cookery school at Binalong Bay on the East Coast offers full-day workshops in the home of Roz MacAllan. The venue has a semi-outdoor kitchen fitted with a woodfired oven for you to learn the practical skills for preparing a quality dish with fresh Tasmanian seafood. Learn how to shuck, scale and fillet your fish before cooking it up to enjoy with the group. Cooking techniques taught include steaming, baking and wok-frying, with a range of cuisines and dishes presented. Full-day classes throughout December and early January cost \$350 a person. For more information, visit kissafishcookeryschool.com.au

SHORT 'N' SWEET

Michelle Crawford's Food Styling Workshop is perfect if you're after tips for creating irresistible food snaps for Instagram and other social media. Huon Valley-based blogger and food stylist Crawford is also author and photographer of *A Table in the Orchard*. The class will be held at Deloraine on December 5 (\$130 a person), as part of a workshop series at The Black Hen store's studio that includes a Christmas Wreath Workshop with Lee Adamson from the Killiecrankie Farm Nursery and Christmas Trees next Saturday (\$120) and The Art of Chalkboard Writing with Ness Lockyer from Marley & Lockyer ceramics on Saturday, November 21 (\$120). For bookings, visit theblackhen.com

AGRARIAN KITCHEN

Rodney Dunn and Severine Demanet run the Agrarian Kitchen cooking school from a 19th-century schoolhouse at Lachlan. The paddock-to-plate experience includes foraging for ingredients in the huge vegetable garden and preparing a feast in the kitchen to be shared, with Tasmanian wine, among a small group. The Agrarian Kitchen Experience costs \$385 a person and also includes an Agrarian Kitchen apron and recipes. Workshops on baking, fermenting and smoking food coming up. For more information, visit theagrariankitchen.com

MAKE YOUR OWN GIN

Craft your own gin under guidance from master distiller William McHenry. Hosted by Kim Dudson's Bespoke Tasmania, the workshop will help you produce a 500ml bottle of distilled gin with your choice of botanicals, ranging from lemon myrtle to pepperberry. The workshop includes a guided tour of the distillery and tastings of leading gin brands with a special focus on the McHenry's range of rare barrel-aged gin and sloe gin. A gin flavour-matched lunch is included. Workshops are held by appointment on Fridays, from 11am-3pm. Prices start at \$280. For more information, visit bespoketasmania.com

YOU TIME

ME TIME RETREATS

Me Time Experiences will bring magazine and fine art photographer Tony Amos to Ratho Farm, Bothwell, from Friday, April 29, to Monday, May 2, to help you hone your photographic skills, with a focus on equipment, composition, location and observations. You'll also have the opportunity for a one-on-one session in the field with Amos and plenty of time to explore the historic grounds and take photos at your own pace. The cost is \$2499 a person and includes three nights' accommodation, all meals and snacks. For more information, visit metimeexperiences.com.au

YOGA

Unwind and indulge in a weekend of yoga and tea at Niche Retreat at Deep Bay. Accredited Iyengar yoga teacher Gabrielle Gartrell will team up with Japanese tea master Allan Halyk for a stress-relief course, including two nights' accommodation and meals. There will be two or three yoga classes a day, with a one-on-one tea ceremony for participants and a tea demonstration on the final day. "Yoga is based on study and practice - and tea is a similar philosophy," Gartrell says. The cost is \$350 a person. For more information, phone 0457 024 267 or visit theyogaeffect.com.au

SPEAK UP

Not one for the faint of heart, this two-day public speaking course will boost your confidence as it forces you to speak up and share improvised and pre-written speeches. Guided meditation will help you to calm your nerves before you partake in activities to get you talking. Make up stories on the spot and learn how to explain something with your body language alone. Actor Justus Neumann hosts the workshop at the Moonah Arts Centre on Saturday, November 21, and Sunday, November 22, from 10am-5pm, and again at Adventure Bay, Bruny Island, on Saturday, November 28 and Sunday, November 29. The cost is \$260 a person, including lunch on both days.

ART

EPIC TOUR

Travel the state with watercolour artist and teacher Greg Allen in this 13-day painting and sketching workshop, which includes intensive sessions with instruction and demonstration on creating pictures ranging from nature to the historic Hobart waterfront. It also includes



HORSING AROUND:
Justin Couper with some of his polo horses at The Creech.

accommodation at Bicheno, Strahan, Launceston and Hobart. Experienced artists and beginners are welcome and you can bring your partner along for \$250 off the final price if they don't want to paint but would like to join you for the trip. The tour starts on Saturday, February 28, from \$3895 for twin share. For more information, visit paintingworkshops.net

BRUSH WITH FLINDERS

Enjoy a group workshop and one-on-one sessions with Sydney-born artist Judith White at Flinders Island, with accommodation at the Mountain Seas Retreat and Art Centre. This retreat, from January 17-24, will have you trekking the wilderness to gather material you can bring back to the studio to sketch your own works. The course is designed for artists with some experience. The cost is \$4225 a person and includes food and accommodation. For more information, visit fayboydsfineartschool.com or mountainseas.com.au

OUTDOOR ADVENTURE

POLO

Learn to play polo like a pro at The Creech - the new polo farm at Mathinna, North-East Tasmania. The workshops will be hosted by farm owner Justin Couper and you'll be under the tutelage of some of Australia's leading polo players who will stay at the property throughout January. If you're a beginner, you can learn how to ride a horse and play polo simultaneously, and if you're more experienced you can book intense training sessions. Workshops can last from a few hours to a full week. Dates and prices by appointment. The players' residency will culminate in final competitions at Barnbougle on Saturday, January 23, and Cornelian Bay on Saturday, January 30, which you can attend as a spectator. For more information, phone 0429 863 158 or visit thecreech.com.au

ROD AND FLY

Mike Tenner will take you out to the private trout fishery Redbanks at Nugent for a full day of fly-fishing. Practise fly-casting, knot-tying and techniques to catch and release your fish. Understand how to choose and use rods, reels, vests and accessories, and fine-tune your senses to find where the trout hides and discover what they see and feel. The cost is \$565 a person, by appointment, for up to four people. For bookings, phone 0408 469 771 or visit rodandfly.com.au