



ONE PERFECT DAY

Brisbane

WORDS **ASHLEY HAY** PHOTOGRAPHY **ALICIA TAYLOR**

The dining, entertainment, cultural and retail opportunities in Queensland's capital are ever-evolving, but it's still all about that lazy old Brisbane River, snaking its way through the heart of the city.



A river runs through it: Brisbane CBD

PHOTOGRAPHY: GETTY IMAGES



07.00

Brisbane is unique among Australia's capital cities in having the same name as its river (named after the colonial governor Thomas Brisbane), and there's no nicer start to the day than on this eponymous waterway. From the centre of town, it's about 20 minutes upriver to the end of the CityCat's line at the University of Queensland, or a pleasant 40-minute run to Bretts Wharf in the other direction (brisbaneferries.com.au). The latter voyage meanders past the striking sandstone cliffs of Kangaroo Point, the Brisbane Botanic Gardens' mangrove boardwalk and underneath the city's iconic Story Bridge.

Kangaroo Point (07.00); right GoMA Cafe Bistro (08.30)

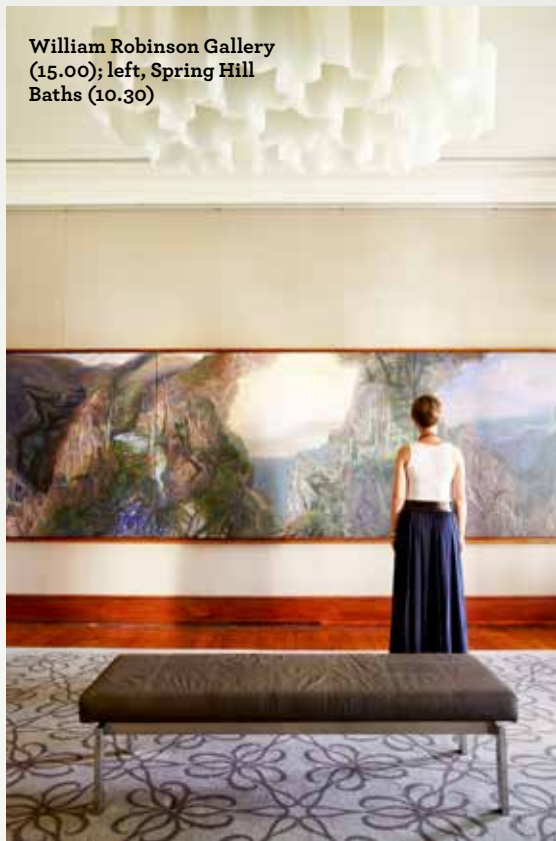
08.30

Head back to town for breakfast at the Gallery of Modern Art's (GoMA) Cafe Bistro (Stanley Place, South Bank, GoMA open 9am-5pm weekends; 10am-5pm weekdays). Towering Moreton Bay fig trees line the river's boardwalk, complementing the juxtaposed elegance of the gallery's vast overhanging roof and the ribbons of expressway on the river's opposite bank: Jeffrey Smart should paint it. Go simple with eggs and toast soldiers, hearty with sausages and rosti, or sneak the chocolate-filled crepes. Take a stroll through the gallery and find the secret sanctuary of the Pavilion Balcony upstairs.

10.30

Cross the river via Kurilpa footbridge. The world's largest "tensegrity" bridge, it uses tension and compression to create a strong, lightweight structure. In certain lights, its uprights seem to almost disappear. Go through the Roma Street Parkland for a time-travelling inner-city swim at Spring Hill Baths (or catch the free Spring Hill Loop bus, translink.com.au). Opened in 1886, this heated pool (just shy of 25m) is partially open to the sky and has 46 old-fashioned change cubicles, doors picture-book red, yellow and green. For a post-lap treat, the kiosk sells lollies from jars, or try Spring Hill Deli (2/537 Boundary Street).









William Robinson Gallery
(15.00); left, Spring Hill
Baths (10.30)



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11.30

The first Brisbane shop to seduce me, almost a decade ago, was Dogstar, marrying structured, asymmetrical designs with irresistibly gorgeous fabric. The city now has four Dogstar outlets: South Bank, Edward Street in the city, Paddington and Ann Street, Fortitude Valley – the dip in the land beyond Spring Hill – beside the Japanese-inspired Maiocchi boutique. The iconic Blonde Venus is here, too, and its younger cousin, The Outpost, is nearby in funky Winn Street. Head the other way, into Brunswick Street, for Fallow, purveyors of “cloth and curiosities” for both genders (range includes Song for the Mute and Tettmann Doust, and perfumes by New York's CB I Hate Perfume). Chic James Street has flagship stores for local stars Easton Pearson and Tom Gunn. Have a speedy snack of sushi or seafood from the Fresh Fish Co (James St Market, jamesstmarket.com.au, they do great things with Moreton Bay bugs) or Happy Little Dumplings' new outlet (65 James Street).

13.30

There's no avoiding Queen Street Mall with its high-street and high-end retailers, its delectable farmers' markets (Wednesdays 10am-6pm) and monthly suitcase rummages (flea markets) at the top end, in Reddycliff Place. Beyond the shops, this strip might be the starting point for any number of adventures. Brisbane Greeters run free walking tours from the mall's lower end, plus some tours on buses and ferries (themes include public art, nature, science and heritage, brisbanegreeters.com.au) or download the Department of Housing and Public Works' Colonial Heritage Tour podcast to any smartphone or listening device and head out from Brisbane Square via various stops including the Commissariat store (dating from the earliest European settlement in the 1820s) and the beautiful red-brick terraces of The Mansions to Old Government House, just a few blocks east (www.hpw.qld.gov.au/heritage). ➤



The Outpost (11.30)

15.00

Old Government House has seen various tenants since it stopped housing governors in 1909 – it's now part of Queensland University of Technology's Gardens Point campus and home to the spectacular William Robinson Gallery. Born in nearby Fairfield, the artist creates vertiginous paintings that rearrange the world and relocate the sky, catching the shifting perspectives and undulating possibilities of Brisbane's topography. For the exhibition *William Robinson: Insights* (until June 16), art historian Betty Churcher, artist Davida Allen and David Malouf have selected their favourite Robinson pieces, Malouf celebrating his "sweet derangement of our sense of visual reality" and "an opening of the moment in fluid time". In his book *Brisbane*, Matt Condon writes of experiencing such a moment, and it feels a distinct possibility in this mutable and fecund place.

17.00

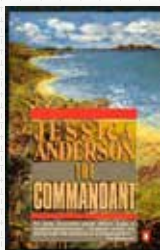
Cross the Brisbane River via the Goodwill Bridge, which is another of Brisbane's "green" thoroughfares, to find yourself at Brisbane's cultural and entertainment precinct of South Bank (visitsouthbank.com.au). Head on via the manmade beach – a surprisingly enticing artifice in this river city – and the aperitif delights of the Sardine Tin wine bar (Little Stanley), and into West End. Nestled in the busiest section of Boundary Street is Avid Reader, which is not only one of Australia's finest independent bookstores, but also the operator of a kind of perennial literary festival: there are eight book clubs underway here, and events (from 6pm) on most nights of the week. But even without the conversation of any writers, Avid is the perfect place to dive into a sea of books and emerge loaded with new stories.

Blonde Venus (11.30)





WORD UP

**THE COMMANDANT***Jessica Anderson (Text)*

A flawless and compelling historical novel about the early Moreton Bay penal settlement and its famous commandant, Captain Patrick Logan.

**BRISBANE***Matthew Condon (New South)*

A biography of Condon's home town, mixed with personal recollections, which loops around the site of John Oxley's first landing on the Brisbane River – "a muddy, twisting, restless thing".

**SMOKE ENCRYPTED WHISPERS***Samuel Wagan Watson (UQP/Melba Recordings)*

A sequence of 23 poems by the Brisbane-born Indigenous writer paired with musical commentaries from local composers that are a response to each of the works.

Pearl Cafe (19.30); right, Super Whatnot (21.30)



19.30

Brisbane is punctuated by several well-known dining precincts, in the inner city and the suburbs beyond. A more recent addition is Logan Street, Woolloongabba, with a hatted restaurant (1889 Enotecca), a generous crowd-pleaser (The Crosstown Eating House), and other smaller establishments. Pearl Cafe has an exquisite selection of courses – from aperitifs to desserts – complemented by a wide-ranging international wine list. The seasonally adjusted menu ebbs and flows: a late-spring supper starts with a hardboiled egg with caviar and herbed crème fraîche. With charming service and irresistible food, it's a place that could easily become a regular haunt (07 3392 3300).


21.30

The latest trend for Brisbane's watering holes has seen nifty bars and cafes spring up in the city's laneways and alleys. Super Whatnot (48 Burnett



Lane) is a perfect example, with a changing rotation of beers on tap and a succulent twist on bar food. For music, something a little loud, try The Beetle Bar, Upper Roma Street (beetlebar.com.au); for quieter ivory-tickling, the Pink Piano in Spring Hill (pinkpiano.net); or the free program of indie rock and comedy downstream at the Brisbane Powerhouse (119 Lamington Street).

To end the night with a drink that leaves no doubt what city you're in, head to Mr and Mrs G, a cool river bar on the Eagle Street Pier. Make the most of a quiet weeknight with a window seat – there, perfectly framed, is the Story Bridge, its familiar shape etched in bright orange light against the darkness. The bar can whip up anything you desire, from classic cocktails to "G originals". Try the fullstop of a gin martini, nicely dry, and watch the CityCats and smaller, stubby ferries etch their last wakes of the day across the river. 

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