



Hot air ballooning.

FLYING HIGH OVER *Ipswich*



STORY JESSICA WILSON | PHOTOS FLOATING IMAGES & DISCOVER IPSWICH

SPEND A WEEKEND EXPLORING THE SOUTH-EAST QUEENSLAND HERITAGE CITY.

WITH AN EMERGING café culture, vibrant gardens and unique historic buildings, the city of Ipswich is the perfect location for a weekend getaway.

**SATURDAY
9AM**

We began our adventure with coffee at

one of Ipswich's most beloved cafes, Rafter and Rose. The laneway cafe's rustic whitewashed brick façade, shabby chic furniture and abundance of lush greenery is complemented by great coffee and delicious home-style meals created from local ingredients.

After coffee we strolled along Ipswich's high street, known as Top of

Town, home to historic buildings filled with quirky boutiques selling with everything from Christmas decorations year-round to collectables at C.J. Vogler and Son, Ipswich's oldest store which has been a family business since 1877.

Many shops at Top of Town close around midday on Saturdays and don't open on Sundays.

▼ PORT MACQUARIE



42

▼ VACATION IN VIENNA



46

▼ PLAYING OUTDOORS



50



12PM

Located at the site of Ipswich's first source of water, Pumpyard Bar is home to Four Hearts Brewing, an independent craft beer company which has quickly gained a reputation for its unique, seasonal small batch brews. 2000-litre vats of beer lined the walls of the industrial design-themed brewpub, which featured 10 beers on tap, all of which are brewed onsite. A tasting paddle is the best way to experience all Four Hearts Brewing has to offer and the experienced bar staff can help customise a paddle to suit any tastes.

After lunch we visited the retro inspired Ungermann Brothers Gourmet Ice Cream Parlour, owned by local *Masterchef Australia* contestant Ben Ungermann and his brother Danny. With chequered floors, retro blue lounges and electro-swing music pumping from the jukebox, Ungermann Brothers is like stepping back in time. Their 17 unique ice cream flavours cater to every taste from the classic triple chocolate (a personal favourite) or vanilla bean to the adventurous roasted garlic or blue cheese and fig (an amazing combination).

5PM

It was time to test our mettle against The Executioner's Toolshed at Seraphim Escape Rooms, a horror-themed puzzle room which required us to work together to find clues, solve riddles, unlock doors and escape before the time runs out. We were immediately immersed in the escape room's storyline and the creepy sound effects combined with dramatic sets made the experience genuinely unnerving. I'll admit to screaming out loud a few times – this is not a room for the faint-hearted. Luckily, we used our cunning to defeat the executioner and escape the room with just four minutes to spare.

8PM

Located in a 19th century heritage-listed building at the heart of the city, Indian Mehfil is the home of Ipswich's authentic Indian cuisine. Upon entering the restaurant, we were greeted with the most delicious aroma which, along with the dining room's ornate high ceiling and bright, colourful décor, set the scene for an unforgettable dining experience. Indian Mehfil's kind and knowledgeable staff helped us to select the perfect dishes, including one of the best lamb vindaloos I've ever eaten.

QUEENSLAND'S LARGEST CLUB

WE WANDERED
THE WINDING
PATHS AMONG
THE LUSH
LANDSCAPED
FORESTS,
WATERFALLS
AND LAKES
DESIGNED
TO REFLECT
IPSWICH'S
TOPOGRAPHY.

SUNDAY

5AM

Waking up before sunrise may not be everyone's idea of a relaxing Sunday morning but it was worth it to experience the breathtaking views over Ipswich from a hot air balloon. Floating Images Hot Air Balloon Flights is the closest ballooning experience to the Brisbane CBD and Chief Pilot Graeme Day has an intimate knowledge of the region's weather, history and geography. After being picked up from the Ipswich Country Motel we helped Graeme and his team to set up and inflate the balloon and, before I knew it, we were airborne. After a tranquil hour of unforgettable views over Somerset and the Scenic Rim as the world beneath us slowly awakened, we gently touched down and assisted in packing up the balloon before heading back to the motel for breakfast with Graeme and the other passengers.



Ungermann
Brothers gourmet
icecream.

10AM

Established in 1986, Queens Park is an Ipswich icon and the recreational heart of the city. A highlight of the park is Nerima Gardens, a unique blend of Japanese and Australian flora to create a place of tranquilly and calm in the heart of the city. We wandered the winding paths among the lush landscaped forests, waterfalls and lakes designed to reflect Ipswich's topography.

After stopping for a coffee at the Queens Park café we explored the Ipswich Nature Centre, a free zoo home to more than 40 species of native Australian animals including wombats, quolls, bilbies and emus. For more than 80 years the centre has strived to reproduce the native habitats of its inhabitants and is actively involved in the rescue and rehabilitation of injured wildlife.

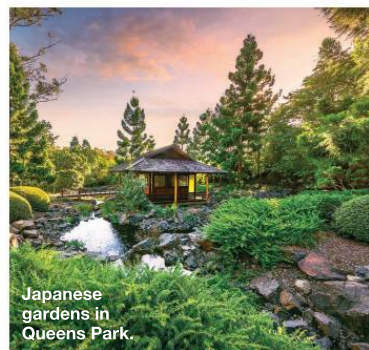
1PM

Prince Alfred Hotel was the perfect place to stop for lunch after our busy morning. With 72 beers on tap, the hotel's craft beer bar, Tap'd, boasts the largest selection of craft beers in the southern hemisphere. The bar's unique décor includes a fountain made from old beer taps and booth seating inside giant barrels. You can even watch sports on custom-made TVs built into the dining tables. If only I had time to try all of the beers! ■

The writer travelled courtesy of the City of Ipswich. discoveripswich.com.au

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Japanese
gardens in
Queens Park.