



VisitVineyards.com
WINE | FOOD | TRAVEL



Page 1 of 2

Gourmet search/Eurostar performer Helicopter hell/Retreat treat

Fruit of the vine

The only real problem with Australia's booming food and wine tourism is we're spoilt for choice. How do you choose from a bewildering array of gourmet products now available in our regions?

A new website – visitvineyards.com – is a good place to start. It covers all the Australian wine and food regions and has listings and information on more than 30,000 products, including wine, vineyards, food, cellar doors, restaurants, produce and accommodation and tour options. It is the handiwork of Robyn Lewis.

Lewis, a passionate foodie who also enjoys the odd glass of fine wine, has had more than 15 years' experience in tourism and marketing. She and her husband, Charles, an experienced viticulturist, have worked in the wine industry including managing a boutique winery in Tasmania.

It was the prospect of leafing through hundreds of brochures for a trip to Margaret River that got her thinking and led to her latest project.

"I was wasting far too much time researching and planning when I could have been out in the region enjoying myself. I knew it was all there but finding exactly what I wanted to do seemed like such hard work when you have to source information from all over the place. I decided there had to be an easier, less complicated way to make the best use of what is available."

The website was her answer.

Alongside the product information, the website also works with independent food and wine writers including *The Age's* John Lethlean, Jane Faulkner and Michael Harden to provide reviews and recommendations. You can also book tours,

restaurants and accommodation on it.

Next month, visitvineyards.com will launch a membership program that will give those who sign up access to specials and tips.

Lewis says that the membership program, which will cost \$49 for a year of benefits, will apply to products and places on the Mornington Peninsula initially but will quickly expand to include Australia's other significant wine regions.

General use of the site and the ability to book tours and restaurants will remain free.

See visitvineyards.com.

Rail reaps benefits

While tourism operators worldwide are struggling with the effects of the soaring cost of fuel, one operator is reaping the benefits.

Eurostar, the cross-channel rail operator, reports a 24.7 per cent increase in ticket sales in the first half of this year, with traveller numbers reaching 4.63 million in that time.

This contrasts with news from British Airways, which is closing six of its short-haul routes, including flights to Dresden and Sarajevo, and has shelved plans to open new services between Gatwick and Oporto, Portugal, and Valencia, Spain.

Buzzing in St Tropez

The high cost of fuel is not deterring the mega-wealthy determined to holiday in St Tropez but residents are getting tired of the ceaseless buzzing of helicopters delivering cashed-up tourists to the French Riviera.

The skies over St Tropez, which has been a magnet for the jet set since Brigitte Bardot made