

# Why this small VICTORIAN TOWN is worth *more than a one-hour stopover*



TOP:  
Campaspe River



RIGHT:  
The Local 3561  
Commercial Hotel



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There are *towns* you pass through, and then there are towns that quietly persuade you to *stay*.

On our latest Murray region road trip, Rochester was the latter.

Just two hours from Melbourne, we arrived expecting a pleasant stopover - somewhere to stretch the legs, grab a coffee, maybe wander the main street before continuing north. Instead, we found ourselves slowing down and discovering that this small riverside town has far more depth than its modest size first suggests. In fact, we ended up staying longer.

Set on Dja Dja Wurrung Country on the banks of the Campaspe River, Rochester feels like the kind of place that knows exactly what it is. It doesn't try too hard, and that's part of its charm. You'll find space here - to wander, to talk, to notice things.

LEFT:  
Mural Park

For caravanners like us, staying at the local caravan park - us in our van and our friends comfortably settled into a cabin - Rochester suited our rhythm immediately. Easy to navigate, welcoming without fuss, and perfectly placed as a gateway to the wider Murray region, it quickly became one of our favourite stops on this year's trip north.

Next morning, we were up early enough to catch sunrise along the river. The light slowly changed from purple to pink to gold over the water, and we got to hear the local birdlife beginning to stir for the day. There are a few ways to enjoy the river here depending on how active you feel. Some head out for a gentle paddle in a kayak, others cast a line from the accessible fishing pontoon, while we chose the simple pleasure of an easy wander along the 2km riverside trail.

It's flat and peaceful, with nesting boxes along the way built for squirrel gliders - a reminder that even in a town this accessible, nature still feels close.



ABOVE: Rochester Bakery  
RIGHT: GrainCorp Silos



TOP RIGHT: Iddles Lane  
BELOW: Shiraz Republic

# Back in town, ROCHESTER'S *creative spirit quickly becomes impossible to miss.*

The towering GrainCorp Silos dominate the skyline, transformed into a striking work by mural artist Jimmy D'Vate, featuring four local threatened species, including the azure kingfisher and the platypus. Only by standing beneath them can you appreciate both the scale of the artwork and the pride the town clearly takes in sharing its stories this way.

What we hadn't expected was just how much public art there is beyond the silos.

Following Rochester's mural trail became one of the highlights of our stay. Murals, carvings and hidden artworks appear throughout town, turning an ordinary walk into something far more interesting.

Mural Park is a standout, where you'll find works from the town's annual mural festival, while Iddles Lane tells the story of local legend and former Homicide Detective, Ron Iddles, through another mural by artist Tim Bowtell.

You get the sense that Rochester is certainly proud of its own.

That feeling carries into the Rochester Sports Museum, where an impressive collection fills the space. We found ourselves lingering far longer than expected, reading the stories behind items like Adam Gilchrist's wicketkeeping gloves and Greg Norman's hat - each piece sparking memories and conversation.

Dinner took us to Shamrock Hotel, a grand old pub that immediately draws your eye from the street. Inside, it delivers exactly what country travellers hope for: generous meals, warm service (ask for Ian) and that unmistakable sense that it's a favourite spot amongst locals.

The next day, we took an easy 30 minute drive into the northern edge of the Heathcote Wine Region for lunch at Shiraz Republic.

Here lunch can easily stretch into an afternoon. We found a table outdoors, ordered wood-fired pizza, sampled the local Shiraz and settled in while live music drifted across the lawn. Surrounded by old farm buildings and remnants of the original Cornella township, you can see that this region does history and hospitality equally well.

Heading back into town, the nearby Colbinabbin silos are well worth a short detour, with six painted silos telling stories of farming, railways and community life.

What makes Rochester stand out isn't one single attraction, but how easily everything fits together. You can begin the day beside the river, spend the afternoon discovering art and local stories, enjoy a pub meal, and still feel as though you've only scratched the surface. It offers enough to fill a couple of days, but never asks you to rush.

For many of us, Rochester was once the town you drove through on the way to somewhere bigger.

Now, it feels like exactly the kind of place worth stopping for - and staying a bit longer.

For more inspiration, visit <http://www.rochester.org.au/>

