

Life

EXPLORE

Aussie-made holiday ideas

Come fly with me



FLYING HIGH: A magic morning floating high in the sky above Ipswich.

PHOTO: FLOATING IMAGES

Superb music returns

SYMPHONY Under the Stars with the Sydney Symphony Orchestra will be returning to Emirates Wolgan Valley Resort and Spa in March.

The sounds of superb classical music will sweep across the valley as world-class musicians present chamber music performances on the weekend of March 7-9.

From violins through to trumpets, the music will span across the centuries.

Guests will enjoy four intimate concerts, set against the stunning backdrop of Wolgan Valley with its dramatic escarpments and spectacular starlit sky.

According to SSO managing director Rory Jeffes, the weekend represents a chance for guests to hear 15 of Australia's best classical musicians performing in the intimate setting of the stunning Wolgan Valley resort.

The all-inclusive Symphony Under the Stars event package, is priced from \$740 a person, a night.

To book phone 02 9290 9733 or email: reservations@wolganvalley.com.



IT'S BACK: Symphony Under the Stars success in 2013 has prompted a return performance.

PHOTO: CONTRIBUTED



Louise O'Mara

finds out there are some special things to do if you can get out of bed at 4am

THE day is just breaking and I find myself soaring majestically over Ipswich.

Save for the occasional roar and hot blast of fire, the trip is silent and steady.

The view is spectacular and I have decided the best and only way to see this great region is by balloon.

I had the opportunity to take a flight with Floating Images based in Ipswich, something that has been on my "things to do before I turn 30" list.

Our journey started at the Metro Hotel Ipswich International as part of the BAD package, Balloon Accommodation and Dinner.

Included in the package was a two-course dinner at the hotel's Platform 9, which is a lovely a la carte restaurant and features a lounge bar to relax in. We were even treated to a bottle of champagne and strawberries in our room.

While we came down just for the balloon ride, I was amazed at how much there is to do in Ipswich.

I always drive past Ipswich and never stop, which is a shame as there are many fantastic things to do in the region. There is the Workshops Rail Museum, the Ipswich Art Gallery (one of the most visited regional art

galleries), Ipswich Nature Centre, the Tivoli Drive-In (why have I been going all the way to Yatala), Willowbank Raceway and much more.

The best part about staying at the Metro Hotel was that we just had to roll out of bed at 4am and be ready in the foyer by 4.30am.

Along with five other passengers, we were picked up by Graeme Day from Floating Images and taken to Limestone Park.

“We were even treated to a bottle of champagne and strawberries in our room.”

Graeme has 21 years of balloon charter experience, which is comforting for someone like me who is afraid of heights. He originally trained in France, where hot air ballooning originated in 1783.

He is one of the two original pilots to fly the first French commercial balloon flights over the French Alps.

I think Graeme must have one of the best jobs in the world.

“No two days are the same,” he said.

“The trip is always different and so are the people.”

After some safety tips, the boys set up and we were even able to assist with the inflation which was fascinating.

Once inflated, we hopped in and slowly started to rise over Ipswich.

Our balloon headed west over Amberley air base.

The actual flight time was an hour and we got to see some amazing scenery of the Lockyer Valley.

Graeme gave us some history of Ipswich and the Valley and pointed out plenty of interesting sights.

After some time, we landed quite smoothly in a paddock, after disturbing some curious cows.

We then assisted in packing up the balloon and were picked up to head back to the Metro Hotel for a champagne breakfast.

This was a great way to unwind and we even got to see the pictures taken from the flight (which are all available for purchase).

And then it was all over, just four hours later. Plenty of time to see some more of Ipswich, or take a nap, like we did. After all, soaring peacefully across the sky can be quite tiring.

The writer was a guest of Floating Images and Metro Hotel Ipswich

SEE YOUR LOCAL TRAVEL AGENT FOR THE TOP AUSSIE DEALS OF THE WEEK



NEW BRISBANE LUXURY HOTEL IN ACTION

FOUR Points, by Sheraton Brisbane, is now taking bookings. The hotel officially opens its doors on March 3.

Located in the heart of Brisbane's central business district, and a short stroll away from the city's key attractions, the Four Points marks Starwood's return to the Brisbane market after more than 10 years.

The Four Points, by Sheraton Brisbane, will feature 246 guest rooms and suites, plus two dining venues, including a signature all-day dining restaurant, The Eatery, as well as a more casual and relaxed deli-style cafe.

Guests will also enjoy a 24-hour fitness centre on the rooftop, delicious breakfast, as well as great local beers from Best Brews, the Four Points signature beer program.

In celebration of the opening, a super-hot offer has been launched with rates starting from \$149 a room a night, including in-room wi-fi. Call 1800 074 545.



HOT AIR BALLOONING AT IPSWICH

EXPERIENCE south-east Queensland's only city and country balloon flight with Floating Images, followed by a restaurant breakfast and commemorative flight certificate. Package includes one night's accommodation at the 4½ star Metro Hotel Ipswich International. Dinner for two at Platform 9 Restaurant.

COSTS: From \$860 for two adults.
MORE DETAILS: (07) 3294 8770;
bookings@floatingimages.com.au