

## The Blue Mountains

### SLOW SHOPPING TRAIL FOR FASHIONISTAS

The locals here know it: there's a certain Blue Mountains "couture" unique to our region! While we don't have fashion houses the likes of which you'll find in Milan or Paris, what we do have is something perhaps far more individual and "edgy": an eclectic mix of strong colours and layers, a pooling of eras from vintage through to retro and beyond interspersed with art clothing, thanks to the wealth of textile artists living here in this inaugural City of the Arts!

In a \*Cittaslow (Slow city) community at the forefront of environmental awareness and putting in place strategies to combat climate change, it's no wonder there's a wealth of op-shops, retro/recycled clothing shops and vintage clothing. Plus, a number of other shops selling new clothing using ethical fibres such as bamboo, organic cotton and alpaca wool, scattered through our region. High time for a **SLOW SHOPPING TRAIL FOR FASHIONISTAS!** When you think about it, there's a direct correlation between fashion and food, anyway: There's not much point espousing food miles and good food with a short supply chain if the clothing we wear has been produced in appalling conditions for workers, travelled half-way around the globe, and in the case of cotton, for example, used about 25 percent of the world's insecticides and 20 percent of its pesticides. And then there is the problem of waste and landfill.

Our specially-created **SLOW SHOPPING TRAIL FOR FASHIONISTAS** is designed to help you, the visitor, purchase some of our "edgy" fashion, with a clear conscience, knowing you are helping the environment, our local economy, and in many cases, a number of worthwhile charities in the Blue Mountains. We've also suggested some delicatessen, café and restaurant "stops" along the way, as we know when fashionistas go shopping – especially in a new location – it can take many hours, or even days!

Dressmaker Dawn Wigge describes Blue Mountains "fashion" as a STYLE - where individuals are able to cross-fertilize, drawing from different eras and thus develop their own style. "It's not seasonal, where items are grabbed because they're trendy for the moment and then discarded", she says. "It's more a brooding, deep-seated creative individualism, where people make statements with their style, allowing experimentation with colour for example. Clothing becomes a drama", she concluded. Dawn is available for one-off commissions and also has an Open House each Spring/Autumn with a number of her individual pieces for sale, along with exquisite jackets reshaped from men's and women's cardigans by another artist, Mary Burns. Dawn can be contacted on 4782 3710 E [dawnwigg@hotmail.com](mailto:dawnwigg@hotmail.com).

First port of call as you swing off the highway, or better still in these environmentally-conscious times - arrive by train - is the village of **Glenbrook**. Definitely a slower pace here! Think timber shops, quaint shop frontages ... why not have an early start and **arrive for breakfast!** Blue Tongue Lizard Café, in Ross Street, with its Bohemian atmosphere, home-cooked food including gluten-free (and delicious cakes) is one such place and open for breakfast, as is **Deli Glenbrook** - known for seriously-excellent coffee. Later on in the morning, the small cakes offered here are great for morning tea. . . . or house-made pumpkin frittata with their very own tomato relish is another option. **Mash Café** is available for breakfast too, in a great setting with open fire and specializing in organic Fair Trade coffee and Tea. Wander some more and you'll find even more cafes! Once breakfast is over, fashionistas will be able to fully appreciate **Linen and Lace And**  
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**Retro Gear**, featuring vintage laces, handmade items, party gear, good quality day and evening clothes as well as accessories, particularly shoes. A favourite haunt with fashion students, this shop raises funds for Presbyterian Social Services, benefitting Allowah Children's Hospital at Dundas and other important programmes. Further down the road is **St Vincent De Paul Centre**, also worth a look. Before you get back in your car (or on the train) to go to Springwood, take time for a freshly-squeezed juice, smoothie or other items from the menu at **Cafe Cee**.

Arriving at **Springwood**, acquaint yourself with the **SPRINGWOOD HISTORY WALK** (there's a copy on display in the **School of Arts Town Square**), in Summer admire the magnificent crepe myrtles lining Macquarie Road, the main street, before you head off along Macquarie Road, (at a S L O W pace, of course!) for **Frou Frou Old and New**. A veritable feast for the eyes, shop owner Parisa Kafer's first passion is vintage clothing, however her constantly-changing stock has a mix of eras and styles and the reasonable pricing means there's always something different in stock. A beautiful place to shop for evening wear that won't be seen everywhere else! Frou Frou is open 6 days, closed on Sundays. Have another "sustenance break" at **Springwood Deli Café** (near the Railway Station on Macquarie Road) and you'll be amazed a **house-made mini pavlova** (can't get more Australian than that!) with fresh fruit and cream, served with coffee, costs a mere \$7. They also serve Devonshire teas, breakfast and make their own quiches and lasagnes. Another hidden fashionistas gem here behind the main street in Springwood Avenue is the **Lifeline Shop**, selling quality recycled clothing. A wide variety of jackets and dresses in particular, as well as a host of other things too numerous to mention! Return back up to Macquarie Road via Raymond Road and you'll see **Charlie's Aroma Café**, with local artwork lining the walls and shortly offering photography and live drawing classes on the premises – really! This is yet another café serving breakfast all day, 7 days a week, with all their soups and quiches house-made. Back again in Macquarie Road and feeling like some wine with your meal as well, stylish **Razz Licensed Restaurant** with a contemporary feel both indoors and out, might be what you're after, before moving on to the higher altitude villages of Leura, Katoomba and Blackheath. By now you've probably realized this whole exercise will take more than one day, and some at least overnight accommodation is needed!

The garden village of Leura has a variety of interesting fashionista shops, including **Renomee** (behind the Mall) stocking vintage, retro and recycled designer clothings, shoes and accessories. **Leura Vintage** upstairs in the Mall (top end) is a fun shop, with lots of retro, great shoes and jewellery and a juke box adding to the atmosphere. **The Nook** is also worth a look while up this end. It promotes goods by local artists/producers and has a wide range of clothing, textile and fibre art plus hand knitted products. They also stock a range of locally-produced foods including Telopea Honey from Medlow Bath, teas from Leura Teas. **Mrs Peel** in the old Post Office building has a selection of wearable vintage clothing and also stock eco-friendly purses, jewellery and retro sunglasses. **The Australian Alpaca Centre** in the Leura Strand Arcade, 178 The Mall, offers knits such as jumpers, cardigans and knitted accessories made of course from alpaca wool, considered "fibre of the gods". A luxurious, ethical fibre, alpacas are soft-footed animals that don't eat into the crown of plants, so ideal for our fragile soils in Australia. **Ikou Natural Living Eco-Store** is also great to visit for ethical fibres such as organic cotton in homewares and clothing. IKOU also make their own 100% natural bath and body products, right here in the Blue Mountains and are converting their Leura store to Green Power. Cafes to visit here include **The Red Door**, offering good café food and producing their own preserves and even a dog cookie, so your pooch doesn't miss out, either! **Stockmarket Café** offers house-made cakes like Belgian lemon tea

cake, rhubarb and raspberry crumble, good soups such as organic beetroot and ginger with tarragon cream and extremely hearty breakfasts! **Josophans** is THE PLACE for hot chocolate and over at **Leura Deli** take your pick from a range of locally-made products including Victory Lane Jams, Whisk and Pin Mueslis and biscuits, Woodford Honey, Blue M Onion Chilli Jam and Lemon Butter. The elegance, service and style of **Silk's Brasserie** is the perfect place for lunch/dinner, giving our fashionistas time to draw breath – before the next stop, Katoomba!

The art deco “café central” village of Katoomba cries out to be explored by fashionistas on foot! Make sure you grab a copy of the **Katoomba Heritage and Art Walk**, to fully-appreciate it all. **Heaven and Hell** 50 metres up Froma Lane running alongside the famous Paragon, specializes in 50s and 60s reproduction clothing and accessories, right down to cocktail swizzle sticks, pop art paintings and 50's toe-peeper shoes. Save your cocktail sticks for later when you visit The Carrington (main house) to have a cocktail or two at Champagne Charlie's Bar, before heading off to dinner at their award-winning **Old City Bank Brasserie!** Look at **Zuri** also up this end & next to the Paragon, to see their range of organic cotton, bamboo and fair trade clothing. On the other side of Katoomba Street at **Mr Pickwick's Books**, go upstairs to wade through a wide variety of vintage clothing. In a previous life, this building was the Bank of NSW and “upstairs” the Manager's Quarters. Heading down Katoomba Street, **Mountain Style Clothing** with soya and bamboo fibre shirts, trousers, undies, socks and varied clothing items is worth a look and **Katoomba Workwear** with bamboo socks, bamboo shirts and bamboo/cotton blend jackets, as is **After-A Fashion Recycled Clothing and Retro**, always with eye-catching window displays and another shop supporting Presbyterian Social Services. Okay, so **The Hattery** doesn't have recycled hats BUT it is one of the biggest hatteries in Australia, stocks a diverse range – including the all-important beanies and woollen hats, de rigueur when the cold winds blow - and a limited stock of ethical fibre hats. Feeling like a coffee?? Take your pick from one of the many cafes and restaurants in the precinct for coffee or something more substantial and make sure you go up Halfpenny Lane to the much-loved **Blue Mountains Food Cooperative**, where good food doesn't cost the earth. Mingle with the locals on Tuesdays, which is Soup Kitchen Day here, operated by Sid Stolk from Lushious Gourmet Vegetarian Catering.

In Waratah Street, **Very Fashion** will excite fashionistas! Described by owner Helen Mountford as “fun, funky and fabbo” and “recycled, rescued or rare”, there's also great accessories, lots of colour and intricate, locally-made felted shawls and other local crafts. Helen also makes bags from vintage fabric and baby wear. Duck down to **St Vincent de Paul** in the same street stocking clothing for men, women and children, accessories and lots of other items. Admire the **Reverence Mural** in this location done by local artists to commemorate the Year of Tibet 2006.

How about a change of pace as you go to the other side of Katoomba, away from the Central strip and yes, it is all accessible on foot: **Blue Mountains Cancer Help Op Shop** in Whitton Street (off Camp Street). A wealth of clothing, in a spacious shop and all clearly marked. Other items too, of course. Unusual and one-off clothing can be found here - and good labels. Fashionistas will experience the “feel good factor” in abundance while they shop here as this charity was established to provide support for local residents who have been diagnosed with cancer, helping to fund support groups, complementary therapies, a buddy system and assistance with transport. On your way back to central Katoomba, go to **The Handy Store**, Corner of Victoria Street and Camp Street. Yes, the traditional corner store is back! Purchase something to take with you as you wander a little further down Victoria Street to the **Blue Mountains Community Gardens**.

Get a little dirt on your hands and do a spot of gardening, mingle with the locals, meditate a while and walk the labyrinth, smell the herbs and meander through the apple arch, admiring the wide variety of heirloom apple trees as you go. Find a quiet corner for a picnic lunch, perhaps. Afterwards, take a **S L O W stroll** back up to Katoomba Station to catch the train for the fashionistas' last stop – Blackheath!

The original railway platform at Blackheath opened in December 1869. Vernon Treweeke painted the mural on the eastern end of the building depicting bushranger Govett with sacks of gold, in 2004. You'll also see Vernon's murals at other stations in the Blue Mountains. Fashionistas should visit **Ravir Boutique** while in Blackheath specializing in clothes for men and women, manufactured from hemp, bamboo, and alpaca silk, for example. The clothing is produced with the welfare of the environment in mind and this shop also supports local artisans. Two other shops here specialize in recycled, pre-loved goods – **Chic But Not Shabby** – good for collectables, accessories, decorative items, and **Margaritas** – funky clothing, 60/70s linen and bric-a-brac. **Victory Theatre**, containing an extensive range of antiques and collectables as well as interesting clothing, has a café in the front, famous for all-day breakfasts, with the menu changing daily. Another popular eating place for locals is **Mementos**, featuring ricotta tarts, mezze plate and Hungarian goulash, and other creative fare. Don't forget to go over the railway line to the **Vinnie's** located in Station Street.

Take a leisurely **40 minute slow meander** from Central Blackheath to spacious **Bush Rock Café** in Evans Lookout Road, in a wonderful bush setting, complete with a kitchen garden which owners Mark and Annette Kern use - even for their herb teas! Some of the produce harvested from their kitchen garden and finding its way on the menu in all sorts of ways includes rhubarb, oregano, salad greens, rainbow beetroot, mint, parsley, chives, bay leaves, lemons, chilli, thyme, basil, garlic, and nasturtiums. Available Fridays only are the Kerns' SLOW SCONES, prepared and cooked while you wait, using organic flour. Lasagne is another favourite on their menu using house-made pasta and seasonal cakes, such as quince and rhubarb, again using organic flour. While in this location, the more energetically-inclined can take the Grand Canyon Walk or, for the less-energetic, simply enjoy the views from Evans Lookout. A perfect way to finish your **Slow Shopping Trail For Fashionistas!**

#### FOOTNOTE

Anne Elliott for Slow Food Blue Mountains and Cittaslow Katoomba Blue Mountains wrote the above article . Research for this article by Juliet Mercer and Anne Elliott.

**Slow Food** is an international non-profit association formed in 1989 as a response to the standardizing effects of fast food and the "fast life". There are now thousands of members in over 100 countries, divided into local focus groups called, *convivia*, of which Slow Food Blue Mountains is just one. To join, tap into local events for find out more about Slow Food Blue Mountains email [cloudlands@hermes.net.au](mailto:cloudlands@hermes.net.au) You can also visit the Slow Food Australia website at: [www.slowfoodaustralia.com.au](http://www.slowfoodaustralia.com.au)

#### **And a little about Cittaslow . . .**

Cittaslow (Italian for Slow City) is derived from the Italian Slow Food Movement, whose principles are based on using local, seasonal produce, supporting small producers and restoring time-honoured methods of production. There are around 100 Cittaslow towns in the world, mostly in Europe. Goolwa in South Australia and Katoomba Blue Mountains are the first in the Southern Hemisphere! Cittaslow towns take the time to identify what is important and special about their town and region and then implement strategies to preserve these unique qualities. A current major ongoing project for our region is a Cittaslow-created A KITCHEN GARDEN IN EVERY BLUE MOUNTAINS' HOME, with our goal of most residents producing their own leafy, green vegetables within 5 years. Essentially, Cittaslow is all about creating a great quality of life that brings benefits to the community. For further information on Cittaslow, visit [www.cittaslow.org.au](http://www.cittaslow.org.au) or email [cloudlands@hermes.net.au](mailto:cloudlands@hermes.net.au).

