



You might expect to see edgy street art, experimental music and modern theatre in Sydney or Melbourne, but Wagga Wagga has become an arts oasis unique to country Australia. With its two public art galleries, including the National Art Glass Gallery, two museums, three theatres, two outdoor amphitheatres and a world-class conservatorium of music, the Riverina city is fast developing a reputation as regional Australia's arts and culture capital.

Enjoy art in public galleries and private studios

Situated in the heart of the city, Wagga Wagga Art Gallery is an innovative public art gallery located in the architect-designed Civic Centre, incorporating a stand-alone gallery to exhibit the National Art Glass Collection. The Wagga Wagga Art Gallery exhibits an exciting range of touring shows and locally developed exhibitions from the Gallery's extensive collections, as well as the work of Riverina based artists. It is also the home of the Margaret Carnegie Print Collection.

If you'd like to see local artists at work there are several private artists' studios and galleries to choose from. Visit the Docker Street Art Gallery, the Wagga Potters Shop or talented artists Jenny Newbound or Willy Sheather in their own studios. The city is dotted with public artworks too.

See Australia's largest collection of art glass

You may be surprised to learn that Australia's largest collection of studio production glass art can be found in Wagga Wagga at the National Art Glass Gallery, purpose built by Wagga Wagga City Council in 1999. The 400-piece collection features blown, engraved, etched, kiln fired, cast and sand blasted glass art from renowned international and Australian artists and is estimated to be worth some \$2.2 million. Of course the art isn't the only thing on show. The collection is housed in a purpose-built architectural masterpiece, shaped like a splinter of glass that has shattered away from the main civic building. This clever building, its collection, and changing shows are a cutting-edge experience not to be missed.

Delve the depths of Wagga's theatre culture

Wagga Wagga is the theatrical hub of southern NSW. It is home to three theatres – the Riverina Playhouse, the Basement and the Civic Theatre – and more than six theatre troupes, including regional Australia's longest serving professional theatre company, the Riverina Theatre Company. The Riverina Young People's Theatre (RYPT) Company, the Charles Sturt University Theatre Ensemble and the School of Acting Community Theatre (SOACT) troupe are all here too, ensuring a steady stream of dynamic and ever-changing performances throughout the year.

Fall in love at the Civic

Wagga Wagga Civic Theatre, located in Wagga's vibrant cultural precinct, holds a special place in many actors' hearts. Not only have stellar performers such as Jacki Weaver, John Bell, Roger Woodward, David Helfgott, Marina Prior and John Walters treaded the boards here, but plenty of star crossed lovers too! The 488-seat theatre has a reputation for bringing couples together. The first – Dennis and Louise Blackett – were high school sweethearts and performed together in the very first production at the Civic Theatre in the early 1960s. Dennis and Louise are still married today and are both still involved in the theatre. Another six couples have succumbed to cupid's arrow since, with the most recent pairing set to marry in April 2007. If you're in the mood for romance, why not attend one of the many productions Wagga Wagga Civic Theatre hosts every year?

Legend of a Larrikin – The Great Tichborne Trial

It was a stout, uncouth local man that first put Wagga Wagga on the world map in the 1860s when he emerged from his hut and announced he was the long-lost Sir Roger Tichborne, heir to a fortune in Hampshire, England. The larrikin antics of Wagga butcher, Arthur Orton, created family squabbles and legal history. The ensuing trial held the record for the longest British Civic Law Case until the 1990s McLibel case. Today, the Wagga Wagga City Council run Museum of the Riverina and Wagga Wagga City Library are home to a nationally significant collection of Tichborne material, including a set of four figurines, the 1874 painting titled 'The Great Tichborne Trial' and the only known photo in the world of the original jury. The museum also holds a set of bound volumes of the 1873 trial.

Hear the world's finest musicians

The Riverina Conservatorium of Music not only moulds the minds of some of the Riverina's most talented musicians; it is a premier provider of classical and contemporary music performance. Established in 1981, the Conservatorium is the third largest regional conservatorium in Australia. From Mozart to Schubert, the Conservatorium holds more than 30 public concerts every year, showcasing the talents of its 1400 students, as well as local, national and international performing artists. In past years, Wagga Wagga has been treated to the melodic tones and stirring instrumentals of percussionist Nick Parnell, jazz diva Janet Seidel, world-famous classical guitarist Slava Grigoryan and internationally acclaimed pianist Simon Tedeschi.

Spend an afternoon retracing Wagga's history

If you like your history up close, Wagga Wagga's heritage walks are for you. Starting from the Visitor Information Centre, there are two walks to choose from. Both wind around significant buildings and sites in the town's history, including the impressive St Andrew's Church and Hall, built in the Gothic Revival style in 1869; the Historic Council Chambers, originally the site of a staging depot for Cobb & Co. coaches; and the Old Federal Brewery. If you'd like to take a walk where Wagga Wagga's Wiradjuri people used to tread, try the Wiradjuri Walking Track. The track follows a perimeter route of 30km, including parts of the Murrumbidgee River, and has 11 established access points. Feel free to join or leave the track at any point along the way.

'Culture vulture' trivia – Did you know ...

- The Bee Gees wrote "Morning of My Life" at the Wagga Police Boys Club.
- Wagga has also been home to socialist, poet and journalist Dame Mary Gilmore; actor and director Lex Marinos OAM; actor Bill Kerr; radio presenter George Moore; and Australia's first WW II VC Medal holder John Hurst Edmondson.

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