

FISHING FOR A GOOD TIME – By Stephanie Jackson

Discovering the wild side of the South Australian city of Adelaide

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Stop over in Brisbane, Perth, Sydney, Melbourne, or Hobart and the extensive rivers or harbours at the doorstep of each of these cities means there are endless opportunities for fishing and boating. But Adelaide? Well, all it has is the diminutive River Torrens that is often referred to, with a hint of disdain or derision, as the Torrens Creek. But if you take the time to give this seemingly insignificant river a second glance, you will find a sleeping beauty at the heart of Adelaide that beckons you to indulge in the pleasures of fishing and boating too – only on a smaller scale.

Elder Park, that, with its ornate Victorian rotunda, is only a five-minute walk away from the major stores at the heart of the city, is the starting point for a journey along the river. Although the bedlam of traffic that passes the park may initially be hard to ignore, wander underneath the arches of the King William Street bridge that spans the River Torrens and you will stumble, like Alice in Wonderland, into a hidden world where the harsh sounds of urban life miraculously vanish.



waterbirds that will flock around you eager to accept a free handout of fish.



There are picnic and barbecue areas along the riverbank, but if you have not come prepared for such casual dining, there's always Jolley's Boathouse Restaurant where you can lunch in style and comfort as you watch life on the river that ambles past only metres away.

There are no grand yachts or luxurious cruisers to be seen on this waterway, but with paddleboats for hire at Captain Jolley's – beside the restaurant - and the ferry known as Popeye continuously dawdling along the river, there are leisurely ways to enjoy a waterbird's eye view of the landscape.

If you have a few hours to spare to discover every intimate detail of the river and its extensive parklands, take a walk along the pathway that follows the river's curvaceous route and you will be well rewarded for your efforts.

The face of the parklands changes with the seasons that are so clearly defined in Adelaide. Neatly coiffured lawns are hemmed by the cold bare earth of winter, by swathes of flowers in spring and summer, and by deep drifts of russet leaves as autumn returns. Ancient trees that are clothed in shades of green in spring and summer, wear attire of gold and red in autumn. And on crisp winter days, they display their naked limbs emblazoned with the symbols that young lovers had carved in the hope that their passion might survive for as many years as these gnarled trees.



On the parklands' benches and lawns amorous couples, oblivious to the world around them, share their affections, picnickers dine with birds as their companions, and an occasional homeless person, for whom this quiet spot is the best option life can offer, dozes soundly as joggers in all the appropriate attire breeze past.

But beyond the manicured parklands, beyond its perfumed rose gardens, and the ornate arches of an historic steel bridge there is a wild side to the River Torrens. Here, bordered by dense reeds, and bulrushes, and overgrown with willows, wattles, and flowering gum trees is a secluded stretch of the river that displays the pleasantly dishevelled face of a waterway that, without the downstream weir, would be little more than a feeble stream. Waterbirds find a retreat here, and other birds including eastern rosellas, wrens, and honeyeaters, twitter among the confusion of foliage. But at the end of the riverbank path, more exotic birds display their colourful plumage, for this trail concludes at the Adelaide zoo that, with more than 1,400 animal species on display in natural surroundings, was recently awarded the prestigious title of Adelaide's Best Day Out.



If you are ready for a cuppa and a bite to eat, the zoo has a café and a restaurant, but if you prefer to watch other diners tucking into their food with gusto, you can join the crowd to watch the zoo's big cats, sea lions, and pelicans being fed. You can amble through immense aviaries, and through recreated landscapes inhabited by all the wildlife you would expect to see in such places as Queensland rainforests and wetlands, and the forests of south-east Asia and South America.

And if you want to ensure you see the best that the zoo has to offer, all you have to do is join a free guided tour.

When you are ready to return to the heart of the city, the easy option is to take a 20 - minute cruise on board Popeye back to Elder Park where, on a sunny day, the river's fountain tosses a rainbow towards the shadowy forest of city skyscrapers. And as you step ashore, where anglers routinely flick a hooked carp from the water, and pelicans, with wings outstretched, rush to snatch a welcome meal, you will have to agree that there is something for everyone at the River Torrens parklands.

