

IF USED PLEASE CREDIT: *John & Lisa's Food Trip Down Under* starts Saturday 20th January from 11.40am on ITV1 and IT VX.

John & Lisa's Food Trip Down Under

ITV's hugely popular culinary couple **John Torode MBE** and **Lisa Faulkner** embark on a journey of a lifetime where the pair travel 500 miles along the beautiful coast of Western Australia in search of the very best local food and wine for brand new five week series - *John & Lisa's Food Trip Down Under* - for ITV1 and IT VX.

Proud Australian chef John Torode travelled with his wife, actress and home cook, Lisa Faulkner along a gourmet route of discovery as he returned to the place where his passion for food and cooking began. They meet chefs, winemakers, food fanatics and entrepreneurs creating incredible produce in new ways, from black truffles to abalone, and experience some of Western Australia's most beautiful landscapes.

• What can viewers expect from this brand new series?

John: Australia is so massive that it's really hard to see all of it. I've been lucky to see quite a bit during my life but where we got to go to for this series I had never been to before so it was a dream come true! We went south from Perth along the Margaret River coastline as well as more inland and got to see everything from the amazing seascapes, to the huge ancient Southern forests where the Karri trees were the biggest I've ever seen in my life.

Lisa: It's such a lovely series and it was so great to get to go away together to a place that we didn't know much about. And I have to say, I fell in love with Western Australia and that side of the country. Australia is beautiful and just stunning. This was just a really wonderful trip and I was so surprised at how varied one area can be. The beaches, countryside, forests, wildlife - everything you could imagine within just a couple of hours of each other. It was incredible!

John: Such a beautiful place and the towns were wonderful, and wherever you are in Australia, you can always get a good cup of coffee too!

• What were you most excited about?

L: It was a road trip! We could have shared the driving...but I must say that I prefer John to drive. I like to sit and take in the scenery! I remember just looking out of the window saying 'Oh My God' a lot at all the wonders we were witnessing. To explore so many new things together during this trip was what made it so exciting. We just got to see so many beautiful places.

J: Oh yeah, it was our first time going to Western Australia together and we were very excited. We really loved it and when we went down to Margaret River, we honestly felt that this was the sort of place you could live. There was one day where we got up, had a walk along the beach first thing in the morning - and we didn't realise the cameras were on us - and we were just chatting away having such a nice time. The next thing you know we were going to an amazing restaurant by Busselton

Jetty and then went to a Beerfarm, we were just thinking 'this is work! This is our job!' It was fantastic, very humbling. We just hope people love going on this journey with us as much as we enjoyed it all.

- **You both have busy schedules so when working projects come up that require being together it must be pretty special...**

J: Yes! Whenever we do television together we are just being us. How we are on Weekend Kitchen for example is just how we are. For this series we got to wear GoPro cameras when we were driving together and were told that that was some of the best material because it was just so natural - with the odd funny remark or a grab of some chocolate from the glovebox! It was just great fun and I hope it inspires others to jump on a plane and discover Western Australia like we did as well.

L: I'm sure it will. For us, it was just great to taste and discover so much together as we went along - and to not do all the cooking for a change!

- **Were there any surprises during the series or things that you discovered about each other or the different locations?**

L: I don't think there was anything new that I discovered about John on this trip, I know my husband pretty well! But it was one of those trips where every time I stepped out of the car, I did just look around and go 'wow'. We take so much for granted and we are very lucky in our jobs, it really was a trip of a lifetime to see all these places during this series. I came back waxing lyrical about Margaret River - it was just amazing, it really was.

J: We had always wanted to visit Western Australia. The production team put together a plan for us to visit locations via an electric car, meaning we had to make sure we went via places to charge the car too. But by doing that it had its perks because there were some breathing spaces where we discovered or stumbled across things along the way that we might not have seen.

I remember getting up early one morning at the Karri Valley Resort in Pemberton and I just watched all these kangaroos come out - there must have been around 150 of them - so I told the team and the next morning all of us were there to watch and capture it. There were gorgeous kookaburras just sitting on the benches and all these kangaroos... It was really special.

We also went to a place called Glenarty Road which is a farm and a restaurant and we didn't expect anything like it. Ben and Sasha who owned it were glorious. We sat and ate their food and it was delicious and has been named one of the best restaurants in Australia at the Gourmet Traveller Awards. And we stumbled on that, so when that kind of thing happened we just went with it!

- **What was your highlight of the trip?**

J: Pretty much everything I've mentioned! But also the history of the place is quite amazing too and we touch on that in the series. For example, the Busselton Jetty is

the longest wood-piled jetty in the southern hemisphere and you learn the reason in our series.

I really loved the guys at Glenarty Road. They were farmers but they got up every single morning and went surfing, then came back to look after the sheep and avocado trees; they grew pretty much everything. That was one of my highlights being with them and just sitting there, listening to Ben and Sasha who had found this amazing world that made them really happy.

Seeing the stingrays at Hamelin Bay swimming by so closely to your feet was pretty cool too.

L: Yes, it really was. To see those stingrays that close and the dolphins at Rockingham jumping literally a metre away from you was incredible! Paddling on the shores and being on the boat seeing all the animals was amazing, and like John said, we also met so many fantastic people and pretty much ate our way through Western Australia!

We did come away thinking 'I want to live here'... it was just so cool. I mean if Australia wasn't so far away we'd be there all the time. But what was lovely about all of the areas we visited was that you could be in the Southern forest one moment and then within forty minutes, you could be by the sea on a white sandy beach. It was awesome, really amazing!

• Did you learn any new tips or get inspired in any way?

L: Did we learn any new tips? I'm not sure, but the food we had was all delightful and was cooked by so many talented chefs. There was a couple, Ben and Kirsty that had worked at Noma Restaurant - the world's best restaurant - and here they were in the town of Busselton, with Ben serving up the most delicious food. We were going on this journey and kept looking at each other going 'wow, wow, wow'.

J: The main thing it inspired me to do was to take more road trips! I remember doing one years ago but you tend to just stay in the cities the whole time, and I really think we should go back to getting in a car with an old fashioned map, planning a couple of places to stay and just going on an adventure...

Did we quarrel over the map reading? No, because Lisa couldn't read a map! There's a fun bit about that in the series.



• You are both highly skilled in the kitchen already, but do you still find that you are learning during adventures like this?

J: I wouldn't still be doing all this if I wasn't constantly learning or seeing or understanding new things. My father always said to me, 'if you go through a day where you haven't learnt something, you've wasted a day'. I think that's so true - you learn things, you appreciate things. One of the things you often see in Australia is this enormous blue sky, and at night time this enormous black sky with huge amounts of stars, and it makes you sit back and wonder how amazing nature truly is.

L: I am definitely still learning - I'm really a home cook that loves cooking. John is an incredible chef, he is amazing and I think one of the things that makes him amazing is that he is always learning. He knows so much about food. He meets so many people from Masterchef or some of the many countries and regions that he's visited. He's cooked for years and years, having started his apprenticeship at 16, and what John doesn't know about food he wants to learn about. And I think that makes you really good at what you do, that desire to keep evolving and improving.

• What are you both like as a travel companion?

J: I'd say I'm pretty good as a travel companion, but I would say that!

L: I think I'm pretty good too! With John and I it always feels like it's very easy, we just roll along quite well together. Fortunately we like doing the same things. Neither of us are very pushy, and as I said, he was happy to drive which I was thrilled about.

• What are your top travel essentials?

J: A very good and solid suitcase! I also bought myself this antique folding coat hanger because Lisa knows that I like to have a nicely ironed shirt. I iron everything and take my fold up coat hangers - you literally fold them down and they can sit in your hand luggage. They're amazing!

The other key thing is a laundry bag so you can put your dirty stuff away from the clean stuff.

L: John was actually quite jealous of my 'packing cubes'! I had these packing cubes of shorts and tops, and things for when we were not filming and John really wished he had them for the different outfits he had to take too. They are amazing and you can really squish them down into your suitcase. Also, if I can, I try to pack a few days before to make sure I've got everything sorted. I lay it out on the bed and then go through it and cull probably half of it!

There's also this amazing lady that I follow on Instagram called @ChloeLovesToShop and she does this thing where she takes photos of outfits so she knows what she's going to pack and knows what she'll wear and what goes with what. It sounds a bit mad but it's absolutely brilliant. You can just look back through your phone at the outfits you've packed and think 'I'll wear that today'. It's so helpful!

• Do you already have plans to return to Oz or where would you like your next adventure to be?

J: Next I'm off to the east coast of Queensland. Every time I go back to Australia I try to see a bit more. It'll be partly work but also pleasure.

L: I definitely want to return to Western Australia and to also see John's family again - my wonderful father in law and brothers in law. He just has the most wonderful family and I would love to spend a bit more time with them... But who knows where our next adventure might be?

• When can people see you both back cooking together on screen?

J: We are on ITV a lot in 2024 actually! After this series, we might have something across Springtime and the new series of John and Lisa's Weekend Kitchen will be back for 11 weeks this autumn.

L: We are so happy to be doing more Weekend Kitchen. We are filming at the moment and it's set to be another brilliant batch of episodes!

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Western Australia facts:

- Western Australia is the closest Australian state to the UK, with the capital city Perth as its gateway

- Perth is the country's sunniest capital city with more than 3,000 hours of sunshine per year.
- Nature and wildlife experiences are easily accessible in Western Australia from Dolphins in the Swan River to Quokkas at Rottnest Island as well as Kangaroos!
- Margaret river, which is a world class food & wine destination producing Michelin standard black perigold truffles, Cambray Cheese, olive oil and seafood straight from the Indian Ocean.
- Margaret River is one of Australia's top premium wine regions producing 25% of the country's finest wines, even though it only makes up 2% of the country's wine production.
- Western Australia's Aboriginal history dates back more than 50,000 years – making it one of the world's oldest living cultures.
- Around the size of Western Europe, Western Australia accounts for one-third of the Australian continent. It boasts 20,000 kilometres of mainland and island coastline.
- Driving into Western Australia's regions is easy, as they also drive on the left and within an hour you are at Rockingham, where you can swim with dolphins and sea lions.