



MOST TRAVELLED MAN Tony Wheeler

The ongoing adventures of Lonely Planet's co-founder - the man who can't stop exploring

A total wreck

This month, Tony takes up a new hobby - diving for sunken warships

The water was a chilly 19°C and visibility not the best, but looking at the bridge, it was easy to imagine the captain ordering 'full speed ahead'. Of course, giving the order would have been difficult, since we were 16 metres below the surface.

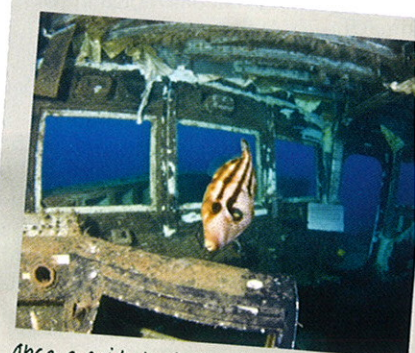
What do you do with old navy warships? Turn them into dive sites is Australia's answer and I was diving on HMAS *Canberra*. The 138-metre-long ship was towed out to waters off Barwon Heads, near Melbourne, in 2009 and sunk in 28 metres of water.

Creating an artificial wreck entails more than just pulling the plug. Anything harmful has to be drained off to avoid leaks. Doors and windows are removed and additional openings cut out - if you're creating a diving attraction, you don't want to lose any divers. Then you need to find a site deep enough to be an interesting dive.

The shallowest part of the *Canberra*, the top of the mast, is six metres below the surface while the decks are at 19 metres, shallow enough for inexperienced 'open water' divers. More advanced divers can swim deeper or inside the wreck.

There are now plans under consideration to sink *Adelaide*, a sister vessel to the *Canberra*, just north of Sydney.

“Advanced divers can swim inside the wreck”



Once a guided missile frigate, HMAS *Canberra* is now a gigantic fish tank



The Turner Contemporary's distinctive white building cost £17.4 million

Comeback Margate

Turner Contemporary is the icing on this resort's regeneration cake



I have hazy memories from the 1960s of a visit to Margate with my grandparents. I recall the place seething with holidaymakers, and the day topped off with a Horlicks from a milk bar on the prom.

Then Margate hit the doldrums for a few decades, as British tourists abandoned their homeland and flew to Spain or Greece for their holidays instead. But now this traditional seaside resort is enjoying a renaissance, spearheaded by the brand new Turner Contemporary gallery overlooking the beach. The striking angular structure is named after JMW Turner; the famous painter was a regular visitor to Margate, attracted by the quality of its light. Naturally, the gallery's opening show will be a Turner headliner, followed by a regular programme of exhibitions and events.

Another sign of Margate's upward mobility is The Reading Rooms, a restored 18th-century house now billed as the town's first boutique b&b. There are just three rooms, each covering an entire floor, with many period fittings intact.

The past is also celebrated at the Shell Grotto, a fascinating underground chamber with mosaics made from millions of shells. Its origins are a mystery: ancient Pagan temple or Victorian hoax? You decide. And for holiday memories of a different era, there's Dreamland, a classic amusement park, complete with a Grade-II listed roller coaster. Local campaigners hope to restore it as part of Margate's regeneration.

Margate is not as trendy as its Kent-coast neighbour Whitstable yet, but change is definitely in the salt air. Although what Granny and Granddad would make of that new-fangled Turner gallery, I just don't know.

- turnercontemporary.org
- thereadingroomsmargate.co.uk



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