

Blackburn South Combined Probus Club
SEASIDE HOLIDAY OVERLOOKING APOLLO BAY
(and many hidden secrets of the Great Ocean Road, Cape Otway
& the Otway Ranges)
5 DAYS

with Chris Grafen on the 'Highland Explorer' (phone 9570 2221).

DATES: MONDAY 24th to FRIDAY 28th MARCH 2025

DEPARTS: (venue to be confirmed) at 7.30am.

COST: \$1215 twin share/double, (single supplement \$240) (price based on having 20 passengers), includes all dinners/bed/cont. breakfast/morn teas, National Park entries and **entrance to Cape Otway Lighthouse Historic Reserve**. **GROUP SIZE 20 PASSENGERS MAX.** (travel with *company*, not a crowd!)

This year, our 'off the beaten track' touring holiday will be based at Skenes Creek, just north of Apollo Bay and a short stroll to stunning beaches and coastline. We'll use our time to explore not just world-famous icons like the Twelve Apostles and Loch Ard Gorge but also some of the hidden secrets of the Otway Rainforests and the timelessly stunning Great Ocean Road as we meander along one of the most truly spectacular coastal drives anywhere in the world.

NEWSFLASH: Owing to access/turning/parking issues, Parks Victoria have now banned coaches 'over 5 ton or carrying more than 21 passengers' from so many of the 'hidden gems' that we visit on this tour, including Erskine Falls, Mait's Rest Rainforest Boardwalk, secluded Blanket Bay, Triplet Falls, Split Rock Point, Mount Defiance Lookout, Aire River/Lake Caven and much of what lies in between. As the 'Highland Explorer' is not subject to these bans, we will be able to see so much more of the Great Ocean Road/Otway region than large bus groups are able to.

Day 1. Heading out over the Westgate Bridge, we'll take the **scenic coastal route through Geelong** for morning tea before hitting the coast proper at **Torquay**, Victoria's surf capital. Each Easter, the World Surfing Championships are held at nearby **Bell's Beach**, where we'll stop for a look before heading on to **Anglesea**, famous for the fact that **kangaroos really do live on the golf course**. Beyond **Split Rock Point**, we'll view the famous 'stilt' house at Fairhaven, which bears testimony to the horrendous fires that ravaged the area on Ash Wednesday, 1983. Hugging the stunning coastline as we go, we'll venture on to **Lorne** for a relaxing lunch stop and some free time. South of Lorne, our smaller coach enables us to **koala spot** along a hilly dirt track out the back of Kennett River. From here, we continue through to **Cape Patten Lookout**, the highest *coastal* point on the Great Ocean Road, before arriving at **Apollo Bay** mid-late afternoon. We'll allow a little free time in town (or tomorrow morning if the group prefers), before settling in at the nearby Skenes Creek Motel (5237 6918), wonderfully positioned overlooking the bay. Dinner each night will be in the motel's licensed restaurant.

Day 2. After a **leisurely start** to the day, we'll venture up into the Otways to the beautiful but too-often by-passed **Mait's Rest Rainforest Walk**. Here, the **raised boardwalk** leads us past **massive ancient myrtle beeches** which tower over **giant tree ferns**. Strolling through this **stunning section of rainforest** should help dust away the cobwebs and renew the senses. Climbing further into the Otways, and then detouring off the Great Ocean Road, we'll head right through a prolific colony of koalas to the iconic but often-missed **Cape Otway Lighthouse** (entry included), which stands as a sentinel on the rugged cliffs

overlooking Bass Strait. Built in 1848, the lighthouse pre-dates the Gold Rush, and it and the surrounding collection of homesteads and facilities constitute **some of the oldest buildings that you will ever see in Victoria**. To come this far and to miss it would be a real shame, and those willing can even climb to the top of the lighthouse! Cape Otway also has the fascinating and recently restored 1859 Telegraph Station which connected Tasmania to the mainland by an undersea cable, as well as a World War Two Radar Bunker, built after an American ship was sunk by German mines off Apollo Bay in 1940.

After a relaxing picnic lunch at the Cape, we'll **explore new territory this afternoon**, with detours along **Blanket Bay Road to isolated Point Lewis**. I suspect this would be one of the least frequented spots along the entire Otway coast, so discovering it together should be fun. Late afternoon, we'll make a tour of **the stunningly situated township of Marengo** before returning to our motel for another great dinner.

Day 3. After **another leisurely start**, we'll venture across isolated farming country via **Horde Vale to Lake Caven** for a morning tea stop. From here, our **unorthodox back roads route** will take us via **Johanna and Johanna Heights** to the small township of **Lavers Hill** for lunch. This afternoon, we'll visit **two of the Otways hidden treasures**, the beautiful and secluded **Triplet Falls** (reached by a short rainforest walk) and **possibly the tallest stand of trees (a rare stand of Californian Redwoods that even dwarf the Mountain Ash of the Black Spur) anywhere in Victoria**. Our return journey is likely to traverse more new territory for most as we head via Ferguson, Cliff Young's famed Beech Forest and the stunning panoramas over Skenes Creek before arriving back at our motel with time to relax before dinner.

Day 4. Today we'll recross the Otways and eventually hit the coast on the west side of Cape Otway where we'll be able to stop and marvel at the **world famous Twelve Apostles** – they are eroding at a rate of up to 10 centimetres a year, and will eventually collapse, but there is some good news, too! For those interested, **Twelve Apostles Helicopters can offer you a short flight** over this world famous icon and beyond as far as London Bridge (optional, ~\$175 in 2024). We'll also have ample time to take in other nearby landmarks, including **historic Loch Ard Gorge**, site of the wreck of the 'Loch Ard' in 1878, **Port Campbell township, the fallen-down London Bridge**, (and hear its incredibly 'quirky' and scandalous tale), the **Bay of Martyrs** and the **Bay of Islands**, nowhere near as well known as the Twelve Apostles but, some would argue, almost as beautiful. Whilst we are not on a rigid schedule and can pretty much play the day by ear, our lunch stop will be Port Campbell and we will return to Apollo Bay sometime late afternoon. Tonight, could be a chance for a sing-along after dinner if people feel like it.

Day 5. One could never tire of the world class beauty of the Great Ocean Road, but this morning we'll actually **travel 'backwards' (the views are quite different in 'reverse')** **along one of the best sections of coastal cliff-face** for about thirty kilometres before heading inland to experience the **beautiful Erskine Falls** over morning tea. We'll also visit the **famous Teddy's Lookout**, which affords a view spectacular enough to appear on the front cover of countless tourist publications and road atlases yet gets neglected by the larger coaches and Great Ocean Road day-trippers.

Trailblazing yet another new route, we'll then head inland via **Diamond Hill to Dean's Marsh** and over to **Winchelsea** for a last day pub lunch. With the assistance of the impressive new Geelong Bypass, we should be back in town around 5 pm. (Itinerary provisional at 15/5/24)

Deposit of \$200 paid _____ Balance of _____ due February 7th.

Cancellation insurance is an excellent way to cover against loss incurred by unforeseen illness.