

# GREAT OCEAN ROAD

The Great Ocean Rd (B100) is one of Australia's most famous road-touring routes, where the Otway Ranges and the sheer limestone cliffs of Port Campbell and Peterborough collapse into the crashing surf of the Southern Ocean. Beyond Apollo Bay, the treacherous Shipwreck Coast – from Cape Otway to Port Fairy – is littered with wrecked vessels. This is some of the planet's most beautiful coastal scenery, a point not lost on the hordes of international tourists in rental Winnebagos making their languorous way past the road's hills and hair-pin turns. The road weaves its way along classic surf beaches before sliding into the Otway Ranges just after Apollo Bay.

The lush Otway Ranges, stretching from Aireys Inlet to Cape Otway, offer revitalising landscapes for bushwalking and camping – most of the coastal section is part of the Great Otway National Park.

Too many visitors drive straight through the open stretches of road, pit-stopping only at the towns and major sights – Lorne, Apollo Bay, the Twelve Apostles – but it's the isolated beaches in between the towns and the thick eucalypt forests in the Otway hinterlands where you can really escape the crowds and truly commune with nature. To miss this is to experience only part of what the region offers. Spend a few weeks scratching below the surface here – this is God's own country.

As we make our way along the Great Ocean Rd we pay our respects to the indigenous peoples of this region – from east to west they include the Guldijan, Gadubanud, Giraiwurung and the Gunditjmarra people.

The first sections of the Great Ocean Rd were constructed by hand – picks, shovels and crowbars – by returned WWI soldiers. Work began in September 1919 and the road between Anglesea and Apollo Bay was completed in 1932.



## LIGHTHOUSES & SHIPWRECKS

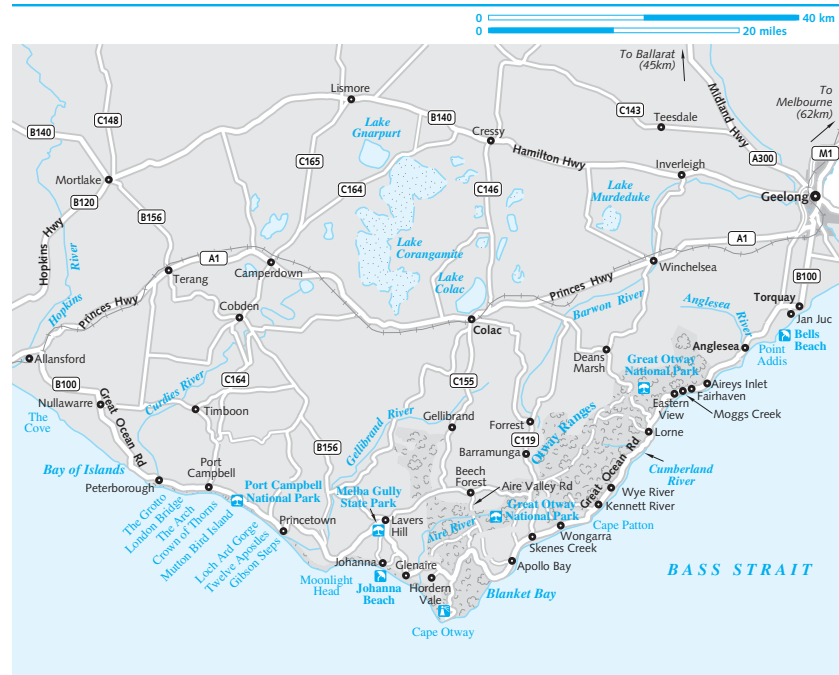
In the era of sailing ships, Victoria's beautiful and rugged southwest coastline was one of the most treacherous on Earth. Between the 1830s and 1930s, more than 200 ships were torn asunder along the so-called **Shipwreck Coast** between Cape Otway and Port Fairy. From the early 1850s to late 1880s, Victoria's gold rush and subsequent economic boom brought countless ships of prospectors and hopefuls from Europe, North America and China. After spending months at sea many vessels (and lives) were lost on the final 'home straight'. The lighthouses along this coast – at **Aireys Inlet** (p229), **Cape Otway** (p237) and **Port Fairy** (p244) – are still operating. The Cape Otway Lighthouse was also involved in the first telegraph cable laid between Tasmania and the Australian mainland in 1859. The spectacular coast around **Port Campbell** (p238) is where the *Loch Ard* famously sank, and the town is littered with material salvaged from this and many other shipwrecks. At **Wreck Beach** (p238) you can see the anchors of the *Marie Gabrielle* which sank in 1869, and the *Fiji*, driven aground in 1891.

## WALKING

The Victorian west coast attracts walkers of all ages and fitness levels who come to enjoy the wide coastal vistas and sea air. There are many coastal walks, along beachfronts and over headlands, that can be done in stages as leisurely strolls or as multiday treks. Visitors centres issue maps of town walking tours that take in historic landmarks and points of interest. The gentle 30km **Surf Coast Walk** (p227) leaves Torquay and goes to Mogg's Creek; the **Great Ocean Walk** (p234) starts at Apollo Bay and runs all the way to the Twelve Apostles; but the biggie is the **Great South West Walk** (p246), a 250km epic.

## SURFING

The Great Ocean Rd offers fantastic opportunities for surfers with great year-round Southern Ocean swells lashing every beach and point. Wannabes can have lessons in beachside towns between Torquay to the South Australian border. **Bells Beach** (p227) is one of the most famous surfing spots on the planet, and there's a legendary (read: suicidal) break at **Johanna Beach** (p237), but every stretch of this coast offers a mix of breaks for beginners and surf-nazis



## TRANSPORT: GREAT OCEAN ROAD

**Direction from Melbourne** Southwest

**Travel time** Melbourne to Torquay 1¼ hours

**Air** Fly to Avalon Airport (22km from Geelong) with Jetstar (☎ 13 15 38; www.jetstar.com.au). Avalon Airport Shuttle (☎ 5278 8788; www.avalonairportshuttle.com.au) runs door-to-door along the Great Ocean Rd as far as Lorne.

**Bus** McHarry's Bus Lines (☎ 5223 2111; www.mcharrys.com.au) runs frequently from Geelong to Torquay, Anglesea and Lorne.

**Car** M1 Melbourne to Geelong; B100 along the Great Ocean Rd.

**Organized tours** Go West Tours (☎ 1300 736 551; www.gowest.com.au); Ride Tours (☎ 1800 605 120; www.ridetours.com.au); Autopia Tours (☎ 1800 000 507; www.autopiatours.com.au); Goin South (☎ 1800 009 858; www.goinsouth.com.au); Otway Discovery (☎ 9654 5432; www.otwaydiscovery.com.au); Wayward Bus (☎ 1300 653 510; www.waywardbus.com.au)

**Train** V/Line (☎ 13 61 96; www.vline.com.au) from Melbourne's Southern Cross station to Geelong, connecting with V/Line buses to Apollo Bay via Torquay, Anglesea and Lorne (continuing to Port Campbell and Warrambol thrice-weekly). V/Line train/train-bus services also connect Melbourne to Warrambol, Port Fairy and Portland via the inland A1.

alike. While there are surf shops with hire gear seemingly every 100m along the Great Ocean Rd, it's hard to go past the big-name retail outlets at **Surf City Plaza** (right) in Torquay, where you can fit yourself out with surf gear, apparel and all possible surfer-guy/chick accoutrements.

## TORQUAY

pop 6700

In the 1960s and '70s Torquay was just another sleepy seaside town. Back then surfing in Australia was a decidedly counter-cultural pursuit, and its devotees were crusty hippy drop-outs living in clapped-out Kombis, smoking pot and making off with your daughters. Since then surfing has become unabashedly mainstream and a huge transglobal business. Torquay's rise and rise directly parallels the boom of the surfing industry (and especially the surf-apparel industry). The town's proximity to world-famous Bells Beach and status as home of two iconic surf brands – Ripcurl and Quicksilver, both initially wetsuit makers – ensured Torquay's place as the undisputed capital of the Australian surf industry.

Torquay is a good spot if you're after a surf lesson or some serious shopping for surfwear or gear. Otherwise there's not too much to do amongst the beachside suburban sprawl, where farm paddocks have given way to blocks of modern housing. Most people drop into Torquay's surf shops on their way to or from the west coast and the Great Ocean Rd.

Torquay's beaches lure everyone from kids in floaties to backpacker surf-school pupils.

**Fisherman's Beach**, protected from ocean swells, is the family favourite. Ringed by shady pines and sloping lawns, the **Front Beach** beckons lazy bums, while surf life-savers patrol the frothing **Back Beach** during summer.

There are several good walking trails including the **Foreshore Trail**, which features a giant sundial, and the **Deep Creek Reserve**, which protects Torquay's only remnant native flora.

The **Surfworld Museum** (☎ 5261 4606; www.surfworld.org.au; adult/child/family \$9/6/20; ☎ 9am-5pm), at the rear of the **Surf City Plaza**, is an excellent homage to Australian surfing, with shifting exhibits, a theatre and displays of old photos and monster balsa mals.

Have a professional surf lesson at one of the gentle beach breaks around Torquay. Two-hour lessons cost from \$50. There are countless surf shops in Torquay and along the coast where you can hire boards and buy secondhand equipment. Surf lesson operators include **Go Ride A Wave** (☎ 1300 132 441; www.gorideawave.com.au; 1/15 Bell St, Torquay; 143b Great Ocean Rd, Anglesea; ☎ 9am-5pm summer), **Torquay Surfing Academy** (☎ 5261 2022; www.torquaysurf.com.au; 2/32 Bell St, Torquay; ☎ 9am-5pm summer) and **Westcoast Surf School** (☎ 5261 2241; www.westcoastsurfschool.com; ☎ 9am-5pm summer).

## INFORMATION

The two main streets for shopping and eating, Gilbert St and Bell St, run perpendicular to the Esplanade.

**Torquay visitors centre** (☎ 5261 4219; www.greatoceanroad.org; Surf City Plaza, Beach Rd) Torquay

has a well-resourced tourist office in the same building as the Surfworld Museum.

## EATING

**Imperial Rhino** (☎ 5261 6780; 3 Bell St; mains \$15-25; ☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner) Oodles of noodles – vermicelli, Hokkien, ramen, udon, Singapore, rice stick or just plain flat – with wok-tossed Asian veggies, tofu or Thai red curry. The relaxed atmosphere is 'mod-Zen', with long wooden tables and loads of natural light – a great place for a late lazy breakfast.

**Growlers** (☎ 5264 8455; 23 The Esplanade; mains \$15-26; ☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner) From the shaded veranda or dark-wood interior you can sneak peaks of the beach through the pines. The menu is inventive; order the coconut-and-banana pancake with mango marmalade.

**Nocturnal Donkey Café** (☎ 5261 9575; 6/13 Bell St; mains \$17-28; ☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner) This place features seafood in its pastas and risottos, and a non sequitur for a name.

**Scorched** (☎ 5261 6142; 17 The Esplanade; mains \$27-36; ☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner) This might be the swankiest restaurant in Torquay, overlooking the waterfront, with classy understated décor and windows that open right up to let the sea breeze in. Innovative dishes include a prawn baklava with cardamom-infused cream.

## SLEEPING

**Bells Beach Lodge** (☎ 5261 7070; www.bellsbeachlodge.com.au; 51-53 Surfcoast Hwy; dm/d \$25/65; ☎) This neat budget option is on the highway with good shared facilities, large garden and surfboard

## TRANSPORT: TORQUAY

**Distance from Melbourne** 98km

**Direction** Southwest

**Travel time** Melbourne to Torquay 1¼ hours

**Bus** McHarry's Buses (☎ 5223 2111; www.mcharrys.com.au) runs buses at least hourly from Geelong to Torquay (\$3.50, 30 minutes), arriving/departing Torquay from the corner of Pearl and Boston Sts (behind the Gilbert St shopping centre). V/Line (☎ 13 61 96; www.vline.com.au) buses run four times daily Monday to Friday (two on weekends) from Geelong to Torquay (\$2.50; 30 mins).

**Car** Torquay is 30 minutes south of Geelong on the B100.

and bike hire. The dorm rooms are a little 'cosy' but the doubles are good value.

**Woolshed B&B** (☎ 5261 2228; www.woolshed.info; 75 Aquarius Way; d \$165; ☎) This restored woolshed is 110 years old and has been fitted out with two comfortable suites (with en suites) that share a large lounge area. There's a 25m pool and a tennis court.

**Wattle Court Retreat** (☎ 5261 9354; www.wattlecourt.experiencetorquay.com.au; 12 Wattle Ct, Jan Juc; d \$200; ☎) In suburban Jan Juc, this bright, two-storey timber apartment has a wonderful bush-garden decking and two generous bedrooms. The view from your king-size bed will make you feel nestled amongst the tree tops.

**Torquay Foreshore Caravan Park** (☎ 5261 2496; www.gorcc.com.au; unpowered sites from \$27, d cabins \$70-125) Just behind Back Beach, this is the largest camping ground on the Surf Coast. It has good facilities.

## TORQUAY TO ANGLESEA

The Great Ocean Rd between Torquay and Anglesea heads slightly inland, with a turn-off about 7km from Torquay to **Bells Beach**. The powerful point break at Bells is part of international surfing folklore (it's here, in name only, that Keanu Reeves and Patrick Swayze had their ultimate showdown in the film *Point Break*). It's notoriously inconsistent, but when the long right-hander is working it's one of the longest rides in the country. Since 1973, Bells has hosted the **Rip Curl Pro** (www.aspworldtour.com) every Easter – the glamour event on the world-championship ASP World Tour. The event draws thousands to watch the world's best surfers carve up the big autumn swells – where waves have reached 5m during the contest! The Rip Curl Pro regularly decamps to Johanna, two hours west, when fickle Bells isn't working. Contact **Surfing Victoria** (☎ 5261 2907; www.surfingaustralia.com) for more details.

Nine kilometres southwest of Torquay is the turn-off to spectacular **Point Addis**, 3km down this road. It's a vast sweep of pristine 'clothing optional' beach that attracts surfers, hang-gliders and swimmers. There's a signposted **Koorie Cultural Walk**, a 1km circuit trail to the beach through the **Ironbark Basin** nature reserve.

The **Surf Coast Walk** (www.surfcoast.vic.gov.au/walking/tracks.htm) follows the coastline from Torquay to Mogg's Creek south of Aireys Inlet, and can be done in stages – the full route takes 11 hours. It's marked on the *Surf Coast Touring Map*, available from tourist offices.

## GREAT OCEAN ROAD TRAVEL DISTANCES

Melbourne to Geelong	76km
Geelong to Torquay	22km
Torquay to Anglesea	17km
Anglesea to Aireys Inlet	10km
Aireys Inlet to Lorne	19km
Lorne to Apollo Bay	43km
Apollo Bay to Cape Otway	31km
Cape Otway to Port Campbell	86km
Port Campbell to Warrnambool	67km
Warrnambool to Port Fairy	39km
Port Fairy to Portland	72km

## ANGLESEA

pop 2300

Kids in neon-coloured togs and swimming rings with zinc cream striped across their noses, eating ice creams and squinting in the sunlight – it's a classic scene from an overexposed family photograph, and mums and dads have been taking this picture in Anglesea for decades. The town is all about the family seaside getaway, with terrific beaches and good camping. Downtown Anglesea is just a strip of shops on the Great Ocean Rd next to the gum-green Anglesea River, but you can get some good grub here and a decent coffee. The accommodation makes the most of tranquil bush settings. Online, check out [www.anglesea.org.au](http://www.anglesea.org.au).

**Anglesea Golf Club** (☎ 5263 1582; [www.angleseagolfclub.com.au](http://www.angleseagolfclub.com.au); Noble St; 9 holes \$25) has a resident kangaroo population that grazes on the fairways as golfers drive and chip balls around them, particularly at early morning and dusk.

**Main Beach** has some gentle beach-break beginner's surf, while sheltered **Point Roadknight Beach** is good for kiddies. Hire surf or beach-play equipment from the **Anglesea Surf Centre** (☎ 5263 1530; [www.secondhandsurfboards.com.au](http://www.secondhandsurfboards.com.au); 111 Great Ocean Rd; ☎ 9am-6pm), which also stocks a huge range of secondhand boards. **Go Ride A Wave** (☎ 1300 132 441; [www.gorideawave.com.au](http://www.gorideawave.com.au); 143b Great Ocean Rd; ☎ 9am-6pm), also hires out gear and runs surfing lessons from \$55 for two hours.

**Eco Logic Education & Environment Services** (☎ 5263 1133; [www.ecologic.net.au](http://www.ecologic.net.au)) guides kid-oriented 'marine rock-pool rambles', night-time 'possum prowls' and tours of Split Point Lighthouse at Aireys Inlet.

**Anglesea Paddleboats** (☎ 0408-599 942; [www.angleseapaddleandcanoe.com](http://www.angleseapaddleandcanoe.com)), by the river, hires canoes and paddleboats, or you could saddle up at **Spring Creek Horse Rides** (☎ 5266 1541; [www.springcreekhorserides.com.au](http://www.springcreekhorserides.com.au); 245 Porth Heath Rd, Bellbrae; per hr adult/child \$35/\$28).

## INFORMATION

**Offshore Café** (☎ 5264 5110; 16/87 Great Ocean Rd; ☎ breakfast & lunch) Located in the mini mall; has internet access.

## EATING

**Angahook Café** (☎ 5263 1420; 119 Great Ocean Rd; mains \$9-\$15; ☎ breakfast & lunch) This café-cum-gourmet food store is always busy and does excellent coffee, slices and smoothies, good focaccias and freshly made sandwiches.

**Pete's Place** (☎ 5263 2500; 113 Great Ocean Rd; mains \$20-29; ☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner Tue-Sun) Café by day; classy Mod-Oz seafood restaurant by night. The tables on the front deck make for fine evening alfresco dining and you can choose from a select list of regional wines.

**38 Degrees South** (☎ 5263 1010; 12/87-89 Great Ocean Rd; mains \$18-24; ☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner) The groovy local café-bar has changed hands (and names) a few times in recent years, but it's still a good spot for some simple food and a drink. This place hosts some of the best live musicians touring the Surf Coast.

## SLEEPING

**Anglesea Backpackers** (☎ 5263 2664; <http://home.iprimus.com.au/angleseabackpacker>; 40 Noble St; dm/d \$35/95) Brightly coloured but basic, daggy but fun, this bunkhouse offers surfboard hire from \$25 per day.

**Rivergums B&B** (☎ 5263 3066; 10 Bingley Pde; d \$100-160; ☎) Tucked by the river with tranquil views, these two spacious, tastefully furnished

## TRANSPORT: ANGLESEA

Distance from Melbourne 115km

Direction Southwest

Travel time Melbourne to Anglesea 1½ hours

Bus V/Line (☎ 13 61 96; [www.vline.com.au](http://www.vline.com.au)) buses link Anglesea with Geelong four times daily Monday to Friday and twice daily on weekends (\$4.50, one hour) and Apollo Bay (\$8.50, 2½ hours).

Car Anglesea is 15 minutes west of Torquay on the B100.

rooms (a self-contained bungalow and a room attached to the house) are excellent value and 10 minutes' walk to the shops.

**Fruit Tree Cottage** (☎ 5263 2725; 60b Fifth Ave; d from \$130; ☎) About 1km from the Point Roadknight beaches, this three-bedroom cottage sleeps six. It has a full kitchen with dishwasher and laundry. Fruit Tree is dog-friendly.

**Berean B&B** (☎ 5263 3633; [bereanbb@bigpond.com](http://bereanbb@bigpond.com); 50 Eighth Ave; d \$220; ☎) Just 100m from the beach, Berean B&B is stylish, modern and well fitted out with kitchenette and luxurious black-tiled spa bathroom, complete with candles and pebble decorations for canoeing couples. *Très romantique!*

**Anglesea Beachfront Family Caravan Park** (☎ 5263 1583; [www.angleseafcp.com.au](http://www.angleseafcp.com.au); 35 Cameron Rd; unpowered sites \$30, d cabins from \$100; ☎) With good river and beach access, pool, wireless internet, camp kitchen and the latest camping-park fad: the jumping pillow.

## AIREYS INLET

pop 760

The Great Ocean Rd finally meets the coast south of Anglesea and starts its spectacular coastal run. Aireys Inlet is midway between Anglesea and Lorne, and next door to some of the southwest's prettiest beaches. It was originally established as a terminus for the Cobb & Co coach service from Geelong.

There are some great beaches in Aireys, backed by tall, volcanic cliffs, with tidal rock pools along the foreshore just below the lighthouse. A few kilometres towards Lorne, you'll find two particularly glorious stretches at **Fairhaven** and **Moggs Creek**. A Surf Life Saving Club patrols the beach at Fairhaven during summer, and at Moggs Creek, hang-gliders launch themselves from the cliffs to land on the sands below.

The 34m-high **Split Point Lighthouse** and its keepers' cottages were built in 1891. The lighthouse (now fully automated) is still operational and visible 30km out to sea. There are great views from the walking tracks and lookout, and tours are conducted by **Eco Logic Education & Environment Services** (☎ 5263 1133; [www.ecologic.net.au](http://www.ecologic.net.au)) in Anglesea.

Signposted off the main road is a replica of an 1852 **settler's hut**, made from bark, which was destroyed by the devastating 1983 Ash Wednesday bushfires.

The lovely 3.5km **Aireys Inlet Cliff Walk** begins at Painkalac Creek, rounds Split Point and makes its way to Sunnymead Beach. The **Surf Coast Walk**

## TRANSPORT: AIREYS INLET

Distance from Melbourne 125km

Direction Southwest

Travel time Melbourne to Aireys Inlet 1¾ hours

Bus V/Line (☎ 13 61 96; [www.vline.com.au](http://www.vline.com.au)) buses link Aireys Inlet with Geelong (\$6.50, 1¼ hours) and Apollo Bay (\$6.50, 1½ hours) four times daily.

Car Aireys Inlet is 15 minutes west of Anglesea on the B100.

continues along the coast here – pick up a copy of *Walks of Lorne & Aireys Inlet* from visitors centres. Aireys Inlet Caravan Park has a free guide to local walks – signposted trails start from Distillery Creek picnic ground, 2.5km north of Aireys, and the Moggs Creek picnic ground, 3km west of Aireys Inlet.

**Blazing Saddles** (☎ 5289 7322; Lot 1 Bimbadeen Dr; 1¼/2¼hr rides \$40/60), about 2km inland, runs horse rides in the bush and along the beach.

## INFORMATION

There's no visitors centre here but you can get good visitor information at [www.aireysinlet.org.au](http://www.aireysinlet.org.au). You can access the internet at Aireys Inlet Caravan Park.

## EATING

**A La Grecque** (☎ 5289 6922; 60 Great Ocean Rd; mains \$17-30; ☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner) This modern Greek taverna is outstanding, serving up Greek staples with a contemporary twist and a strong leaning towards local fish and seafood. Kosta, the host, ran famous Kosta's in Lorne for 27 years before decamping to Aireys. This is a great stop for lunch while motoring along the coast road or, better, make a reservation for dinner.

**Truffles Café Deli** (☎ 5289 7402; 34 Great Ocean Rd; mains \$15-25; ☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner) Truffles does the lot – eat in or takeaway, pizza, pasta, curries, good vegetarian choices, licensed and BYO, coffee, homemade cakes, cheerful efficient service and a happy ambience. Big tick.

## SLEEPING

**Cimarron B&B** (☎ 5289 7044; [www.cimarron.com.au](http://www.cimarron.com.au); 105 Gilbert St; d \$180) This house was built in 1979 from local timbers using only wooden pegs and shiplap joins, and is an idyllic getaway with views over Point Roadknight. Rustic yet

sophisticated, the large lounge area has book-lined walls and a cosy fireplace, while upstairs there are two unique, loft-style doubles with vaulted timber ceilings, or there's a den-like apartment. Out back, it's all state park and wildlife. Gay friendly but no kids.

**Ocean Inlet at Fairhaven** (☎ 5289 7313; www.oceaninlet.com; 34 Wybellena Dr, Fairhaven; d \$90) This cute gazebo-style bedsit with sofa bed and floor-to-ceiling windows overlooking native gardens has a teensy cabin next door containing a kitchenette (with breakfast bar) and bathroom. Well-heeled couples can swing cats in the sleek Coral Cove or Shorehouse apartments for \$250 and \$275 respectively.

**Surf Coast Cabins** (☎ 5289 6066; www.surfcoastcabins.com.au; 42 Hopkins St; d from \$120) These large, self-contained cabins in a bush setting come in one-, two- and three-bedroom configurations and are ideal for couples or families. They're well fitted out with kitchens and BBQ facilities and are tastefully furnished.

**Pole House** (☎ 5220 0200; 60 Banool Rd, Fairhaven; www.greatoceanroadholidays.com.au; per 2 nights from \$780) The Pole House, in nearby Fairhaven, is an iconic Great Ocean Rd landmark, sitting, as the name suggests, atop a pole, with extraordinary views. It was built in the late '70s and retains its authentic kitsch décor, and was one of the few buildings in the area to survive the 1983 Ash Wednesday bushfires. Sleeps four; two-night minimum.

**Aireys Inlet Caravan Park** (☎ 5289 6230; www.aicp.com.au; 19-25 Great Ocean Rd; unpowered/powerd sites from \$28/30, d en suite cabins from \$80; 📶 🚰) This neat little park lacks shade but it's close to the township's few stores.

## LORNE

pop 1000

Lorne is packed – 'Full!' say the locals. During summer weekends and holidays it's hard to find a car park let alone a bed for the night, and making your way down the main street can be a challenge, with all the café tables on the footpath, window-shoppers and folks ambling along in holiday-mode. Thanks to its natural beauty, great restaurants, boutique shopping and proximity to the big smoke, Lorne is extremely popular for weekend Melburnians – it's like an outpost of South Yarra chic. It's come a long way since the days of Rudyard Kipling's 1891 visit, whence he penned the poem *Flowers*: 'Gathered where the Erskine leaps, Down the road to Lorne...'

Out of season there's a little more breathing space, but thronged with tourists or not, Lorne is a lovely place built around the Erskine River and the shores of Loutit Bay. Log on to [www.visitlorne.org](http://www.visitlorne.org).

Apart from the obvious beachy-themed activities, kids will love the foreshore trampolines, swimming pool and skate park. You can rent paddleboats from **Lorne Paddleboat Hire** (☎ 0408-895 022; www.lorneswingbridgecafe.com; 20min \$10; ☎ 8am-sunset) on the Erskine River. The visitors centre has information on the self-guided **Lorne Historical Walk** and the **Shipwreck Plaque Walk**. Art-lovers can take in the excellent **Qdos Art Gallery** (☎ 5289 1989; www.qdos.com; 35 Allenvale Rd; 9am-5.30pm Thu-Mon) in the hills about 500m behind town.

There are more than 50km of walking tracks through the Otway Ranges around Lorne. **Eco Logic Education and Environment Services** (☎ 5263 1133; www.ecologic.net.au; walks from \$10), based in Anglesea, organises guided walks.

**Teddy's Lookout** makes for a scenic drive, and heading inland onto picturesque Erskine Falls Rd, there's good walking. At **Erskine Falls** it's an easy walk to the viewing platform or 250 steps down to the base of the waterfall. **Lorne Surf Shop** (☎ 5289 1673; 130 Mountjoy Pde; ☎ 9am-5.30pm) hires boards and wetsuits, while **Southern Exposure** (☎ 5261 2170; www.southernexposure.com.au; 2hr lessons \$55) offers surfing lessons.

## INFORMATION

**Lorne visitors centre** (☎ 1300 891 152, 5289 1152; www.visitsurfcoast.com; 15 Mountjoy Pde; ☎ 9am-5pm) Stacks of information, helpful staff and an accommodation booking service.

**Parks Victoria** (☎ 5289 4100; www.parkweb.vic.gov.au; 86 Polwarth Rd; ☎ 8am-4.30pm Mon-Fri) If you're interested in camping, come here for more details.

## FESTIVALS & EVENTS

**Falls Festival** ([www.fallsfestival.com](http://www.fallsfestival.com); tickets \$100) A two-day knees-up over New Year's on a farm not too far from town. A top line-up of rock groups; tickets include camping.

**Pier to Pub Swim** ([www.lornesurfclub.com.au](http://www.lornesurfclub.com.au)) This popular event in January inspires up to 4500 swimmers to splash their way 1.2km across Loutit Bay to the Lorne Hotel; a photo opportunity for local politicians and celebrities.

## EATING

Lorne is the Great Ocean Rd's gourmet capital, and Mountjoy Pde is bumper-to-bumper with

great cafés and restaurants. Most are open day and night during summer, but have shorter winter hours. There's a well-provisioned **Foodworks Supermarket** (☎ 5289 1645; 1-3 Great Ocean Rd) at the northern end of town, and for the state's freshest fish and seafood supplies head to **Lorne Fisheries** (☎ 5289 1453; Lorne Pier; ☎ 10am-6pm).

**Grandma Shield's Bakery** (☎ 5289 2639; 152 Mountjoy Pde; sandwiches from \$7; ☎ 8am-4pm) No hoity-toity *pain au chocolat* or *ciabatta* here – this old-fashioned hot-bread shop has good pies, pasties and freshly made sandwiches.

**Salty Dog Fish & Chippery** (☎ 5289 1300; Shop 1 Cumberland Resort; ☎ lunch & dinner) Consistently good fish and chips. You can feed yourself and a flock of seagulls for about \$8 to \$10.

**Kafe Kaos** (☎ 5289 2639; 52 Mountjoy Pde; lunch \$8-15; ☎ breakfast & lunch) Bright and perky, Kafe

Kaos typifies Lorne's relaxed foodie philosophy – barefoot patrons in boardies or bikinis tucking into first-class *paninis*, bruschettas, burgers and chips. With great veggie options, all-day breakfasts, and coffee, cocktails, beer and wine to wash the sand out of your hair.

**Pizza Pizza** (☎ 5289 1007; 2b Mountjoy Pde; pizzas \$12-14; ☎ noon-10.30pm) This tiny shopfront is only big enough for the kitchen – diners takeaway or eat on the footpath tables – but it's been a huge hit, offering pizzas like Punkrock, Alfonso and Spinner.

**B Bar & Grill** (☎ 5289 2882; 81 Mountjoy Pde; mains \$18-30; ☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner) This new Greek taverna, right on the sandy beachfront, does up simple grilled meat and seafood dishes. The location is the best in Lorne. Opens summer only.



## TRANSPORT: LORNE

**Distance from Melbourne** 144km

**Direction** Southwest

**Travel time** Melbourne to Lorne 2½ hours

**Bus & Train** V/Line (☎ 13 61 96; www.vline.com.au) runs four buses Monday to Friday (two on both Saturday and Sunday) that connect with Melbourne trains in Geelong and travel to Lorne (\$15 including Melbourne–Geelong train fare, \$8.50 bus only to/from Geelong, 1½ hours from Geelong); three services Monday to Friday (two on both Saturday and Sunday) to/from Apollo Bay (\$3.50, 1¼ hours). Buses stop in Lorne outside the Commonwealth Bank on Mountjoy Pde.

**Car** Lorne is 30 minutes west of Aireys Inlet on the B100. Avis (☎ 5521 1332; www.avis.com.au; 344 Latrobe Tce, Geelong; rental per day from \$65) in Geelong delivers rental vehicles to Lorne Automotive Services (☎ 5289 2593; 2 Bearepaire Dr, Lorne).

**Shuttle bus** Mountjoy Pde free shuttle bus operates from 10am to 6pm, every 30 minutes in December and January.

**Taxi** Lorne Taxi Service (☎ 0409-892 304).

**Arab** (☎ 5289 1435; 94 Mountjoy Pde; mains \$20-24; ☺ breakfast, lunch & dinner; ♿) Arab started as a beatnik coffee lounge in 1956, and single-handedly transformed Lorne from a daggy family holiday destination into a place for groovers and shakers. It's been trading ever since, and is *the* spot for coffee and all-day breakfasts. Motorcyclists converge on this place like seagulls to a hot chip.

**Ba Ba Lu Bar** (☎ 5289 1808; 6a Mountjoy Pde; mains \$18-28; ☺ breakfast, lunch & dinner) Ever-popular with backpackers and billionaires alike, this is a good spot for a predinner tippie. The menu has inspired tapas and some seafood-based mains. Ba Ba Lu kicks on into the wee hours.

## ENTERTAINMENT

Many of Lorne's restaurants add music to their menus and open until late over summer. The two hotels offer live bands on weekends. Ba Ba Lu Bar is a popular place to drink into the morning hours. **Lorne Theatre** (☎ 5289 1272; www.greatoceanroadcinemas.com.au; 78 Mountjoy Pde; adult/child \$12.50/9.50) shows new-release films daily during the peak season.

## SLEEPING

There's often a minimum two-night stay on weekends in Lorne, and high-season rates can be nearly double winter prices. For other options, ask the visitors centre or the **Great Ocean Road Accommodation Centre** (☎ 5289 1800; www.gorac.com.au; 136 Mountjoy Pde; ☺ 9am-5.30pm), next to the pharmacy. **Lorne Camping Grounds Booking Office** (☎ 5289 1382; 2 Great Ocean Rd; unpowered/powering sites from \$20/25, onsite vans \$60, d cabins from \$100) manages

bookings for five good caravan parks. Book well ahead for peak-season stays. Of these Erskine River Park is the prettiest; on the left-hand side as you enter Lorne, just before the bridge. The four others are Top Bank Camping Ground, nestled along the southern bank of the river; Ocean Road Camping Ground, on the right-hand side of the Great Ocean Rd as you enter Lorne, opposite Erskine River Park; Kia Ora Park, also on the right, tucked beside the bridge; and hillside Queens Park Camping Ground, 2½ kilometres further at the southern end of town.

**Great Ocean Road Cottages & Backpackers YHA** (☎ 5289 1070; www.yha.com.au; 10 Erskine Ave; tents \$20, dm \$20-24, d \$55-62, cottages \$170) Tucked away in the bush among the cockatoos and koalas, this two-storey timber lodge has spacious dorms, bargain tents with beds already set up, and top-value doubles. Unisex bathrooms take some getting used to. The A-frame cottages sleep four (six at a squeeze), with kitchens and bathrooms.

**Erskine River Backpackers** (☎ 5289 1496; 6 Mountjoy Pde; dm/d \$25/70) Beautiful verandas line this classic old building by the river at the north end of town. It's a relaxed place with four-bunk dorms and great communal spaces.

**Stanmorr B&B** (☎ 5289 1530; www.stanmorr.com; 64 Otway St; d \$140, ste \$250) Sheltering in the hills, this B&B is a Lorne institution, with helpful owners and kookaburras that come for hand-feeding. The rooms are comfortable and some have bay views. The suite has the best aspect, along with romantic indulgences such as the gas fire, spa and languorous 11am checkout.

**Bridun B&B** (☎ 5289 1666; www.bridun.com.au; 1 Grove Rd; d \$190) One of Lorne's original buildings, this 1920s weatherboard place, just off the main

street, has timber floors and many authentic period furnishings. A hearty breakfast is thrown in, but it's the location that's the clincher – 25m to the main drag and 100m to the beach.

**Allenvale Cottages** (☎ 5289 1450; www.allenvale.com.au; 150 Allenvale Rd; d from \$195) We keep coming back here – four self-contained early-1900s timber cottages that each sleep four (or more) that have been luxuriously restored. They're 2km northwest of Lorne, arrayed among shady trees and green lawns, complete with bridge and babbling brook. There are walking and cycling trails and it's ideal for families.

**Chapel** (☎ 5289 2622; thechapelorne@bigpond.com; 45 Richardson Blvd; d \$200; ♿) Outstanding – this contemporary two-level bungalow has been lifted from the pages of a glossy magazine, with tasteful Asian furnishings, splashes of colour and bay windows that open into the forest. It's secluded and romantic, with double shower and complimentary robes.

**Grand Pacific Hotel** (☎ 5289 1609; www.grandpacific.com.au; 268 Mountjoy Pde; d from \$180) This iconic Lorne landmark, harking back to 1875, has been restored with a sleek modern décor that retains some classic period features. The best rooms have balconies and stunning sea views, though plainer rooms are still luxurious. It's a popular weekend wedding venue.

## CUMBERLAND RIVER TO SKENES CREEK

Just 7km southwest of Lorne is **Cumberland River**. There's nothing here – no shops or houses – other than the wonderful **Cumberland River Holiday Park** (☎ 5289 1790; www.cumberlandriver.com.au; Great Ocean Rd; unpowered sites \$28, en suite cabins from \$105). This splendidly located bushy camping ground is next to a lovely river and high craggy cliffs that rise on the far side. The ocean beach offers surfing and swimming, and there are many walks upriver and over the hills. We've been coming here since we were kids.

The Great Ocean Rd snakes spectacularly around the cliff-side for another few kilometres until it levels out at the mouth of **Wye River** (pop 140). Nestled discretely in the pretty (steep!) hillsides are some modest holiday houses and a few grander steel-and-glass pole-frame structures built on the 'challenging' housing sites. A large part of town is taken up by the 25-acre **Wye River Valley Tourist Park** (☎ 5289 0241; www.wyerivervalleypark.com.au; 25 Great Ocean Rd; unpowered/powering sites \$30/38, d en suite cabins

\$120), which has all the facilities of a modern 'holiday park' including the essential jumping pillow. The pretty Wye River babbles through the park and there's a beach across the road. From December through April the **Wye River Foreshore Camping Reserve** (☎ 5289 0412) offers powered beachside camp sites.

Also here is the **Wye Beach Hotel** (☎ 5289 0240; www.wyebeachhotel.com.au; 19 Great Ocean Rd; d \$140-170, mains \$18-30; ☺ lunch & dinner; ♿), where people come for excellent pub food. It's in a fantastic location on the hillside with rugged ocean views. There are comfortable motel-style double rooms, all with great views. This hotel is a favourite stop along the Great Ocean Rd, if only for a soft drink and a bowl of chips.

Several private holiday houses in Wye River are managed by **Holiday Great Ocean Road** (☎ 5237 4201; www.holidaygor.com.au).

Another 5km along is **Kennett River**, which has the best **koala spotting** on the southwest coast. Behind the caravan park, walk 200m up Grey River Rd and you'll see bundles of sleepy koalas clinging to the branches. *Ooh aah!* There are **glow worms** that shine at night up the same stretch of Grey River Rd (take a torch).

The **Kennett River Caravan Park** (☎ 1300 664 417, 5289 0272; www.kennettriver.com; unpowered/powering sites \$25/29, d cabins from \$110; ♿) has free wireless internet throughout the park and coin-operated electric BBQs for multitaskers. Be camera-ready for stunning **Cape Patton lookout**, about 4km beyond Kennett River. From here to Skenes Creek, the land rolls and folds dramatically in camel-hump hills. **Wongarra**, 8km south of Cape Patton, has an appealing moody, windswept quality.

## APOLLO BAY

pop 1400

Apollo Bay is a lovely place, one of the Great Ocean Rd's major attractions. While this former fishing town is more relaxed and less trendy than Lorne, property moguls seem to be using her big sister to the northeast as a template for Apollo Bay's impending rampant overdevelopment. When every shop is a surf-boutique or coffee shop there'll be nowhere to buy an onion. Locals – fisherfolk, artists, musicians and sea-changers – seem to be resigned to this, and while they lament the loss of the old pre-yuppie days, their house values have doubled while you've been reading this.

Majestic rolling hills provide a postcard backdrop to the town, while broad, white-sand beaches dominate the foreground. It's

## DETOUR: APOLLO BAY–LAVERS HILL–BEECH FOREST

A great day-drive is from Apollo Bay to Beech Forest via Lavers Hill and Melba Forest State Park. It becomes a loop if you take **Aire Valley Road** (which becomes Binns Track) from Beech Forest back to Apollo Bay, but be warned: this narrow, logging-truck route is not advised for conventional vehicles. It is badly corrugated, mushy clay, arduous driving and certainly no short cut! In winter, it's out of bounds to everyone.

Lavers Hill is 48km from Apollo Bay. This often mist-shrouded hilltop was once a thriving timber town but today it's a favourite feed-stop with two excellent cafés. International folk love the **Fauna Australia Wildlife Retreat** (☎ 5237 3234; www.faunaaustralia.com.au; 5040 Colac-Lavers Hill Rd, Lavers Hill; d \$220) where almost-tame native animals (bred on the property) snoop about at night.

Seven kilometres southwest of Lavers Hill is tiny **Melba Gully State Park**. The marked **Madsen's Track** rainforest nature walk goes under a canopy of blackwoods and myrtle beeches and the fat, 300-year-old 'Big Tree', a messmate eucalypt. After dark, **glow worms** glimmer in the park. You won't escape the well-signposted **Otway Fly** (p238), 5km from Beech Forest.

**Triplet Falls**, further along the same road as the Fly (Phillips Track), is also worth the hike. The 900m walk passes an historic timber site. The **Beauchamp** and **Hopetoun Falls** are just past Beech Forest, down the Aire Valley Rd.

For a real slice of Otways' life, meet the locals by staying overnight in **Beech Forest**. Amid rolling mists, the **Beechy Pub** (☎ 5235 9220; Beech Forest; d \$95; ☎ lunch & dinner Wed-Sun) is a welcoming shelter. Mains cost \$15 to \$18.

also an ideal base for exploring magical Cape Otway and Otway National Park. Online, check out www.visitapollobay.com and www.visitotways.com.

There's stacks to do in and around Apollo Bay. The local Saturday **community market** (www.apollobay.com/market\_place; ☎ 8.30am-4.30pm), along the main strip, is good for homemade jams and weird table lamps made from tree stumps. Signposted **Marriners Lookout** is 1.5km from town back towards Cape Patton – from the car park the lookout is a rewarding 20-minute return walk.

**Otway Shipwreck Tours** (☎ 0417-983 985; msbrack@bigpond.com; 3hr tours adult/child \$50/15) are run by Mark Brack, son of the Cape Otway Lighthouse keeper, who knows this stretch of coast, its history and ghosts better than anyone around. His tours are small, personal and very informative. Minimum two people.

The **Old Cable Station Museum** (☎ 5237 7441; 6250 Great Ocean Rd; admission \$2.50; ☎ 2-5pm Sat & Sun) has a huge collection of photographs and local artefacts relating to the 1859 laying of submarine telegraph cable from Cape Otway to Tasmania.

Highly recommended are the seal colony visits at the Marengo Marine Sanctuary with **Apollo Bay Sea Kayaking** (☎ 0405-495 909; www.apollobaysurfkayak.com.au; 2hr tours \$55), which are safe and suitable for children over 12. They depart from Marengo Beach at 10.30am and 2pm most days. This outfit also runs the **Apollo Bay Surf School** (1½hr lessons \$45) and rents boards, bikes, sports gear and camping equipment.

Reel in the big' uns with **Apollo Bay Fishing & Adventure Tours** (☎ 5237 7888, www.apollobayfishing.com

.au; 4hr trips adult/child \$85/75) or go mountain-bike riding with **Otway Expeditions** (☎ 5237 6341; http://otwayexpeditions.tripod.com; rides from \$60) through the Otways. Amphibious all-terrain 8x8 'argos buggies' are also available.

Tandem hang-glide or paraglide from Marriners Lookout with **Wingsports Flight Academy** (☎ 0419-378 616; www.wingsports.com.au; 9 Evans Cr; flights from \$150), or strap yourself into a Cessna 206 flight over the Twelve Apostles with **Apollo Bay Aviation** (☎ 0407-306 065; www.apollobayaviation.com.au; 3 Telford St; flights \$95). Minimum two people.

The superb multiday **Great Ocean Walk** (www.greatoceanwalk.com.au) starts at Apollo Bay and runs all the way to the Twelve Apostles. You can do shorter walks or the whole trek over six days; see the website for details.

## TRANSPORT: APOLLO BAY

Distance from Melbourne 187km

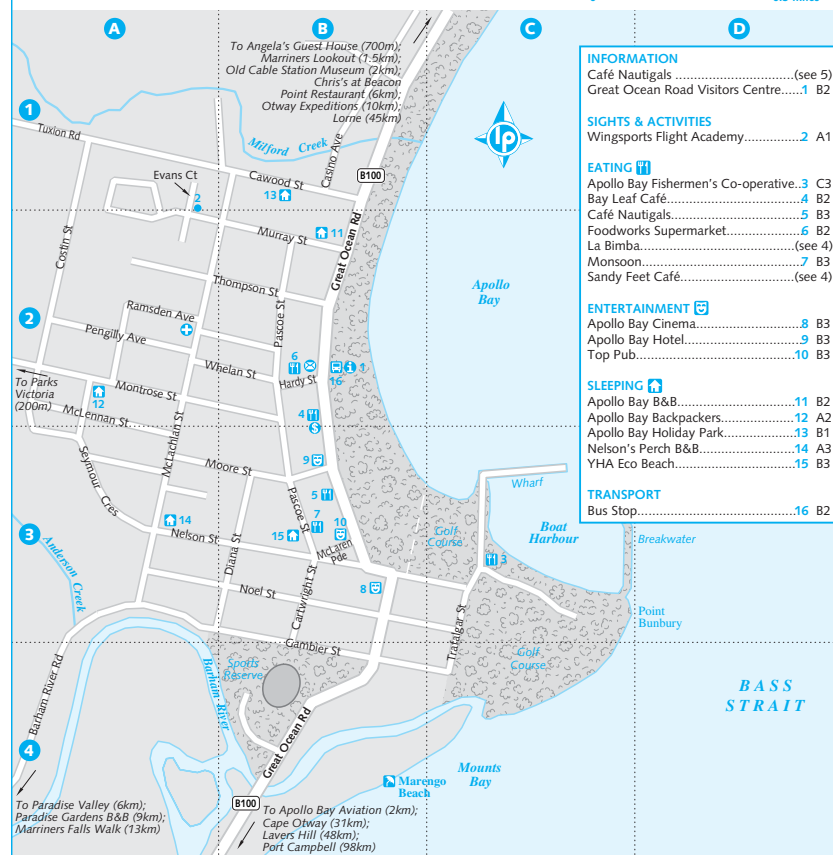
Direction Southwest

Travel time Melbourne to Apollo Bay three hours

**Bus** V/Line (☎ 13 61 96; www.vline.com.au) buses connect with Melbourne trains in Geelong and travel onto Apollo Bay three times Monday to Friday (twice on both Saturday and Sunday; \$19.50 including train fare, \$13 bus only to/from Geelong, 2½ hours from Geelong). Buses stop at the Apollo Bay visitors centre; one bus continues on to Warrnambool via Port Campbell on Monday, Wednesday and Friday (\$15, 3½ hours).

**Car** Apollo Bay is 45 minutes west of Lorne on the B100.

## APOLLO BAY



## INFORMATION

**Café Nautigals** (☎ 0402-825 590; 57 Great Ocean Rd; ☎ 8.30am-11pm) Internet access.

**Great Ocean Road visitors centre** (☎ 5237 6529; 100 Great Ocean Rd; ☎ 9am-5pm) In the same building, there's an impressive 'eco-centre' with displays on Aboriginal history, rainforests, shipwrecks and the building of the Great Ocean Rd.

**Parks Victoria** (☎ 5237 2500; www.parkweb.vic.gov.au; cnr Oak Ave & Montrose St; ☎ 8am-4.30pm Mon-Fri)

## FESTIVALS & EVENTS

**Apollo Bay Music Festival** (☎ 5237 6761; www.apollobaymusicfestival.com; weekend pass adult/youth/under 13 \$130/70/free) Held over a weekend in late April; features classical, folk, blues, jazz, rock and some edgy contemporary

sounds too. It's an outstanding event, but accommodation is scarce and expensive – book well ahead.

## EATING

There's good eating at the two pubs on the main drag, and the **Apollo Bay Fishermen's Co-operative** (☎ 5237 6591; Nelson St; ☎ 9.30am-4.30pm) sells fresh fish and seafood. The **Foodworks Supermarket** (☎ 5237 7355; 4 Hardy St) is just behind the post office.

**Sandy Feet Café** (☎ 5237 6995; 139 Great Ocean Rd; mains \$6-12; ☎ breakfast & lunch) Tofu, tempeh, wholefoods and good karma.

**Café Nautigals** (☎ 0402-825 590; 57 Great Ocean Rd; mains \$14-16; ☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner; ☎) With an eclectic menu of Asian noodle, rice and curry dishes, tofu plates for vegetarians, chicken-mayo

wraps and great coffee. Nautigals is a favourite with backpackers and hip locals. The backpackers' menu includes a free drink and internet access with your meal.

**Monsoon** (☎ 5237 6776; 1/8 Pascoe St, mains \$15-26; ☺ lunch & dinner) This Thai restaurant-bar is a newbie on the culinary scene, cooking up traditional piquant curries and satay skewers with some funky modern inflections. Fully licensed; takeaway available.

**Bay Leaf Café** (☎ 5237 6470; 131 Great Ocean Rd; mains \$10-16; ☺ breakfast & lunch daily, dinner Tue-Sat) Morning pancake stacks and evening chicken-and-leek pie – great! A local favourite for its innovative menu, good coffee, friendly atmosphere and fair prices.

**La Bimba** (☎ 5237 7411; 125 Great Ocean Rd; mains \$25-45; ☺ breakfast, lunch & dinner Thu-Mon) This upstairs Mod Oz restaurant is outstanding – definitely worth the splurge. It's a warm, relaxed smart-casual place with views, great service and a good wine list. Try the Portuguese bouillabaisse-style seafood broth with prawns, clams, potato, chorizo, baby spinach and a half-crab. It comes with an array of surgeo's tools and a dainty finger bowl – very messy! We'll be back.

**Chris's at Beacon Point Restaurant** (☎ 5237 6411; Skenes Creek Rd; mains \$30-48; ☺ lunch & dinner) A hill-top fine-dining sanctuary with breathtaking views over Bass Strait and Apollo Bay, 6km away. It's a beautifully designed restaurant with stone feature walls, sandstone floors and vaulted ceilings.

## ENTERTAINMENT

Lots of Apollo Bay's restaurants have evening bar services, and **Apollo Bay Hotel** (☎ 5237 6250; 95 Great Ocean Rd) and **Top Pub** (Great Ocean Hotel; ☎ 5237 6240; 29 Great Ocean Rd) have live bands on weekends.

During holidays, the **Apollo Bay Cinema** (☎ 5289 1272; www.greatoceanroadcinemas.com.au; cnr Great Ocean Rd & Nelson St; adult/child \$12.50/9.50) operates from the local hall.

## SLEEPING

**YHA Eco Beach** (☎ 5237 7899; 5 Pascoe St; dm \$27-37, d \$75-89, f \$95-109; ☺) Even if you're not on a budget this new three-million-dollar, architect-designed hostel is an outstanding place to stay. Its eco-credentials are too many to list here, but it's a wonderful piece of architecture with great lounge areas, kitchens, TV rooms, internet lounge and rooftop terraces. The location, just a block behind the beach in the guts of

town, is the icing on the cake. It's often full, so book ahead.

**Apollo Bay Backpackers** (☎ 1800 113 045, 5237 7360; www.apollobaybackpackers.com.au; 47 Montrose St; dm/d from \$20/50; ☺) This friendly, blue-fibro hippie digs is kinda daggy, but has all the facilities and complimentary breakfast.

**Angela's Guest House** (☎ 5237 7085; www.angelasguesthouse.com.au; 7 Campbell Ct; d from \$130) This large family home has spotless double and family rooms with bright, cheerful décor. Some share a bathroom, most have balconies, and they're all excellent value.

**Apollo Bay Holiday Park** (☎ 5237 7111; www.kooringal-park.com.au; 27 Cawood St; unpowered sites \$25, d cabins from \$110) Formerly Kooringal Holiday Park, this place looks prefab-suburban, complete with speed humps, car parks and kit homes. It's in a good location on the northern end of town.

**Nelson's Perch B&B** (☎ 5237 7176; www.nelsonsperch.com; 54 Nelson St; d \$160; ☺) Nelson's looks fresher than some of the town's weary B&Bs. There are three rooms, each with courtyard, and free wireless internet throughout.

**Apollo Bay B&B** (☎ 5237 7153; www.apollobaybandb.com.au; 4 Murray St; s/d \$160/190; ☺) A great mix of creature comforts (king-size beds), amenities, location and value, not to mention the breakfast. Stroll over the main road and you're on the beach.

**Paradise Gardens B&B** (☎ 5237 6939; www.paradisegardens.net.au; 715 Barham River Rd; d B&B from \$160, self-contained cottages \$220; ☺) Drive up the beautiful Barham Valley, 9km from Apollo Bay, to this genteel minimanor beside a lovely lake with green lawns, weeping willows and wild ducks. The cottage is large and well appointed, though rockstars may find the décor a little twee and feminine.

## AROUND APOLLO BAY

Head 6km southwest of Apollo Bay along the Great Ocean Rd to the signposted **Shelley Beach** turn-off. It's an unsealed road. There are toilets and wood BBQs in the reserve, a track down to the beach and the 4km **Elliot River Walk**.

The narrow **Barham River Road Scenic Drive** from Apollo Bay runs a delightful 12km past tumbling grassy hills, sheep and stands of colossal eucalypts. Before returning walk the **Marriners Falls Walk**, which follows the babbling Barham River, and pull into the aptly named **Paradise Valley** picnic area. Seventeen kilometres past Apollo Bay is **Maits Rest Rainforest Boardwalk**, an easy 20-minute rainforest-gully walk.

### Detour: Skenes Creek to Forrest

An alternative return route from Apollo Bay to Geelong is via the C119 through Forrest. The road leaves the coast at Skenes Creek and dips and weaves through beautiful Otways hills to Forrest 32km away. The sleepy town is tiny but Parks Victoria and the Department of Sustainability & Environment (DSE) have recently opened more than 50km of **mountain bike trails** (ranging from beginner to suicidal) nearby. There are trail maps in town. The park hosts the **Otway Odyssey Mountain Bike Marathon** (www.rapidascent.com.au/otwayodyssey) in late February.

Accommodation options include the very swish **Forest River Valley B&B** (☎ 5236 6322; www.forrestrivervalley.com.au; 135 Yaughar Rd; d \$240; ☺) outside town, and **Otways Forrest Retreat** (☎ 0428-689 297; www.otwaysforrestretreat.com.au; 6 Station St; d from \$120).

## CAPE OTWAY

Cape Otway is the second most southerly point of mainland Australia (after Wilsons Promontory) and one of the wettest parts of the state. This coastline is particularly beautiful, rugged and dangerous. More than 200 ships came to grief between Cape Otway and Port Fairy between the 1830s and 1930s, which led to the 'Shipwreck Coast' moniker.

The turn-off for Lighthouse Rd, which leads 12km down to the lighthouse, is 21km from Apollo Bay. About 8km down Lighthouse Rd is a signposted unsealed road to spectacular **Blanket Bay**, **Parker Hill**, **Point Franklin** and **Crayfish Beach**. Camping is allowed here; it's free but you need to book through **Parks Victoria** (☎ 13 19 63; www.parkweb.vic.gov.au) in Apollo Bay.

You can climb to the top of **Cape Otway Lighthouse** (☎ 5237 9240; www.lightstation.com; adult/child/family \$14/8/36; ☺ 9am-5pm) for amazing views. This lighthouse was built in 1848 by more than 40 stonemasons without mortar or cement. The **Telegraph Station** has fascinating displays on the 250km undersea telegraph cable link with Tasmania laid in 1859. A mammoth logistical exercise, the first cable failed after six months.

As many as 16 people can be accommodated at the windswept **Lighthouse Keeper's Residence** (d from \$185), though there's a two-night minimum stay on weekends.

You won't be the only guests at **Great Ocean Eco Lodge** (☎ 5237 9297; www.apeotwaycentre.com; 635 Lighthouse Rd, s/d from \$250/300), just off the Great Ocean Rd, as the attached Cape Otway Centre for Conservation Ecology also serves as an animal hospital for a menagerie of local fauna. The luxurious en suite rooms in the post-and-beam, solar-powered, mud-brick homestead have bush-view decks and the centre offers guided walking tours and eco activities.

## CAPE OTWAY TO PORT CAMPBELL NATIONAL PARK

After Cape Otway, the Great Ocean Rd levels out and enters the fertile Horden Vale flats, returning briefly to the coast at tiny Glenaire. Then the road returns inland and begins the climb up to Lavers Hill (see p234). On overcast or rainy days the hills here can be seriously fog-bound, and the twists and turns can be challenging when you can't see the end of your car bonnet.

Six kilometres north of Glenaire, a 5km detour goes down Red Johanna Rd winding through rolling hills and grazing cows to the wild thrashing surf of **Johanna Beach** (forget swimming). The world-famous Rip Curl Pro surfing competition (p227) relocates here when Bells Beach isn't working.

There's a lovely **camping ground** at Johanna on a protected grassy area between the dunes and the rolling hills. It's maintained by **Parks Victoria** (☎ 13 19 63; www.parkweb.vic.gov.au) but there are no fees due or permits required. There's an ablutions facility, but fires are banned and you'll need to bring in your own drinking water.

There are several places to stay tucked down the Red Johanna and Blue Johanna Rds (which together make a loop back to the Great Ocean Rd), some managed by **Holiday Great Ocean Road** (☎ 5237 4201; www.holidaygor.com.au). **Boomerangs** (☎ 5237 4213; www.theboomerangs.com; cnr Great Ocean Rd & Red Johanna Rd; d \$340) is great for well-heeled folks with a penchant for plush, boomerang-shaped cabins: vaulted ceilings, jarrah floorboards, leadlighting, spas and commanding views of the Johanna Valley.

About 16km from the former timber town of **Lavers Hill** is the turn-off to **Moonlight Head**, a lumpy 5km unsealed road that forks near the coast: to the left is the **cemetery** and a walking track along the cliff tops; to the right is a car park with a

track to [Wreck Beach](#) and the anchors of the *Marie Gabrielle*, which sank off here in 1869, and the *Fiji*, driven aground in a storm in 1891.

Twenty kilometres inland from Lavers Hill on the Colac Rd (C155) is the [Otway Fly](#) (☎ 5235 9200; Phillips Track; www.otwayfly.com; adult/child/family \$20/9/50; ☎ 9am-5pm), 5km from Beech Forest. It's an elevated steel walkway in the forest canopy with a lookout tower, affording great views for the up-to-2000 people pumped through here each day. Arrive early.

## PORT CAMPBELL NATIONAL PARK

The road levels out after leaving the Otways and enters narrow, relatively flat scrubby escarpment lands that fall away to sheer, 70m cliffs along the coast between Princetown to Peterborough – a distinct change of scene. This is Port Campbell National Park – home to the Twelve Apostles – the most famous and most photographed stretch of the Great Ocean Rd. For eons, waves and tides have crashed against the soft limestone rock, eroding, undercutting and carving out a fascinating series of rock stacks, gorges, arches and blowholes.

The [Gibson Steps](#), hacked by hand into the cliffs in the 19th century by local landowner Hugh Gibson (and more recently replaced by concrete steps), lead down to feral Gibson Beach, an essential stop. This beach, and others along this stretch of coast, are not suitable for swimming because of strong currents and undertows – you can walk along the beach, but be careful not to be stranded by high tides or nasty waves. This is the only place along this stretch of coast where you can ac-

cess the open beach, and it's possible to walk around the first headland to the west if the tide is low.

Opposite Gibson Steps is Hugh Gibson's original 1869 [Glenample Homestead](#), where the survivors of the famed *Loch Ard* shipwreck recovered (see [opposite](#)).

The lonely [Twelve Apostles](#) are rocky stacks that have been abandoned to the ocean by retreating headland. Today, only seven apostles can be seen from the viewing platforms (see [below](#)). The understated roadside [display centre](#) (Great Ocean Rd; ☎ 9am-5pm) at the Twelve Apostles, 6km past Princetown, has public toilets and informative displays. There's pedestrian access to the viewing platforms from the car park via a tunnel beneath the Great Ocean Rd. Timber boardwalks run around the cliff tops. Amid howls of protest from locals, [Parks Victoria](#) (☎ 13 96 63; www.parkweb.vic.gov.au), which manages this facility, intends to 'commercialise' this site constructing a café and takeaway food outlet. Golden arches? Nobody knows... It seems a shame, but why stop there? Put up a nightclub and shopping mall too!

There are several outfits that offer helicopter tours over the Twelve Apostles, including the [Edge Helicopters](#) (☎ 5598 8283; www.theedgehelicopters.com.au) just behind the car park at the display centre, and [12 Apostles Helicopters](#) (☎ 5598 6161; www.12apostleshelicopters.com.au), 5km past the display centre. Both offer a range of tours from \$90 per person for an eight-minute flight.

Nearby [Loch Ard Gorge](#) is where the Shipwreck Coast's most famous and haunting tale unfolded when two young survivors of the wrecked iron clipper *Loch Ard* made it to shore (see [opposite](#)).

### How Many Apostles?

The Twelve Apostles are not 12 in number. From the viewing platform you can clearly count seven Apostles, but maybe some obscure others? We consulted widely with Parks Victoria officers, tourist office staff and even the cleaner at the car park display centre, but obfuscation is the better part of valour around these parts, and locals like to say, 'It depends' or, 'Do you want the short answer or the long answer?'

The Apostles are called 'stacks' in geologic lingo, and the rock formations were originally called the 'Sow and Piglets'. Someone in the '60s (nobody can recall who) thought they might attract some tourists with a more venerable name, so they were renamed 'the Apostles'. Since apostles tend to come by the dozen, the number 12 was added sometime later. The two stacks on the eastern (Otway) side of the viewing platform are not technically Apostles – they're Gog and Magog (picking up on the religious nomenclature yet?). But if they help you to count to 12, then that's OK too.

So there aren't 12 stacks – there are more or less, depending which ones you want to count and how far along the coastline you include. The soft limestone cliffs are dynamic and changeable, constantly eroded by the unceasing waves – one 70m-high stack collapsed into the sea in July 2005. If you look carefully at how the waves lick around the pointy part of the cliff base, you can see a new Apostle being born. The labour lasts many thousands of years.

### The Wreck of the Loch Ard

The Victorian coastline between Cape Otway and Port Fairy was a notoriously treacherous stretch of water in the days of sailing ships, due to hidden reefs and frequent heavy fog. More than 80 vessels came to grief on this 120km stretch in just 40 years.

The most famous wreck was that of the iron-hulled clipper *Loch Ard*, which foundered off Mutton Bird Island at 4am on the final night of its long voyage from England in 1878. Of 37 crew and 19 passengers on board, only two survived. Eva Carmichael, a nonswimmer, clung to wreckage and was washed into a gorge, where apprentice officer Tom Pearce rescued her. Tom heroically climbed the sheer cliff the next day and raised the alarm at a local farmhouse, but no other survivors were found. Eva and Tom were both 19 years old, leading to speculation in the press about a romance, but nothing actually happened – they never saw each other again and Eva soon moved to Ireland.

## PORT CAMPBELL

pop 260

This small, windswept town is poised on a dramatic, natural bay, eroded from the surrounding limestone cliffs, and almost perfectly rectangular in shape. It was named after Scottish Captain Alexander Campbell, a whaler who took refuge here on trading voyages between Tasmania and Port Fairy. The tiny bay has a lovely sandy beach, the only safe place for swimming along this tempestuous coast.

After the throngs of people, bars and cafés of Lorne and Apollo Bay, sleepy Port Campbell is a nice small-town antidote. There's still the souvenir trash and everything's 'Twelve Apostles this' and 'Loch Ard that' but there are no pretensions here – it's got a bit of a hokum back-country feel and remains an authentic seaside town.

The 4.7km [Discovery Walk](#), with signage, gives an introduction to the area's natural and historical features. It's just out of town on the way to Warrnambool.

There is stunning [diving](#) in the kelp forests, canyons and tunnels of the [Arches Marine Sanctuary](#) and to the *Loch Ard* wreck, as well as [boat tours](#) to the Twelve Apostles; inquire at [Port Campbell Marine Services](#) (☎ 5598 6411; 32 Lord St) at the Mobil Service Station.

[Port Campbell Touring Company](#) (☎ 5598 6424; www.portcampbelltouring.com.au; 129 Currells Rd; half-day tours \$38) runs tours, fishing trips and the like.

## INFORMATION

[Parks Victoria](#) (☎ 5558 6233; www.parkweb.vic.gov.au; 6 Lord St; ☎ 8am-4.30pm Mon-Fri)

[Port Campbell visitor centre](#) (☎ 5598 6089; www.visit12apostles.com; 26 Morris St; ☎ 9am-5pm) Stacks of regional and accommodation information and interesting historic displays – the anchor from the *Loch Ard* is out the front, salvaged in 1978.

## EATING

[12 Rocks Café](#) (☎ 5598 6123; 19 Lord St; mains \$8-15; ☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner) This busy place, with the best beachfront views, does a roaring daytime trade of coffee and light meals, plus reasonable pasta and seafood mains.

[Waves](#) (☎ 5598 6111; 29 Lord St; mains \$20-26; ☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner) Waves, the only flash eatery in town, does good morning coffee and breakfast. At night the menu is strong on local seafood, or you can pop in for a drink.

## SLEEPING

[Port Campbell Hostel](#) (☎ 5598 6305; www.portcampbellhostel.com.au; 18 Tregesa St; dm \$25) This rustic-looking hostel has good dorms and communal facilities, and it's in the throes of building some comfy double rooms.

[Ocean House Backpackers](#) (☎ 5598 6492; www.portcampbell.nu/oceanhouse; Cairns St; dm \$27) Occupying the best real estate in town overlooking the main beach, this hot-pink, pine-panelled house has a cosy guest lounge with an open fireplace. Bookings through Port Campbell Caravan Park office (below).

[Port Campbell Caravan Park](#) (☎ 5598 6492; www.portcampbell.nu/camping; Morris St; unpowered/powerful sites \$27/30, en suite cabins \$125; ☎ ) Neat, small, and a two-minute walk to the beach and town.

[Port Bayou](#) (☎ 5598 6009; www.portbayou.portcampbell.nu; 52 Lord St; d B&B \$120, cottage \$145; ☎ ) Choose from the cosy in-house B&B or a rustic self-contained cottage fitted with exposed ceiling beams and corrugated-tin walls.

[Daisy Hill Country Cottages](#) (☎ 5598 6226; www.greatoceanroad.nu/daisyhill; 7353 Timboon-Port Campbell Rd; d from \$145; ☎ ) These hillside cedar-and-sandstone cottages are few minutes from town and are decorated in a modern colonial style. The newer deluxe cabins have the best views and include spas.



## PORT CAMPBELL TO WARRNAMBOOL

The Great Ocean Rd continues west of Port Campbell passing more rock stacks. The next one is the **Arch**, offshore from Point Hesse.

Nearby is **London Bridge**...fallen down! Now sometimes called London Arch, it was once a double-arched rock platform linked to the mainland. Visitors could walk out across a narrow natural bridge to the huge rock formation. In January 1990, the bridge collapsed leaving two terrified tourists marooned on the world's newest island – they were eventually rescued by helicopter. Nearby are the **Grotto** and the **Crown of Thorns**.

The **Bay of Islands** is 8km west of tiny **Peterborough**, where a two-hour coastal walk from the car park takes you to magnificent lookout points.

The Great Ocean Rd then heads inland through to Warrnambool. About 16km inland from Peterborough, **Timboon Farmhouse Cheese** (☎ 5598 3387; cnr Ford & Fells Rd; 🕒 10.30am-4pm daily Oct-Apr, Wed-Sun May-Sep) has free tastings of its award-winning, biodynamic cheeses – a worthy detour.

Not to be out-cheesed, **Cheese World** (☎ 5563 2130; www.cheeseworld.com.au; Great Ocean Rd, Allansford; 🕒 8.30am-5pm Mon-Fri, 9am-4pm Sat, 10am-4pm Sun) is 12km before Warrnambool, with a museum, restaurant, cheese cellar and free tastings.

The Great Ocean Rd ends near here where it meets the Princess Hwy, which continues through the traditional lands of the Gunditj-mara people into South Australia.

## WARRNAMBOOL

pop 30,400

Warrnambool was originally a whaling and sealing station – now it's booming as a major regional commercial centre. Its historic buildings, waterways and tree-lined streets are attractive, and there's a large student population who attend the Warrnambool campus of Deakin University. The major housing and commercial development around the fringes of the city look much like city suburbs anywhere in Australia, but the regions around the waterfront have largely retained their considerable historic charm.

Warrnambool's major tourist attraction is the impressive **Flagstaff Hill Maritime Village** (☎ 1800 556 111; www.flagstaffhill.com; Merri St; adult/child/fam-

### TRANSPORT: PORT CAMPBELL

Distance from Melbourne 304km

Direction Southwest

Travel time Melbourne to Port Campbell 4½ hours

**Bus V/Line** (☎ 13 61 96; www.vline.com.au) buses run from Geelong to Port Campbell (\$23, 5¼ hours, three weekly). **Wayward Bus** (☎ 1300 653 510; www.waywardbus.com.au) stops here on its Melbourne-to-Adelaide trip.

**Car** Port Campbell is 1½ hours west of Apollo Bay on the B100.

ily \$167/39; 🕒 9am-5pm), modelled on an early Australian coastal port. See the cannon and fortifications, built in 1887 to withstand the perceived threat of Russian invasion, and **Shipwrecked** (adult/child/family \$26/14/65), a lame evening sound-and-laser show of the *Loch Ard's* plunge. Grab a meal at Pippies by the Bay (see Eating) while you're here.

Warrnambool has excellent beaches such as sheltered **Lady Bay**, the main swimming beach, which has fortifications at the breakwater at its western end. **Logan's Beach** has the best surf, and there are breaks at Levy's Beach and Second Bay. Hang five with **Easyrider Surf School** (☎ 5521 7646; www.easyridersurfschool.com.au; 2hr lessons \$45) or saddle up with **Rundell's Mahogany Trail Rides** (☎ 0408-589 546; www.rundellshr.com.au; 2hr beach rides \$50).

Southern right whales come to mate and nurse their bubs in the waters off Logan's Beach from July to September, breaching and fluking off **Logan's Beach Whale Watching Platform**. It's a major tourist drawcard, but you'll need 20/20 eyesight or a pair of binoculars. **Dive Inn Charters** (☎ 0419-349 058; www.diveinncharters.com.au) and **Shipwreck Coast Diving** (☎ 5561 6108; www.shipwreckcoastdiving.com.au) are among several operators offering whale-watching boat tours and diving and fishing charters.

Walking trails in and around Warrnambool include the 3km **Heritage Trail**. The short **Thunder Point** stroll shows off the best coastal scenery in the area; it's also the starting point for the 22km coastal **Mahogany Walking Trail**.

The **Warrnambool Art Gallery** (☎ 5564 7832; www.warrnambool.vic.gov.au; 165 Timor St; admission free; 🕒 10am-5pm Mon-Fri, noon-5pm Sat & Sun) is well worth a visit. The permanent Australian collection includes such notable painters as Tom Roberts, James Gleeson and Arthur Boyd.



## THE MAHOGANY SHIP

The *Mahogany Ship* is said to be a Portuguese vessel that ran aground off Warrnambool in the 1500s – there have been alleged sightings of the elusive wreck sitting high in the dunes dating back to 1846. Portuguese naval charts from the 16th century known as the *Dieppe Maps* are said to depict parts of Australia's southern coastline, including Armstrong Bay 6km west of Warrnambool, and this has further fuelled the *Mahogany Ship* legend. Alternative theories claim that the *Mahogany Ship* was an even earlier Chinese junk. For 150 years people have been trying to find the remains of the *Mahogany Ship* – some say it's buried deep in the dunes or was swallowed by the sea. However, there's no direct evidence that the ship ever existed.

## INFORMATION

**Parks Victoria** (☎ 5561 9920; www.parkweb.vic.gov.au; 78 Henna St; ☎ 8am–4.30pm Mon–Fri)

**Southern Right Computers** (☎ 5561 7762; 105a Liebig St; ☎ 8.30am–5.30pm Mon–Fri) Internet access \$6 per hour.

**Warrnambool Library** (☎ 5562 2258; 25 Liebig St; ☎ 10am–5pm Mon–Thu, to 8pm Fri, to noon Sat) Free internet access.

**Warrnambool visitors centre** (☎ 5559 4620; www.warrnamboolinfo.com.au; Merri St; ☎ 9am–5pm) Signposted off the Princes Hwy (A1) in the Flagstaff Hill complex, it produces the handy *Warrnambool Visitors Guide*, a bike map and several walking maps. There's also internet access here (\$10 per hour) and bicycle hire (\$30 per day).

## EATING & DRINKING

**Beach House** (☎ 5562 2223; Warrnambool Surf Life Saving Club, off Pertobe Rd; mains \$12–22; ☎ breakfast, lunch

& dinner) The views from Beach House are amazing, ensconced in the Surf Life Saving Club's former function room – sip your cab sav whilst watching the surfers and yachts below. It's a bit daggy, with plastic chairs and tables and grubby carpet, and the food's more good than outstanding, yet there's something really nice going on here. If things aren't busy the wait staff will sit down for a chat, and there are highchairs and crayons for the kids, as well as a palpable good vibe. Gourmet burgers, pastas, Thai red seafood curry, occasional live music and no naughty pretensions.

**Fishtales Café** (☎ 5561 2957; 63 Liebig St; mains \$10–18; ☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner) This upbeat, friendly eatery-takeaway has well-prepared fare from excellent burgers, fish and chips and vegetarian specials to slightly less impressive seafood and Asian dishes. There's a cheery courtyard.

**Siamese Restaurant** (☎ 5561 3596; 108 Lava St; mains \$10–18; ☎ lunch & dinner Tue–Sat) This place serves authentic Thai food – noodles, soups and rice dishes. Eat in or takeaway.

**Whaler's Inn** (☎ 5562 8391; cnr Liebig & Timor Sts; mains \$12–22; ☎ lunch & dinner) It's a family-friendly setup here. Meals are tasty and generous, and prices include an all-you-can-eat salad bar.

**Bojangles** (☎ 5562 8751; 61 Liebig St; mains \$15–22; ☎ lunch & dinner) Bojangles is an upmarket pizza restaurant that does great pastas and wood-fired pizzas. It has an excellent wine list and friendly service. Highly recommended.

**Pippies by the Bay** (☎ 5561 2188; Flagstaff Hill Maritime Village, Merri St; mains \$26–30; ☎ lunch & dinner daily, breakfast Sat & Sun) A fine restaurant in the Flagstaff Hill visitors centre.

**Hotel Warrnambool** (☎ 5562 2377; cnr Koroit & Kepler Sts; mains \$14–28; ☎ lunch & dinner) This is the most welcoming place in town – a cheerful, earthy

and cavernous place with exposed mud bricks and railway sleepers, slouchy lounges, pool table and weekend live music. Eleven beers on tap and excellent pub food.

## ENTERTAINMENT

**Loft** (☎ 5561 0995; 58 Liebig St; ☎ 5.30pm–1am Wed, Fri & Sat, daily Dec–Feb) Perhaps the pick of the local nightclubs, Loft is relaxed with live music on weekends.

**Seanchai** (☎ 5561 7900; 62 Liebig St; ☎ 2pm–1am Wed–Sun) Seanchai (pronounced 'Shannakee', which is Gaelic for storyteller) has live music and traditional Irish jigs on Sunday.

**Warrnambool Entertainment Centre** (☎ 5564 7885; www.entertainmentcentre.com.au; cnr Liebig & Timor Sts) This is a major venue for live theatre, ballet and music.

**Warrnambool Cinema** (☎ 5562 2709; 54 Kepler St; adult/child/student \$13.50/9.50/11.50) Mainstream movies. All tickets for sessions starting before 11am are \$9.

## SLEEPING

**Warrnambool Beach Backpackers** (☎ 5562 4874; www.beachbackpackers.com.au; 17 Stanley St; dm/d \$23/65; ☎ ) Close to the sea, this former museum has a huge living area with a bar, internet access, kitchen and free pick-up. It has self-contained family rooms and fills up quickly with seasonal workers who pick vegetables at nearby farms. It's a good place to seek casual employment.

**Surfside Holiday Park** (☎ 5559 4700; www.surfsidepark.com.au; Pertobe Rd; unpowered/powerd sites \$35/40, cabins from \$111) Surfside is one of several Warrnambool caravan parks, and offers good self-contained cabins as well as tent and caravan sites. It's perfectly situated between the town and the beach.

**Hotel Warrnambool** (☎ 5562 2377, fax 5561 7248; ozone1@hotmail.net.au; cnr Koroit & Kepler Sts; d with/without en suite \$140/100; ☎ ) Recent renovations upstairs in this historic 1894 pub have done wonders with the rooms, which have plasma TVs and access to a kitchenette and lounge. Some have bathrooms and balconies. Downstairs is one of the friendliest pub-eateries in town.

**Bayside Lodge** (☎ 5562 7323; baysidelodge@dodo.com.au; 30 Pertobe Rd; q \$100–150; ☎ ) With free wireless internet throughout, these large self-contained two-bedroom apartments are great value for a group or family. Stuck in a '70s time warp, but literally spitting distance from the beach.

**Girt by Sea** (☎ 0418-261 969; www.girtbyseabandb.com.au; 52 Banyan St; d/ste from \$145/200; ☎ ) This re-

stored 1856 sandstone home has been tastefully refurbished. Large bathrooms boast antique vanities and Baltic pine floors. There are various suites with huge brass beds, private garden decks, plasma TVs and massage chairs. There's a large, bright guest lounge and great breakfasts. Free wireless internet throughout.

**Ban Kor House** (☎ 5562 9461; www.bankorhouse.com.au; cnr Banyan & Koroit Sts; d from \$180; ☎ ) This is a nice refit of an old sandstone cottage, retaining many original features. The rooms have been decorated with an eclectic mix of period features and modern styles. One block from town, two from the beach.

## TOWER HILL RESERVE

Tower Hill, 15km west of Warrnambool, is a vast caldera born in a volcanic eruption 30,000 years ago. Aboriginal artefacts unearthed in the volcanic ash show that indigenous people lived in the area at the time. It's jointly administered by the Worn Gundidj Aboriginal Cooperative, which operates the visitors centre (☎ 5561 5315; www.worn Gundidj.org.au; ☎ 9am–5pm Mon–Fri, 10am–4pm Sat, Sun & public holidays) with Parks Victoria. There are excellent day walks, including the steep 30-minute **Peak Climb** with spectacular 360-degree views. There's a fascinating painting in the Warrnambool Art Gallery (p240) by Eugene von Guérard of Tower Hill painted in 1855. After a century of deforestation and environmental degradation, this incredibly detailed painting was used to identify species used in a replanting program begun in 1961 when Tower Hill became a state game reserve. Since then over 300,000 trees have been replanted.

## PORT FAIRY

pop 2600

This seaside township at the mouth of the Moyne River was settled in 1835, and the first arrivals were whalers and sealers. Port Fairy still has a large fishing fleet and a relaxed, salty feel, with its old bluestone and sandstone buildings, whitewashed cottages, colourful fishing boats and tree-lined streets. The tiny town centre is along and around Sackville St, and the many historic buildings (some falling down!) remain authentic to Port Fairy's bygone era. The town has been reborn as a tourist destination and is home to art galleries, antique shops and boutiques.

## TRANSPORT: WARRNAMBOOL

**Distance from Melbourne** 371km

**Direction** Southwest

**Travel time** Melbourne to Warrnambool 5¼ hours (three hours via A1 inland route)

**Bus** V/Line (☎ 13 61 96; www.vline.com.au) has three buses on weekdays (two on Saturday and one on Sunday) to Port Fairy (\$3.50, 30 minutes) and Portland (\$9, 1½ hours), one bus each weekday to Hamilton (\$4.50, 1½ hours) and Ballarat (\$13, 3 hours), and one on Monday, Wednesday and Friday to Apollo Bay (\$15, 3½ hours). Wayward Bus (☎ 1300 653 510; www.waywardbus.com.au) services Warrnambool on its Melbourne-to-Adelaide route. Viclink (☎ 13 61 38; www.viclink.com.au) connects Warrnambool with Port Fairy (\$3.50, 45 minutes, three weekly), continuing to Hamilton (\$14, two hours), Dunkeld (\$18.50, 2½ hours), Halls Gap (\$27.50, 3¼ hours) and Ararat (\$32, four hours).

**Car** Warrnambool is 45 minutes west of Port Campbell on the B100.

**Train** V/Line (☎ 13 61 96; www.vline.com.au; Merri St) trains run to Melbourne (\$25, 3¼ hours, three or four daily).

Port Fairy has a rich and sometimes gloomy heritage that enraptures local history buffs. The visitors centre has brochures and maps that show the popular **Shipwreck Walk** and **History Walk** signposted around town. Also from the visitors centre is a guide to the many local **art galleries**.

The **Port Fairy History Centre** (<http://historicalsociety.port-fairy.com>; 30 Gipps St; admission adult/child \$3/\$0; ☎ 2-5pm Wed, Sat & Sun), housed in the old blue-stone courthouse (complete with dusty mannequins acting out a courtroom scene), has shipping relics, old photos and costumes, and a prisoner's cell.

On **Battery Hill** there's a lookout point, and cannons and fortifications positioned here in the 1860s. Down below there's a lovely walk around **Griffiths Island** where the Moyne River empties into the sea. The island is connected

to the mainland by a footbridge, and is home to a protected **mutton bird colony** and a modest **lighthouse**.

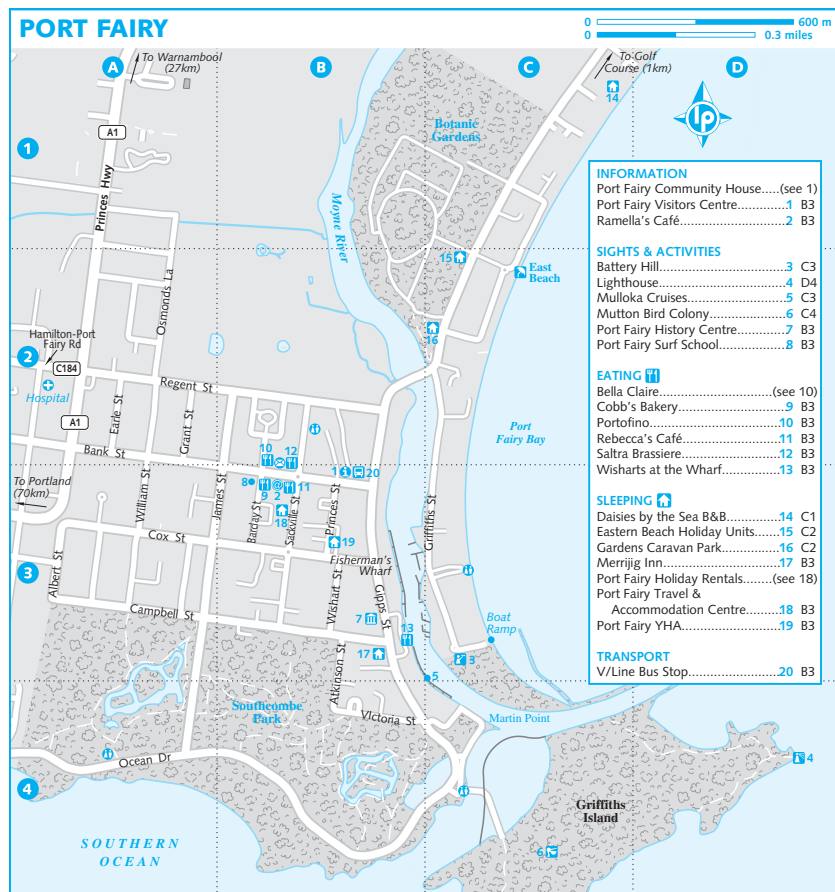
**Mulloka Cruises** (☎ 0408-514 382; cruises adult/child \$10/free) runs half-hour cruises of the port, bay and Griffiths Island. Or you can learn to surf with the **Port Fairy Surf School** (☎ 5568 2800; [www.daktarisport.com.au](http://www.daktarisport.com.au); 33 Bank St), run out of the Port Fairy Surf Shop.

## INFORMATION

**Port Fairy Community House** (☎ 5568 2681; Railway Pl; ☎ 9am-3.30pm Mon-Fri; ☎ ) Internet access \$4 per hour.

**Port Fairy visitors centre** (☎ 5568 2682; [www.port-fairy.com/vic](http://www.port-fairy.com/vic); Bank St) Ocean end of Bank St.

**Ramella's Café** (☎ 5568 3322; 19 Bank St; ☎ 9.30am-late) Internet access \$6 per hour; good coffee and food too.



## TRANSPORT: PORT FAIRY

Distance from Melbourne 410km

Direction Southwest

Travel time Melbourne to Port Fairy 5¼ hours (3½ hours via A1 inland route)

**Bus** V/Line (☎ 13 61 96; [www.vline.com.au](http://www.vline.com.au)) buses run three times daily on weekdays (twice on Saturday and once on Sunday) to Portland (\$6.50, one hour) and Warrnambool (\$3.50, 35 min). Viclink (☎ 13 61 38; [www.viclink.com.au](http://www.viclink.com.au)) services connect Port Fairy with Hamilton (\$10, 1¼ hours, three weekly), continuing to Halls Gap (\$23.50, 2½ hours) and Ararat (\$30, 3¼ hours).

**Car** Port Fairy is 45 minutes west of Warrnambool on the A1.

## FESTIVALS & EVENTS

**Port Fairy Folk Festival** ([www.portfairyfolkfestival.com](http://www.portfairyfolkfestival.com)) Australia's premier folk-music festival, held on the Labour Day long weekend in early March. Accommodation for the festival is routinely booked a year in advance.

## EATING

**Cobb's Bakery** (☎ 5568 1713; 25 Bank St) This is where the locals come for sandwiches, pies, pasties, burgers and (naturally) fresh bread. Delicious fresh sandwiches cost from \$7.

**Bella Claire** (☎ 5568 1610; 28 Bank St; mains \$6-14; ☎ breakfast & lunch) This new café and gourmet provodore does outstanding coffee, ice cream and lunches. Just try to get away without buying some chutney or mustard or olive oil or cheese...

**Rebecca's Café** (☎ 5568 2533; 72 Sackville St; mains \$5-12; ☎ breakfast & lunch) Excellent for breakfast and light lunches, Rebecca's serves up cakes, muffins, slices, scones and biscuits as well as homemade ice cream until 6pm.

**Wisharts at the Wharf** (☎ 5568 1884; 29 Gipps St; mains \$17-23; ☎ lunch & dinner) Wharfside dining doesn't come prettier than this. Plump, fresh fish and chips are always assured here. Adventurous presentation and flavours in very relaxed surrounds.

**Saltra Brassiere** (☎ 5568 3058; 20 Bank St; mains \$18-38; ☎ lunch-late Tue-Sun) Saltra, a Mod Oz restaurant that becomes a late-night lounge bar, is new on the Port Fairy scene and has made quite a splash. With a funky modern interior and courtyard, superb food and live music at weekends, it's getting people out of the house.

**Portofino** (☎ 5568 2251; 26 Bank St; mains \$28-42; ☎ dinner Mon-Sat) Portofino does high-end Mod Oz-cum-Mediterranean food with style – one of the best restaurants in western Victoria. Roast duck over couscous with a dried fig and radish salad, or venison with Moorish spinach

and potatoes Catalan style – sounds OK huh? Portofino offers splendid vegetarian dishes too, and local seafood is a feature.

## SLEEPING

Much of Port Fairy's holiday accommodation is managed by agents, including **Port Fairy Travel & Accommodation Centre** (☎ 5568 3150; [www.hearns.com.au](http://www.hearns.com.au); 2/54 Sackville St) and **Port Fairy Holiday Rentals** (☎ 5568 1066; [www.lockettrealestate.com.au](http://www.lockettrealestate.com.au); 62 Sackville St). The visitors centre also offers a booking service for \$2, or check out **My Port Fairy** ([www.portfairy.com.au](http://www.portfairy.com.au)) for more.

**Port Fairy YHA** (☎ 5568 2468; [www.portfairyhostel.com.au](http://www.portfairyhostel.com.au); 8 Cox St; dm \$22-26, d/f/2-bed apt from \$60/85/150; ☎ ) In the rambling 1844 home of merchant William Rutledge, this friendly and well-run hostel has a large kitchen, pool table, free cable TV and peaceful gardens. There's a huge newly opened self-contained apartment with its own lounge that can sleep six.

**Gardens Caravan Park** (☎ 5568 1608; [www.portfairycaravanparks.com](http://www.portfairycaravanparks.com); 111 Griffiths St; unpowered/poweredsites \$28/33, cabins from \$95) One of several local caravan parks, this park is next to the botanical gardens, 200m from the beach and a short walk to the town centre.

**Eastern Beach Holiday Units** (☎ 5568 1117; [www.port-fairy.com/eastbeach](http://www.port-fairy.com/eastbeach); 121 Griffiths St; d \$95) What these units lack in old-world style they more than make up for in price and amenities – large, comfortable self-contained units with separate bedrooms, lounges and kitchens. Excellent value just near the beach.

**Daisies by the Sea B&B** (☎ 5568 2355; [www.port-fairy.com/daisiesbythesea](http://www.port-fairy.com/daisiesbythesea); 222 Griffiths St; d from \$140) Bright, airy and contemporary, Daisies is the perfect antidote to Port Fairy's claustrophobic old-world charm. Nod off to the sound of the crashing waves just 50m from your door in these two cosy beachfront suites, 1.5km from

town. Daisies is a modest, snug and appealing getaway for couples.

**Merrijig Inn** (☎ 5568 2324; www.merrijiginn.com; cnr Campbell & Gipps Sts; d incl breakfast from \$150) This is Victoria's oldest inn, and the tiny attic doubles are about as authentic as you can get. The queen suites are roomier and the restaurant downstairs is splendid.

## PORTLAND

pop 9800

Portland, Victoria's first European settlement, was a whaling and sealing base from the early 1800s. The Henty family came here from Van Diemen's Land in 1834 and were the first permanent settlers. Blessed Mary MacKillop, Australia's first saint, arrived here from Melbourne in 1862 and founded Australia's first religious order. Portland is the only deep-water port between Melbourne and Adelaide, and home to the massive Portland Aluminium Smelter. The huge industrial wharf is an eyesore on an otherwise attractive colonial-era township.

The restored 1886 **Portland Cable Tram** (☎ 5523 2831; www.portlandcabletrams.com.au; rides adult/child/family \$12/10/30; ☹ 10am-4pm) does five trips a day plying an 8km circular route linking the vintage-car museum, botanic gardens, Maritime Discovery Centre and WWII memorial water tower. You can hop on and off as you please.

The **Powerhouse Motor & Car Museum** (☎ 5523 5795; www.portlandnow.net.au/powerhouse; cnr Glenelg & Percy Sts; adult/child/family \$6/2/12) has 30 vintage Australian and American vehicles and motorbikes dating from 1920.

The grand old **Burswood Homestead** (☎ 5523 4686; burswood@anson.com.au; 15 Cape Nelson Rd; admission adult/

## TRANSPORT: PORTLAND

Distance from Melbourne 482km

Direction Southwest

Travel time Melbourne to Portland 6½ hours (4¼ hours via A1 inland route)

Bus V/Line (☎ 13 61 96; www.vline.com.au) buses connect Portland with Port Fairy three times daily and once on Sunday (\$6.50, 55 minutes) and Warrnambool (\$9, 1½ hours). Buses depart from Henty St.

Car Portland is 45 minutes west of Port Fairy on the A1.

child \$3/free; ☹ 10am-5pm) was built for Edward Henty in 1850, with 5.5 hectares of gardens.

## INFORMATION

**Parks Victoria** (☎ 5522 3454; www.parkweb.vic.gov.au; 8-12 Julia St; ☹ 8am-4.30pm Mon-Fri)

**Portland visitors centre** (☎ 5523 2671; www.greatoceanroad.org; Lee Breakwater Rd; ☹ 9am-5pm) In the impressive-looking Maritime Discovery Centre.

## EATING

**Sullys Café & Wine Bar** (☎ 5523 5355; 55 Bentinck St; mains \$15-18; ☹ breakfast, lunch & dinner) 'Safe, sustainable cuisine' is the ethos at Sullys, a narrow and pleasant nook across from the waterfront.

**Sandilands** (☎ 5523 3319; 33 Percy St; mains \$16-24; ☹ dinner Mon & Wed-Sat) This elegant manor's imposing façade suggests scary sophistication, but reception-centre chairs tone it down a notch. There are some good vegetarian options with stir-fry, pasta and risotto dishes.

## SLEEPING

**Burswood Homestead** (☎ 5523 4686; burswood@anson.com.au; 15 Cape Nelson Rd; s/d incl breakfast from \$105/150) Set in beautiful gardens, this rather regal place is an indulgent, antique-laden minipalace. Spacious master rooms have bathrooms, and Devonshire tea is served on arrival.

**Clifftop Accommodation** (☎ 5523 1126; www.portlandaccommodation.com.au; 13 Clifton Ct; s/d from \$115/135; ☹) The panoramic ocean views from the balconies here are incredible. These two self-contained rooms are huge, with big brass beds, telescopes and a modern maritime feel.

**Victoria House** (☎ 5521 7577; www.babs.com.au/vic house; 5 Tyers St; s/d incl breakfast from \$130/145) This

excellent two-storey Georgian bluestone dwelling right in the town centre was built in 1853 and is National Trust classified. It's been stylishly renovated with nine heritage-style guestrooms with bathrooms, a comfy lounge, open fires and a garden.

**Henty Bay Van & Cabin Park** (☎ 5523 1904; www.hentybay.com.au; 342 Dutton Way; unpowered/powerd sites from \$20/25, cabins from \$80; ☹) This park, 5km from town, has wireless internet and cybercafé, ATM, kitchen, laundry, covered BBQs, boat ramps, TV lounge and disabled access.

## PORTLAND TO SOUTH AUSTRALIA

From Portland you can go north to Heywood and rejoin the Princes Hwy to SA, or head northwest along the slower, beautiful coastal route known as the Portland-Nelson Rd. This road runs inland from the coast, but along the way there are turn-offs leading to beaches and national parks.

## NELSON

pop 230

Tiny Nelson is the last vestige of civilisation before the South Australian border – just a general store, pub and a handful of accommodation places. It's a popular holiday and fishing spot at the mouth of the **Glenelg River**, which flows through **Lower Glenelg National Park**. Note that Nelson uses South Australia's 08 telephone area code. Why? We dunno!

The **Parks Victoria & Nelson visitors centre** (☎ 08-8738 4051; nelsonvic@hotmail.net.au; ☹ 9am-5pm; ☹) is just before the Glenelg River bridge.

**Nelson Boat & Canoe Hire** (☎ 08-8738 4048; www.nelsonboatandcanohire.com.au) can rig you up for

serious river-camping expeditions – canoe hire costs from \$40 a day.

Book a leisurely 3½-hour cruise with **Glenelg River Cruises** (☎ 08-8738 4191; www.glenelgrivercruises.com.au; adult/child \$25/10). The cruise stops at the **Princess Margaret Rose Cave** (☎ 08-8738 4171; www.princessmargaretrosecave.com; admission adult/child/family \$12/7/28), but tickets for the cave tour cost extra. Cruises depart daily in summer at 1pm, but don't operate Monday and Friday during the rest of the year. If you travel to the cave on your own, it's about 17km from Nelson, towards the border.

**Nelson Cottage** (☎ 08-8738 4161; www.nelsoncottage.bigpondhosting.com; cnr Kellett & Sturt Sts; d \$80) has old-fashioned rooms with clean shared amenities.

The 1848 **Nelson Hotel** (☎ 08-8738 4011; www.nelsonhotel.com.au; Kellett St; d/apr from \$60/135; mains \$14-18; ☹ lunch & dinner) has a dusty stuffed pelican above the bar and a few vegetarian meals on the fishy menu. The quarters are plain but adequate with shared facilities, and the apartments are large and self-contained.

**Wrens on Glenelg** (☎ 08-8738 4198; www.wrensonglenelg.com.au; 5 Acacia St; d incl breakfast \$160) is a swish, modern B&B done in designer corrugated iron in a nice bush setting, with a private landing on the Glenelg River.

The **Kywong Caravan Park** (☎ 08-8738 4174; www.kywongcp.com; North Nelson Rd; unpowered/powerd sites \$15/20, d cabins from \$50) is next to the national park and Glenelg River.

There are nine **camp sites** between Nelson and Dartmoor along the Glenelg River that are popular with canoeists but accessible by road, with rain-fed water tanks, toilets and fireplaces (BYO firewood). Camping permits are issued by Parks Victoria in Nelson. Forest Camp South is the nicest of these, right on the river, rich in bird life and easily accessible from the Portland-Nelson Rd.

## DETOUR: CAPE BRIDGEWATER

Cape Bridgewater is an essential 21km detour off the Portland-Nelson Rd. The stunning 4km arc of **Bridgewater Bay** is perhaps one of Australia's finest stretches of white-sand surf beach, backed by pristine dunes. The road continues on to **Cape Duquesne** where walking tracks lead to a **Blowhole** and the **Petrified Forest** on the cliff top. A longer two-hour return walk takes you to a **seal colony** where you can see dozens of fur seals sunning themselves on the rocks.

There's plenty of accommodation available at Cape Bridgewater (inquire at Portland visitors centre, **opposite**), but standouts include **Sea View Lodge B&B** (☎ 5526 7276; fax 5526 7125; Bridgewater Rd; d from \$140), **Abalone Beach House** (☎ 0408-808 346; www.abalonehouse.com.au; Bridgewater Rd; house sleeping 4 from \$230) and **Cape Bridgewater Bay House** (☎ 9439 2966; www.capebridgewater.com.au; Bridgewater Rd; up to 4 people \$190, extra person \$25), an outstanding original bluestone house, refurbished with recycled timber and designer flare, which can sleep eight. For those with more meagre means there's **Cape Bridgewater Holiday Camp** (☎ 5526 7267; darrien@hotmail.net.au; Blowhole Rd; unpowered sites/dm/cabins \$20/15/80).

## GREAT SOUTH WEST WALK

This 250km signposted loop begins and ends at Portland, and takes in some of the southwest's most stunning natural scenery, from the remote, blustery coast, through the river system of the Lower Glenelg National Park and back through the hinterland to Portland. Brilliantly conceived to connect some of the region's best camping grounds, comfortable accommodation and dining options can also be included. The whole loop would take at least 10 days, but it can be done in sections, and parts can be done as day-walks. Maps are available from the Portland visitors centre (**right**) and the Parks Victoria and visitors centre in Nelson (**opposite**). All information, FAQs and registration details are available online at [www.greatsouthwestwalk.com](http://www.greatsouthwestwalk.com).



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