

Media Backgrounder

What happens when you Go Beyond Melbourne?

Melbourne is a magical city. But Go Beyond Melbourne and you'll discover the pure alchemy of four extraordinary regions. Travelling between them is simply effortless - and what you discover along the way will stay with you forever.

The Yarra Valley and the Dandenong Ranges, Phillip Island, the Mornington Peninsula, Geelong and the Bellarine. Four very different regions, four totally different experiences which you'll only fully discover when you spend a few days beyond the city.

You can travel from mist-wreathed mountains and forests to perfect white sandy bays in just 90 minutes. Float over Yarra Valley vineyards in a hot air balloon at dawn, then watch Phillip Island's penguins waddle up the beach that evening. Explore historic villages - perhaps Sorrento on the Mornington Peninsula then cruise across Port Phillip Bay on a sleek vehicular ferry to Queenscliff on the Bellarine.



Forage at farmgates, buy fresh seafood at piers, fill your picnic basket at busy markets. Then see how top chefs reimagine it all at award-winning country restaurants. Meet the locals...the winemakers, cidermakers and brewers, the artists and sculptors, the inspiring entrepreneurs and colourful characters, the farmers-come-B&B hosts. And have a brush with fame... the 100-year-old Puffing Billy steam train in the Dandenongs, the celebrated wildlife at Healesville and Moonlit sanctuaries, the Grand Prix circuit on Phillip Island.

Stretch your legs on glorious clifftop walks, then stretch your imagination in puzzling mazes. Gorgeous gardens, golf, horseriding around wineries and in bushclad hills, swimming with seals and diving with dolphins, facing up to a pride of lions in an open range zoo. It's only possible when you Go Beyond Melbourne.



And there's no need to waste time returning to the city each night and hassling with peak hour traffic... you simply motor on to your next destination in about 90 minutes. And there's accommodation which you simply can't experience in the city...vineyard estates, historic mansions, peaceful country retreats, luxury seaside apartments, romantic B&Bs.

Just imagine this...

You head for the Yarra Valley, visiting some of Australia's most famous vineyards and staying overnight in an historic, grand country hotel. At 5am you're off in a hot air balloon with Global

Ballooning, drifting over misty forests, lush farmlands and neat rows of vines.

Then you have the most delicious dilemma. (Which is what happens when you Go Beyond.) Do you head off for your next region, or spend another day exploring this place of exceptional taste (local produce, wine, craft beers, ciders and gins) and visiting celebrated attractions like Healesville Wildlife Sanctuary? You could take a horse ride too, and stay overnight in Chum Creek Hut, a rustic, renovated original cattleman's hut (think Man from Snowy River).

Or you could head for the Dandenong Ranges just 30 minutes away, take tea in a charming old world teahouse in a mountain village and explore the National Rhododendron Gardens and William Ricketts Sanctuary with its mystical sculptures of Aboriginal people. Then spend the evening on the 100-year old Puffing Billy steam train, with a classic Australian 'dine and dance' en route at an historic packing shed. The Dandenong Ranges' romantic B&Bs are in a world of their own, so it's totally tempting to stay over. And why not...lots of temptation happens when you Go Beyond.



Early next morning, be first on the Kokoda Track Memorial Walk of 1000 Steps in cool, crisp Ferntree Gully. There's still lots more to see up here in the forest-clad hills east of the city, but if a breath of sea air appeals (and if time is tight), just motor on down to Phillip Island and its tiny sister, Churchill Island.

The internationally renowned Penguin Parade that evening will be top of your list, because there's something very heart-warming about watching these Little Penguins splash out of the sea every evening and waddle faithfully off to their sand burrows.

Get more of that fabulous fresh air fix with accommodation by the sea, then you'd better arise early next morning because there's still a lot more to choose from. There are several perfect vantage points for sunrise over the ocean, which tradition demands is followed by breakfast at a cliffside café overlooking the sea. What's next? The Grand Prix Circuit? The huge fur seal colony at Seal Rocks and the virtual Antarctic experience at The Nobbies? A treetops walk at the Koala Conservation Centre and lunch on tiny Churchill Island where the working farm is still set in the 19th century?



Go Beyond, and the choices are just about limitless.

But if you've only allowed one night here, it's time to head off to the Mornington Peninsula. This is the land of the Wine Food Farmgate trail, of cellar doors and produce farms, of chef's hatted restaurants, diving with dolphins and swimming with seals, galleries and gardens and golf.

This evening, Moonlit Sanctuary and Wildlife Conservation Park beckons, with its fascinating lantern-lit tours to meet nocturnal wildlife. Rare and endangered species emerge in the soft light, nocturnal birds spread their wings, tiny feathertail gliders dart around while quolls, Tasmanian devils, pademelons and bettongs all forage for food.

Or if you want to create a little romance, some evening star gazing from a hilltop thermal mineral

pool at Peninsula Hot Springs will hit a very sweet note.

Stay overnight in a seaside apartment or up in the hinterland in a vineyard estate. In the early morning, wild kangaroos can be observed placidly feeding at beautiful Greens Bush before you attend to your own breakfast at a welcoming café. Then explore the Wine Food Farmgate trail, take a winery tour on horseback or an aquatic adventure before cruising across Port Phillip Bay at sunset with Searoad Ferries. It's just 45 minutes on very comfortable drive-on drive-off ships to historic Queenscliff on the Bellarine.



Explore Queenscliff's glorious Victorian buildings, then prepare for a few surprises in nearby Geelong by the sea. Once an industrial city which served the rich surrounding farm regions, Geelong has shrugged off its past to reveal reinvented warehouses and factories that are now home a hip new culture of outstanding regional restaurants, cool cafes and bars, craft breweries, art and design galleries.

A stroll along the magnificent waterfront (\$30 million was spent on redevelopment) is a favourite local custom – the Baywalk Bollard Trail features over 100 carved characters who have shaped Geelong's history, there's a charming 1890s carousel and a band organ dating from 1890s Paris, and a huge choice of cafes and restaurants.



Where to stay this evening? It's another delightful dilemma when you Go Beyond. Geelong's Little Malop beckons with a variety of nightlife and there's superb accommodation, but you might like to heed the call of the wild and head for the Slumber Safari at Werribee Open Range Zoo where lions, giraffes, zebras, rhinos, hippos and gorillas reside.

Next day, the 'to do' list is still pretty long. There are 40 experiences just on the Bellarine Taste Trail, then there are spectacular ocean and bay beaches, seaside villages, land and sea adventures, golf courses, festivals and events.

Maybe stay another night or two?

For more information or themed 5-day itineraries beyond Melbourne:

Ms Alva Hemming
Marketing Manager

T: +61 417122831

E: visit@gobeyondmelbourne.com

www.gobeyondmelbourne.com