

The Great Ocean Road

Australia's most spectacular and photogenic coastal drive hugs Victoria's rugged south west. The Great Ocean Road offers visitors breathtaking twists and turns with panoramic views of dramatic limestone rock formations and cliffs, pumping surf beaches, beautiful green forests and waterfalls, and a multitude of Australia's favourite wildlife.

The Great Ocean Road starts at Torquay and travels westward to the outskirts of Warrnambool. On the way you'll pass through the very pretty towns of Lorne, Apollo Bay, Warrnambool and Port Fairy. The best ways to see the Great Ocean Road are by car, campervan or tour. There are a number of fantastic tours departing from either Melbourne or Adelaide, for just short 1 day return trips or 3 day one-way journeys, which take in most of the spectacular sights of the Great Ocean Road.

Sights & Attractions

Along the Great Ocean Road there are many highlights and hidden delights to be experienced. These include the towering rock stacks of the famous Twelve Apostles, the Cape Otway Lighthouse, tranquil beaches, or walking amongst the treetops in the Otway rainforest on the specially designed treetop walk.

There are a huge range of recreational activities available in the region, from fishing and golfing to diving and surfing. Quaint seaside towns, such as Lorne and Apollo Bay, offer access to gorgeous beaches as well as the lush green rainforest scenery of the Otway Ranges. History fanatics will enjoy exploring the maritime museums at Warrnambool, Port Fairy and Portland, dedicated to recounting the dramatic stories of ships wrecked off this rugged coastline.

Unique Australian wildlife is found throughout this region, from southern right whales, kangaroos, koalas, to glow worms. Spot cute koalas at Kennett River, or visit Melba Gully State Park at night with a torch light and see millions of glowworms known as Arachnocampa.

Built in 1848 Cape Otway Lighthouse is the oldest surviving lighthouse on mainland Australia. Following a number of tragic shipwrecks along this stretch of coast, which claimed hundreds of lives, the lighthouse was designed to avert tragedy by guiding ships safely through the narrow Bass Strait entrance between the coast and King Island. Cape Otway Lighthouse stands 91 metres above the ocean and offers breathtaking views of the coastline. Tours of the historic light station operate daily.

The Great Ocean Road region boasts awesome surf breaks all along its coast and dedicated surfers visit the area all year round. The most famous is Bells Beach, an icon of Australia's surf scene and part of international surfing folklore. It is also the site of the Rip Curl Pro, a

part of the ASP World Championship Tour, held every Easter. Visitors to the region can hire surf gear or beginners, who wish to learn the art of standing on a surfboard and riding the waves, can find a number of 'learn to surf' schools along the coast.

The Great Ocean Walk is becoming more and more popular with hikers. The walk hugs the rugged coastline of the Great Ocean Road, where you can hike on isolated sandy beaches, through forests and along some of Australia's highest sea-cliffs. This 91 kilometre walk through beautiful natural surroundings offers absolutely sensational views of the rugged coastline. The walk has been designed in such a way that hikers can 'step on and step off' the trail in short walk, day walk and overnight walk options. Hikers can then choose from the wide range of accommodation and service options in the region.

Twelve Apostles

The most famous sight to visit along the Great Ocean Road, without a doubt is the stunning Twelve Apostles. Incredible rock formations along the Great Ocean Road include Loch Ard Gorge, the Grotto, London Bridge (renamed London Arch in recent years after the 'bridge' partially collapsed) and the Twelve Apostles (also now reduced in number).

The Twelve Apostles are located just east of Port Campbell, along the Great Ocean Road. They are bizarre giant rock formations which rise majestically from the Southern Ocean in the Port Campbell National Park. 10 to 20 million years ago the fierce and stormy Southern Ocean and blasting wild winds began to gradually erode the limestone cliffs between Port Campbell and Princeton until caves formed within the cliffs. As more time passed the caves became arches until they eventually collapsed into the sea and left just isolated remnants of rock stacks up to 45 metres high away from the shoreline. These became known as the Twelve Apostles and are now one of the most significant natural attractions in Victoria.

Timber boardwalks, tracks, viewing platforms and seats run along the cliff tops and ensure that you get absolutely stunning views of the Twelve Apostles. The most impressive views can be seen at sunrise and sunset when the colours of the Twelve Apostles shift from stark dark silhouettes to a brilliant sandy yellow in bright sunlight.

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History

The idea for a coastal road was suggested as far back as 1864, but it wasn't until near the end of World War I that the construction of the Great Ocean Road started. A plan was submitted for a South Coast Road to be built by returned soldiers as a memorial to all those who were killed in the Great War. September 19, 1919 construction work began on the Great Ocean Road. Over 13 years nearly 3000 returned soldiers (or "Diggers") were to build the 'Road', living in bush camps along route. Parts of the Great Ocean Road run around steep coastal mountains and were the hardest and final sections to be built. It was very dangerous work and a few workers were killed on the job. In November 1932 the Great Ocean Road was declared officially open. A modern visitors' centre was more recently built near Peterborough to provide basic facilities for the thousands of tourists who visit each year.

Climate

Daily maximum temperatures average 25°C (Degrees Celsius) in the height of summer and 13°C in winter. Rainfall is spread fairly evenly throughout the year, although mid-January to mid-March tends to be the driest period.

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