

Ti-Tree Tops Poll

Ocean Grove's Ti-Tree Village has been voted Victoria's Best Place to Stay in an RACV online poll.

The poll was voted by the public and is testament to the very loyal clientele of Ti-Tree Village actively voting for their favourite holiday spot. The result also speaks volumes about the excellent level of service provided by Ti-Tree Village.

Ti-Tree Village co-owner Tiffany Trickey was ecstatic with the result.

The Bellarine and Great Ocean Road region fared well in the poll overall, with The Boomerangs at Johanna and Big 4 Beacon Resort at Queenscliff in the top ten. Nine of the top 20 properties are from the Great Ocean Road region.

The accommodation rankings follow a 2008 poll by the RACV which ranked 'Driving the Great Ocean Road' as the number one tourism experience in the state.

Geelong Otway Tourism's Deputy Chief Executive Terry Hickey says the prominence of the Great Ocean Road region comes as no surprise.

"We always feature well in these sorts of polls," he says.

"People have a great affection for the region because of what it has to offer.

"It is no surprise really to see family attractions like Ti-Tree Village and the Big 4 Beacon Resort rated so highly because these are the places that families keep coming back to.

"Ocean Grove's beach is one of the best, safest and most popular in Victoria and Queenscliff has long been a favourite with travellers.

"At the same time it is pleasing to see The Boomerangs at Johanna also in the top 10 because that again highlights the fact that the Great Ocean Road has high quality accommodation to complement the amazing natural beauty and our wide range of attractions."

Visit www.101victoria.com.au for the full result list.



Your 5 Minute Guide to Tourism Directions

Short on time?

Here's a quick summary of some of the stories in this edition.

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25th Victorian Tourism Awards

Tourism Victoria reached a milestone this year with the 25th anniversary of the Melbourne Airport 2009 Victorian Tourism Awards.

The awards annually recognise leading businesses and individuals for their outstanding contribution to the Victorian tourism industry, which employs almost 180,000 people and contributes \$15 billion to the economy each year.

This year 100 entrants contested 27 business categories. There were an impressive nine submissions from the Great Ocean Road and many were officially recognised at the presentation ceremony held at Crown Casino in November.

Successful businesses from the region included:

- * BIG 4 Beacon Resort – winner, Tourist and Caravan Parks
- * Anglesea Beachfront Family Caravan Park – finalist Tourist and Caravan Parks
- * Bothfeet Walking Tours – merit, Adventure Tours
- * Auswalk Walking Holidays – merit, Adventure Tours
- * Geelong Visitor Information Centres – merit Specialised Tourism Services and Visitor Information Services
- * The Otway Fly Tree Top Walk – merit, Tourist Attractions

As well as recognising high achievers, the awards encourage continual excellence and innovation in the tourism industry by supporting skill development and networking opportunities.

BIG 4 Beacon Resort will now represent Victoria at the Australian Tourism Awards in Hobart in February 2010.

Weblink: www.victoriantourismawards.com.au

Bellarine Information Outlets

The Bellarine now has five designated tourism outlets that have information displayed for visitors to help themselves. A free call telephone line is situated by each of the brochure display racks, a visitor just needs to pick up the receiver and a friendly volunteer from one of the Geelong Centres will assist with their enquiry.

Bellarine Information Outlets include:

1. Drysdale Community Crafts
2. Bellarine Estate, Bellarine
3. A Maze n Games, Wallington
4. The Bellarine Aquatic Centre, Ocean Grove
5. Barwon Grove Holiday Rentals, Barwon Heads

2010 Official Visitors' Guides

Geelong Otway Tourism has released the new Official Visitor's Guides for 'Geelong & The Bellarine' and 'Surf Coast & Otways' ahead of the busy summer season. 80,000 copies of each will be distributed across the state via the Visitor Information Centres and to conference and event delegates.

They are a great resource for visitors and locals alike, and highlight many new developments. Features include attractions, wineries, accommodation, events, dining, walks, waterfalls and more.

The guides are designed to encourage you to get out and explore the region, showcasing some of the hidden secrets in our own backyard. You can pick one up at any Visitor Information Centre.



New Ghost Cruises

GameRec Charters have introduced a new spooky experience to run in addition to their popular Sunset Cruises throughout January and February.

Local medium Donna Barnard will take you on a journey over the infamous Port Phillip Bay and intrigue you with stories of the vessels that met a watery end.

You can bring along your own picnic hamper and enjoy a ghostly night out on the water.

Gamerec Charters have moved just in time for the summer. You can now find them at Shop 2, 6 Wharf Street, Queenscliff Harbour.

Visit www.gamerec.com for more information on any of the tours or T: 5258 2802.

Pettavel Crowned Australia's Best Winery & Restaurant

In October, Pettavel Winery & Restaurant was crowned Australia's Best Winery Restaurant by Australia's leading restaurateurs and caterers.

The 2009 Savour Australia National Awards for Excellence (the annual awards of Restaurant & Catering Australia) brings together more than 2,500 restaurants and caterers to compete for 35 highly sought-after awards.

Pettavel Winery & Restaurant won the Victorian 'Winery Restaurant' Award earlier this year and went on to compete against the winners from other States in the National Awards.

Robyn Fitzpatrick, General Manager said she was thrilled to receive this recognition.

"Everyday we aim to deliver a great experience for our customers who dine here. To see all our hard work being rewarded is very humbling," she said.

With 7,200 members representing 70 per cent of the overall industry turnover, Restaurant & Catering Australia exists to lead and represent the interests of restaurants and catering businesses throughout Australia.



Aussie Film Stars on Location at Cape Otway Lightstation

In November, Lord of the Rings star Miranda Otto and her veteran actor dad Barry Otto took over the lantern room at Cape Otway's lighthouse for the filming of a new Australian movie, titled South Solitary.

The 1848 lighthouse tower was closed to the public for three weeks to make way for Miranda, who played Rohan princess Eowyn in Peter Jackson's Tolkien trilogy, plus her father Barry, who is well known for his AFI winning role in Strictly Ballroom and other stand-out performances in the films Bliss and Così.

They were joined at the heritage precinct by actor Marton Csokas, also known from Lord of the Rings and Romulus My Father.

In writer/director Shirley Barrett's Solitary South, Miranda plays Meredith, an unmarried woman in her 30s who arrives at an isolated lighthouse with her uncle (played by Barry Otto), who is the new head keeper.

Misadventure and bad weather conspire to land her in the company of a sullen and withdrawn assistant keeper. A tentative and tender courtship follows.

Lightstation manager Paul Thompson said a production crew of 50 descended on the lighthouse and although tourists couldn't climb the tower during this period, they were welcome to visit the Telegraph Station, the coastal walk, Radar Bunker and Lightkeeper's Café.

"It was still very interesting for Lightstation visitors to glimpse all the activity surrounding the production of this film," Mr Thompson said.

The Lightstation precinct remained open to visitors, with guides offering tours to parts of the movie set.

Mr Thompson said Lightstation staff were excited about seeing the historic lighthouse and World War Two Radar Bunker transformed into a movie set, and the prospect of the Cape Otway beacon being on cinema screens around the world.

"We've been negotiating for more than two years with the film company, we gave them good advice on film locations, and then after searching high and low around Australia they've come back to us," Mr Thompson said.

Pat Howell in the lantern room, getting it ship-shape for filming.

News in Brief

Dusk Fireworks Coup

The skies of Geelong will light up with spectacular fireworks not once but twice on New Year's Eve for the first time ever.

The Fireworks at Dusk schedule will also include roving entertainment and rides on Cunningham Pier and Steampacket Quay from 5.30pm.

Melbourne Overtakes Gold Coast as No. 1

According to the latest Roy Morgan Single Source data Melbourne has replaced the Gold Coast as the No.1 destination at which Australians would like to take an overnight holiday in the next two years.

In the year ended September 2009, 20.1% of Australians would like to take a holiday in Melbourne, up from 19.0% in the year ended March 2001. Gold Coast comes in second at 19.5%, down from 22.3% in March 2001. Sunshine Coast is third at 13.5%, down from 15.8%; and Sydney is fourth at 10.3%, down from 16.0%.

Water Saving Message for Holiday Makers

Holiday makers are reminded not to take a break from saving water while visiting the region this summer. With an influx of up to 200,000 visitors during the peak holiday period, it is important everyone observes local restrictions.

Visitors are encouraged to keep up the conservation practices they have in place at home, including shorter showers, turning off taps while teeth brushing, using the half-flush function on toilets if available and reporting leaks.

Geelong and many nearby coastal resorts are presently on modified Stage 4 restrictions because of the prolonged dry conditions.

Werribee Open Range Zoo Opens Back of House

For the first time in its 26-year history, the Zoo is throwing open many of its "back of house" areas to the public.

Visitors will be able to explore areas that are normally 'off-limits' for just an extra \$2 on the general admission price. The holding yards and night quarters of lions, zebras, cheetahs, hippos, or monkeys will be open for viewing, with a staff member available to answer questions.

This rare opportunity is available between 4 - 29 January. 10am - 3.30pm daily.

Summer Days at Clyde Park

This summer Clyde Park have extended their hours to open for lunch over the following dates;

* 26 - 31 December 2009

* 1 - 10, 16, 17, 23 - 26, 30 and 31 January 2010

Live music will be a feature on Sundays. Bistro hours are 12 - 4pm. Bookings are recommended. Cellar door opens seven days a week, 11 am - 5 pm.

Phone 52817274 for more information or visit www.clydepark.com.au



Professional Development

Bellarine Tourism, Tourism Geelong and Central Geelong Marketing have started planning for the 2010 Professional Development Calendar.

The 2010 calendar will expand on popular topics covered in the 2009 training calendar and deliver some new exciting Professional Development workshops to members.

Together Bellarine Tourism, Tourism Geelong & Central Geelong Marketing invest over \$15,000 in training for members each year.

Portarlington Mussel Festival Saturday 9 January 2010

The annual Portarlington Mussel festival is on again and promises to be even bigger and better than before with over eight hours of entertainment, a large selection of stalls including wineries, food outlets, mussel produce and children activities. Visitors to the event will also have the opportunity to visit mussel farms, come on board the Enterprize sailing ship, view the muscle cars, or watch the dry boat event and tug of war competition!

Due to the ever increasing crowds, park and ride facilities will operate from Bellarine Estate Winery to the Portarlington township. There will also be a free courtesy bus for Portarlington residents and additional parking will be available at the local primary school.



Alcoa Access For All

The Carousel at Geelong's Waterfront received an award at the Alcoa Access Awards in December in recognition of Achievement in disability access in the category of Recreation.

The Carousel has become a very popular visitor destination attracting 1.5 million visitors. It has become an accessible and ideal meeting place for the community, and takes pride in providing a memorable experience for all ages and abilities. The Mobility Lift in place was designed specifically to respect and compliment the historic value of the Carousel.

Congratulations to the Carousel team and everyone associated with the implementation of disability access improvements at the Carousel.

Victorian Caravan Parks Assoc Young Achiever of the Year

Congratulations to Michael McIvor from El Dorado Tourist park who was recently awarded the Victorian Caravan Parks Association Young Achiever of the Year Award 2009.

Michael has worked in the family business since he was 12 years old. After completing high school Michael undertook a Certificate III in Caravan Park Operations, a Bachelor of Business majoring in Tourism Management and is currently completing a Diploma in Caravan Park Management.

As part of his university studies he spent 12 months working and living in the United States for an Australian Travel Wholesaler.

This award is recognition of Michael's business acumen and excellent approach to customer service.

Avalon Introduces Bagcheck Kiosks

Passengers at Avalon airport can now avoid the embarrassing repacking of luggage thanks to the introduction of "weigh-in kiosks".

Developed by Brisbane-based company Bagcheck Corporation, the scales will enable passengers to check to see if their luggage is over their limit – before they get into the check-in queue.

One of the first kiosks is operating at Avalon Airport and Bagcheck intends to install them in airports around the country and throughout the Asia Pacific region. The kiosk is touchscreen operated. For \$2 a bag can be weighed and free information is available about all airline baggage charges.

Bagcheck Managing Director Danny Joslyn says the kiosks will make the check-in process faster and less stressful.

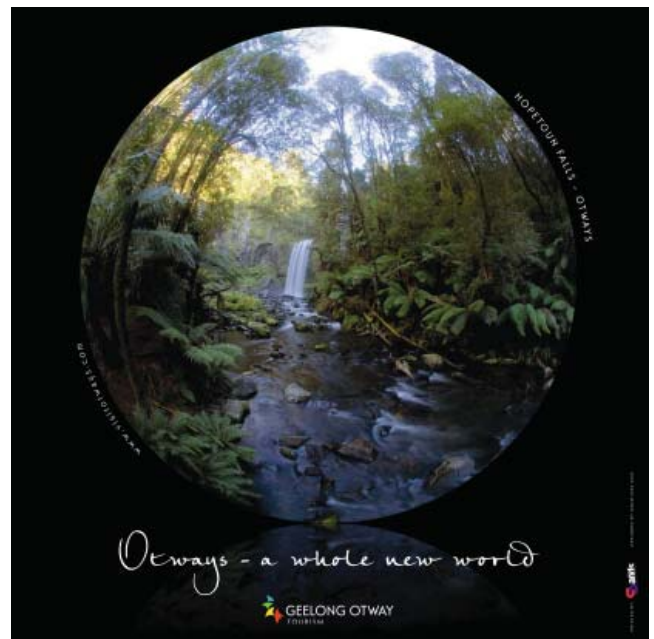
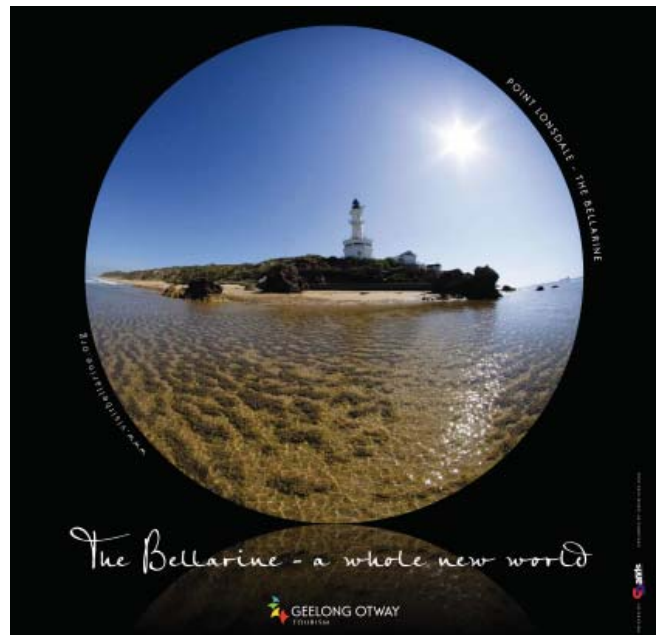
"Excess baggage charges can vary somewhat from airline to airline and it is easy to forget the allowance. Also, airlines are seeing excess luggage charges as an additional income stream and they don't seem to be as lenient as they once were," Mr Joslyn said.

Summer Poster Series

For the past 11 years Geelong Otway Tourism has released a summer poster series showcasing the four municipalities of our region; Geelong, The Bellarine, Surf Coast and Otways.

The latest series features stunning 'fisheye' photography. They highlight Geelong's Waterfront, Point Lonsdale, Bells Beach and Hopetoun Falls.

The posters will be distributed locally and to destinations including North America, China, Europe and the United Kingdom via Tourism Victoria and Tourism Australia.



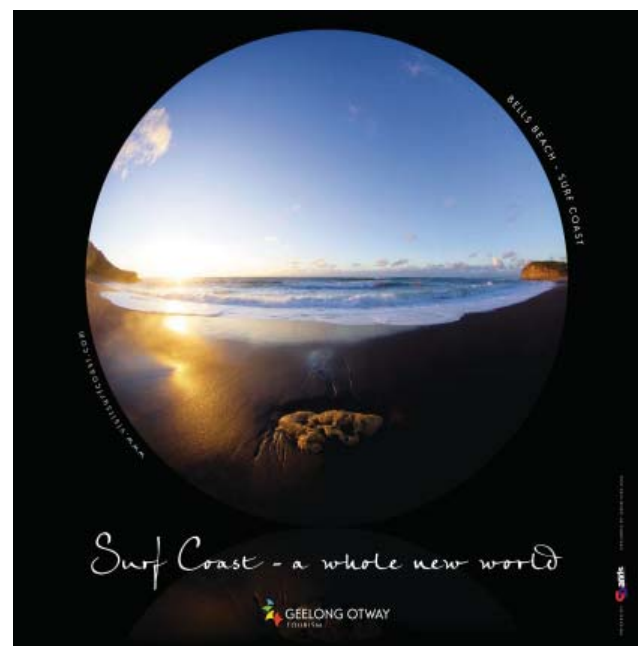
Oakdene 2007 Shiraz Wins Best in Show

The team at Oakdene Vineyards had plenty to celebrate after receiving three trophies, including The Best Wine in the Show, at the "Le Concours des Vins du Victoria 2009", held at Zinc at Federation Square in November.

The current release 2007 Shiraz was awarded Gold medals in the major Shiraz classes of the 2009 Royal Melbourne Wine Show and 2009 Victorian Wine Show last month, now adding a third Gold Medal, trophy for Best Shiraz, Best Red Wine and Best Wine of Show at the annual wine show held by the French-Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry Victoria.

THE 19th CONCOURS DES VINS DU VICTORIA is proudly organised by the French-Australian Chamber of Commerce & Industry. This year the judging panel, led by renowned Rhône Valley winemaker Michel Chapoutier, welcomed a group of five young French sommeliers who topped France's annual competition for sommeliers students.

Limited quantities of the 2007 Shiraz are available at Oakdene Cellar Door, Restaurant, and selected restaurants and fine wine retailers in the Greater Geelong region.



Member Profile

Duck About Tours

Geelong's newest tourism attraction Ride the Croc is set to turn heads with the amphibious vehicle helping sightseers explore Geelong by road and on water - all in the one tour.

Ride the Croc is the first amphibious venture by Duck About Tours – a company born from an idea by Torquay couple Paul Appleton and Sara Doble.

"A few years ago we went on an amphibious tour in Queensland with our kids and it was fantastic," Mr Appleton said.

"The idea started from there and now, two years later, Duck About Tours is a fully fledged adventure tourism company.

"Ride the Croc is the first amphibious craft that we've rebuilt from scratch. We spent a year working with road and marine engineering experts to build a vehicle that is like a bus on the road, but a boat when it hits the water with a massive splash." Mr Appleton said.

"On the road, when we drive past people, you see them stop and do a double-take. They can't work out if it's a bus or a boat. There's nothing else like Ride the Croc in Geelong," he said.

Ride the Croc will run Splash & Dash tours throughout the day in Geelong through to the end of February.

Duck About Tours
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