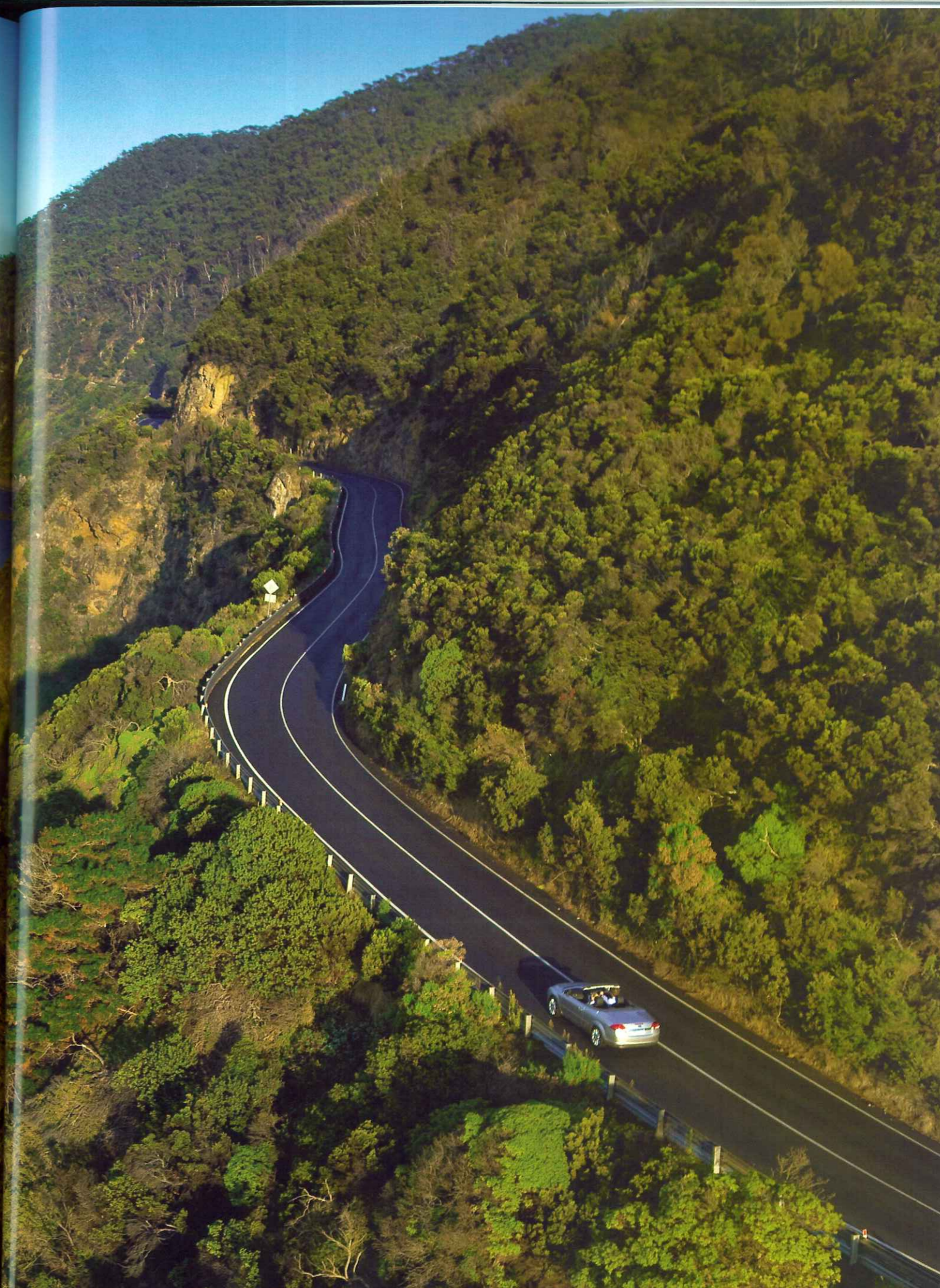


# LIFE ON THE OCEAN ROAD

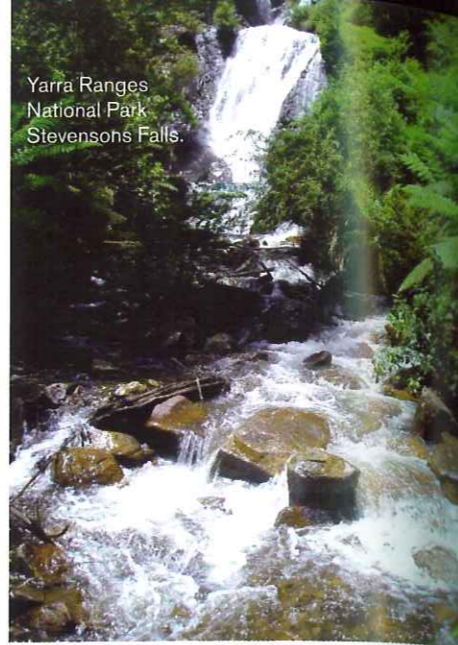
With its winding roads and spectacular views, take a few days out and drive, walk and play on the Great Ocean Road.

*Words by Joelle Thomson*





Eco-friendly walking tours include scenic Apollo Bay.



Yarra Ranges National Park  
Stevensons Falls.

#### TRIPLET FALLS AND STEVENSON'S FALLS

[parkweb.vic.gov.au](http://parkweb.vic.gov.au)

The majestic and beautiful waterfalls in the Great Otway National Park are well worth the walk to reach them. Take a picnic, relax and enjoy the exquisite forest scenery.

#### UNMISSABLE BEACHES

- **Bell's Beach** Just an hour and a half out of Melbourne, this famous beach is a favourite of the surf crowd and is home to the Rip Curl Pro surfing competition every March and April. [ripcurl.com.au](http://ripcurl.com.au)
- **Fairhaven Beach** Make sure you take the time for a stop-off on this gloriously unspoilt beach, so quiet you may find you're the only people there.
- **Lorne** If relaxed cafes and chilled beach bars are what you're after be sure to stop at Lorne. Grab a smoothie at Moon's Espresso Bar (108 Mountjoy Parade) then dive into the gentle waves on the beach for a cooling swim.

#### WHAT TO DO

##### WALK THE GREAT OCEAN ROAD

[bothfeet.com.au](http://bothfeet.com.au)

Walk for three, four or six days with Dana and Gavin Ronan, operators of Bothfeet Walking Tours. Destinations include Cape Otway, Apollo Bay, Macedon Regional Park, Historic Kyneton, Hanging Rock Reserve, Daylesford, Hepburn Springs and Castlemaine.

##### CAPE OTWAY LIGHTSTATION

*Great Ocean Road, Cape Otway, Victoria, Australia*  
+61 3 5237 9240  
[lightstation.com](http://lightstation.com)

Visit the oldest lighthouse in mainland Australia, which began operation in 1848 and has been the site of hundreds of shipwrecks. Learn about early settler life in Australia and enjoy the dramatic views from this windswept clifftop.

##### MAIT'S REST RAINFOREST TRAIL

[visitvictoria.com](http://visitvictoria.com)

Walk through this incredibly lush rainforest during the day, or do like many visitors do and return at night with a torch to search for glow worms, which are amazingly iridescent.



#### WHERE TO EAT AND DRINK

##### WYE RIVER GENERAL STORE

*35 Great Ocean Road, Wye River*  
+61 3 5289 0247  
[wyerivergeneralstore.com.au](http://wyerivergeneralstore.com.au)

This store, that for years has had one of the best views on the Great Ocean Road, has had a recent makeover. Half the old store has been remodelled into a modern deli, while the other houses a stylish cafe, which

serves delicious breakfasts, lunches and dinners in front of its open fireplace or on the outdoor deck.

##### MERRIJIG INN

*1 Campbell Street, Port Fairy*  
+61 3 5568 2324  
[merrijiginn.com](http://merrijiginn.com)

This unassuming restaurant dishes up exquisite modern food using local seafood, as well as unusual coastal ingredients such as samphire. Choose from the à la carte menu or dive headlong into the six or nine-course degustation with matching wines. It also picked up two chefs hats in the 2010 edition of *The Age Good Food Guide*.

##### CHRIS'S RESTAURANT

*280 Skenes Creek Rd, Apollo Bay*  
+61 3 5237 6411  
[chris.com.au](http://chris.com.au)

Set on a cliff overlooking the surf at Apollo Bay, Chris's Restaurant serves bountiful Mediterranean fare. The mood is welcoming and relaxed, in typical Greek style.

##### ROOM SIX

+61 3 5598 6242  
*28 Lord Street, Port Campbell*  
[roomsix-cafe-restaurant.com](http://roomsix-cafe-restaurant.com)  
Eat al fresco in the centre of charming Port Campbell, just a stone's throw from the Twelve Apostles. Must-tries include the salt and pepper calamari and the seafood saganaki.



Big4 Anglesea.

#### WHERE TO STAY

##### GREAT OCEAN ECOLOGDE

*635 Lighthouse Road, Cape Otway*  
+61 3 5237 9297  
[greatoceanecolodge.com.au](http://greatoceanecolodge.com.au)  
Its rugged location near the windswept Cape Otway makes for a beautiful break away.

##### BIG4 ANGLESEA

*45 Murray St Anglesea*  
+61 3 5263 1640  
[big4anglesea.com.au](http://big4anglesea.com.au)  
Modern spa cabins in a quiet and relaxing setting make this the ideal overnight retreat for families and couples alike.

##### ECO BEACH YHA

*5 Pascoe Street Apollo Bay*  
+61 3 5237 7899  
[yha.com.au/hostels](http://yha.com.au/hostels)

This high-end hostel uses a range of energy-saving techniques to reduce environmental impact.

##### BOTHFEET LODGE

*70 Stafford Rd, Johanna VIC*  
+61 3 5334 0688  
[bothfeet.com.au](http://bothfeet.com.au)  
This sustainably built lodge has facilities for walkers with its licensed dining room, massage treatments and gear storage area and drying room. It meets certified ecotourism standards in Australia and is great for groups, families or couples.

##### ALTO HOTEL ON BOURKE

*636 Bourke Street, Melbourne*  
+61 3 9606 0585  
[altohotel.com.au](http://altohotel.com.au)  
If you're flying in to Melbourne before your Great Ocean Road adventure check out the Alto Hotel on Bourke. Located in the heart of the CBD it is Australia's first carbon-neutral hotel due to its wind-generated power; double-glazed, heat-reflecting windows; biodegradable products and energy-efficient lighting.



##### MELBOURNE

Ecotourism is alive and well in Melbourne, and the best way to experience it is by bike. Journalist-turned-bike-tour-operator, Murray Johnson (owner of Real Melbourne Bike Tours, [rentabike.net.au](http://rentabike.net.au)) takes me on a four-hour bike tour of the undulating CBD and Melbourne's inner suburbs, taking in Federation Square, the Royal Exhibition Building, Carlton Gardens, Brunswick Street and Lygon Street. Even our shopping verges on 'eco'. I visit well-stocked second-hand stores, such as Books for Cooks, where I purchase rare, secondhand books that I've been searching for, for months. Next stop is the long-standing Italian bakery, cafe and gelateria, Brunetti, for a refreshing pastry and refuelling coffee. The bike tour Johnson takes me on is for half a day, but full-day tours are available. 

##### MORE AT MINDFOOD.COM

**VISIT**  
[MINDFOOD.COM](http://MINDFOOD.COM)  
Read about places to shop and eat in Melbourne's CBD while on Murray's bike tour.

It rains all the way on my journey along the Great Ocean Road. But rain, hail or shine, this 243km stretch of road is a visual feast. The drama of the ocean is so spectacular that sometimes it's hard to keep my eyes glued to the road.

I'm taking the coastal route to the secluded inner sanctum of eco accommodation, Bothfeet Lodge at Johanna. The lodge is named after Bothfeet Walking Tours, owned and operated by Dana and Gavin Ronan, who built it five years ago with a clear view to own and operate accommodation exclusive to their walks rather than being drive-in accommodation. And visitors can't drive in anyway, unless directed, as there are no clues to the lodge's secluded spot in the middle of a forest, just off the Great Ocean Road.

The Ronans are an advanced eco-certified tourism operator with Ecotourism Australia. They take guests on short walks but their showpiece is the Great Ocean Walk; a 104km trek from Apollo Bay to a point just before the Twelve Apostles.

These giant rock formations were created by erosion of the mainland's limestone cliffs and rise up to 45m out of the Southern



Cape Otway Lightstation.

Ocean. With inclement weather against me, my own walk is somewhat shortened but it's easy to see how the old rainforest, dramatic surf beaches and delicate plant life along the coast lure walkers on repeat visits to this coastline.

For avid photographers, Bothfeet has teamed up with award-winning Australian photographer David Hugh Evans to offer photographic workshops in 2010. Participants will be able to get up close to the spectacular flora and fauna along the Great Ocean Walk, while experiencing small-group photographic tuition with a professional. Designed for keen amateur digital SLR users and intermediate enthusiasts alike, these four-day journeys will enable photographers to hone their practical skills on a series

of hikes escorted by an expert Bothfeet guide with intimate knowledge of the nature along the route, as well as the best times of day to be at different locations along the walk.

Most walking trails in Victoria have public access, so it is possible to hike independently but the main benefit of a walking guide is added safety and security; offering access to extra water, first aid and emergency equipment. And with hosts as dedicated as the Ronans, guests depart with more than just a beautiful hiking experience – they have an understanding of the ancient flora and fauna of southern Victoria. And more than a few leads to the next green walking, trekking or holidaying spot.