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
I'm taking the coastal route to the secluded inner sanctum of eco accommodation, Botfiethe Lodge at Johanna. The lodge is named after Botfiethe 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 roads 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 Ocean. With inclement weather against me, my own walk is somewhat shorter but it’s easy to see how the old rainforest, dramatic surf beaches and delicate plant life along the coast have walkers on repeat visits to this coastline.

For avid photographers, Botfiethe 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 recorded by an expert. Botfiethe 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.

WHAT TO DO

WALK THE GREAT OCEAN ROAD

Botfiethe.com.au

Walk for three, four or six days with Dana and Gavin Ronan, operators of Botfiethe Walking Tours. Destinations include Cape Otway, Apollo Bay, Maldon, Phillip Island, Fairhaven Beach and Lorne.

CAPE OTWAY LIGHTSTATION

Great Ocean Road, Cape Otway, Victoria, Australia

Botfiethe.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 Victoria, and enjoy the dramatic views from this windswept clifftop.

MAMET’S RAINFORD TRAIL

Mamets.com.au

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 industrious.

WHERE TO STAY

GREAT OCEAN ECLOGO

665 Lighthouse Road, Cape Otway

Miss Mertens at 665 Lighthouse Road, 1260 9272, swanseaecoloodge.com.au

This unassuming restaurant dishes up exquisite modern food using local seafood, as well as unusual and unusual ingredients such as surpemare. Choose from the à la carte menu or the headline into the no-nonsense, no-nonsense, no-nonsense. Main courses served fresh fish, luscious lamb, beef and chicken. Also pickled up two dishes in the 2010 edition of The Age Good Food Guide.

CHRIS’S RESTAURANT

200 Skene Creek Rd, Apollo Bay

chrisin.com.au

With a stunning view overlooking the surf at Apollo Bay, Chris’s Restaurant serves beautiful Mediterranean fare. The mood is welcoming and relaxed, in typical Greek style.

ROOM SIX

www.roomsix.co.uk

26 Lord Street, Port Campbell

Ateliers.com.au

This sustainably built lodge has facilities for walkers with its licensed dining room, massage treatments and storage area and dining room. It meets certified ecotourism standards in Australia and is great for groups, families or couples.

WHERE TO EAT AND DRINK

WYE RIVER GENERAL STORE

35 Great Ocean Road, Wye River

wyrerivergeneraledge.com.au

This shop, that for years has had one of the best views on the Great Ocean Road, has had a recent facelift. The old store has been remodeled into a modern deli, with the other boves a stylish cafe, which serves delicious breakfasts, lunches and dinners in front of its open fireplace or on the outdoor deck.

MERRIUG INN

3 Campbell Street, Port Fairy

merrin.com.au

This rustic restaurant is a great stop for those who have had enough of the Great Ocean Road, has had a recent facelift. The old store has been remodeled into a modern deli, with the other boves a stylish cafe, which serves delicious breakfasts, lunches and dinners in front of its open fireplace or on the outdoor deck.

BIG ANGLESEA

45 Murray St, Anglesea

biganglesea.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 Princes Street, Apollo Bay

apollobay.yha.com.au

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

BOTHFIE LODEGE

70 Stafford Rd, Johanna VIC

Bothfiethe.com.au

This sustainable built lodge has facilities for walkers with its licensed dining room, massage treatments and storage area and dining room. It meets certified ecotourism standards in Australia and is great for groups, families or couples.

MORE AT MINDFOOD.COM

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ALT HOOD ON BOURNE

638 Bourke Street, Melbourne

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alhotelderson.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 glazing, heat reflecting windows, biodegradable products and energy-efficient lighting.