

THE GREATEST OF THE GREAT

6 DAYS / 5 NIGHTS



Great Southern Touring Route
AUSTRALIA

You're about to discover just how great six days can be. From great and small creatures to great sights, great stories, great drops and great heights - this itinerary puts the 'great' in The Great Southern Touring Route. So what are you waiting for? Let the great times roll!

WHAT TO EXPECT

- One of the world's most iconic coastal drives - the Great Ocean Road
- Discover the Grampians landscape and ancient culture at its heart
- Mind-blowing local food and wine around every corner
- An abundance of local nature and wildlife
- The heritage charm of Ballarat

DAY 1

Melbourne to Point Lonsdale

Depart: Melbourne

O/night: Point Lonsdale

Distance: 127.3 km

Travel time: 2 hrs

Morning

Your 'Greatest of the Great' trip begins with just over an hour's drive to **Little Malop St** in **Geelong**. Filled with street art and quirky cafés, it's almost like you haven't actually left Melbourne as you enjoy a spot of brunch and people-watching. Sated and caffeinated, take a walk along the sparkling waterfront, before jumping in the car and visiting some **Bellarine** wineries. Bellarine is a cool-climate region, famed for producing Pinot Noir, Shiraz and Chardonnay. If any of these varieties are calling your name, put **Jack Rabbit Vineyard**, **Leura Park Estate** and **Terindah Estate** on your list to stop for a tasting... and some delicious local produce.

Afternoon / evening

From the lush green vines to the deep blue sea, the next stop is **Sea All Dolphins Swims** in **Queenscliff**. First, you're kitted out with all the swimming gear you need: flippers, a snorkel and a heavy-duty wetsuit, then... it's anchors away! The friendly and experienced crew will take you out onto Port Phillip Bay for 3.5 hours, where you'll swim with baby fur seals and look out for playful dolphins along the way. If you're lucky, they'll swim with the boat, and if you're even luckier, you can jump in and swim with them too. Either way, Sea All Dolphin Swims is a truly unforgettable 'Greatest of the Great' experience.

After all the ocean swimming, you deserve a little luxury. Check into the exclusive **Lon Retreat** in **Point Lonsdale**. Lon Retreat features seven plush suites and a mineral spa, plus a seasonal three-course dinner will be waiting for you. Relax and unwind in 200 acres of rural land, hidden away on a hill by the ocean. If you want to visit one of Geelong city's amazing restaurants stay at **Novotel Geelong** and take advantage of views to die for.

DAY 2

Point Lonsdale to Port Campbell

Depart: Point Lonsdale

O/night: Port Campbell

Distance: 217.6 km

Travel time: 3 hrs 40 mins

Morning

Now we begin the drive that rivals any destination, not just on the Great Southern Touring Route, on the Great Southern Land. The **Great Ocean Road** begins at **Torquay**, the surfing capital of Australia. Stop at **Bells Beach** to watch the local surfers do what they do best.

FAST FACTS

Time: 6 days

Distance: 876.5 km

Nearest major city: Melbourne

Price: \$\$

HASHTAG

#geelong #greatoceanroad #12apostles
#grampians #ballarat #gstr #roadtrip

Then, sit back and enjoy the dramatic coastal scenery as you wind through the Great Ocean Road. With crashing waves on your left and epic rocky cliffs on your right, you can see why it's known as a drive unlike any other. Make sure you stop and take it in at **Teddy's Lookout**, **Mount Defiance Lookout**, and **Marriner's Lookout** along the way.

Afternoon / evening

The jewel of the Great Southern Touring Route towns is undoubtedly cute, coastal **Lorne**. Stop here for a walk along the beach and a light lunch at superfood café, **HAH Lornebeach**. From sea to tree, stop at **Wildlife Wonders** for a 75-minute, guided walk through **The Otways**. Your conservationist guide will share the secrets of the plants and animals that call this bushland home. And it's wonderful to know that this is a sustainable wildlife experience, with all profits going directly to conserving the unique flora and fauna of the area.

Get ready for great heights when you arrive at **Port Campbell** to visit the **12 Apostles**. Don't miss these storeys-high, limestone rock stacks rising majestically from the Southern Ocean at sunset – quite simply, epic. There's a viewing platform to see them and take photos from, and you can also wander down **Gibson Steps** to the beach to see them from a different angle. Although wherever you're snapping from, they really don't have a bad side as one of the most incredible natural wonders of the route!

Accommodation choices: Southern Ocean Villas, Anchors Port Campbell, Alkina Lodge.



Little Malop Street

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DAY 3

Port Campbell to Warrnambool

Depart: Port Campbell

O/night: Warrnambool

Distance: 70.5 km

Travel time: 1 hr

Morning

Enjoy an early morning walk into the picturesque **Loch Ard Gorge** in **Port Campbell National Park**. Then, on the way to **Warrnambool**, if it's not too early for the hard stuff, try a single malt whisky at **Timboon Distillery**. Don't worry, as well as sampling what owner and distiller, Josh Walker, calls 'liquid gold,' you can also enjoy an early lunch of local cheese, meats and breads. Another 40 or so minutes will get you to Warrnambool, where if it's between June and September, you can whale watch. Every year, magnificent female Southern Right Whales return to the waters of Warrnambool to calve. From the shoreline at the Warrnambool breakwater you can see Middle Island where during breeding season Maremma dogs guard the local penguin population, these amazing animals have been trained to protect the penguins during breeding season!

Afternoon / evening

If you haven't seen enough wildlife today, head to **Tower Hill Reserve**, an inactive volcano and major natural landmark just outside Warrnambool. Enjoy a 90-minute, interactive tour with an experienced local guide. Lose yourself in the incredible landscape as you learn about traditional Aboriginal lifestyles and meet even more furry and feathered friends like emus, kangaroos, wallabies, echidnas and black swans.

Now, it's time to take a load off at **The Deep Blue**. The first hot springs hotel in Victoria, it's the perfect place to relax, rejuvenate and replenish. There are 15 hot spring bathing experiences as well as massage day spa services, so you'll come out feeling like new.

DAY 4

Warrnambool to Halls Gap

Depart: Warrnambool

O/night: Halls Gap

Distance: 161 km

Travel time: 1 hr 55 mins

Morning

Whether you can see whales or waves, take an early morning stroll along the iconic main beach, **Logans Beach**. Then get back on the road just over an hour in-land. On the way to Dunkeld, why not soak up a little culture with a stop at **Hamilton Gallery**? A local treasure for almost 60 years, Hamilton Gallery presents a range of exhibitions, programs and events that aim to stimulate enjoyment of the visual arts. To stimulate your tastebuds, it's only a short drive to **Pierrepoint Wines**, a family run winery with food and wine that celebrates everything the region has to offer. But don't ruin your appetite as you have such a great lunch to look forward to...

Afternoon / evening

Arrive at **Royal Mail Hotel** in the charming town of **Dunkeld**. Home to two restaurants, when your visit Royal Mail Hotel you can choose from the more casual **Parker Street Project** or the two-hatted, fine dining **Wickens at Royal Mail Hotel**. This place is so great, you could go to Parker Street Project for lunch and come back to Wickens for dinner. Up to 80% of the produce is grown on-site and the wine cellar contains 25,000 bottles, leaving you with unparalleled choice. And deliciousness.

Once you've had your fill, it's only a 45-minute drive to check in at **Halls Gap Lakeside Tourist Park**. Here you can stay in a cosy cabin, or glamp under the stars. Just remember to take the time to say hello to your friendly neighbours... the hundreds of kangaroos who are permanent residents of the park!

Don't relax with your new furry friends too long though, because one of the best places to see the sunset in the Grampians is **Reed Lookout**. Just walk 1 km from the car park to **The Balconies**, where you'll see the most incredible, panoramic views of **Victoria Valley** and the surrounding ranges.



Loch Ard Gorge

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DAY 5

Halls Gap to Ballarat

Depart: Halls Gap

O/night: Ballarat

Distance: 142 km

Travel time: 1 hr 45 mins

Morning

Get up with the local cockatoos and rosellas and out into the natural beauty the region is famous for. Join a guided walk along the **Grampians Peaks Trail** with the guys from **Absolute Outdoors**, or go chasing waterfalls – **MacKenzie Falls**, to be precise. One of the largest waterfalls in Victoria, it's also the only one in the Grampians that flows all year 'round. There are two platforms to view this mesmerising sight from, upper and lower. If you are able to make it down to the lower platform, it's well worth all those stairs.

As you drive out of Halls Gaps, watch out for more wildlife, particularly kangaroos, emus and... look up for koalas!

Afternoon / evening

Now you've walked up a thirst, stop for some wine tasting on the way to Ballarat. Don't miss **Seppelts at Great Western's** fascinating cellar tour, plus, **Mount Langi Ghiran, Fallen Giants** and **Blue Pyrenees Estate** come highly recommended.

Let the good times continue to flow as you arrive in **Ballarat**, with its flourishing brewing scene, before checking into **The Provincial**. The Provincial is 1909 on the outside and modern on the inside – with buzzing European restaurant **Lola** and luxe accommodation available. The menu is locally sourced and seasonally driven. The wine list is creative and extensive. It's a boutique experience in the heart of Ballarat, and the rooms look just as good as the food tastes.

A short stroll of the historic local streets will lead you to the **Art Gallery of Ballarat**, with an eclectic mix of classic, Indigenous and modern artworks. Explore the ground floor for ever-evolving exhibitions, and upstairs for the permanent collection.

Before dinner back at Lola, put **Ballarat Wildlife Park** into the GPS. You'll see kangaroos, meerkats, penguins, tigers and even the most enormous saltwater crocodiles! But the highlight is getting to cuddle a koala! The greatest of the great wildlife experiences right there!

DAY 6

Ballarat to Melbourne

Depart: Ballarat

O/night: Melbourne

Distance: 158 km

Travel time: 2 hrs 10 mins

Morning

As your time on the route is running out, it feels only right to travel to the living museum of **Sovereign Hill**. Step back into 1851 as you ride a horse and carriage, dress up for a sepia portrait and pan for gold, immersing yourself in local history.

After you've worked up a prospector's appetite, have a traditional high tea lunch in the heritage splendour of **Craig's Royal Hotel**, the oldest hotel in Ballarat. Surrounded by fine china and finger sandwiches, you might even feel a little royal yourself. Don't forget to take a selfie or five.

Afternoon / evening

Back very much in the present day, it's time to get back on the road to visit one last town on the way to Melbourne. It may be last, but definitely not least. **Daylesford** is known as Australia's spa capital because it has the highest concentration of natural mineral waters in the country. Why not take an afternoon walk from **Tipperary Springs** to **Bryce's Flat**? When you're ready for something heartier, the two-hatted **Lake House** is not only Daylesford's premier restaurant, it's a hotel spa, retreat and local icon not to miss.

If you can stand to drag yourself away, it's less than an hour and a half until you're back in Melbourne. Nowhere near enough time to talk about all the great memories you've made on this greatest of the great road trips! But do remember, you can always come back.



MacKenzie Falls

