

it's about the

Experience

Gourmet Getaway in and around Geelong

Avida Daydreams > Victoria



DURATION: 3 Days

TRAVEL: 164.7KM

DOWNLOAD MAP

A HIDDEN POCKET OF WILD, SPRAWLING COASTLINE, GEELONG AND THE BELLARINE PENINSULA ARE VICTORIA'S RISING WINE-AND-DINE STARS.

Sandwiched snugly between two of Victoria's headline attractions, Melbourne and the Great Ocean Road, Geelong has long been overlooked. Once among the largest manufacturing centres in Australia – home to wool and paper mills, ropeworks and a car factory – it was known as little more than a gritty port city.

But since those days, Geelong and its surrounds have quietly come of age: Victoria's second city now boasts all the trappings of a mean gourmet getaway. Craft breweries occupy converted warehouses and lay hidden down laneways. A glut of great waterfront cafés dish up specialty coffee and creative brunches, innovative, internationally recognised restaurants exploit the bounty of fresh local produce, and award-winning wineries and dynamic food experiences dot the surrounding countryside of the Bellarine Peninsula. The best part: this is all within a one-hour drive of Melbourne.

STAGE 1: MELBOURNE TO THE BELLARINE PENINSULA

TRAVEL TIME APPROX: 1 Hour 36 Mins | 91.6KM

Drive for just over an hour southwest of Melbourne, bypassing Geelong – for now – to reach the spoils of the Bellarine Peninsula. While it may not be as well-known outside of Victoria as its eastern cousin, the Mornington Peninsula, this sweet spot offers up a bounty of beaches, wineries, luxury accommodation and great food for those in the know.

Although you can drive from one side of the Bellarine Peninsula to the other in just half an hour, plan to spend two days here to soak up all it has to offer at a suitably holiday-like pace: it was, after all, a supremely popular summer holiday destination in the 1800s. Flit between the Victorian-era seaside village of Queenscliff, the beautiful beaches of Barwon Heads, the historic coastal town of Portarlington and all the juicy bits in between.



Let the Bellarine Taste Trail, a curated network of nearly 50 food and wine destinations on the peninsula, be your guide to those juicy bits. Stock up on pantry staples at Wildings, purveyor of all things handmade (think sticky chilli jam and fragrant yet fiery Saharan harissa spice rub); peruse the array of sustainably sourced smoked fish at the ‘shed door’ of husband-and-wife-run Bellarine Smokehouse; take a guided tasting of cold-pressed, locally made extra virgin olive oils at Lighthouse; pluck juicy, ripe blueberries from the bush at Tuckerberry Hill Berry Farm; or, if you’re here on the third Saturday of the month, buy goods straight from the source at Bellarine Community Farmers’ Market in the seaside town of Ocean Grove between 9am and 1pm.

Your afternoons could be spent dining al fresco on fresh shellfish at rustic bayside eatery The Little Mussel Cafe. Portarlington mussels and Angasi oysters are delivered directly to the café kitchen by the farmers at parent company Advance Mussel Supply. From here, it’s less than a 10-minute drive to the peninsula’s boutique wineries, many of which are family-owned and operated. With an industry that began in the mid-1800s, when it was introduced by early Swiss settlers, the Bellarine Peninsula produces cool-climate maritime wines, and is well-known for its chardonnay, pinot noir and shiraz.

Leura Park Estate's Segway Tour



Sample Scotchmans Hill's premium reds and whites at its impossibly cosy cellar door, modelled on a provincial French farmhouse; whiz around Leura Park Estate's sea of vineyards on a Segway tour; or try minimal-intervention wines with a side-serve of arresting Corio Bay views at Jack Rabbit.

If wine isn't your thing, don't fret: there's a 'distillery door' just around the corner from this clutch of wineries, providing small-batch gin infused with native botanicals, and a single malt whisky planned for 2021 release, all from a revamped shed. Alternatively, there's Flying Brick Cider House, which supplies locals with its fix of tart, fruity homebrewed nectar made with all-Australian apples.



Flying Brick Cider

WHERE TO STAY?

BIG4 Bellarine Holiday Park - (03) 5251 5744

Ocean Grove Holiday Park - (03) 5256 2233

Collendina Caravan Park - (03) 5255 1966

STAGE 2: BELLARINE PENINSULA VIA POINT LONSDALE, BARWON HEADS AND DRYSDALE TO GEELONG

TRAVEL TIME APPROX: 1 Hour 25 Mins | 73.1KM

Start your morning with a salty lick of sea air as you pull up a pew on the deck at At The Heads – a café perched on a jetty that juts into the water in Barwon Heads, 20 minutes from Point Lonsdale. Dine on breakfast classics paired with strong coffee before ambling along the beach.

Jump back in the RV and head towards Drysdale, a 20-minute drive inland, to embark on what is surely the region's most unique dining experience: the Q Train. It's not every day diners get to feast on ever-changing scenery as well as a five-course degustation menu. This three-hour mobile banquet travels along the historic Bellarine Railway between Drysdale and Queenscliff and back as it spotlights the best in Bellarine produce.



Full from your Q Train adventure, it's time to make your way towards Geelong, around a 20-minute drive away. En route, make a pitstop at Geelong icon Little Creatures Village in the city's south. The historic textile mill now houses not one, but two cavernous breweries – Little Creatures and White Rabbit. Take a behind-the-scenes tour in the former, and settle in for a speciality, barrel-aged brew at the latter.



Following today's lavish lunch, try something a little more low-key for dinner. Award-winning casual diner Tulip toys with an array of culinary techniques, promises stellar execution and offers reasonable prices. Or dial down the mood another notch and make for laneway outfit The Good Beer Bar, where you can dip into a tasting paddle and mop up the brews with some bar snacks.



WHERE TO STAY?

Riverglen Holiday Park Geelong - (03) 5243 5505

Barwon River Tourist Park - (03) 5243 3842

Discovery Parks - Geelong - (03) 5243 6225

STAGE 3: GEELONG

Start the day right with breakfast at one of the city's most anticipated openings, The Beach House. Located in a former bathers' pavilion, this restored, two-storey Art Deco building is also slap-bang on Geelong's waterfront, offering beautifully framed views of the sea. Dishes range from the nostalgic and decadent (fish finger sandwiches) to the on-trend and virtuous (chia pudding with fruit).

Next, wander through the city's laneways, now a trove of Geelong's best eateries, boutiques and cafés. One such example is Cartel Coffee Roasters, which works directly with farmers across the world, and offers caffeine addicts coffee cuppings (Fridays) and barista training (Tuesdays and Wednesdays). Spend the rest of the morning at the Geelong Art Gallery.

Time for a light lunch at The Arborist Geelong: a share-plate-focused restaurant that takes flavour cues from the Mediterranean and Middle East. In summer, bathe in the sun's rays on the deck with a glass of sparkling in hand; come winter curl up inside on a leather banquette and dine on spicy, warming dishes such as chargrilled squid with chermoula marinade and harissa.

The Beach House



Jumping back in the RV, drive out to The Old Paper Mills at Fyansford on the city's fringe. This restored 1870s bluestone complex is now a hub for arts and design, featuring a clutch of artists' studios, plus an independent jeweller, a handcrafted homewares store and a boutique award-winning winery. Situated on the Barwon River, there are also leafy walking tracks and waterfalls to explore.

Igni Restaurant



Go out with a bang, by booking a table (in advance) at Geelong institution, Igni. This celebrated degustation diner is arguably responsible for kickstarting the city's destination dining scene. Meaning 'from fire' in Latin, Igni's output revolves around dishes blistered to smoky charcoal perfection.

Well-fed and watered, either retire for one more night in town or head straight back to Melbourne, an easy hour's drive from here.

This article was written in conjunction with [Tourism Australia](#).

For more information about road trips in Victoria, go to [visitvictoria.com](#).