



COME SHARE THE LOVE IN EAST GIPPSLAND THIS VALENTINE'S DAY

Business owners and tourism operators in East Gippsland are calling on Victorians to “share the love” this Valentine’s Day by celebrating the annual day of love with their Valentine in the state’s far east.

Business operators across East Gippsland have been severely impacted by the fires that ravaged some parts of the region during what is normally their busiest time of the year.

Even coastal towns such as Bairnsdale, Paynesville, Metung, Lakes Entrance and Nicholson, which were untouched by fire, have been impacted as tourists deserted the area over the peak summer holiday period.

But business owners in these towns want Victorians to know the “coast is clear”, they are open for business, and the best way they can help the region rebuild is to come and visit, and what better excuse than Valentine’s Day.

Hayley Hardy from East Gippsland Marketing Inc. says with Valentine’s Day (February 14) falling on a Friday this year, it is the perfect opportunity to turn it into a long weekend, escape the hustle and bustle of the city with your loved one and share that love with business operators in the region who will welcome you with open arms.

“People have seen the images and they’ve watched on feeling helpless. But by booking accommodation, dinner, cruises and tours in East Gippsland over the Valentine’s Day weekend, you can help fire-affected communities recover economically and ensure that 100 per cent of your money is going directly to the businesses who need your help,” she said.

To further entice lovebirds to share the love with East Gippsland over the Valentine’s Day weekend, some of the region’s most popular restaurants, resorts, wineries and day spas are offering a range of offers and discounts to make that romantic getaway even more special.

Tamara Cook, owner of Captains Cove Resort in Paynesville, in the heart of the Gippsland Lakes, is among those offering special deals for Valentine’s Day visitors.

Anyone who books three nights at Captains Cove between February 10 and 17, 2020, will receive a complimentary \$50 voucher at Sardine Eatery & Bar or Pier 70 on the Esplanade.

"We're really excited to take part in this initiative and offer something special to our guests who make the effort to come and visit the region and share the love," Ms Cook said.

"Everyone here has felt the impact of these fires either directly or indirectly," she said. "And obviously some are hurting more than others."

"But our cafes, restaurants, hotels and our tourist operators have all been affected by the fact that visitors have largely stayed away while the bushfires impacted the region over our peak tourism period," she said.

"The one thing people can do is come back, come visit. Come and stay in East Gippsland and enjoy all the things we have to offer, from our amazing restaurants, cafes, wineries and local produce, to our picture-perfect lakes and beaches and an abundance of outdoor activities, from hiking and horse riding to boating and fishing," she said.

"It's actually a no-brainer," says Sarah Carlisle, co-owner of Lakes Entrance-based outdoor adventure operator, Venture Out Australia.

"Couples get to enjoy a romantic getaway while at the same time knowing that the money, they are spending is going straight into the pockets of those who need it," she said.

Other East Gippsland Valentine's Day offers, include:

Bellevue on the Lakes at Lakes Entrance and the hugely popular Albert & Co cafe and restaurant have come together to offer a special Valentine's night in the Boathouse spa suite, including champagne on arrival, an 'East Gippsland produce-inspired love dinner for two' at Albert and Co and a breakfast hamper to your room the following morning, all for \$425.

The Nicholson River Winery, in Nicholson is offering two glasses of 9-year-old sparkling wine with a cheese or antipasto platter for just \$40 to anyone who visits between February 13 and February 15, 2020.

Sardine eatery and bar in Paynesville is currently taking bookings for its a la carte and tasting menu for Valentine's Day. The tasting menu offers 8-9 dishes to share between two people for \$85 per person; and add an additional \$50 per person, for the 'wine match' option.

Lakes Entrance Helicopters and Albert and Co have partnered to offer a unique Valentine's Day experience in East Gippsland at a surprise location on the Lakes. Fly high above the spectacular lake system, enjoy the birds-eye view of the islands and iconic Entrance and land at a surprise location to enjoy a sensational picnic basket provided by Albert and Co. (\$375 for two people for 1 hour and 45 minutes)

Northern Ground in Bairnsdale is offering a complimentary glass of Lightfoots Sparkling Shiraz, or Glenmaggie Sparkling to anyone who comes in to enjoy its seasonal Gippsland produce menu on Valentine's night.

Illuka Day Spa in Lakes Entrance is offering anyone who purchases a voucher for the day spa, an additional 50 per cent for free. Pay \$100 and get a \$150 voucher; pay \$150 and get a \$225 voucher.

Meanwhile, anyone who books a romantic Valentine's Day getaway at The Esplanade Resort in Lakes Entrance will receive a bottle of sparkling wine and chocolate platter upon arrival. Simply quote 'vday' when you book.

For more information about how you can share the love in East Gippsland, visit: <https://www.visitgippsland.com.au/loveeastgippsland>

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