



THE COAST IS CLEAR TO WORK, STAY AND PLAY IN EAST GIPPSLAND

Things haven't exactly been rosy on the Australian tourism and hospitality fronts. First there was the summer's bushfires, and then the coronavirus arrived: twin catastrophes with far-reaching impacts for all operators.

But there is a light at the end of the tunnel, and East Gippsland has declared it's open for business come June 1. Indeed, operators in towns like Bairnsdale, Metung, Paynesville, Lakes Entrance, Nicholson, Bruthen, Orbost and Omeo are calling on visitors to "work, stay and play" as restrictions lift and winter's charms set in.

Experience the wind in your hair at Ninety Mile Beach, Cape Conran or Red Bluff Beach, or simply savour being far away from the maddening crowd – or, at least, the inside of your home, where you've spent almost every waking hour these past 10 weeks – in one of East Gippsland's 11 national and marine parks.

There's the tranquil Gippsland Lakes; the invigorating Alpine High Country (one of Victoria's best kept secrets!); the natural heritage attractions of the vast Snowy River region; the majestic coastal wilderness of the Croajingolong National Park... the list goes on.

East Gippsland is about nurturing among nature; combining stunning scenery with modern-lux accommodation, world-class food and country hospitality.

Hayley Hardy, East Gippsland Marketing Inc., says local operators are ready to "welcome visitors with open arms", but is urging tourists to practice social distancing while being mindful of the many locals still working through the impact of the bushfires.

"We're just asking people to be empathetic, sympathetic and respectful to locals – but please visit; it's the best way to support local businesses and communities," she says.

Where to stay

The flexibility of remote working is one gift of COVID-19. So why not consider a three- or four-day break that takes in work and play? The region has no shortage of superbly positioned hotels that pamper and pander while providing resources to assist travellers with work commitments.

These include: The Riversleigh Hotel in Bairnsdale; Paynesville's Captains Cove Resort; the Bellevue on the Lakes Resort and Esplanade Resort + Spa in Lakes Entrance; and the Jetty Road Retreat, situated on the Gippsland Lakes. (If you don't want working but still want remote, East Gippsland's wide-open spaces are perfect for that, too.)

What to do

Venture Out Australia (Lakes Entrance) – Reignite your sense of adventure with a paddle-boarding, kayaking or bike tour.

Lakes Entrance Explorer – While sea safari tours remain out, socially-distanced foursomes can explore the Lakes by water taxi. Ideal for photographers, anglers and wildlife lovers.

Raymond Island – Nature lovers can witness koalas in their natural habitat on this island paradise.

Ride the Rail Trail – An easy 20-kilometre return ride from Bairnsdale to Nicholson – and don't forget to grab a homemade pie at the Nicholson General Store.

Metung boardwalk walk – Spot the endangered baby Burrunan dolphin on this easy five-kilometre return walk.

Fish – East Gippsland is full of great spots cast a line. Try your luck at Snowy River Estuary, Mallacoota Inlet, Lake Tyers and more!

Where to eat and drink

Nicholson Winery - Victoria's oldest winery east of Melbourne boasts a wide range of traditional European-style wines representing the intense flavours unique to East Gippsland.

David Lucke's Fresh Food Market – Before you head back to the big smoke, stock up on the region's local eggs, honey, seafood and fresh fruit and vegetables.

The Long Paddock, Lindenow - Melbourne-trained country chefs deliver an amazing range of delicious cakes, pies, tarts and great coffee.

Northern Ground, Bairnsdale – A nod to Flinders Lane, this modern and stylish café-by-day and restaurant-by-night champions fresh, seasonal produce from across Gippsland.

The Grand Terminus, Bairnsdale – Beautiful Victorian-era pub delivering quality pub grub since 1889.

Sardine Eatery + Bar, Paynesville – This beloved “hatted” restaurant delivers seafood at its finest. Eat in or take-away.

The Marlo Hotel – Dine in at this scenic, scrumptious country pub at the mouth of the Snowy River.

Albert + Co., Lakes Entrance – An all-day café that showcases the region's produce, offers great coffee and a cocktail bar that opens on Monday, Tuesday and Sunday evenings.

For more information about how to work, stay and play in East Gippsland, visit: www.visitgippsland.com.au/loveeastgippsland

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