

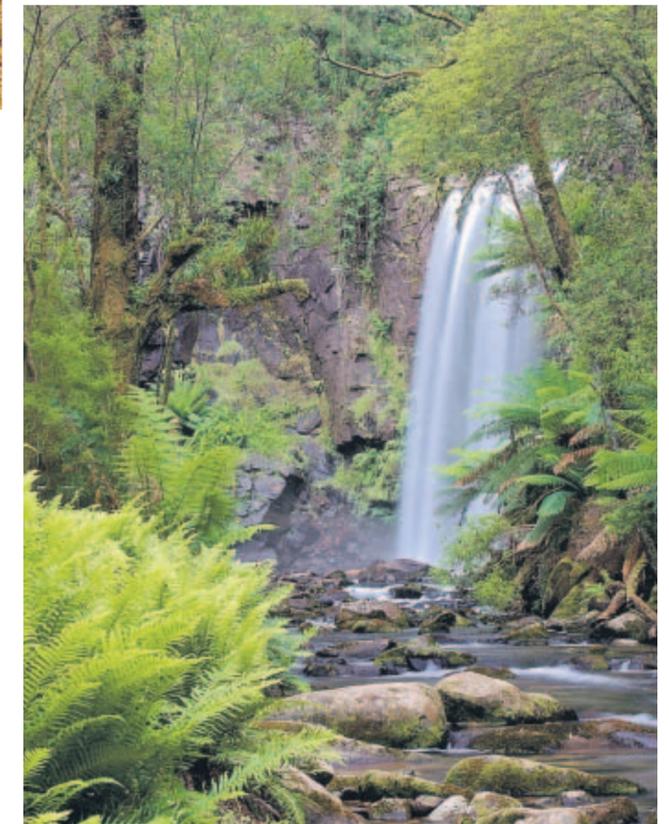


cover story



the deal

Cape Otway Great Ocean Eco Lodge gets you up close to the koalas and kangaroos on Cape Otway and is a perfect base to access remote beaches and sunset shoots. ... Photo package Mark Gray runs three-day tours in the summer to share his landscape photography skills. ... Going digital Canon's new digital SLR 5D MkII is designed to appeal to serious shutterbugs. ...



Great Ocean photos

The Great Ocean Rd is Victoria's most photographed destination. Visit the best camera-friendly spots with Ewen Bell Pictures: Ewen Bell

TRAVELLERS and photographers alike get more than just ocean views when they head down the Shipwreck Coast.

They get beach sunsets and beech forests, crashing waves and tumbling waterfalls. Then there is the wildlife: Cape Otway koalas, whales at Warrnambool and echidnas, wallabies, kangaroos, blue-tongue lizards and native birds along the way.

You can also keep an eye out for platypus, wrens, robins, cockatoos and kookaburras.

But the greatest treasure of the Great Ocean Rd is space. There's more than enough for everyone.

Even at the height of summer you can find a quiet place to practise your photography, chill with nature and appreciate how lucky you are to be there.

You might encounter a few other walkers on Moonlight Head's remote beaches, but at the bottom of Hopetoun Falls you can have the scene to yourself for hours with no other person in sight.

Even the drive west from Port Campbell to Port Fairy is dotted with coastal reserves and infrequently used tracks that lead down to the water.

Give yourself several hours at these locations. Time is one way to improve your pictures; the other is to have a professional accompany you.

Mark Gray is one of a new breed of landscape photographers in Australia who have cashed in their careers to chase sunsets.

Several times a year he runs photography tours along the Great Ocean Rd to workshop techniques and share his secrets. The next one is in September.

He knows the best locations to take shots, but the right philosophy for landscape art is another of his skills.

"People come on a tour and I try to teach them about the art of photography. It's a crash course on everything I've learnt since I started shooting landscapes," Gray says.

"Three days isn't very much time really, but I want to give them the chance to walk away with as many new ideas and photographic experiences as we can fit in."

Gray works almost exclusively on film, saying it's a matter of scale and detail.

"I can get incredible quality and large-print reproduction from my panoramic film camera," he says.

"Sure, there's a lot of work involved with film, but I also spend weeks before each shoot researching scenic spots and assessing their potential."

Tripods enable him to work with ultra-slow shutter speeds that achieve a blurring effect on waves and rivers.

Anyone can do it. You just need to be prepared to carry extra gear. And with such stunning scenery all around, why wouldn't you make the effort?

ONE of Gray's recent finds at Cape Otway is a set of rock pools in Crayfish Bay that reflect the sunset with views across to Cape Otway Lighthouse. Waves crash around us as we see out the last rays of light. We have to walk back up the track in darkness.

You don't want to rush a Great Ocean Rd holiday by trying to squeeze in too many sights on a single day.

Gray often shoots in the last light of day and the first light of morning.

After breakfast on a cloudy day he might go inland to shoot some waterfalls or farmland while the light is soft and even.

There's no shortage of options to pique a photographer's interest. Even a rusty old car in a paddock can be worth shooting.

The big lesson to learn from the professionals is to take your time.

It took thousands of years for nature to shape the Shipwreck Coast, so why rush the photos?

The author travelled courtesy of Tourism Victoria.

must-have shots

1 Apostles of the Shipwreck Coast: Stay overnight nearby at Port Campbell and get a shot at sunset one day and sunrise the next (above).

2 Moonlight Head: Anchors of wrecked ships still rest on the rocks, but wait for low tide to avoid waves under foot (top right).

3 Cape Otway koalas: You'll want a long lens to get close shots, or a good zoom on your compact camera (left).

4 Hopetoun Falls: The viewing deck offers a great shot. Take a tripod to shoot at slow speeds that turn water into silk (right).



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