Title:
The Great Ocean Road - Australia's Costa Verde

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Summary:
Visitors to the Australian state of Victoria and its capital Melbourne should definitely consider reserving two or three days to explore Victoria's own Costa Verde, the Great Ocean Road. This magnificent coastal tour combines spectacular Southern Ocean scenery, huge cliffs, towering rock stacks, lush temperate rainforests, tranquil bays, intriguing coastal villages full of history, clean uncrowded beaches and great surf.

Keywords:
great, ocean, road, tour, travel, victoria, australia, melbourne, holiday, vacation

Article Body:
Visitors to the Australian state of Victoria and its capital Melbourne should definitely consider reserving two or three days to explore Victoria's own Costa Verde, the Great Ocean Road. This magnificent coastal tour combines spectacular Southern Ocean scenery, huge cliffs, towering rock stacks, lush temperate rainforests, tranquil bays, intriguing coastal villages full of history, clean uncrowded beaches and great surf.

The Great Ocean Road winds its way along the breath-taking coastline of south-west Victoria, from Geelong in the east to Nelson in the west, with the area between Lorne and Apollo Bay being the most picturesque. It is without doubt one of the world's most scenic coastal drives. It traverses an extended length of coastline that includes the world-famous Twelve Apostles rock formation, the Otways rainforest, and Bells Beach on the Surf Coast. The Great Ocean Road also regularly passes through coastal resort towns including Torquay, Lorne and Apollo Bay, coastal cities including Geelong and Warrnambool, and historic villages including Queenscliff, Port Campbell, Port Fairy and Portland.

There is ample opportunity to expand and extend the Great Ocean Road experience by detouring inland to the magnificent Grampians National Park and the Goldfields, continuing across Victoria's western border to South Australia, or exploring Port Phillip Bay in the east including the Bellarine and Mornington peninsulas.

Portland (population 11,000) was founded by the pioneering Henty brothers in 1834. Today, it boasts more than 200 well-maintained heritage buildings and private residences. Visit the Maritime Discovery Centre for an insight into Portland's long seafaring history. Portland's waterfront is still alive with commercial activity today, and whales sometimes visit in the winter months. Portland is also an angler's paradise, the range of fish in the area including King George whiting, flathead, snapper, tuna and mulloway.

Apollo Bay (population 2,000) is regarded by many as a paradise by the sea. The town is characterised by a wide, crescent-shaped sandy swimming beach, a backdrop of undulating green Otway hills, relaxed lifestyle, waterfalls, national and state parks and abundant flora and fauna in the nearby ranges. The beach at Apollo Bay is a focus for activity all year round. Swim in the clear sea waters, kayak with local seals, go deep-sea fishing, surfing, or simply take a relaxed horse ride along the beach at sunset.

Anglesea (population 2,500) is a favourite Great Ocean Road holiday destination due to the great beaches, bushland, wildlife and stunning coastal scenery in the area. Located on a wide sandy expanse beside the Anglesea River, Anglesea's main beach is perfect for swimming, surfing and relaxing. Anglesea is also a great place to explore on foot. The 35 kilometre Surf Coast Walk passes through the town and can be followed along the coast in either direction. Coogoorah Park fronts the river and has a series of walking tracks, boardwalks and bridges winding through native bush and reedy wetlands teeming with birdlife.

Aireys Inlet, just a few kilometres from Anglesea, is a peaceful village nestled in the shadow of Angahook-Lorne State Park. Clifftop tracks provide views of rocky reefs, rock pools and sheltered coves. Aireys Inlet has superb beaches suitable for swimming and board riding, with a national park at its backdoor which is home to native trees and heathlands that are alive with colour when wildflowers bloom in winter, spring and early summer.
Port Campbell (population 200) is located amongst some of the most spectacular coastline scenery found in Victoria, including the Port Campbell National Park and the Twelve Apostles. Sheltered by towering cliffs and Norfolk pines, Port Campbell has the feeling of a haven on the edge of wild nature. It is a great base for a day tour to the Twelve Apostles, the dramatic rock stacks that have made this section of Victoria's coastline famous. Other spectacular coastal features include Loch Ard Gorge, Gibson Steps and the Bay of Islands.

Torquay (population 3,670) is a major holiday resort town, and also Victoria's surfing capital where beach-based culture is strong. Many of the best known names in surfwear and accessories are based in Torquay, with anything and

everything connected with surfing available in retail outlets at Surf City Plaza. The Surfworld Museum captures the spirit of surfing in a variety of multimedia and hands-on displays. Famous surf beaches in the area include Jan Juc and Bells Beach, famous as the venue for the Rip Curl Pro (held in Easter), one of the most sought after titles on the World Championship Tour.

Lorne (population 1,170) has a distinct Mediterranean atmosphere and outstanding picture-postcard scenery. This beautiful coastal town has been attracting visitors for more than a century. Located between Loutit Bay and the cool Otway ranges, Lorne's charm is difficult to beat. Mild weather, a thriving café culture, and a full range of shops, boutiques and galleries make Lorne one of the Great Ocean Road's most popular holiday destinations.

The City of Warrnambool (population 29,500) is situated in one of the most picturesque locations in Victoria, nestled into the coast amid green countryside and overlooking the deep blue of the Southern Ocean. Warrnambool has a long and colourful history linked with the sea, much of which is on show at the Flagstaff Hill Maritime Museum. The museum provides a fascinating insight into the early life of the city, and includes original buildings, a lighthouse and a recreated port complete with ships. The many shipwreck relics on display include the famous porcelain peacock salvaged up from the tragic wreck of the Loch Ard in 1878. Giant southern right whales return to Logan's Beach near Warrnambool every May to October and can frequently be seen just 100 metres off the shore.

Port Fairy (population 2,600) is a charming old fishing village with wide streets lined by 19th century cottages, old stone churches, boarding houses, inns and imposing Norfolk pines. Many fine examples of 19th century architecture can be found, with more than 50 buildings classified by the National Trust.