

WHAT'S *the* BUZZ

All that's new, happening and interesting on the local travel scene.

WORDS Chris Canty, Katherine Lindt and Fiona Crawford.



One of Parks Victoria's eco-friendly luxury tents in the tranquil surroundings of Tidal River.

IN VICTORIA

Luxury escapes

For those who like the idea of camping, but won't compromise when it comes to comfort and style, this is for you.

Parks Victoria has just completed building four eco-friendly luxury tents in the tranquil surrounding of Tidal River, deep in the heart of Wilson's Promontory. This follows the success of two other retreats at other Gippsland locations – Buchan Caves and Cape Conran.

The luxury safari-style tents which are set up for couples (though can

comfortably sleep up to four people) have modern amenities such as a private ensuite, double beds and table and chairs.

The furniture has been made by a local business which uses only sustainably grown mahogany sourced nearby. All linen and towels are provided, as is crockery, cutlery and cooking utensils. Guests also have use of a communal kitchen.

As you'd hope, the tents are completely weatherproof and include a stylish hardwood timber deck perfect for drinks at sunset, or perhaps a

sunrise breakfast surrounded by the waking forest.

For more information, go to parkweb.vic.gov.au.

Wine heaven

Corks were popping (or is it screw tops were unscrewing?) when Melbourne's newest wine bar, La Vita Buona, finally opened its doors and cellars mid-year.

La Vita Buona ("The Good Life"), is located in Melbourne's City Square, which is slowly building a reputation with the after-work crowd as a

sophisticated hotspot. The cellar/bar/delicatessen has more than 500 boutique Australian and international labels that are sure to entice the beginner and satisfy the amateur expert.

Visitors who buy a bottle and don't finish it will have it waiting for them when they return, though we would recommend leaving it too late. In the colder months there is a fireplace perfect for that romantic red, and when the weather warms up the place will undoubtedly be prime real estate.

For information on regular wine tasting



ONE OF A KIND: Hepburn Spa and Adelphi.

special dinners and "educational sessions" in the tasting room phone (03) 9663 4448 or go to lavitabuona.com.au.

Spa in the city

For the thousands of us who'd love to head to Hepburn Spa in Victoria's spa district of Daylesford every weekend but just never seem to find the time, stay where you are because the spa is coming to town!

The only one of its kind in Melbourne, Hepburn Spa has joined forces with the highly rated and super chic Adelphi Hotel to offer the appropriately titled Hepburn Spa and Adelphi. Located on the ninth floor and near to the famous glass bottom pool

(which all spa guests are entitled to use) the spa offers five star treatments in luxurious surroundings. Using natural Australian LITYA products derived from Indigenous dreamtime philosophies, the spa provides the best products with the most motivated staff. With facilities such as a steam room, rain shower, Vichy shower and a special treatment centre for couples, it's so much more than just laying on a mat.

All spa experiences begin with a foot bath ritual and Indigenous smudging ceremony, and no treatment lasts for under 90 minutes, enabling enough time to immerse yourself in the pampering. You'll completely forget the city is just outside.

Bookings can be made by calling (03) 8080 8888. For further information visit hepburnspa.com.au.

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Great Ocean drive

The Great Ocean Road, just 90 minutes from Melbourne, is regarded as one of the world's most picturesque drives, though experiencing it in a luxury car would surely put it on top. Imagine winding around the coast in a Maserati, Porsche Boxter or Mercedes SLK 350, seeing stunning attractions such as the 12 Apostles and Bells Beach and ending the trip at the internationally renowned Moonlight Head Private Lodge. (pictured) The "Moonlight Drive" Package is an all-inclusive luxury experience. The two day and two night package includes car hire; accommodation; breakfast and dinner daily with your own personal chef; a selection of beverages; your own concierge; and a housekeeper. The Moonlight Head Lodge, three hours from Melbourne and designed by the multi award winning architect Glenn Murcutt, is considered a modern masterpiece. Situated on 40ha and

surrounded by farm and bushland, the eco-friendly lodge is all about understated European chic. With works of art by Karl Maughan, a B&O audio system and B&B Italia pieces, alongside contemporary furnishings and designer artefacts, it can sleep up to eight very comfortably. At night, bask in the views of the stars overhead through the glass ceilings in the saw-toothed roof. The lodge is also the perfect base to explore the nearby attractions that are especially customised for the guests. Along with the renowned links golf courses, the Otways forest, whale watching or wreck-diving, you can also get a one-on-one tutorial from renowned wildlife photographers including Peter Merritt. Or perhaps a private lecture with Australia's leading architect historian and critic Philip Drew on the work of Pritzker Prize winners Glenn Murcutt and Jorn Utzon, is more your thing. *For information and bookings visit moonlighthead.com or Ph: (02) 9363 8870.*

Kiwis fly high

If you fancy heading overseas later this year and are wondering where to go, Air New Zealand has just announced it will increase flights and fly larger aircraft on their increasingly popular Melbourne to Auckland route. From October 26, Air NZ will use a Boeing 767-300 aircraft instead of an Airbus A320, on Monday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday and Sunday afternoons. From December 16 a third daily service will operate from Auckland on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Sundays. As a result, there will be a six percent increase in capacity giving you extra incentive to visit a country winning plaudits from adventure and luxury travellers alike. *For bookings go to airnewzealand.com.*

Brew tours

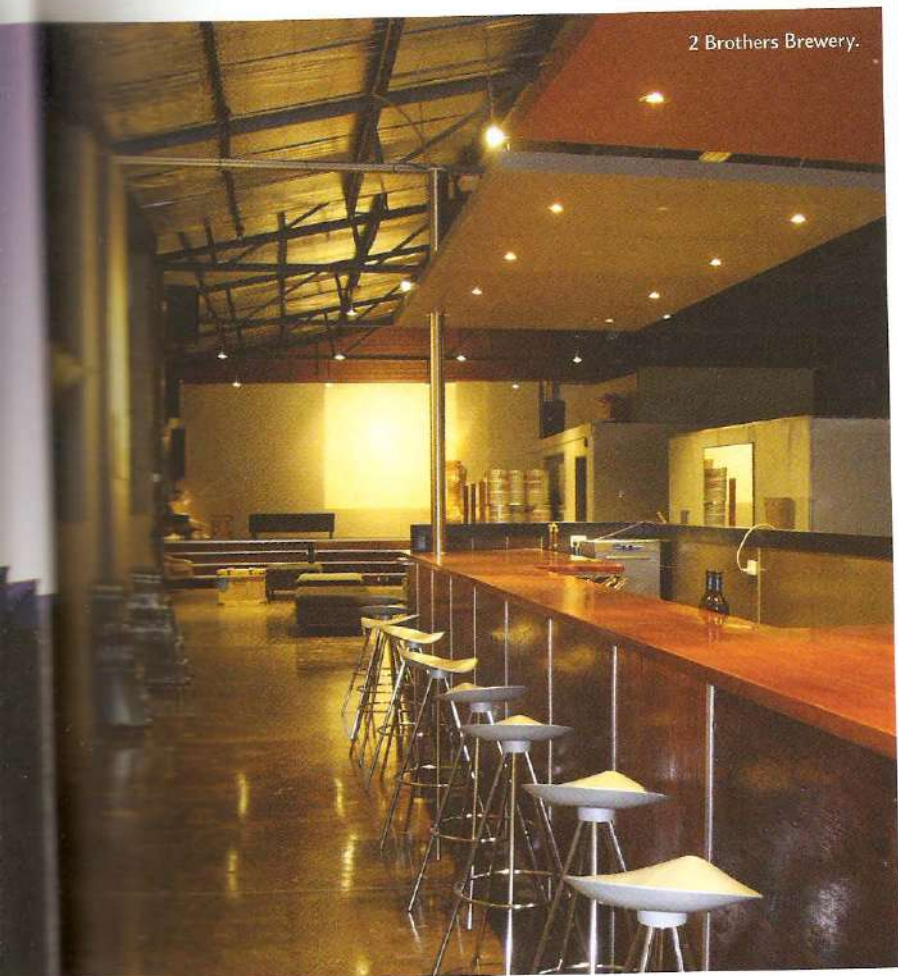
It was only a matter of time before someone realised that the picturesque Yarra Valley had more than just

wineries on offer. Those smart lads at Scruffy Bunch Tours saw the emergence of microbreweries in the area and have created a Microbrewery Tour designed especially for beer lovers... and the word is out. The tour starts in the city, and then visits an inner suburban brewery before heading to the Yarra Valley area, where brewers are happy to take visitors in and explain the process of developing great boutique beer. Lunch, especially chosen to complement the beer, is also supplied. Included in the price is the chance to sample around 30 beers. Not a bad effort that. *For bookings and more info, phone (03) 9589 4932 or visit scruffybunch.com.au.*

Moorabbin magic

Speaking of beer, brothers Andrew and Dave Ong have just completed building the 2 Brothers Brewery in

2 Brothers Brewery.



the southern suburb of Moorabbin. Despite creating some wonderful brews, and providing an ideal place in which to drink them, wait till you hear the story how it all began.

After searching far and wide for suitable brewing equipment, they eventually struck gold at the bankrupt Times Square Brewery in New York. It then took over a year transporting and setting it up in Moorabbin (can you imagine trying to transport huge vats out of New York City?).

A long way to come from but as you sit on the long wooden bar, drinking excellent beer straight from the vats, you'll see it's been worth it.

The brewery is open Thursdays and Fridays with free tours are conducted at 7pm.

For more information see 2brothers.com.au or ph (03) 9553 1177.

Fly-in fun

The people at Big Blue Air Touring

are flying high after introducing a new helicopter division, which offers three great day packages out of Melbourne. A brand new Robinson 44 chopper awaits those that what to experience the very best of golf, spa, wine and horse riding.

The "Max Day" tour includes the pick of Victoria wineries where you can visit the best of Yarra Valley's wineries before flying to the Mornington Peninsula's emerging vineyards. A horse ride along St Andrews beach followed by a three-hour pampering at Peninsula Hot springs isn't a bad way to end the day.

The "He says, She says" tour lets one passenger enjoy 18 holes of golf while their partner relaxes at a premium spa. The "Pure Golf" package is a golfer's dream where the passenger gets to visit and play on two of Victoria's best golf courses.

For further information, visit bigblueairtouring.com.

what's the buzz

IN TASMANIA

Winged wonder

Cantilevered over the northwest coast is the newly opened The Winged House in Table Cape. Designed by architect Richard Goodwin, winner of Australia's Bondi Sculpture by the Sea 2003, the house looks something like a plane about to take off from the cliff. There is a Japanese bath, a gourmet kitchen and 180-degree views from inside. The owners describe the place as a major contribution to sustainable eco-tourism. The Winged House is just 10 minutes from the Burnie/Wynyard airport. Midweek rates from \$350 per night. Two nights on weekends from \$750. Visit thewingedhouse.com.

Whisky wonders

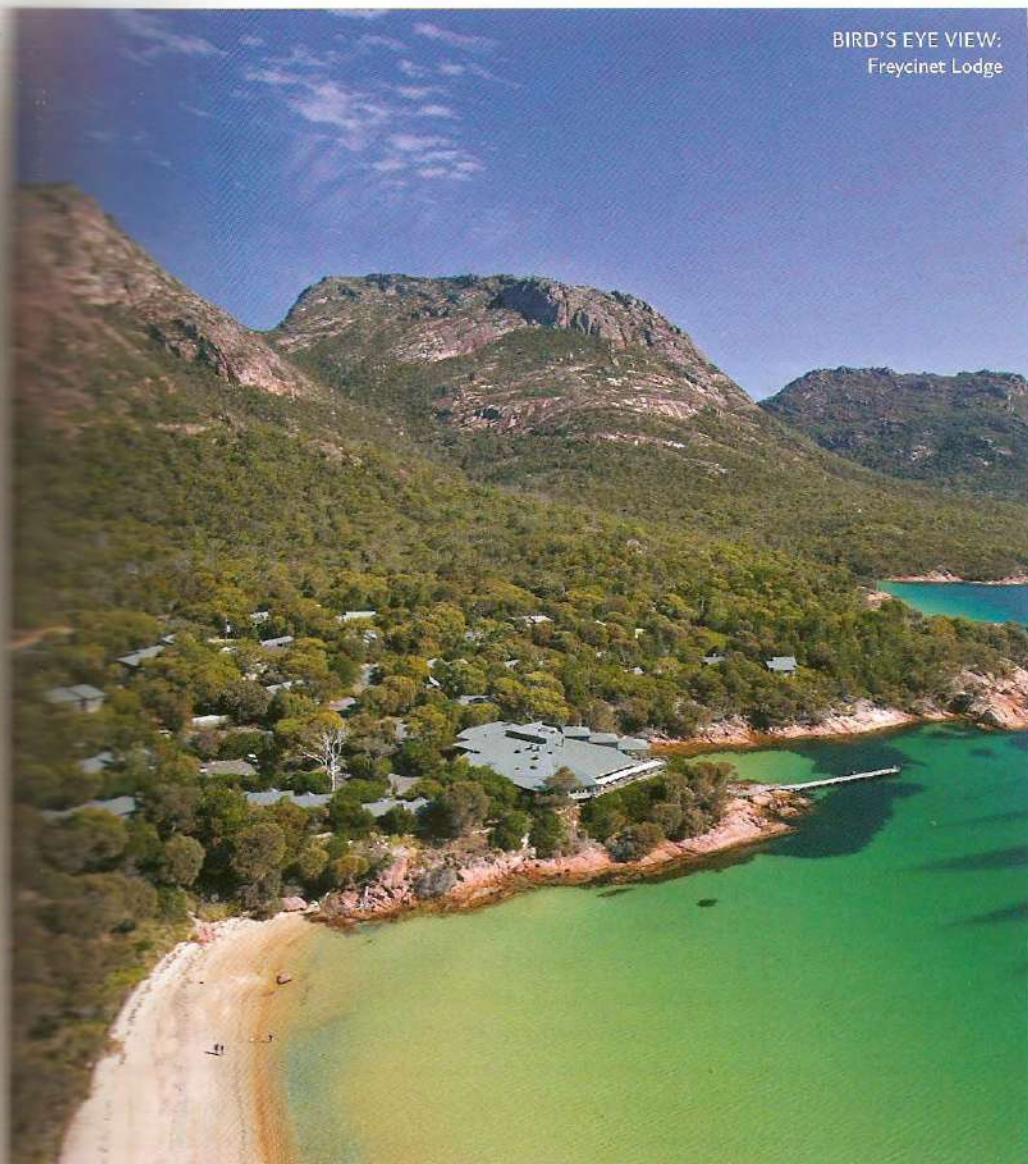
On this new four-day tour you become the distiller. Whisky aficionados and the just plain curious can experience every aspect of the whisky maker's art. Lark's guest distillers even travel to the Tasmanian Central Highlands and dig their own blocks of peat from the Lark (peat) bog. In fact, every element in the time-honoured tradition of single malt whisky production is seen and experienced – the peat, smoking the malted barley, fermenting, distilling, and filling an oak barrel. In something of a considerable option, guests can select a special 20-litre oak cask at the cooperage and have it filled with the 65 percent proof whisky they have helped nurture. The people at Lark Distillery believe that there is no tour like this anywhere

in the world. Visit larkdistillery.com/tours for more details.

Grand entry

Southern Tasmania's newest boutique hotel, the D'Entrecasteaux, has also opened. The French provincial-style hotel at Howden includes a private dining room, 10 accommodation suites, an indoor heated pool, balconies for most rooms and a foyer with a suitably grand staircase. Many of the rooms have views over North-West Bay toward the D'Entrecasteaux Channel. All the furniture is either custom made or antique and the Tower Suite includes a claw-foot bath. The hotel, just 15 minutes from Hobart, will have a personal chef. Breakfast is included in the tariff and

Experience every aspect of the whisky maker's art at Lark's.



Three course meals are available at one day's notice. Free wireless Internet is also available for guests and spa and massage treatments will be available in the pool area. The owner managers John and Sheryl Bullock have spent more than \$3 million overhauling the property.

Call (03) 6267 1161 for more details.

Country classic

Tasmania's newest fishing lodge has now opened. After a year of renovations, the circa 1847 house has been reborn with just four luxurious bedrooms. The Priory Country Lodge is in historic of Bothwell, one hour north of Hobart.

Bothwell is a gateway to the central highlands and fly fishing country.

Beyond the bedrooms the Priory has a library, hunt room, dining, reading and movie rooms, a barbecue area and an outdoor infrared sauna. The manager lives off site but is the property's host and chef.

The Priory offers a refined country experience. It is perfect for those who are looking to blend luxury

with hunting and fishing. Visit thepriorycountrylodge.com.au for more details.

Tassie hotels win Gold

Three Tasmanian hotels, Freycinet Lodge, Bay of Fires Lodge and the Henry Jones Art Hotel, have been chosen by *Condé Nast Traveller* as the best hotels in the world as a part of the magazine's 2008 Gold List awards.

The annual Gold List is a selection of the best hotels from around the world, voted by readers and the magazine's editors to have the best service, rooms, food, ambiance and design, location and leisure facilities. Freycinet Lodge was selected for the excellent food served at its two restaurants; the Bay of Fires Lodge for its spectacular coastal location; and the Henry Jones Art Hotel for its superbly appointed rooms.

To discover more about these top hotels visit:

freycinetlodge.com.au

thehenryjones.com

bayoffires.com.au 55