

# Lorne by Mustang

THE GREAT OCEAN ROAD HAS NEVER BEEN GROOVIER, AS OUR WRITER DISCOVERS ON A BOHEMIAN-INSPIRED DAY-TRIP.

WORDS KRISTIE HAYDEN



Stopping to take in the view.

Her name's Betty, and she's beautiful. Her white soft-top's down and her six cylinders roar as driver Shayne Cunningham puts the pedal to her shiny metal, compelling the 1966 Mustang "Pony" forward in a toffee-apple red flash, her engine reverberating deep into the eardrums, and reaching for my soul. As the first car Ford explicitly marketed to women, it's no wonder I'm in what car enthusiasts call Pony love.

This is Betty's maiden voyage down Victoria's Great Ocean Road from new Geelong-based touring company Mustang & Co. And since I'm feeling nostalgic, we head for the former bohemian playground of Lorne. Famed for its packed beaches, restaurants and 196-metre pier slicing into Louttit Bay, Lorne also has proud foundations in the many artists and hippies who peppered the seaside village in the 1960s. Now home to several festivals on the national arts calendar, Lorne houses an enduring creative community inspired by vintage surf culture and the wildlife-packed Otway Ranges that wrap the inlet in a giant hug.

From Geelong, it's only an hour to Lorne but we stop half way, cruising into Aireys Inlet's Split Point Lighthouse precinct. While Betty lounges in the shade, we follow the Lighthouse Discovery Trail for spectacular views of limestone cliffs and a turquoise marine sanctuary under a holiday blue sky. The still functioning lighthouse (circa 1891) stands 34m high and sits 70m above sea level. Locals call her The White Queen. We could stay all day, exploring the rock pools at her base or spiralling up the cast iron staircase to tour the lantern room, but another lady awaits so we settle for scones and tea at historic Willows Teahouse before reuniting with Betty.

Drifting into Lorne, Cunningham pats the dash tenderly, declaring: "She liked that road." Just a click up the hill, in a canopy of dense bush, we visit Qdos Arts, a gallery, café, accommodation and sculpture garden described as "a complete respite for creative souls". The open-air sculpture park is a eucalyptus-scented oasis – away from Lorne's bustling foreshore. Strolling the gardens, I view a family of figurines guarding the pond. A kookaburra perches on the

patriarch, regarding me with interest; a wiry human, wind-smacked face and big horizontal hair. It was the convertible, I chirp.

Qdos owner and local artist Graeme Wilke says Lorne has attracted both professional and amateur painters, photographers and musicians since the mid-20th-century. Modern artists exhibiting under Qdos's lofty ceilings are offering "a fresh spin on our littoral edge," he adds.

After a peaceful lunch on the shaded deck, we head back to the village for a trip down memory lane.

Lorne-based writer and historian, Murray Wadding, sells a vibrant collection of beach-party posters and vintage-themed gifts in beachside shop Wild on the Beach, and his photographic archives are a window to the birth of Aussie surf culture.

I walk along the strand, where unique shops from art galleries to boutiques are reason enough to visit Lorne. But it's the Arab restaurant, open since 1956, where I stop for coffee and soak up some beatnik vibes. Murray remembers the photographers,

musicians and artists who clogged this place. "(It) boasted a juke box and a small hissing chrome contraption, part boiler and part fighter jet, which produced a new fangled coffee called cappuccino. It was frequented by beatniks, bohemians and sun-freckled beachgoers, who spent the chilly summer nights listening to live folk and jazz with a touch of beat poetry thrown in for good measure."

Bidding farewell to the sparkling ocean, we're soon swallowed by the Otway Ranges on the inland route back to Geelong. The twisting road pierces a mass of gums, dead-straight soldiers guarding the deep valley to our right. As bends give way to vast open farmland, we enter Otway Harvest Trail territory. Here, the ancient volcanic plains serve up some of Australia's finest harvests. From summer berry-picking to cellar doors, The Trail Map guides visitors to the cream of the region's crop.

But it's just 16-kilometres from Geelong where the day ends in beers. Mt Duneed Estate, housing the Pettavel Road Brewing Company, is a place Betty knows well, rarely galloping past without dropping in and treating passengers to the latest small-batch craft beers, ciders, wines and epicurean platters. I straighten my hair and pull my face together as the vineyard turns sunset-peach and we re-mount Betty gratefully for the final leg home. •

## TRAVEL FACTS

### ✈ Getting there

Geelong is 83km from Melbourne Tullamarine Airport (domestic and international terminals) and 22km from Avalon Airport (domestic Jetstar only). Shuttle transfers to Geelong CBD and hire car facilities are available from both airports.

### 🏠 Stay at

The Novotel, for point-blank Geelong waterfront views: [@ www.novotelgeelong.com.au](#)

### 🍴 Eat at

Local taste trails showcase internationally renowned produce from the region's rich volcanic plains and ocean offerings tended by a unique maritime climate. For maps, go to:

- [@ www.otwayharvesttrail.org.au](#)
- [@ www.bellarinetastetrail.com.au](#)
- [@ www.mtduneedestate.com.au](#)

### 📍 More info

[@ www.lorneartsfestival.com.au](#); [@ www.wildonthebeach.com.au](#); [@ www.qdosarts.com](#)

Mustang & Co is a chauffeur driven service for up to four passengers, aged seven up, from four hours to full day tours. Pick up and drop off anywhere in the Geelong region, Bellarine Peninsula, Surf Coast or Otway Ranges [@ www.mustangrental.com.au](#)