



COME AS YOU ARE - LEAVE A LITTLE DIFFERENT.

# PORT CAMPBELL

KEERRAY WOOROONG COUNTRY • GREAT OCEAN ROAD • VICTORIA, AUSTRALIA

Sunset at the Twelve Apostles lived on my phone, and rent free in my head, long before Australia did. A saved image, quietly persuasive. Pale limestone rising from a restless ocean, light doing something generous and impossible.

When Eric and I talked about leaving Singapore, *“that picture”* was looked at more than job sites. *“If we can drive from Melbourne to that,”* I’d said once, scrolling. Eric nodded and smiled.

Employment in Melbourne sealed the deal. Port Campbell underpinned it.

Which is how we find ourselves driving through a kaleidoscope of green, on the second day of our first Great Ocean Road trip. A suggested playlist fuelling our childlike outbursts of wonder. Morning light slipping through the rainforest canopy reward for our 8 am check-out.

I’m surprised when Eric, who insisted on driving, passes the empty Gibson Steps car park without slowing. My flicker of disappointment is replaced by anticipation when Eric clears his throat in that casual, over-rehearsed way.

*“I made a booking.”*  
I squint. *“For what?”*  
He points.  
The helicopter sits there like it’s been waiting for us.  
*“Oh no,”* I laugh. *“You didn’t.”*  
*“I did,”* he says, radiant. *“We deserve this.”*

The staff at 12 Apostles Helicopters are calm and kind, clearly experienced in managing people having mild emotional revelations. Doors closed. Rotors whirring. The pilot smiles, and then we lift.

From above, the coastline cracks open. The ocean darkens, the Apostles rise cleanly out of it, ancient and unreadable. Light slides across stone exactly as imagined. Tiny figures walk the beach below, the one I had long dreamed of walking on.

*“This,”* I say softly, *“is beyond belief.”*  
Eric grins. *“Worth the secrecy?”*  
I nod. *“I forgive everything.”*

“  
I feel impossibly  
small and  
completely calm.”

Back on the ground, something has shifted. Perspective will do that. I step onto what I now know is Keerray Wooroong Country and pull Eric into the first hug of the rest of our lives. Then we set off to explore what we’ve just seen from the sky.

Nothing, not even a helicopter, could prepare us for Gibson Steps Beach. Wet sand mirrors the sky. Sea stacks rise sharply from the water adorned by the same textured limestone layers of the dizzying vertical cliff face. I feel impossibly small and completely calm.

Island Arch, the Razorback, Muttonbird Island, and the unforgettable Poombeeyt Koontapool “Breath of the Whale” lookout punctuate the morning with awe. Emojis fill gaps where words fail.



Port Campbell reveals itself gently. We wander in from the edge of town, appetite heightened by sea air and excitement. Cafés spill warmth and aroma onto the footpath; lunch comes early.

After Melbournesque coffee and a lingering meal, we check into Anchors Port Campbell and agree to do nothing very quickly. Shoes off. Bags dropped. The bath and book with ocean view must wait; there's still more coastline calling.

London Bridge delivers drama, wave wet limestone glistens, mist sharp on our faces. The Grotto draws everything inward. A pool below, perfectly framed by light.

"This one whispers," I tell Eric. He nods, transfixed.

At the Bay of Islands, the horizon stretches long and unconcerned. We sit in silence, the good kind, as the ocean works steadily, hypnotically.

Back in town, Port Campbell works its quiet magic. The Discovery Walk wraps us in stories and salt air. On the foreshore and jetty, we stand still and watch the water move. No apps. No schedule. Just wind, sea, and presence.

Golden hour returns us to the Apostles. Light softens. Stone glows. Voices drop instinctively. I send carefully chosen photos and voice notes layered with temptation to those that matter most.

*You need to see this.  
Come visit.  
Soon.*

“  
...sometimes the best thing a place can do is gently hand you back to yourself.”

Dinner feels earned. At REAL Pizza, Pasta and Salads, blistered dough and handmade beetroot pasta shine. I laugh mid-bite as Eric excitedly recounts our day to Kylie, the chef and owner.

"The flavours are sublime," he says. "That's the aim," she smiles. "Let the ingredients speak."  
"Not the boyfriend," I add. We all laugh.

At Barrels Bar, glasses clink. Someone nearby toasts "to weekends that actually feel like weekends." Eric joins without hesitation.

We wake early for morning light and new trails. Breakfast at Waves Port Campbell delivers silky Hollandaise, locally smoked bacon, and excellent coffee. We stay for another cup without checking the time.

Packing happens slowly.

"I'm not sad we're leaving," I say. "Just grateful we came."

Eric nods. "I need a little longer."

We fill our hamper driving north through Timboon and Camperdown, past volcanic lakes and rolling peaks, calmer and more energised than when we arrived. I know we'll be back, with friends, with family, with anyone who needs reminding that sometimes the best thing a place can do is gently hand you back to yourself.

Port Campbell does that beautifully.

**MAIN PHOTO:** Enjoying the sunshine from the Mutton Bird Island West Lookout  
**ON PAGE 3 - 4 CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT:** Exploring Loch Ard Gorge trails, aerial view of Port Campbell, dinner at REAL Pizza, Pasta and Salads, sunset session at the Twelve Apostles, picnic on the foreshore, and Poombeeyt Koontapool "Breath of the Whale" lookout