

# THE WANDERER

AUSTRALIA'S LARGEST RV CLUB MAGAZINE

## All Aussie Adventures

*Swimming with sharks and jumping out of perfectly good airplanes*



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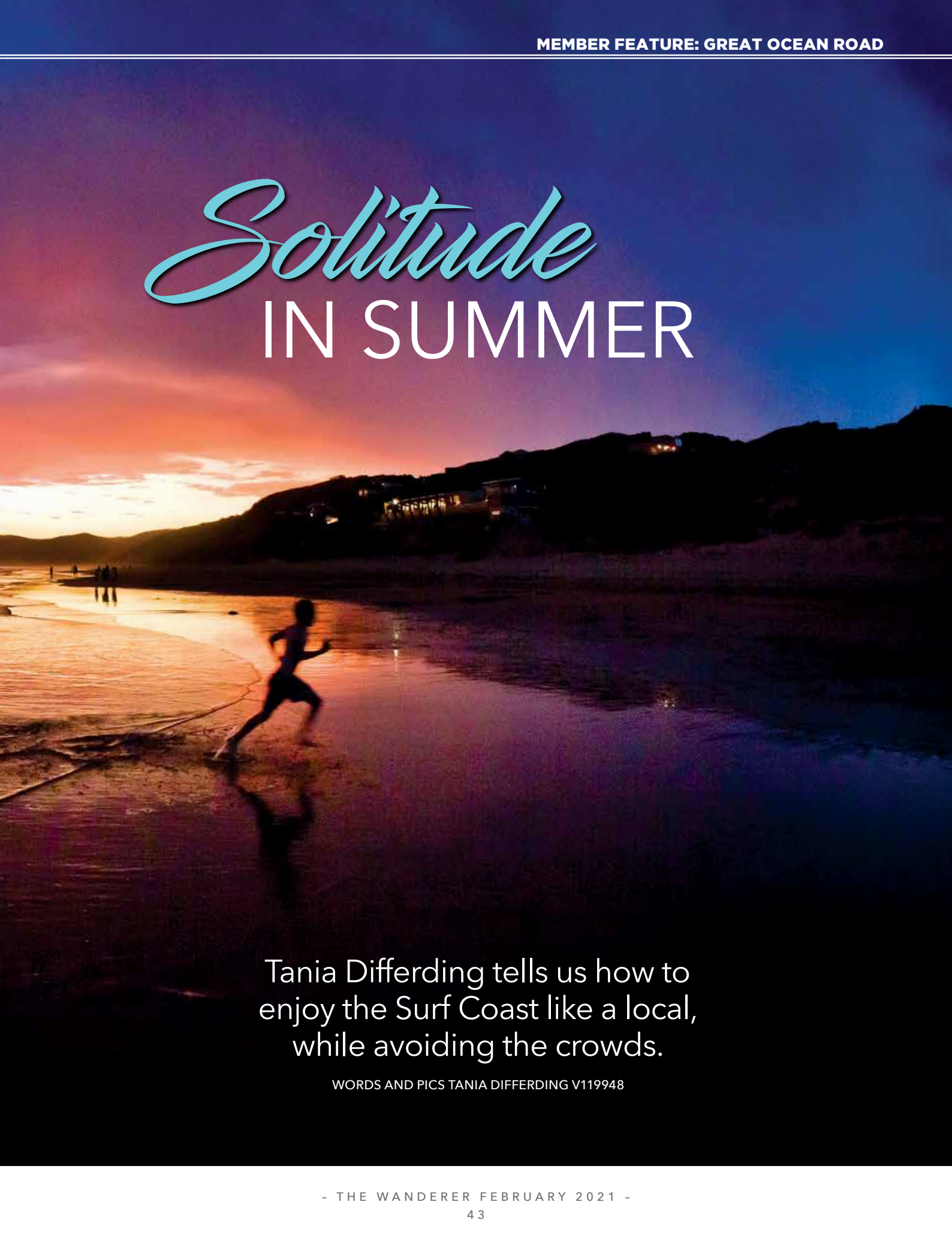
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# *Solitude* IN SUMMER

A person is running on a beach at sunset. The sky is a mix of orange, pink, and blue. The ocean is calm, and the beach is wet, reflecting the colors of the sky. In the background, there are hills with some buildings lit up.

Tania Differding tells us how to enjoy the Surf Coast like a local, while avoiding the crowds.

WORDS AND PICS TANIA DIFFERDING V119948

**I**t's the first week of January, and I'm sitting virtually alone on a perfect summer's day at Sunnymeade Beach in Aireys Inlet on the Great Ocean Road. That's right, I'm smack bang in the middle of the craziest busy school holiday accommodation charging peak rates time of the year and I'm more than smug. I'm a local. And at times like these I'm damn thankful for living in one of the most beautiful parts of the world and knowing where to go when the hordes of tourists descend.

Torquay, the start of the Great Ocean Road, has had a population boom in recent years growing from 14,879 in 2012 to 20,167 in 2019. Love it or hate it, one thing's for sure, there are more new cafes and restaurants than I can count, and I'm not complaining! More people however, means more people, with queues even on weekdays — who knew so many people love brunch!



*Clockwise from above: The Great Ocean Walk provides spectacular views; The little one needed a helping hand on the Koorie Cultural Walk in Torquay; Up early to beat the crowds at Torquay; Surf Coast Beaches have some quiet spots*

**PLACES TO GO**

Torquay now has two industrial estates which are home to a couple of great cafes frequented by locals, that you won't have to queue up to get into, even on a weekend. Ocean Grind, in the new industrial estate (behind Bunnings), has become a bit of an institution with its table tennis table, hipsters on laptops sipping coffees in op shop mugs, all in an uber cool concrete warehouse. They brew their own coffee and supply many local hospitality businesses.

If you're after something a bit cosier, Amitie Textiles, in the old industrial estate (behind the surf shops), has its own everything-made-in-house cafe with a vibe that mixes grandmas lounge room with hipster cool. They also run a range of sewing workshops and sell loads of cute and funky textile fabrics sourced from all around the world.

Another great local cafe in the old industrial estate, Monkey's Uncle and their more recent offshoot Ginger Monkey (a few doors

down) are well run with friendly staff, great food with a veg/vegan specialty and surf town vibes. That's the thing here, when you rely on locals to survive, you've got to be great!

Still in Torquay, Blackman's Brewery on Bell Street is owned by award-winning beer brewing locals and has a new-to-Australia Italian chef who does the most authentic Italian food you'll have without boarding a plane. They also do the best burgers in town if that's your thing.





## FAST FACTS

Torquay (the start of the Great Ocean Road) is a 1 hour and 15-minute drive from Melbourne.

Avalon airport runs flights with Jetstar to Adelaide, Hobart, Sydney and the Gold Coast and is a 40-minute drive from Torquay.

*Clockwise from above: Out and about and having fun; The rough surf around Port Campbell; Kookaburra Lodge is a hidden gem; Ocean Grind is popular with the locals; Sunnymeade Beach is another hidden beach*



If you're having trouble braving the crowds for a coffee in Anglesea, head out of 'town' only a minute to Anglesea's tiny industrial estate which houses Poppie's Nursery and Cafe and the best setting for your breaky, lunch or coffee and cake — a beautiful plant filled nursery. Be warned, the mouth-watering array of home-made cakes will have you coming back for a second visit!

A further 15 minutes down the road you'll hit Airey's Inlet. With a population of only 800, this tiny town has five breathtaking beaches (way too many for the locals to enjoy alone!). Airey's beaches are great if you've got kids, as there are loads of rockpools, caves, interesting rock formations and at The Inlet there's, well, exactly that, a calm inlet for the littlies.

And if you must sit completely alone on a long white sand beach, drive a minute past Airey's and find a spot at Fairhaven, the Great Ocean Road's longest beach. At 6.4km long you're bound to find your own private piece of paradise no matter what time of year it is.

Still at Airey's Inlet, if bushwalking's your thing head to Angahook State Park for the 11.6km Currawong Falls loop. It's beautiful any time of the year, and as you won't run into loads of people, it's also a great secluded picnic spot.

### GETTING OUT AND ABOUT

If you need to walk off all of that amazing food, the 2km return Koorie Cultural Walk at Point Addis, just five minutes from Torquay, is a great family friendly bushwalk with loads of benches in breathtaking spots for your packed lunch break.

If you're hiking inclined, the Koorie Cultural Walk joins up to the Ironbark Basin Walk, an 8km coastal track that'll wind you around Bells Beach, Southside and Addiscot Beach, all arguably some of the world's best surfing beaches.

Fifteen minutes down the road,

Anglesea has one of the best coastal bush campgrounds in the area. Even better, it's on Anglesea Beach and within walking distance to everything in town so you won't have to worry about car parks or traffic.

A great local tip while in Anglesea is to cross the Great Ocean Road and visit Coogoorah Park. It's a beautiful spot and the countless waterways and boardwalks make it perfect for a bushwalk or fishing if that's your thing. If you are with kids, then this spot's also worth a visit for the great Pirate Ship Playground or a relaxed BBQ.



## MEMBER FEATURE: GREAT OCEAN ROAD

### KEEP GOING

Further down the road, just before Apollo Bay is the Surf Coast's best kept secret (that will even get this die-hard camper to pay for 'accommodation' just for the experience).

For something special, Kookaburra Lodge is like stepping into a rainbow/fairy wonderland/beautifully curated hippy festival. Perfect for a romantic couple's weekend or a family holiday with kids, there are Shetland Ponies, a resident talking cockatoo, multiple sunset viewing points, a cute pool and, best of all, your own private

beach, Petticoat Creek.

Opened by Lesley over 30 years ago and still run by her and her two friendly (adult) kids, this place has to be seen to be believed. At about \$300 a night for a cottage, it's the best value accommodation you'll stay in all year.

If camping's more your thing the Apollo Bay Recreational Reserve and Camping Ground doesn't look like much chop from the street but there are river front sites which are definitely worth booking in advance. Another great thing about this location is it's only a 10-minute walk from the pub!

If you've got more time, there's loads more to explore down the road, but now we're getting into true tourist country with the likes of the 12 Apostles and quite a few 'Don't forget to drive on the left side of the road in Australia' road signs. So, if it's solitude you seek, you'll find it, ironically, closer to Melbourne and often in an industrial estate.

A small side note if you love books, Torquay Books, Great Escape Books in Aireys Inlet and Lorne Beach Books are three of the best and worth a road trip in themselves. Be warned though, leave with an empty boot and little luggage! 🚗



*Clockwise from left: Deck view from Kookaburra Lodge; This coastal scenery is breathtaking; Inside, the lodge is bright and colourful*

