

## Spotlight: Wye River Holiday Park



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This bush and beach oasis is not as big or popular as other Great Ocean Road hotspots, but well worth a stop-off

A friend of mine has fond memories of surfing holidays at Wye River, a tiny hamlet that enjoys the natural beauty of the Otway Ranges along with the coastal appeal of the Great Ocean Road, in one idyllic location.

As a free-lovin', panel van driving dude of the 1970s, he'd grab his surfboard and sleeping bag and head off from Melbourne for the Wye River campgrounds, located just metres from where the surf rolled in.

The old foreshore camping reserve is still there, with powered sites and toilet facilities, but it's the Big4 Wye River Holiday Park on the other side of the Great Ocean Road that today provides the most comfortable, budget options for families and the odd 'grey nomad' surfer.

Run by Matt and Leanne Travers and their competent team, the Wye River Park is situated on 25 acres in a lush valley, with mountain backdrop, trickling creek, and enticing beach cove just near the entrance.

Everything from tents to large motorhomes are catered for on the expansive, grassy campgrounds, with 130 powered and unpowered sites available, as well as concreted ensuite sites and the usual array of cabins including a luxury beach house.

Wye River is 160km, or just over two hours drive from Melbourne, and while popular tourist hot spots like Anglesea and Lorne get most of the attention along the GOR, it's worth dropping your tent pegs at this 'blink-or-you'll-miss-it' bush/beach oasis for at least a night or two...

#### GRASSIN' ABOUT

With plenty of grassy, open spaces around the camp sites, there's plenty of scope to let the kids run safely free and be entertained for hours.

When they tire of that, the young ones (and the young at heart) are also well catered for with a giant jumping pillow, adventure playground, go karts, canoes and a rec room.

Much to our two kids' delight, our two-night stay included plenty of interaction with local wildlife, from very friendly parrots and ducks (and ducklings), to sleeping koalas in the nearby Eucalypt trees.

In fact, if you want to get up close to koalas the Wye River area is almost a sure bet, and at a nearby breeding ground we were delighted to spot two mothers and their babies. The caravan park also had a few resident koalas.

Access to the park for guests is via a security gate, and there's a strict ban on excessive noise beyond 10pm to keep it family-friendly.

The camp kitchen is well set up with lounges, kids' books, grille, big fridge and freezer, and pay-per-view internet kiosk.

The general store out the front of the park is good for topping up supplies, and gourmands will appreciate two excellent eating spots within strolling distance, including a first-class cafe which adjoins the general store, and an upmarket pub serving a great range of beers a few more steps up the hill.

While offering fairly pricey but decent pub grub, a meal here is worth it with some great views across the beach cove, and there's some quaint old photos on the pub's wall depicting the Wye River township in the early part of last century.

It was too wet and soggy during our visit to contemplate bush walks with young kids in tow, but there are some interesting and fairly easy walks in the vicinity including one to the nearby Sheoak Falls.

Two nights in this relaxing haven were not enough, and we vowed to return as we pulled our motorhome back onto the GOR and headed back to Melbourne.

As we cruised back along the famous coastal road, the chorus from that catchy travelling song by '70s rock giants Cold Chisel came to mind, albeit with a twist:

"First thing you know I'll be back in (Wye) River again..."

#### BIG4 WYE RIVER HOLIDAY PARK

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