



Autumn Newsletter 2007

New discovery tour to attract global market

TOUR operators around the world will soon be selling Cape Otway Lightstation as a destination in its own right.

The Lightstation is breaking into a new tourism sector by offering two-hour discovery tours which will include a one-hour 4WD tour into the Great Otway National Park taking in beauty spots and sites which have special significance to the lighthouse.

Among the tour highlights will be a visit to Parker River inlet, which is where lighthouse supplies were originally landed, and the nearby quarry site where stone was carved into giant building blocks for the 1848 lighthouse.

Did you know?

LOSS of life was heavy on August 24, 1857 when the SS Lady Bird collided with the English 229 ton steamer Champion, cutting a gaping hole in the hull above the saloon.

Most of the Champion's passengers were in bed at the time and a total of 32 drowned. After searching for an hour the Lady Bird returned to Geelong; only the fore-castle bulkhead saved her from sinking as her bow plates were badly damaged along with her bowsprit and cutwater.

Survivors told many tragic stories, however on a lighter note, the Second Mate of the Lady Bird rescued the stewardess of the Champion and they were later married.

A racehorse aboard the Champion broke loose and swam seven miles to the shore. The horse made such a good recovery he went on to race again in the Western District. (Source: Shipwrecks of Victoria)

For more amazing Cape Otway shipwreck stories visit our website at www.lightstation.com. Better still, come and enjoy a tour with our experienced guides.

Tourists will also get to explore Blanket Bay where the stone chimney ruins of an old lightstation storage shed can be found, along with the rotting timbers of a jetty where lighthouse supplies were brought ashore.

Visitors will also learn about the local ecology and the lives and times of the Lightkeepers.

The second hour of the guided tour will be dedicated to discovering the iconic lighthouse, telegraph station, and the World War Two radar bunker used to track Japanese submarines.

It will culminate with a leisurely morning or afternoon tea in the Lightkeeper's

Café, where guests can enjoy the history and the view. The Discovery Tour package could also be extended with overnight accommodation in the historic lightkeepers' cottages.

Lightstation manager Paul Thompson said the Lightkeeper's Discovery Tour would be sold to international travel wholesalers, with commission on offer to agents.

He said it was the first time the Lightstation had a tourism product which could be pre-sold either overseas, interstate or at locations like the visitor information centre in Melbourne's Federation Square.



Whale of a time for locals

EVERY resident in Colac Otway Shire will be invited to the Lightstation for free from May.

Lightstation manager Paul Thompson said the locals pass would be launched to coincide with the return of the whales. Locals are invited to climb the lighthouse and stand on the observation deck to watch the Southern Rights, Minkes, Humpbacks and maybe even Blue Whales at play where the Southern Ocean meets the Bass Strait.

"The free pass is an acknowledgement

of the fact that the local people have supported the Lightstation over the years, so now as the local landmark we want to give something back," Paul said.

"It's a good will gesture so people can come down here and take a fresh look at the heritage precinct and all the improvements we've made in the last year."

Adult entry is usually \$12.50 and children are \$6. People claiming a locals' pass will need to show a driver's license as proof of their residency in the shire.

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Highlight of the Great Ocean Road - Café Tours Accommodation Events Schools

Stage winners, and overall second place getters, Darren Clarke and Guy Andrews claim victory at the lighthouse.



Light at end of a punishing day

THE lighthouse became a beacon of hope for shipwrecks of a thoroughly modern variety when extreme sports stars paddled, swam, rode and ran from Port Campbell to Cape Otway in the inaugural Keen Adventure Race.

Many of the 28 extreme sportsmen and women, from six countries, began the first stage of their epic, five-day journey by becoming wrecked during a 16km ski paddle in punishing surf at dawn between the Bay of Islands and Port Campbell.

They followed up with a 20 km mountain bike leg, a technical 6km run/orienteering leg, a 17km river paddle, another 25km bike ride, a testing 18km "coasteering" run and a final 13km bike ride to the finish line at Cape Otway Lightstation.

Making it to the lighthouse wasn't quite enough, they had to sprint up the historic spiral staircase and hang over the observation deck to make their final

checkpoint for the day, and sprint back downstairs to the start of the lighthouse path to complete their punishing day.

Race organiser Ben Hahnel said the fastest team clocked in at the lighthouse in just under 10 hours at 5pm, and the slowest arrived just after 2am.

Stage two of the adventure race was equally gruelling with a course that snaked from Apollo Bay to Blanket Bay, the Otway Fly, a 50km ride and a 20km paddle to the Fairhaven finish line.

Ben said although the Keen Adventure Race, held in mid March, is destined to become an annual event it may not follow the same course next year.

However, he said contestants were so blown away by the stunning coastal scenery and the challenges thrown at them by the diverse landscapes of the Otways and the Great Ocean Road region, they now hope to stage an annual one-day event focusing on the Cape Otway Lightstation.

INTERNATIONAL visitor Helena Ho was so impressed with this shot of her at Cape Otway she emailed it to the Lightstation. The picturesque precinct is the subject of countless thousands of photos each year. Tourists can't believe their luck when kangaroos, koalas or whales appear as if on cue for photo opportunities.

Some of the best happy snaps and artistic photographs appear on our website (www.lightstation.com). Send us your favourite lighthouse shot, contemporary or something from the family album to keeper@lightstation.com

She's got the whole tower in her hands...



'Awesome' camp wins kids seal of approval



KIDS from all over Victoria are queuing up to take on the Quest Skills for Life challenge by trying their luck as lightkeepers.

More than 1,000 primary and high school children are committed to excursions at the lightstation which are tailored to the individual schools' curriculum and the age of the children.

The programs, for children in years four to 12, last from two hours to five days.

They are strongly linked with the Great Otway National Park, Koori culture and history, communication technologies, geography, conservation and environment, plus the giant Pandora's

Box of local shipping disasters. Kids are fascinated by the trials and tribulations of the lightkeepers and their families.

In February alone more than 400 children visited the Lightstation with a group of 24 year six students from Geelong Grammar and 59 from Clifton Hill.

This is the second consecutive year Clifton Hill school has returned to the Lightstation with year four children.

Paul Thompson who heads up the program said The Quest equips young people with the

skills to understand their capabilities and the confidence to put them into action, through a variety of practical exercises and challenges in the field.

"Thank you so much for this AWESOME camp! Not even once were we bored!"

- written by a Geelong Grammar year 6 student



Postcards' Bridget McIntyre
(Photo courtesy Colac Herald)

Wish you were here

CHANNEL Nine's Postcards TV crew spent four hours filming at the Lightstation in March for a feature on the Otways which will go to air on Sunday, April 15, at 5:30pm.

Postcards presenter Bridget McIntyre and her crew were charmed by the Lightstation and surrounding heritage buildings including the Telegraph Station, Head Lightkeeper's House and the recently refurbished World War Two radar bunker.

The Lightstation is at the heart of the Great Ocean Walk, which is also expected to feature on the show, alongside Castle Cove, Triple Falls and Lake Elizabeth.

Postcards is dedicated to highlighting the best places to visit and things to do in Victoria.

IF you thought that last piece of flat-pack assembly furniture you bought was bad - spare a thought for the guys who have just taken apart, revamped and reassembled the top section of the Cape Otway Lighthouse.

"We refer to the lighthouse as the first Ikea nightmare that came out as a flat-pack from Britain in 1890," said Lightstation manager Paul Thompson who has just overseen an \$80,000 facelift of the iconic landmark.

"We don't have any original plans to go by, but the whole top section comes apart with a spanner and a screwdriver, so we unbolted everything and then numbered them so we knew how to put it back together," Paul said.

"They're all original components as far as we're aware."

Maintenance was a never-ending task for the traditional keepers who manned the light from 1848 to 1994.

The lighthouse has just undergone its eight to 10 year scheduled overhaul.

"We gutted the inside of the lantern room and took out the inner gantry where lightkeepers used to go up a ladder onto a walkway and around the lens so they could clean the glass," Paul said.

A total of 32 brass air vents have been restored as part of the refurbishment, the windows have been resealed and the entire 40 metre high lighthouse has been repainted brilliant white from the tip of its lightning conductor, weathervane and copper dome to the base of the tower.

The railings have been



Ship-shape and Bristol fashion

repainted lighthouse red. Paul said an exciting part of the project was having the light repaired.

"We'll be applying to the Australian Maritime Safety Authority to turn it on for International Lighthouse Weekend so it can take its rightful place as Cape Otway Lighthouse, taking over the job of the automated beacon."

The beacon replaced the

lighthouse in January 1994."

Mainland Australia's most significant lighthouse, which perches on 100 metre high sea cliffs overlooking the Bass Strait and Southern Ocean, is now ship-shape after being prepared for another eight years of maritime weather and the attentions of more than 80,000 domestic and international tourists each year.

International Lighthouse Weekend - 18th/19th August 2007



Discover the amazing history of the Cape's traditional owners, shipwrecks, the trials and tribulations of the colourful lighthouse keepers, the working of the light, our top secret World War connections, fascinating stories of the Telegraph Station, one of Australia's most intriguing UFO mysteries, and much more. Great fun for kids.

