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Into the woods

The Woods

📍 Ocean Grove, Victoria

🏠 2 guests, 1 bed, 1 bathroom
(Cabin One)

🏠 4 guests, 3 beds (1 pull-out),
1 bathroom (Cabin Two)

Host: Stephanie

To call Stephanie King a local would be an understatement. The owner and Host of the Bellarine Peninsula's coolest Airbnb cabin stay, The Woods, is a fourth-generation resident of Ocean Grove and knows this stretch of Victorian coastline better than anyone – even if it took a round-the-world trip to truly appreciate it.

"When I got home after a few years travelling, I remember going for a walk up to the Barwon Heads bluff, looking down over the sea and back across Ocean Grove. I thought, 'Oh, my God – this is just as amazing as everywhere that I've been,'" she says. "I saw my hometown in a new light and I thought it was too good not to share."

Stephanie's passion for this beautiful beachside town, just 90 minutes south-west of Melbourne, is palpable at her stylish cabin stay, where 100-year-old Bellarine yellow gums shade perennial gardens, generous lawns and private outdoor soaking tubs.

There are two cabins at The Woods, each with its own creature comforts. Cabin One is a couple's retreat, while Cabin Two sleeps up

to four guests. Both feature kitchenettes, split-system air-conditioning and heating, yoga mats, outdoor cooking facilities and an open-air clawfoot bath and shower, all finished with Stephanie's considered touches.

"I always fill the cabins with fresh greenery from the gum trees and other botanicals straight from the garden. To go with the bath, I make bath salts with rosemary from the garden and also a signature scent that I worked on with a perfumer."

In addition to an on-site tennis court, putt-putt golf green and firepit, guests will find thoughtful extras in their cabins, such as Nespresso machines, French flax linen sheets and dough ready for the outdoor pizza oven, the latter of which is best enjoyed at a certain time of evening.

"There's what I call magic hour, between about four and six o'clock in the afternoon. There's a spot in the garden you have the sun beaming down, while all the butterflies are flying around. It's gorgeous."



Eat and drink

"Basils Farm is one of my lunch favourites. It's a cute rustic house with this expansive veggie garden, great seafood and amazing views over Swan Bay," says Stephanie. "Merne at Lighthouse is a two-hatted modern Australian restaurant in nearby Drysdale. That's a special-occasion place; delicious, locally sourced food served in a grazing style."

Things to do

"First thing in the morning I'd head down the beach, a five-minute drive away, and go for a walk along the sand or do the rugged cliff-top walk that leads you to the Barwon Heads bluff. And the one place I tell people they can't miss is The Whiskery. They distill a gin there called Teddy & the Fox and they have an amazing cocktail list – it's a really fun daytime place to visit."

Stay a little longer

"If you've got more time up your sleeve, there's so much to do. Hire a board or have a surfing lesson with Go Ride a Wave. Take a paddleboard out on the Barwon River – it's flat and gorgeous. If you have a bit longer,

head down towards the Great Ocean Road. Lorne is about an hour from here and you can stop at Bells Beach or one of the little coastal towns along the way. The drive is just spectacular."



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Whale Song Oceanfront Escape

On the water's edge in sleepy Falmouth, north-east Tasmania, this rustic beach shack for four has an outdoor bath, a wood-burning fireplace and firepit, private deck spaces and expansive windows that look out to the ocean below.



My Sister & The Sea

This 1950s cottage was transported from Sweden to Marion Bay on South Australia's Yorke Peninsula, where sheltered coves meet the wilds of Dhillba Gauranda-Innes National Park. Spark up the fire then crack open a local red and a book on the daybed.



The Machinery Shed

Reworked into a luxurious nest for couples, this 1919-built shed is set into Logan Brae Orchards, the oldest in this part of the NSW Blue Mountains. At sundown, be in the treetop bath as birds sing themselves to sleep. In the dark, snuggle up around the firepit.

Nikole Ramsay; Marnie Hawson

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