

PEACEFUL CORNER

GIPPSLAND LAKES
VICTORIA

FOR water lovers, the Gippsland Lakes are truly paradise. From boating, to fishing, swimming, canoeing and kayaking, or simply enjoying the atmosphere of the picturesque lakeside towns of Metung, Raymond Island and Paynesville.

Travelling with my partner Clint and our daughter Charli, 6, our adventure kicks off in Lakes Entrance, where the Gippsland Lakes meet Bass Strait. As we drive into town, we stop for fresh seafood and snatch up a kilogram of prawns and a dozen oysters, then pop up our Jayco at the BIG4 Waters Edge Holiday Park.

After a relaxing night, we head half-an-hour down the road to heart of the Gippsland Lakes and one of the most magical places I've ever been.

The lakes span 400sq km, which is 10 times the size of Sydney Harbour. A protected area for the wetlands and their birdlife, there are plenty of spots to explore, including its two national parks that are only accessible by boat.

The village of Metung is tucked away like a well-kept secret. This charming town, steeped in rich boating history, is glistening as the morning sun rises over the water.

It feels like the world has slowed down as locals and



Simple pleasures by the water

The magic and charm of Metung captures the heart of Jennifer Adams as she sets sail on the Gippsland Lakes



holidaymakers are out enjoying its beauty. Some are tending to their boats or fishing down by the jetty, others are out for their morning walk.

The town is home to about 1200 people, with that number swelling into the thousands during the holiday season.

The village centre is pretty much made up of one main street, with cafes, restaurants, boutiques and the local pub

right on the water. All are filled with welcoming locals, including Ian, who runs the Visitor Information Centre.

He came here for a holiday 11 years ago, fell in love with the place and made the sea change from the city.

"It was the warm welcome I received every time I came here that attracted me to the place. Metung has a magic about it," Ian declares with a smile.

As he takes me for a walk down to the jetty, a pelican sits on top of the lamp post with not a care in the world.

The area is filled with treasures to visit, many are nestled in the surrounding bushland, including the jewellery studio "oneofftwo".

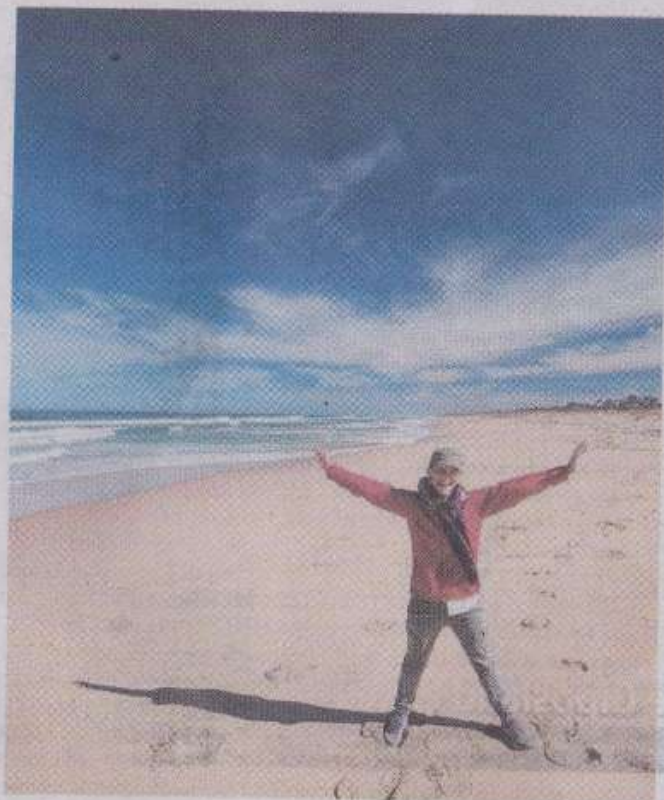
A dream come true for owners Marcus and his wife Dora who have been here making their unique jewellery,

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often inspired by their surroundings, for the past 20 years. It's a pleasure to look through their treasure chest of jewels, with every piece so passionately designed and produced.

Back down by the water, we jump on board a yacht with Riviera Nautic, for a day on the lakes with Cam and Sasha, who

made the move here from Melbourne a few years ago after buying the business.

They have a fleet of 12 charter boats, and cater for everyone from the inexperienced right through to experienced sailors.

Under a sunny blue sky, we leave the marina and sail out towards a place called Barrier



Landing, where we can get off and walk over the sand dunes to 90 Mile Beach.

We have just enough wind to put the sails up.

As Cam cuts the engine a silence takes over the boat. "This is what it's all about" Cam says. "All you can hear is the flap of the sails and the boat gliding through the water."

As we snake our way through the islands we keep our eyes peeled for Burrunan dolphins – a species unique to the lakes.

After only half-an-hour on the water, we pull into the jetty at Barrier Landing.

With a picnic basket filled with fresh rolls and muffins we head over the dune, and take



HIDDEN TREASURE: (clockwise from main) The tranquil waters of Gippsland Lakes; the writer on 90 Mile Beach; enjoy scenic views at Metung Pub; Tallowood Emporium in Metung; sailing with Riviera Nautic on Gippsland Lakes; and Clint Bizzel with Riviera Nautic owners Sasha and Cam and the writer.

our shoes off to feel the sand beneath our toes on spectacular 90 Mile Beach.

From the tranquillity of the lakes to the roar of the rolling waves, the mood shifts in an instant, and we find ourselves running along the straight stretch of sand that goes on as far as the eye can see.

There's not a person on the beach and we tempt fate by running close to the water's edge fully clothed. As the water crashes up our legs, we squeal with laughter and are taken straight back to our childhoods.

Spending time with Cam and Sasha, it's impossible to not be swept away in the beauty of

sailing on the magnificent Gippsland Lakes and for a moment it feels like we have stepped into their blessed life. Our day slips away too fast.

We head back to the jetty in Metung right on sunset, which is casting the same magic over the village that it did at dawn.

We join tradition and end our adventure at the Metung Hotel, watching the boats come in and the pelicans floating effortlessly in the water. Metung – what a treasure.

Places We Go travelled to the Gippsland Lakes as guests of Destination Gippsland. inspiredbygippsland.com.au