

# Good food glide

By Tim Richards

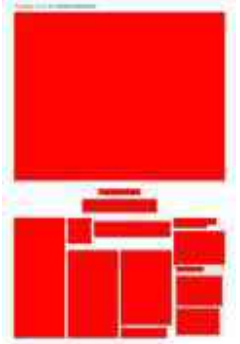
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DINING | VICTORIA

**It's simple to travel around Port Phillip Bay by using public transport, eating well along the way, writes Tim Richards.**

It's not often you catch a ferry to dinner but I'm doing so today. It's a good day to be out on Port Phillip Bay – the water off Sorrento is as flat as a pancake, a shimmering blue beneath a sunny sky.

As I stand on the deck of the Sorrento-Queenscliff Ferry, the norfolk pines and limestone buildings of the Mornington Peninsula settlement fall away, with the Bellarine Peninsula looming ahead. And it's there that my evening meal awaits. It's the first of a succession of great meals I'll be having as I travel clockwise around the bay by public transport.

I started my trek by catching a train from central Melbourne to the south-eastern bayside suburb of Frankston; then bus 788 to Sorrento. As the ferry progresses, we passengers cast our eyes upon the homes of the wealthy in Portsea and the buildings of the historic quarantine station further west.

On arrival in Queenscliff, I head to 360Q, a waterside restaurant with a view over the local marina. Its gleaming white dining room is open to the fresh air and the menu includes interesting items such as Viennoise crusted John Dory, flash-fried baby snapper and Portarlington mussels. I order the fenugreek spiced chicken curry with a side of Moroccan eggplant, after an entree of salted cod croquettes, and both are excellent.

Breakfast the next morning is at Queenscliff General Store, a former corner store with timber panelling and local art on the walls.

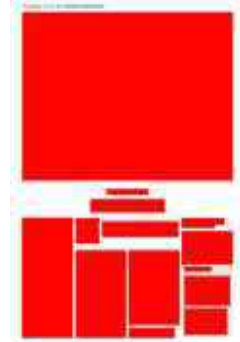
Its menu ranges from Turkish eggs with labneh to an okonomiyaki waffle and I enjoy the smashed avocado with Meredith goat's curd, shaved radish and dukkah. It's not your average smashed avo, with an explosion of healthy greens beside the poached egg.

After nosing around the shops on Hesse Street, it's time for lunch – and a return to the ferry terminal. Opened in April 2023, it's a sensational building with elongated wings drawing inspiration from the bay's stingrays. It's also home to the restaurant Tarra and chef Michael Demagistris tells me that he forages around the bay for some of his ingredients.

The menu aims to please both ferry passengers and visitors with more time. In addition to classics such as fish and chips, there are oysters, an Asian duck salad and baked scallops. I have the scallops as an entree and they are excellent: finished in brown butter, served with salmon roe and decoratively presented on their shells. For main course I try the pork schnitzel with zesty slaw, accompanied by a glass of Mornington Peninsula pinot gris – and gaze out at that peninsula while I enjoy both.

From the terminal, bus 56 takes me to Geelong, where I'm staying at the brand-new Holiday Inn & Suites. After a swim in the hotel pool and some relaxation in my room (with its glimpses of the bay), I head for dinner at the hotel restaurant, Maestro. Here I discover a menu with a playful retro vibe, which I fall in with by ordering a prawn cocktail, featuring sizeable prawns with avocado and salmon roe; a veal cutlet and roasted carrots with whipped ricotta and pistachios; and, somewhat inevitably, a delicious creme brulee with thick custard beneath its crunchy lid.

After a night in Geelong, it's time to complete my circumnavigation of the bay – but not before a lunch of spinach and ricotta tortellini followed by rockling and chips at Tempo, on the waterfront. From there it's a short walk to historic Cunningham Pier, where a Melbourne ferry awaits. It's certainly been a weekend of diverse public



transport – and very good food. **T**



**Chef Michael Demagistris, at Tarra, Queenscliff; dishes at 360Q (below).**

**Photo (main): Chris McConville**



*The writer was a guest of Tourism Greater Geelong and the Bellarine, see [visitgeelongbellarine.com.au](http://visitgeelongbellarine.com.au)*

## THE DETAILS

### TOUR

Trains and buses reach Sorrento, Geelong and Queenscliff, for which you need a Myki card (cost \$6, daily fare cap \$10.60), see [ptv.vic.gov.au](http://ptv.vic.gov.au)  
Sorrento-Queenscliff Ferry from \$17, see [searoad.com.au](http://searoad.com.au)  
Geelong to Melbourne ferry from \$20, see [portphillipferries.com.au](http://portphillipferries.com.au)

### STAY

Beechworth on Gellibrand is a beautiful spacious Queenscliff house with water views, from \$550 a night plus fees, see [airbnb.com.au](http://airbnb.com.au)  
Holiday Inn & Suites Geelong offers stylish, central rooms from \$151 a night, see [ihg.com](http://ihg.com)