



Hotel Frangos in Daylesford. Photo: Visit Victoria
Below (from left): A suite at Hotel Frangos; delicious fare at Moto Bean Coffee Roasters in Malmsbury; the serene scene at Baringo Food & Wine Co in Kyneton.



Exploring hidden gems

There is so much to discover during a visit to the Daylesford and Mt Macedon region, writes KYLIE OLIVER

WHEN you think of a trip to Daylesford your mind inevitably conjures up images of indulgent day spas, rejuvenating mineral springs and snuggling up by an open fire.

Sure, these are the expected highlights of a visit to this picturesque region but there's more to discover if you venture a little further afield.

With its close proximity to Geelong, the Daylesford Macedon Ranges area is an ideal getaway destination, whether you are planning a girls' weekend, family holiday or romantic escape.

For us, it is the latter and we base ourselves in the heart of Daylesford at the opulent Hotel Frangos which certainly impresses with its beautifully appointed rooms and faultless levels of customer service.

In keeping with the theme of venturing outside Daylesford itself, we bypass the shops and galleries surrounding our hotel and instead make our way to the Piper Street shopping strip in Kyneton where we stumble upon an eclectic mix of boutique shops that achieves a delightful

balance between vintage finds, hand-crafted items and vibrant cafes. Even the local farmer's market is in full swing. A few favourites to visit are The Chairmakers Wife, Red Cart Vintage and the Duck, Duck, Goose Cafe & Larder.

After purchasing some artisan wares we head for Malmsbury where, I'm pleased to say, there is top-notch coffee awaiting us at Moto Bean Coffee Roasters.

Owner Lachy Evans clearly loves his coffee and motorbikes in equal parts. The bikes are dotted around the spacious venue but it is the coffee and delicious fare that truly shine, alongside the cosy atmosphere. Moto Bean also offers accommodation and enjoys a lovely outlook across the botanic gardens.

We arrive in time for lunch but the all-day breakfast menu proves too tempting. It does not disappoint, making Moto Bean a must-visit.

After fuelling up on coffee, eggs and avocado it is time to roadtest the locally made wine so we take a 15-minute drive to Hunter-Gatherer

Vintners in Pipers Creek.

We are greeted by yet another passionate local producer in owner and winemaker Brian Martin who is taking the plunge into business to enjoy life in the country alongside his wife Roslyn and their three young children.

From their Victorian homestead among the vineyards, Brian uses old-world winemaking practices to create a range of wines including a prosecco, sparkling pinot chardonnay, riesling, chardonnay, rosé, pinot noir, shiraz, sparkling shiraz and, his personal favourite, the sangiovese. Their business is a work in progress, with tastings and platters available for weekend visitors and weddings another growing focus.

Brian, a former accountant, tells us he started out making wine in a barrel with a mate in Northcote before becoming a winemaker.

"I went from a desk job and being not very fit to almost having a six-pack from plunging grapes eight hours a day," he says with a smile.

"If someone told me when I was 18 that you could do this for a living I would have jumped at it. Doing something you are passionate about gets you out of bed every morning."

The next day we farewell Hotel Frangos and drop into Baringo Food & Wine Co in New Gisborne for a delicious breakfast and inspiring chat with its owner, Gary Harley, who has created a boutique community complete with a cafe, wine bar, theatre and communal gardens.

It proves to be the perfect end to a weekend spent exploring new places close to home.

Some websites to help plan your trip:

piperstreet.com.au
motobean.com.au
hgwiners.com.au
hotelfrangos.com.au
baringo.net.au