



The Twelve Apostles: a feast for the eyes.

A tasty way to sample nature

By Sian Watkins

GABRIELA AND GRAEME CLARKE take people to beautiful spots around Victoria — Wilsons Promontory, the Otways, the Grampians. They take them walking and feed them beautifully.

Graeme cooks a mean beetroot cake. We eat that at the botanical gardens in Colac before driving on to Port Campbell for lunch in the sun, sheltered from the wind.

There was terrine and salad, quiche and lovely cheeses. Then a walk along the cliffs in buffeting winds, past Mutton Bird Island, the Loch Ard Gorge and the graves of those who died, to the 12 Apostles. We saw two whales, wallowing and spluttering, out to sea.

You walked with a smile on your face for everything — the wind, the sun, the cliffs — was so beautiful.

This is the third season Graeme, a former accountant, and Gabriela, originally from Germany, have run their weekend and week-long getaways (under the name of Walkabout Gourmet Adventures) to all parts of the state.

On the monthly Otways trip the Clarkes take their guests to the dairy farm of George and Joy Evans, which sits in a lush, green valley, nestled between the sea and the hills. The Evans's took to renting out cottages on their farm (as well as a second farmhouse) when dairying went through a tough patch several years ago.

Saturday night's dinner was served. First *bon femme*, a French vegetable soup, followed by pork fillets with

mountain mushrooms, pear and bean salad, potatoes and zucchini and broccoli gratin. Figs followed, poached in white wine and topped with cream and hazelnuts.

Breakfast was just as good. If Graeme cooks a mean beetroot cake, then Gabriela makes a mean muesli. There were six of us on the trip and the muesli had to be passed back and forth for seconds. There was more too — croissants and homemade jams, rye bread, hams and cheeses.

The second day's walk took the group through the Melba Gully State Park (waterfalls, ferns and towering mountain ash) and then along the coast from Melanesia Beach back to Joanna. Graeme does the walking and he has a lot of information to offer about the area's vegetation and wildlife, while

Gabriela returns to the farmhouse to spend the afternoon preparing dinner.

George and Joy come to dinner. It is very nice after showers, drinking port in front of the fire. Everyone gets dressed up. High-heels and lipstick, bow-ties and smart strides. Gabriela has made the Swiss/French dish *raclette*. It's a matter of toasting an assortment of cheese, bacon, mushrooms, under a table-top grill, and placing big dabs of the mixture on a large, hot potato. There is exotic accompanying salads, followed by pineapple sorbet, and coffee and chocolates.

Everyone is rather pleased to see the muesli back on the table in the morning and it is followed by rye-bread and jam, and then, fortunately, by a walk along Joanna Beach as far as Dinosaur Cove and back along the edge of the Joanna River. The rain comes pelting down and

there is a rather exhilarating dash across the undulating fields to the warmth of the house.

Yes, warmth and lunch. Barbecued fish, prawns and chicken with satay and chilli sauces, warm, crusty bread and Greek salad. All this topped off with a generous helping of *creme caramel*. In the end, nobody wanted to go home.

The Clarkes Walkabout Gourmet Adventures run a number of walking trips in Victoria and New South Wales. Destinations include Kosciusko, Wonnangatta Moroka National Park, the Hattah Kulkyne National Park, the Grampians and Wilsons Promontory. As well, there are mid-week day trips.

Details from VicTour offices or Walkabout Gourmet Adventures, PO Box 2179, North Brighton, 3186. Telephone (03) 598 4904.

Sian Watkins was a guest of Walkabout Gourmet Adventures.