

Regional Echoes

Michael Chan

Hi, my name is Michael. I'm a multitalented artist, who can act, sing, write, improvise, even cooking where I called Geelong home. The space I'm in is big and open and my desk is close to the entrance with windows faced towards from the right. I live at home with my parents, and here in Geelong can be pleasant during winter, despite woke up to chilly mornings on few occasions, the afternoon sun is really lovely that keeps me out and about more often. Behind me is a cabinet filled with documents I require for my future reference and my accolades for my achievements include winning the Geelong Awards for People with a Disability under Achievement category and my Aspire Medal for my personal recognition in the Arts. In the corner is an clothing rack with my jackets needed to wear when I take a walk under the crisp, windy air during the evening so I have a tendency to be 'cute' and notebooks that I like to keep a note of that. For Regional Echoes EWF, I'm going to read a poem about my personal story that is truly inspiring and heart-warming.

I was born in Swan Hill, a northwestern Victorian town on 5 July 1983 and then been raised by my late grandmother as my Chinese parents had to own and operate a local Chinese restaurant. I know it's busy and bustling by the time we begin our golden era, but our days have never been easier to make ends meet.

After spending time away for family holiday and visiting relatives overseas we've been settled in the quiet town of Colac, which serves as an 'Gateway to Otway Ranges'. When not working my parents taking us a long road trip, either heading west all the way down to Warrnambool where southern right whales can be seen or up slightly north to Ballarat. On some occasions we'd been enjoy our leisure by having lunch at the restaurant as part of the petrol station, which is located outer east of the town before going to work. To seek even more opportunities ahead we'd been able to settle ourselves in Geelong – just an hour drive from Melbourne, so it's convenient for us to have day out for work, shopping and other things.

When I'm not working or doing anything busy, why not take a joyride that is even closer to home, like dreaming of going to Europe with Back to Back Theatre if it wasn't for the pandemic? If enjoying bright sunny days, I drive down along Surfcoast Highway to Torquay – the home of Bells Beach and such iconic brands like Rip Curl and Quiksilver, which also acts as a starting point to world-renowned Great Ocean Road. Or a visit to Surf World Museum to gain spirit of surfing culture with spectacular pictures and hands-on displays.

On longer day this is where the adventure and pristine landscape begins as, my friend and I set ourselves on our road trip along the renowned Great Ocean Road. The only get that far is to Lorne – a beautiful seaside town which I am daring enough to drive through its jagged, winding coastline. Despite a tiny seaside town Lorne has something to offer, I mean get to explore the nature of Erskine Falls and once drive up to Teddy's Lookout I can see the rainbow that appears visibly on such a cold, windy day. Once drive past of Anglesea we had stopped by to indulge our sweet tooth at the Great Ocean Road Chocolateries & Ice Creamery – to treat ourselves some classic family favourites or buy souvenirs to enjoy our collection.

Within easy reach of each other by turning east the Bellarine Peninsula is a truly breathtaking place with stunning sea views with bay and ocean beaches, beautiful farmlands, and gorgeous Australian countryside. If you watched ABC's *SeaChange* you will have seachange effect if you head down to Barwon Heads. What so unique about this town is to drive along the long Barwon Heads Bridge, where I expected to see people walking along the beaches for family time, ride on a boat which Barwon River discharged into Bass Strait or lucky enough to go fishing. The locals alike had been stayed up late to cheer on Cadel Evans, the local hero who made history to become Australia's one-and-only Tour de France champion, so I wonder whoever are willing to ride with him and train.

After a long ride across the bridge, just a short distance on my way to another relaxing seaside town called Ocean Grove. Besides seeing people walking along the 10km stretch of beach; ending up having salt-air in the hair or going down on the roar of the surf it's still big enough to have a great, endless selection of shops and eateries of the Terrace, Grubb and Shell Roads; added more vibes to keep the coastal town bustling.

The beautiful Bellarine discovery will not complete without the leisurely road trip to Queenscliff (do not mistakenly referring to Borough of Queenscliffe as the other town to visit is Point Lonsdale – it is a bit tad confusing!). Heading to the harbour I walk along the boardwalk and check out any boats while browsing through shops, cafes, and restaurants to be stopped by, I wish I could bring my partner to have dinner at 360Q Tower Restaurant.

I just say there's much more that Geelong has to offer, than a pretty waterfront but that is a good place to start. It is a fabulous waterside retreat where you can easily escape from the urban madness of the big city; retained a distinct town-like quality with friendly locals and a relaxed social vibe. Geelong has reinvented itself from its industrial past and historical monuments so why don't you see for yourself.