

# Growing Adventure Tourism in Barwon South West Region

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Barwon South West (BSW) Region has an immense opportunity to capitalise on its capacity to attract a greater share of the growing soft adventure market and generate significant economic and employment benefits for the region and state.

The region has six international and nationally significant trails and mountain bike hubs as well as an impressive calendar of national and international events. Despite these strengths, a number of issues are preventing the region from developing its trail and cycle tourism offering and generating greater economic and employment benefits. Targeted trail investment and strengthening the strategic marketing effort is critical to the growth of the region as a trail and cycle tourism destination.

***Our vision is to be recognised as Victoria's premier trail destination with a range of trails and cycling touring routes that offer exceptional natural adventure experiences***

With the right level of investment, the region is well placed to:

- » increase the yield from visitors to the region
- » generate significant economic and employment benefits from the trail network and
- » support Victoria to become a leading trail and cycling tourism destination.

In order to become Victoria's premier trail destination we need to direct our efforts towards a number of recently prepared strategies including:

- » Business Case for investment
- » Cycle Tourism Strategy
- » Marketing Strategy
- » Guidelines for Trail Planning, Design and Management.

To download the documents go to <http://bswadventuretourism.com.au/>

### Priorities

#### ***Focus on the leading trails***

In view of the large number of trails and limited funding opportunities for the region, we need to prioritise a small number of outstanding trails and cycle experiences for investment.

***Our leading trails are, or have the potential to be, flagships generating significant economic and employment benefits for the region***

They will form the core adventure trail/cycle tourism offering in the region and will be used to attract private and public sector investment. These trails offer the best opportunity for revenue generation. They are:

- » Great Ocean Walk
- » Grampians Peaks Trail (planned)
- » You Yangs MTB Trails
- » Surf Coast Walk
- » Forrest MTB Trails
- » Twelve Apostles Trail (planned)
- » Great South West Walk (3 Bays 3 Days segment)

The level of investment required to develop the leading trails and MTB parks to international standard is \$40.6million.

Developing supporting trails will add to the overall experience for visitors to the region and play a vital role in extending the length of visitor stays<sup>1</sup>. As with the region's leading trails, supporting trails also offer significant recreational opportunities and are an investment priority for the health and well-being of the region's communities.

#### ***Strengthen cycling opportunities***

The BSW Cycle Tourism Strategy identifies the need to establish a number of highly visible road touring routes, create safer cycling experiences for visitors, and develop products and services for cyclists.

#### ***Strategic and focused marketing effort***

The BSW Regional Trails Marketing Plan 2016-2020<sup>2</sup> focusses specifically on creating consistent content and messages about the walking and cycling opportunities to increase volume and length of stay of visitors to the region<sup>3</sup>. It is based on a partnership approach that will tap into existing marketing strategies, channels to market and programs undertaken by Great Ocean Road Regional Tourism, Tourism Greater Geelong and the Bellarine and Grampians Tourism. The cost of marketing over a ten year period will be \$1 million.

<sup>1</sup> By increasing the length of stay of visitors in the region we can increase the average spend of trail users from \$65 per person per half day in the region to \$450 in the region per person for the whole trip.

<sup>2</sup> TRC Tourism 2014 BSW Regional Trails Marketing Plan 2014-2018

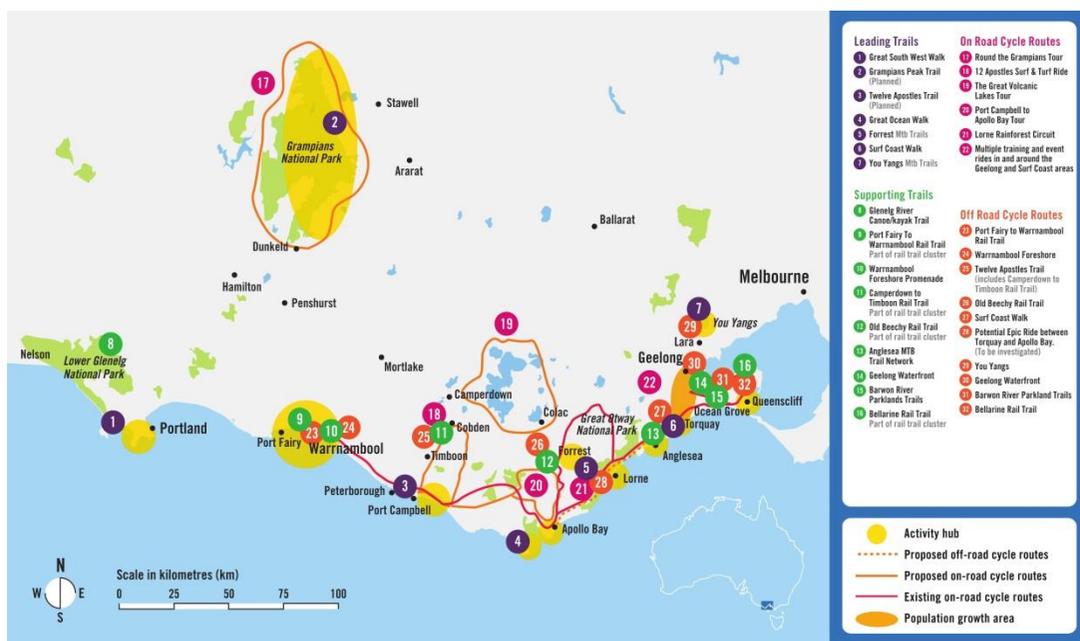
<sup>3</sup> Recent research indicates that people spending a day or less on trails in the region spend around \$65 per person per trip on average. People spending more than a full day spend in the order of \$450 in the region per person for the whole trip. These results show clearly that for the full potential of trails to be realised, effective marketing of trails in the BSW Region is needed to grow awareness, the number of visitors and extend their length of stay in the region.

## Leadership

In order to implement the changes required to strengthen the region's trail and cycle tourism offering, a new governance model is required. The preferred model is through a co-ordinating agency such as an existing regional tourism organisation to lead the transformation.

An existing Regional Tourism Board such as Great Ocean Road Regional Tourism (GORRT) is well positioned to be the lead agency and could represent all interests across the region and consult with regional partners.

**Figure 1. Leading and Supporting Trails and Cycle Touring Routes**



## Socio Economic Benefits

If the proposed improvements are implemented and the leading trails continue to attract existing and new visitors, a 10% increase in visitor numbers could be achieved. This would result in an estimated **\$24 million in direct visitor expenditure per annum** in the region<sup>4</sup> and 273 jobs<sup>5</sup>. The flow on affects as a result of indirect expenditure is expected to be much greater.

The trail network will deliver significant economic benefits for the Victorian community. For a 6 year investment of \$40 million, the trail net upgrade will deliver \$74.7 million in benefits over 10 years. Importantly, a positive cash flow for the community will be maintained for each and every year of the project.

The **short and medium term benefits** to arise from the implementation of the strategies are:

- » employment growth directly related to investment in existing trails and new trail development (Grampians Peaks Trail and Twelve Apostles Trail)
- » creation of demand for services throughout the region as construction progresses
- » employment growth in the tourism, accommodation and services sectors indirectly related to the investment in trail development and cycle tourism
- » regional investment in trail-related and cycle tourism businesses
- » complementary benefits for regional communities such as active transport, recreation, health, social and cultural experiences
- » diversification of the state and region's tourism product mix
- » international awareness of the BSW trail network and cycle tourism offering through branding and marketing
- » creation of greater community, government and business engagement around trail management.

**Longer term benefits will include:**

- » increased employment and economic development opportunities for the region
- » increased employment and economic development opportunities for the state economy
- » enhanced reputation of the region and state as a premier trails and cycling tourism destination.



<sup>4</sup> A more conservative growth estimate of 1% indicates that direct tourism expenditure will be around \$15 million.

<sup>5</sup> Every \$1 million of direct tourism expenditure supports 11.4 FTE jobs – TRA 2015