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INDULGENT SMALL GROUP EXPERIENCES
HIDDEN SECRETS TOURS
MELBOURNE

Greetings and Happy New Year from Melbourne!

I hope that this year has started well for you.

With the recent publicity around the fires affecting some communities in Australia, I wanted to reach out and let you know what it is like right now in

Melbourne. It is easy to think that all of Australia is affected, this is not true. Our hearts and prayers go to those affected and we hope to see an end to this situation as soon as possible.

Australia is the 6th largest country in the world, and is a strong diverse destination. Melbourne and the state of Victoria is certainly still open for business and summer is an amazing time to visit.

We at Hidden Secrets Tours are small group tour specialists and we pride ourselves on adapting our tours to meet the comfort of our guests.

There have been some days when Melbourne has been affected by smoke haze. This has only happened on a few days and to date has not affected the enjoyment of exploring Melbourne for guests on tour.

Here are some of the ways we ensure our guests are comfortable:

- We monitor heat and air quality daily.
- In days of extreme heat or smoke haze we make contact with guests to make sure they are still comfortable to tour the city.
- We adapt our tour to spend more time indoors, visiting local attractions, businesses and arcades.
- When outdoors, whenever possible, we make use of naturally shaded areas.
- We provide our large yellow Hidden Secrets umbrellas as a shade option for guests.
- Our guides carry water, in case guests would like a sip, whilst we are on tour.
- Water is always provided on café visits.
- Our guides check with our guests before we set off, to make sure they are comfortable and will tailor the tour to suit the guests needs.
- Our guides check with guests whilst on tour, to make sure they are comfortable throughout and will schedule extra stops if needed.

Unfortunately, during this time, some visitors have changed their plans, even when our city and most of our regional areas are unaffected by fires. Hidden

Secrets Tours is an Australian (Melbourne) family owned business, employing local staff. We have seen an immediate drop in bookings and a slowing in forward bookings. This during peak season, a time when Melbourne is alive and is the perfect time to visit, has an adverse effect on the local community. A drop in visitation will negatively affect us, our staff and the wonderful local businesses who we support.

How can you help?

Keep up the bookings to Melbourne and Victoria, with most of our destinations across our state unaffected - Please keep sending us your guests! Apart from their smiling faces, their visit is a much-needed input to our local economy, it keeps moving, this gives people hope and reassurance.

What destinations are safe?

While some parts of the state are experiencing challenging conditions, many regional destinations have not been impacted and are welcoming visitors.

If your clients are travelling outside of Melbourne to regional areas, it is important to advise your clients to check official websites, Here is the [Victorian emergency website](#)

As at 17th January 2020 the following destinations are NOT affected:

- Melbourne & the suburbs
- Great Ocean Road
- Phillip Island
- West and South Gippsland, including Wilsons Promontory
- Grampians
- Ballarat, Bendigo & the Goldfields
- Daylesford & Macedon Ranges
- Mornington Peninsula
- Yarra Valley and Dandenong Ranges
- Geelong & the Bellarine Peninsula

As you can see, ALL of the main areas that international tourists visit in Victoria, are open and safe to visit.

We have been heartened by the generosity, kindness and support not only from across Australia but also from our International friends. This connection with community is inspiring and is part of why we do what we do.

To assist those affected by these fires, we at Hidden Secrets Tours have provided support by donations to different organisations and by sharing information on how people can help.

If you would like to make a donation, or visit some of the online stores who are supporting regional areas, here are some links that you may find useful:

Koala Clancy Foundation

The Koala Clancy Foundation is a not for profit incorporated association and registered charity set up to support the wild koalas of the Western Plains of Victoria, particularly around the You Yangs and Brisbane Ranges west of Melbourne.

Wildlife Victoria - Victorian Bushfire Appeal

A lot of the wildlife donations have been raised for WIRES, which is a great organisation in NSW, they've received millions of dollars in generous donations. Wildlife Victoria desperately needs support to provide assistance in Victoria. Donations to their Victorian bushfire appeal will be distributed to wildlife shelters and carers to help rebuild enclosures and equipment that they have lost in the fires so that they can continue their lifesaving work, and support those that are struggling to cope with the enormous number of animals that will need care in the coming weeks and months.

Country Fire Association – CFA - Victoria

For those interested in supporting the efforts of Victorian firefighters, you can donate to the state's Country Fire Association here.

Australian Red Cross

Are providing specialist emergency volunteers who are working at evacuation centres and helping people directly affected by the bushfires, with immediate

financial assistance, shelter, food and water.

We are encouraging our guests to spend some money with the businesses in fire affected communities who need it. If you would like to contribute, you can do this too.

It's my shout

Nothing more Aussie, than to shout (buy) someone a drink! Here's a great way to support local businesses in East Gippsland, one of the areas of regional Victoria that has been directly impacted by bushfires. It's as easy as buying a virtual coffee or maybe something bigger.

Buy from the Bush

An initiative with links to buy products from stores in Australian towns that have been affected by drought and bushfires.

Spend with them

If you want to buy something (now, or in the future) from regional Australia, you can also check out

We really appreciate your support and welcome any questions you may have.

Here is a link to the [Tourism Australia map](#) that shows affected areas Australia wide.

Feel free to reach out and let us know if you have any questions about our tours and the city of Melbourne. We appreciate your ongoing support and look forward to welcoming your clients on tour with us in 2020.

Best wishes

Fiona

Fiona Sweetman

Owner

Hidden Secrets Tours

