

Grampians YHA Eco-Hostel

Halls Gap

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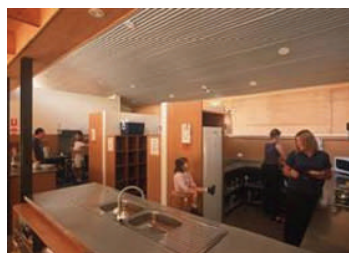
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It's fairly common for visitors to Halls Gap to rave about the scenery of the Grampians National Park, but in recent years many of them have also been singing the praises of Victoria's first eco youth hostel.

Not only does the 5-star hostel set new standards in budget accommodation, it is also a showpiece of environmental sustainability, providing its visitors with a low-key crash course in how to live more harmoniously with nature. It's an industry leader in environmentally-friendly accommodation.

Melbourne architects Ian Perkins & Associates designed the stylish 60-bed hostel to use 50% less energy and to generate 50% less waste than a standard hostel, while not skimping on guest comfort. This is achieved through solar hot water and electricity, rainwater tanks and grey water recycling, along with a passive solar design and clever zoning techniques.

The rammed earth building - set in a native garden - is sited to make full use of the sun. Tank water is used in the kitchen and bathrooms; shower water is recycled to flush the toilets. On sunny days the building feeds excess power generated from a roof clad in photovoltaic tiles to the mains electric grid. The hostel then buys back what it needs.



In colder weather, wood-fired stoves warm the living rooms, aided by ceiling fans that push down the hot air. In summer, the blade direction is reversed to circulate cool breezes.

Guests have a choice of accommodation, including single, double or twin rooms, small dormitory rooms, and family rooms.



The north facing rooms have balconies offering spectacular views of the Grampians.

The eco lodge has attracted attention from the backpacking fraternity around the world and numerous blog entries attest to their approval, for example Eric of Minneapolis.....

"I had read about the hostel I wanted to stay at in my guidebook as this 'eco-lodge'. It had solar power and water conservation practices in place. This place turned out to be one of the best hostels I've ever been to, and not only that but is probably one of the best places of accommodation as well. Solar power heats the water and provides electricity (not completely off the grid though) and a first of its kind water recycling system re-uses the gray water from sinks and showers to flush the toilets. There are free range chickens roaming the hostel grounds so every morning we get fresh eggs to use. There is an herb garden. The owners put out baked goods. The facilities are first rate."

The public reaction to the concept and its commercial success prompted the owners and the YHA to replicate their efforts on the Great Ocean Road. The Eco-Beach YHA Apollo Bay Hostel also attests to the fact that 'green' is not only good for the environment, it can also be very good for a business's bottom line.

www.yha.com.au