

# BATHING FOR WELLBEING

Australia's Peninsula Hot Springs is about to become one of the world's leading wellness destinations. NADINE DILONG explains why the retreat should be on your travel bucket list.

Bath House guests stimulating senses on reflexology walk

Bath House hilltop view

Bath House Lakeside Pool

We all know that Australia is a stunning country with the most beautiful variety of landscapes, and many natural resources with healing properties, such as our rich clay and many native plants that have proven beneficial for our health and wellbeing. But did you know that Australia is also home to mineral-rich, geothermic hot springs?

Usually associated with volcanic activity, Australian hot springs have formed from groundwater seeping through porous bedrock, building large underground reservoirs heated up by the Earth's molten core. So is the case in Victoria's Mornington Peninsula, and thanks to brothers Charles and Richard Davidson, a spa and wellbeing haven was founded in 1997 and opened in 2005, Peninsula Hot Springs.

After drilling a bore 637 meters deep, the brothers found natural hot mineral waters, 54 degrees warm, and so the foundation of one of the world's leading hot spring spa retreats was born. Today, Peninsula Hot Springs welcomes over half a million visitors from around the world each year offering dozens of outdoor hot spring pools built into the rugged bushland of Southern Victoria.

Two facilities invite guests to relax and unwind, the Bath House is a social bathing experience perfect for families and friends, and includes cave pools, reflexology walks, and the 'piece de resistance', the top hill pool, offering stunning views over the Mornington Peninsula.

And then there's the Spa Dreaming Centre, the 'quiet sister' of the Bath House if you like. Reserved for guests 16 years and over, it offers tranquil spaces, saunas, private baths, and spa treatments including massages, facials, and body wraps using natural, Australian brands.

Pardon the pun, but everything at Peninsula Hot Springs just 'flows'. From the wooden décor and hanging tree pods that blend in effortlessly with nature to the rocky paths winding around the pools inviting you to wander, a day at Peninsula Hot Springs is like a detox from reality.

"We want guests to just walk around and explore," says Duty Manager Nicole Ring, "which is why we don't hand out maps of the property." After she shows me the main pools, that's exactly what I do for over an hour, it's that big. Even though there are many guests here today, it doesn't feel overly crowded thanks to the strategic placing of pools, some hidden behind trees and seeming to cascade down the big hill.

The water temperature ranges from the high 30s to high 40s degrees, and it's under constant quality control. In fact, I see staff walking around all day testing the water in every pool to make sure guests can enjoy the benefits of the mineral rich water, which includes Boron, Magnesium, and Potassium, all shown to relieve pain and even

improve mental health thanks to the relaxing effect of mineral bathing.

"Our staff circulate and do water testing every hour to ensure the optimum bathing environment," explains PHS's PR and communications specialist Meagan Biacsi.

"Every night our pools are completely drained and cleaned by our Cleaning Team. Then every morning, before guests arrive, our Pool Attendants fill the pools with our natural geothermic waters. Throughout the day, fresh mineral water flows constantly into the pools to maintain warmth and cleanliness. It is constantly moving and over approximately a three hour period, each pool's water is completely renewed. We do add a small amount of chlorine as we receive a lot of guests."


## MORE THAN JUST WATER

Peninsula Hot Springs wouldn't exist without the pools, but the retreat has so much more to offer. One of my favourite parts of my stay was swinging back and forth in one of the hanging tree pods while reading a book and sipping on herbal tea provided by the Spa Dreaming Centre.

Green picnic areas invite guests to enjoy a meal once the bathing has made them hungry, and infrared saunas and Zen Chi machines are there to further improve your relaxation journey. As if this wasn't impressive enough, a big extension is currently under construction with plans for it to be finished later this year. The new amphitheater area will include seven new geothermic hot springs pools, two cold plunge pools, a fire and ice experience (two saunas to hold 30 people each, an ice cave which will be -20 degrees and a snow room which will be -4 degrees.)

This area will also include a new cafe which will use produce from the retreat's very own food bowl, a three-acre terraced garden which will be the source of their produce in the cafes onsite. A semi-underground mushroom cave and a vineyard are also currently under construction, taking the retreat one step closer to being completely self-contained and sustainable.

Expecting guests will never want to leave again, 126 accommodation rooms and a Wellness Centre stepping out onto coastal bush land walking tracks, and lakeside and hilltop relaxation spaces are currently being built turning Peninsula Hot Springs from thermal bath to one of the world's leading spa and wellbeing destinations.

As I watch the sunset over the Mornington Peninsula from the top hill pool under a purple sky, it feels like one of those pinch-me moments you don't want to end — I guess that's exactly what Davidson intended.  PENINSULAHOTSPRINGS.COM