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# Moonlight Head, Australia

Stretching for 175 miles along some of the most scenic coastline in the world, Australia's Great Ocean Road lures visitors to its quaint towns, national parks and scenic vistas. Its rugged beauty prompted Londoner Mark Banning-Taylor to search for a spot to build his vacation home along the winding road. Halfway along the route, he discovered Moonlight Head, a 108-acre parcel that rests on top of the highest coastal headland in Australia. Views to the south span across the Indian Ocean, and to the west toward the 12 Apostles, a gathering of towering rock formations sculpted by the wind and the sea. To the east is the Great Otway National Park, with its signature lighthouse and over a million acres of temperate rain forest and craggy coastline.

To celebrate his discovery, Banning-Taylor commissioned Pritzker Prize-winning architect Glenn Murcutt to design a 75-room boutique hotel and five four-bedroom lodges on Moon-

light Head. Murcutt created the structures with an eye toward maximizing ocean views and minimizing energy expenditure. Ceilings are punctuated with bands of glass to let in natural light and allow views of the southern sky, while the use of local bluestone and earth-toned brick unify the buildings with the ocean and surrounding rocky bluffs.

"I thought the natural quietness of the place would appeal to people who want to get away from it all—to view wildlife, hike and mountain bike without having to see a jet trail in the sky," says Banning-Taylor. From the property, guests can watch kangaroos at play or look for whales journeying from Antarctica. Recreational enthusiasts can dive to local shipwrecks, head offshore for sport fishing or hike the Great Ocean Walk, a 57-mile trek along the coast. While the hotel is not scheduled to open until late 2007, the first of the five 2,600-square-foot lodge homes will be completed and offered for sale



Left: The white-sand beach beckons from below the headland. Below: A boutique hotel and five private homes are scheduled for completion on Moonlight Head, a jaw-dropping patch of terrain that occupies the highest coastal headland in Australia.

in early 2006, with the second offering to follow six months later. Two of the remaining homes will be available for paying guests to book, and the last lodge will serve as home for Banning-Taylor and his family.

KIM FREDERICKS

## Moonlight Head

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