



Above: Debra Webber is willing to go the extra mile to give customers their perfect day out. She is also passionate about promoting the Murrindindi Shire area. "We are blessed from a tourism point of view, natural beauty abounds in the Murrindindi and Yarra Valley regions and yet we are only 90 kilometres from Melbourne CBD. You can have your cake and eat it too!"

Sit back and enjoy the ride with Bespoke Driven Tours

By Emily Friedel

Whether you're after a leisurely jaunt around local wineries, a trip to some of the area's most scenic spots, a private chauffeur for the day, or an airport transfer, Debra Webber from Bespoke Driven Tours has got you covered. All you have to do is sit back and enjoy the ride – Deb will take care of the rest.

"Anything's possible. Don't be afraid to ring and discuss your needs," she says. "Just ask."

Based in Narbethong, Bespoke Driven Tours was launched in July 2021 to fill a tourism gap in the Murrindindi Shire. During Deb's 20 years of working in hospitality around the Yarra Valley, Marysville and Narbethong, she saw a demand for transport and tour operators based on this side of the Black Spur that wasn't being met. She says driving the extra kilometres through the Spur for pick ups and drop offs in the local area can be a deterrent for operators on the other side.

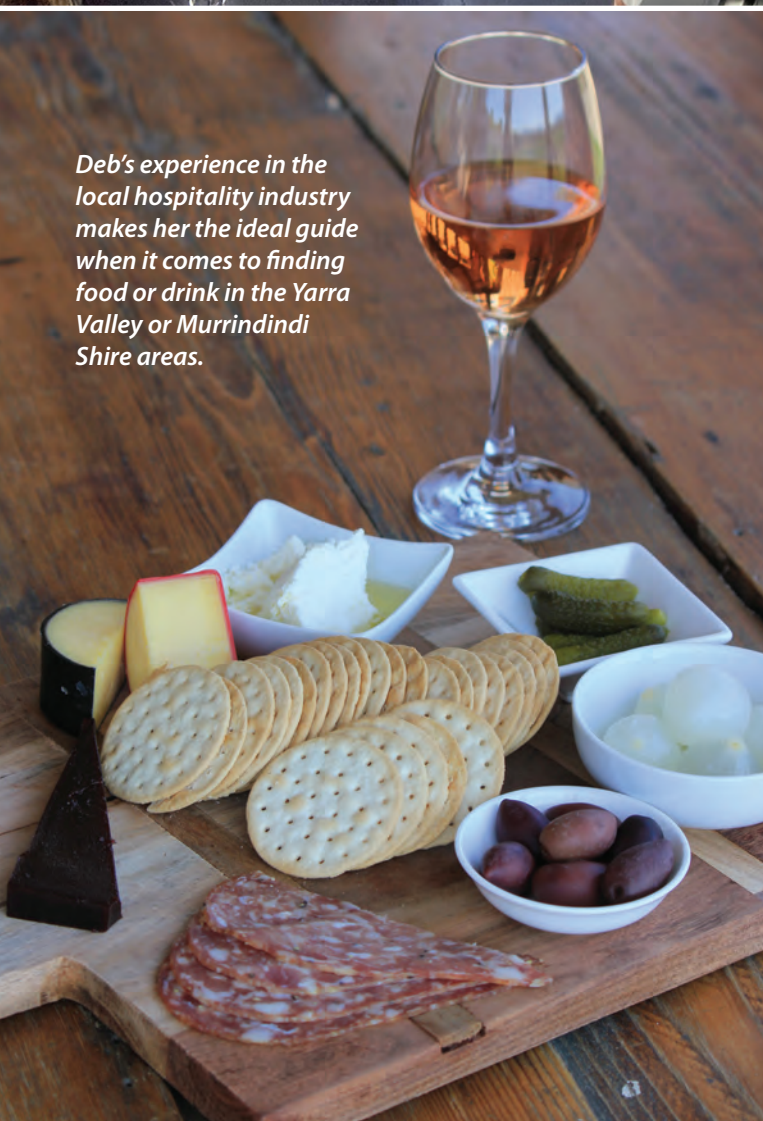
"I just saw a bit of a niche in the market, and I thought I could combine my food-and-beverage and hospitality experience with something of this nature, and so that's where the idea was born." ➤



Inside Deb's van: clean and comfortable. Deb says she loves driving, so chauffeuring people around is her idea of fun.



Deb's experience in the local hospitality industry makes her the ideal guide when it comes to finding food or drink in the Yarra Valley or Murrindindi Shire areas.



Bespoke Driven Tours caters for all sorts of groups from two to 11 people, and tours are tailor-made to ensure customer satisfaction.

After a bit of a rocky start when an extended Covid lockdown began soon after opening, Deb wondered if she'd made the right decision. But, thanks to her persistence, the business is now "growing legs", and Deb is savouring every moment of it.

"I love the face-to-face element of hospitality – it's probably my strength – and I'm a big fan of good food and wine combined with great service, so I've put it all together. I've got a lovely little van, and I enjoy driving, so I'm happy to drive all day, every day. I've got a captive audience, and I can yak away in the front, and if they yak back and enjoy a bit of a giggle, all the better!" she laughs.

Deb is also thrilled to have an excuse to explore the region more to find hidden gems for her customers.

"Because I have always worked full time with school-age children until recently, I didn't have time to visit all the wineries and places of interest both in the Yarra Valley and the Murrindindi shire, and there's some amazing places tucked away – I love it. So that aspect of it is exciting for me."

With her people skills and ever-growing local knowledge, Deb is well equipped to put together the perfect package for any small group of two to 11 people. She is also determined to live up to the "bespoke" element of the business name, working with customers to tailor-make their experience. Upon request, Deb has ferried a birthday group around Daylesford for the day, taken a couple all the way to Yarrowonga for a special lunch, and provided concert transfers to Rochford. ➤

She has even assisted with setting up a romantic marriage proposal at a winery: "It was fabulous. They went off in the vines, and she came back with the rock. So if people want to stage a surprise proposal or a special occasion I can help with that. I can keep a good secret!"

Whatever your reason for wanting a tour, Deb says autumn is a fantastic time to do it, especially if you want to get better acquainted with the Murrindindi Shire's offerings.

"We have a few wineries, so we can do a full day going as far as Yea and then working our way back to Taggerty. Drive time is a bit longer, but the scenery en route is well worth it. Marysville and the Murrindindi Shire is stunning in autumn, too – it's probably the most amazing part of the year for the gorgeous colours. And autumn's a bit more comfortable from a travel perspective with temperatures a little more stable. In my mind, it's the perfect time of year to go anywhere."

Deb is also hoping to provide catered tours from autumn onwards, allowing more options for customers to enjoy the shire's great outdoors.

"There's a lot of spectacular sights, waterfalls, and lookouts in Murrindindi, so there will be additional options available for picnic hampers, cheese or charcuterie boards that may be pre-ordered. If customers just want to sight-see, then a perfect example would be perhaps Lake Eildon, Keppells Lookout, or Snobs Creek Falls for a picnic or platter and a bottle of bubbles," she says.

And if a mouth-watering picnic with a gorgeous view in the mild autumn weather doesn't sound like heaven to you, no worries. Deb says she is more than happy to help you plan your ideal day out.

"If you've got an idea, or if you've got plans and you're not sure how to go about it, give me a call, have a chat, and I'll do something to suit you at a competitive price. Anything's possible. And I mean anything!"

For more information on Bespoke Driven Tours visit the website at www.bespokedriventours.com or call Deb on 0493 097 777.



Of course, Yarra Valley and Murrindindi Shire winery tours are popular among Deb's clients. It's easy to see why.

