



On the waterfront

Gary LaPersonne heads down to Victoria's Riviera and discovers a unique daily double.



PAYNESVILLE residents like to boast that their region is one of the few spots in the world where skiers can achieve a rare double — go salt-water skiing and snow skiing on the same day.

Long-time skier John Castran has done the daily double, competing in the Ski & Ski race, an event hosted by Gippsland Lakes and Mount Hotham in the mid-1980s. It ran for three years, pitting water-speed ski instructors against Hotham's race squad. Mr Castran, a Melbourne realtor and developer of Mount Hotham's Dinner Plain, won the inaugural event.

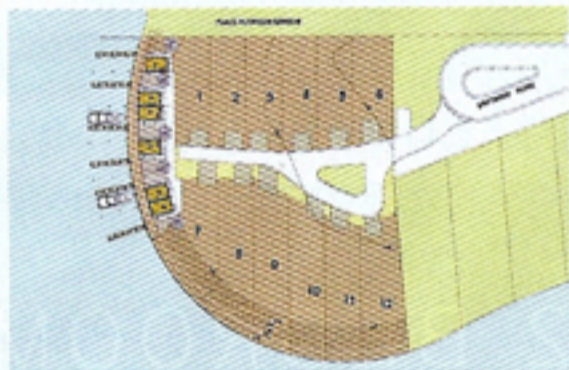
"We'd start in the waters off Lakes Entrance in the morning, skiing at speeds of up to 160km/h for nine kilometres, then jump in our cars — no, it wasn't a race up the mountain — and drive to Mount Hotham 140 kilometres away."

The snow leg involved ski-racing between slalom poles in temperatures as low as -7°C, often 15-20° colder than the lakes off what's commonly called Victoria's Riviera. "I don't know why the challenge stopped," he says. "The race captured people's imagination."

Tim Weight, managing director of Riviera Properties, is all for re-introducing the event, with Paynesville as its base.

Little more than a fishing hamlet in the '80s, Paynesville has been transformed by the vision of one man.

For decades, most of it was regarded as uninhabitable: damp, low-lying and with severe drainage problems. In 1981,



The Landings, Paynesville's new release.

it into premium waterfront land. His scheme was to build a canal system with direct access to adjacent Lake King and leading out to Bass Strait via the Gippsland Lakes, Australia's largest inland salt-water system. "His vision was to bring in the water, creating plots that fronted navigable water," says Mr Weight, who runs the company that evolved from Mr Heath's business.

The canal idea worked brilliantly. Today, about 300 properties dot the seven-kilometre canal network.

The houses reflect the maritime setting. The facades are rendered or weatherboard with a mixture of other lightweight materials, finished in greys, off-whites and light blues. Other neutrals also feature, along with the dramatic use of accent colour on the occasional property. On some banks, the building code allows decks to extend over the shimmering water. Boats are anchored underneath. A group of waterfront houses comes with private beaches.

"An architect review panel checks



MAP: JAMIE BROWN

the most of the location — what works best on the canal, site/design aspects, getting the most from the sun and protection from wind. [There's advice] on landscaping, often not considered in the initial drawings."

Median prices for 25-square houses with waterfront and jetty sell for between \$700,000-\$800,000, says Mr Weight. "Allotments start at \$300,000 with up to \$700,000 for larger blocks."

Riviera Properties' latest release is 12 sites in The Landings, an enclave with private jetties, boardwalks and uninterrupted waterfront views.

Starting from \$335,000, six of the premier allotments include private boatshed facilities and individual jetties, already built. The remaining six look to the Victorian alps on one side and Lake King on the other. Eventually there will be a total of 35 blocks.