

Mornington Peninsula National Park



Visitor Guide

Mornington Peninsula National Park is renowned for its historic features, outstanding scenic headlands and sandy beaches along the Bass Strait coast. It is popular for swimming, surfing, diving, fishing, walking and nature sightseeing. Parks Victoria aims to protect the natural and cultural features of the park while encouraging visitors to appreciate and enjoy the area.

How to get there

The national park is 90 kilometres south of Melbourne. It includes all of the ocean coast between London Bridge and Bushrangers Bay, plus a stretch from Stockyard Creek to Flinders, and also an area north of Cape Schanck called Greens Bush. Most access roads are signposted from the Point Nepean Road. The eastern part of the park, including Cape Schanck, can be reached from Boneo (Rosebud-Flinders) Road.

Things to see and do

Popular visitor areas include the historic Cape Schanck lighthouse precinct; the ocean beaches of Sorrento and Portsea; the rugged Flinders coastline and the walking tracks through the wildlife haven Greens Bush.

There are barbecue facilities at Fingal Picnic Area (near Cape Schanck) and Sorrento Ocean Beach. Kiosks operate at Sorrento and Cape Schanck and takeaway food is often available during summer holidays at Gunnamatta and Portsea.

Walks

Walking tracks are located along much of the coastline and through Greens Bush. Arrow markers outline tracks; orange markers indicate longer 'through tracks' and blue markers indicate 'circuit walks'.

For the ultimate challenge, try the 100km Mornington Peninsula Walk which links existing tracks across the peninsula; traversing wild ocean coastlines, peaceful bay beaches and tranquil bushland. A separate brochure and map is available.

The most popular walks are:

Greens Bush Walks

Situated between Arthurs Seat and Cape Schanck, Greens Bush is the largest remnant of bushland on the Mornington Peninsula. The area contains a variety of vegetation

communities and is a wildlife haven, making it an excellent place for nature walking.

Baldry's Circuit Walk

Starting at Baldry's Crossing, a short (1.6km) and longer (3.6km) circuit walk meanders through the peaceful eucalypt woodlands and cool, moist fern gullies of northern Greens Bush.

Bushrangers Bay

A 2.6km track from Cape Schanck car park to Bushrangers Bay provides some spectacular coastal scenery, finishing at a sandy beach surrounded by striking basalt cliffs. Swimming is hazardous at this unpatrolled beach due to strong rips and large waves. Numbered posts along the way provide points of interest and a guide to this nature walk can be purchased at the Cape Schanck Kiosk for a small fee. The walk can be extended on to Boneo Road car park via the Two Bays Track, a further 2.5km.

Two Bays Walking Track

This 8.9km walk, an excellent way to see Greens Bush, is a section of the 26km bush corridor from Dromana to Cape Schanck. The track takes visitors through the heart of Greens Bush, passing through eucalypt forests, stands of grasstrees, pockets of Melaleuca swamp, fern gullies, coastal heathlands and open grasslands. The track is identified on signage by a circular symbol displaying the Blue Wren, a stunning bird which can often be seen along the walk.

Ocean Beach Walks:

Fingal Track

From Fingal Picnic Area, a 3km (return) track leads through dense Moonah woodland to lookouts over Bass Strait. Access down to the beach is via a long, steep staircase which may not be suitable for visitors with low mobility. Longer walks to Cape Schanck (2km to the south) and Gunnamatta Beach (5km to the north) are also available from the picnic area.

For further information

Call Parks Victoria on **13 1963**
or visit www.parks.vic.gov.au

Park Office
P.O. Box 400, Rosebud
Call 5986 9100

Point Nepean Visitor Centre
Point Nepean Rd, Portsea
Call 5984 4276

Caring for the environment

Help us look after your park
by following these guidelines:

Please take rubbish home with
you for recycling and disposal.

Keep to the formed walking
tracks.

Bicycles are not permitted on
walking tracks.

Dogs and other pets are not
permitted within the park.

Firearms are not permitted in
the park.

Fires are not permitted in the
park.

All native plants and animals
are protected. Leave the park
as you found it.

Coppins Track

This historic track starts at the kiosk at Sorrento Back Beach and winds 3km along the cliff top to Diamond Bay. Numbered posts along the track highlight interesting historic sites which are explained in the park note *'Looking Back...Along Coppins Track.'*

Farnsworth Track

This track links London Bridge car park to Portsea Surf Beach via two scenic lookouts. Start at Portsea for the best views and an alternate return route is available along the beach (loop return 2km).

Lifesaving Track

This 11km track was constructed in the 1890s to provide better access to the coast after two devastating shipwrecks. A number of lookouts provide breathtaking views down the coast, with good vantage points at the Bay of Islands, St Paul's, Koonya Ocean Beach and No 16 (the 16th lifesaving point). Detours to Diamond Bay, Jubilee Point and St Paul's are well worth the trip.

The Coastal Walk

For those feeling more energetic, consider the 26km Coastal Walk which extends from Cape Schanck to London Bridge. This two day walk features a network of cliff top tracks with spectacular ocean views and dense coastal vegetation, as well as sections of long beach walks which pass by sculpted sand dunes and tidal rock pools. The Coastal Walk is identified on signage by the circular Hooded Plover symbols.

Horses

Horse riding is only permitted between Boag Rocks and the beach access track at Paradise Drive (St Andrews), with access from Truemans Road only. A separate park note is available on horse riding. Penalties apply for any breach of regulations.

Other activities

Ocean fishing (regulations apply), surfing and swimming are also popular along the coast. Portsea, Sorrento and Gunnamatta surf beaches are patrolled during summer holidays. Please swim between the flags as ocean beaches are dangerous for swimming.

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Flora & fauna

Mornington Peninsula National Park is home to a diversity of plant and animals, including a number that are listed as threatened in Victoria.

Greens Bush is home to eastern grey kangaroos, black wallabies, possums, koalas, echidnas and a range of birds and reptiles.

Fascinating marine life live in the rock pools at Sorrento, Cape Schanck and Mushroom Reef Marine Sanctuary. Whale and dolphin watching can be enjoyed from lookouts along the coast.

Beach-going visitors with a keen eye might be lucky enough to spot the nationally significant Hooded Plover. These small, well camouflaged shorebirds feed in the intertidal zone on many of the park's beaches. As they lay their eggs directly onto the sand between the high-tide mark and the foredune, you can help their plight by avoiding this area, keeping away from nest sites and only walking your dog on a leash at the water's edge during permitted times.

History

Indigenous History

For many thousands of years Aboriginal people inhabited this area and made use of the abundant plants and animals. The broken shells that you may observe in the dunes are the remains of feasts enjoyed by the Aboriginal people. These midden sites are tangible evidence of Aboriginal culture and provide Traditional Owners with a link to their past ancestry.

Always stay on formed walking tracks to avoid disturbing these protected significant cultural sites.

Early Settlement

Mornington Peninsula National Park has evidence of a rich and varied European history, including some of the earliest settlement in Victoria. Discover the Peninsula's history by visiting some of the following sites:

- Heritage listed Cape Schanck lighthouse, which has been safely guiding vessels since 1859.
- Collins historic settlement site and settlers' graves, near Sorrento; marks the site of the first official European settlement in Victoria in 1803.
- Coolart Homestead and farm buildings feature a magnificent late Victorian mansion surrounded by wetlands teeming with wildlife.
- Neighbouring Point Nepean National Park contains historic military forts, a Quarantine Station and pioneer cemetery.

