

French Island National Park

An Island refuge

French Island National Park, although close to Melbourne, is a mystery to many people due to its isolated location within Western Port. The Park is 11,100 hectares which constitutes two thirds of the island. Many vegetation communities are represented ranging from mangroves and saltmarsh through to heaths and open woodlands.

At first sight the vegetation appears as a vast sea of impenetrable green scrub; but in fact, the flora is rich and diverse, containing over 580 indigenous plant species, including over 100 native orchid species, several of which are endemic to French Island. The Parks' wetlands are extensive and diverse, ranging from seasonal to permanent open water, providing habitat for an array of flora and fauna.

Over 230 bird species have been recorded including rare birds such as the White-Bellied Sea-Eagle, King Quail and the Orange-Bellied Parrot, as well as 33 species of waders which forage along the coast at low tide. The Island supports a large population of the Long-nosed Potaroo, as well as containing the most significant population of Koalas in Victoria.

Koalas were introduced to French Island in the 1880s and by the 1920s over browsing was occurring and in 1923 the first Koala transfers took place. The population is free of the disease Chlamydia and is the major source of Koalas for recolonising areas of the mainland.

The French Island Marine National Park (2,800ha) compliments French Island National Park by protecting extensive sea grass beds, mangroves and mud flats that provide habitat for fish, waterbirds and invertebrates. (see separate brochure)

Things to do

French Island National Park has much to offer the type of visitor who appreciates unspoiled natural bushland or walking along beaches where your only companions are hundreds of wading birds.

Experience wonderful walks and bike rides through a range of habitats. There are day, half day and shorter walks and rides starting at Tankerton Foreshore Reserve (see the information display at Tankerton for more information). The topography is mainly flat and gently undulating and at 60 metres above sea level, the Pinnacles offers the visitor expansive views of Phillip Island, Western Port and the west coast wetlands of the Park.

Camping

Presently camping within the National Park is only available at the Fairhaven camp-site. Located on the west coast foreshore the camp-site offers campers the opportunity to stay over night in an idyllic natural setting. Only basic toilet facilities and water supplies (purify or boil first) are provided and due to the highly combustible vegetation of the island, no open fires are permitted at any time. A portable gas stove, or similar, is essential. For more information contact the Parks Victoria Information Centre on 13 1963.

Preparation

- Check ferry time-table on 03 5257 4565 (westernportferries.com.au).
- Please bring drinking water, food and insect repellent, although limited supplies are available at the general store.
- If walking, it is advisable to wear long pants or gaiters and sturdy walking boots.
- If cycling, it is highly advisable that you use a mountain bike, due to the often sandy and wet conditions encountered. A repair kit is also a must.

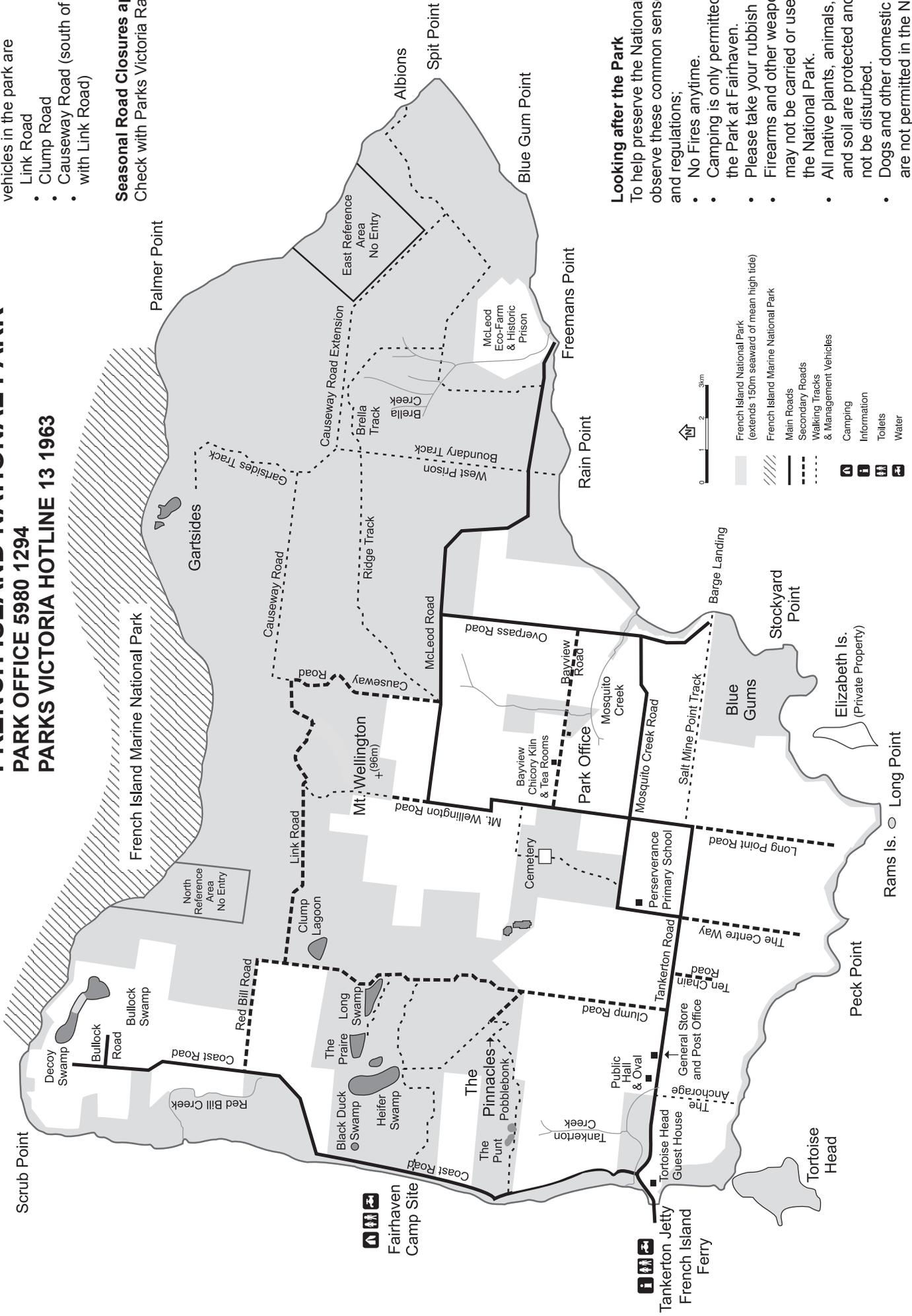


FRENCH ISLAND NATIONAL PARK

PARK OFFICE 5980 1294
PARKS VICTORIA HOTLINE 13 1963

- Permit required** to take a vehicle onto French Island. The only roads open to vehicles in the park are
- Link Road
 - Clump Road
 - Causeway Road (south of the junction with Link Road)

Seasonal Road Closures apply
Check with Parks Victoria Ranger



Looking after the Park

To help preserve the National Park, please observe these common sense guide-lines and regulations;

- No Fires anytime.
- Camping is only permitted in the Park at Fairhaven.
- Please take your rubbish home.
- Firearms and other weapons may not be carried or used in the National Park.
- All native plants, animals, rocks and soil are protected and must not be disturbed.
- Dogs and other domestic animals are not permitted in the National Park.

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- French Island National Park (extends 150m seaward of mean high tide)
- French Island Marine National Park
- Main Roads
- Secondary Roads
- Walking Tracks & Management Vehicles
- Camping
- Information
- Toilets
- Water