

Nooramunga Marine and Coastal Park



Snake Island Camping Guide

The largest sand island in Victoria, Snake Island forms the western end of the barrier islands that protect sheltered mangroves, intertidal mudflats and marine communities from the pounding seas of Bass Strait.

Location and access

Snake Island (3,452ha), named after its elongated shape, is situated within Nooramunga Marine and Coastal Park, 180km from Melbourne. Knowledge of the local tides and channels within Nooramunga Marine and Coastal Park is necessary before travelling to Snake Island. Access to the island is by boat and is tide dependant. Port Welshpool is the closest boat ramp.

A jetty at Swashway on the north western side of the island provides a safe mooring site. Beach landing can be made in calm weather at some locations. Some charter boat operators provide taxi service to the island from Port Welshpool.

Things to see and do

Walking

The island's remoteness is popular with walkers and a network of tracks provides access to the many features of the island. Knowledge of the tides is essential for safely walking the ocean beaches. When walking remember a hat, shirt and sunscreen and take plenty of drinking water. The diverse range of flora and fauna make it ideal for the naturalist, particularly birdwatchers.

Fishing

Try your luck surf fishing from the ocean beach on Snake Island. Anglers seek Snapper, King George Whiting, Flathead and Salmon.

A recreational fishing licence is required to take fish (including bait and shellfish) in all Victorian Marine, estuary and freshwaters. Licences are available from the Department of Primary Industries or most retail fishing stores, as is the Victorian Recreational Fishing Guide which specifies size limits and seasons for different fish.

Camping

A permit must be obtained from Parks Victoria before camping on Snake Island or any of the other islands. Available at www.parkweb.vic.gov.au.

Three recognised camping areas exist on Snake Island: Swashway, Gulf and Huts. Facilities are not provided so campers need to be self sufficient, including all water as water on the island is not suitable for drinking. Dispersed bush camping is permitted for groups less than 12 provided the site is not used for more than two consecutive nights.

Campfires are permitted in accordance with fire protection regulations, although the use of portable stoves is encouraged.

Remnants of history

The local Brataualung Aboriginal clan of the Gunai /Kurnai indigenous people called the island 'Negima'. It was traditionally used as a place of refuge by the Brataualung. It was however mainly used as a nuptial island, a place where young couples could find solitude.

Since the 1880's farmers in South Gippsland have regularly agisted their cattle on Snake Island, mainly over the winter months. The cattle swim the narrow channel at low tide to reach the island.

A haven for plants and wildlife

Snake Island supports a diverse range of vegetation communities including coastal woodlands and scrublands, wet heath, freshwater swamps, saltmarshes and mangroves. The island is home to a number of threatened species including the Ground Parrot and Swamp Antechinus (a small marsupial mouse).

From Spring to Autumn, thousands of migratory wading birds arrive in the area from their breeding grounds in the northern hemisphere to feed. Other wildlife present on the island include Eastern Grey Kangaroos and Swamp Wallabies. Koalas and Hog Deer were both introduced to the island. The death and defoliation of many Manna Gums on Snake Island is the result of over-browsing by koalas. Currently there is a program in place to manage the koala population on the island.

