Lower Glenelg National Park,
Discovery Bay Coastal Park
Visitor Guide

These two parks offer some of Victoria’s finest natural settings including the beautiful Glenelg River and estuary, and the sweeping ocean beaches of Discovery Bay. Explore the freshwater lakes and discover a wide range of bird life, or enjoy a cruise on the Glenelg River. Walk among massive dunes, hike the Great South West Walk or camp beside the river. The choice is yours.

**Enjoying the park**

Parks provide a multitude of activities for visitors to enjoy. Camping, fishing, horse riding, touring, bushwalking, mountain biking, or 4WD, there’s something for everyone.

**Walking**

The internationally acclaimed Great South West Walk allows for a number of short or longer walks. Starting and ending at Portland, the 250km route passes through forest and heathlands, along rivers and via wind-swept coastal cliffs and beaches. A brochure covering the entire walk is available from visitor centres at Portland and Nelson or visit the website [www.greatsouthwestwalk.com](http://www.greatsouthwestwalk.com)

Some walks are listed on the map page.

**Camping**

Camping is permitted at several places along the river at Lower Glenelg National Park. In Discovery Bay Coastal Park camping is available at Lake Monibong and Swan Lake. Fireplaces, toilets and water are available at all sites. Walkers’ camps are located along the Great South West Walk within a day’s walk of each other.


**Driving and sightseeing**

Sealed, gravel and sandy roads provide two wheel drive access to many areas and attractions within the parks. Short walks lead to views at a number of points along the Glenelg River. Several picnic areas are located close to the Glenelg River and estuary, and the lakes in Discovery Bay Coastal Park (DBCP).

**River cruise**

Relax by taking a river cruise from Nelson and discover the wide variety of wildlife and plants on your way.

**Wildlife abounds**

Native animals, though sometimes difficult to find, include Eastern Grey kangaroos, Red-necked wallabies, Brush-tail possums, koalas and echidnas. In the more remote and undisturbed areas, rare animals such as Heath Rats, Swamp Antechinus and Potoroos can be found. Small colonies of Wombats inhabit Lower Glenelg National Park (LGNP), the only remnants of a once widespread population in the south west region of Victoria.

Some of the more common large birds include emus, herons and ducks. Other less common species are the Spotted Quail-Thrush, Painted Quail, Ground Thrush, Azure Kingfisher, and the rare Rufous Bristle-bird.

**How to get there**

These parks are in south-west Victoria adjoining the SA border, about 420km from Melbourne and 490km from Adelaide. The major access roads to the park are shown on the map inside. The parks are connected and there is good access to most points by vehicle or on foot.

**Be fire ready and stay safe**

Many parks and forests are located in high fire risk areas. On days of forecast Code Red Fire Danger this park will be closed for public safety.

If you are already in the park you should leave the night before or early in the morning for your own safety. Closure signs will be erected and rangers will patrol when possible, however you may not receive a personal warning that the park is closed so check the latest conditions by calling 13 1963 or visit [www.parks.vic.gov.au](http://www.parks.vic.gov.au)

For up to date information on fires in Victoria or general fire safety advice call the [Victorian Bushfire Information Line on 1800 240 667](tel:1800240667).

For more information call the Parks Victoria Information Centre on 13 1963 or visit our website at [www.parks.vic.gov.au](http://www.parks.vic.gov.au)

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Shy visitors in need of care

The low vegetation of DBCP allows excellent opportunities for observing bird life along the vast stretches of sandy beach. The park provides important habitat for the endangered Hooded Plover and many other waders migrating from overseas.

Hooded Plovers nest in very exposed beach locations. Take care - please watch for eggs when walking above the high tide line, especially between August and February.

**Do not disturb the birds at their nesting sites. Easily scared, they will often abandon their eggs.**

The Nelson estuary is a great place for bird watching. Spoonbills, ducks, herons, pelicans and swans can often be seen along the boardwalk and bird-hide situated here.

The 27,300 hectares of LGNP features the tranquil Glenelg River and surrounding forest. Rising in the Grampians, the river meanders 400km through western Victoria to the ocean at Nelson.

The 10,615 hectares of DBCP hosts a broad range of coastal environments, stretching from Nelson to Portland.

A rich human history

The Glenelg River is the traditional boundary of the Gunditjmara and the Boonanngka people. The Aboriginal name for the Glenelg River is Bochara. Both the Gunditjmara and Boonanngka people have inhabited this area for many thousands of years, enjoying the rich variety of foods available in the bush and along the coast. They continue to live in this area celebrating their traditional physical and spiritual connections.

Lieutenant Grant named Discovery Bay in 1800 during a voyage along the unknown south-western Victorian coast.

"Ngatanwar wortee pa kokay teen Gunditjimara mirring"; Welcome brothers and sisters to Gunditjmara Country.

‘We are happy and proud to share this special place with you and ask that you take the time to look, listen and feel the Country. We ask visitors to experience and respect this Country - it holds our spirit and stories from our past, present and future’ - Gunditjmara Elders.

Rich in plants

LGNP protects over 700 species of native plants. There are plants of forest, swamp, river, dune and cliff associations. In this part of Victoria, West Australian plant varieties meet with those that are characteristically eastern.

The heath and fringing forest areas have over 50 species of orchids, while the tributaries of Moleside Creek support the most westerly tree-fern gullies in Australia. At least 60 species of plants reach their westernmost occurrence in this park.

The coastal plants of Discovery Bay have altered significantly since Lieutenant Grant arrived. Many dunes now support no vegetation at all. Some small patches of vegetation in sand dunes remain as relics of a former stable land system. Plants typical of coastal heathlands include Coast Wattle, Coast Beard-Heath and Correa.

Away from the dune areas, the plant and animal communities are quite complex.

At Long Swamp there are several plant species of high conservation value, including heaths, dense paperbark thickets and both a pink and yellow flowering form of a variety of Yellow Gum (*Eucalyptus leucoxylon var. macrocarpa*) that occurs nowhere else in the State.

Glenelg River Gorge

Stretching 15km along the lower reaches of the river, this limestone gorge has cliffs up to 50m high in places.

Water percolating through and dissolving the limestone in the rock has formed caves which host nurseries and roosting caves for bats.

Some caves have vertical shafts which, over thousands of years, have literally become death traps for unwary animals. The remains of long-extinct marsupials such as the Giant Kangaroo and the Marsupial Lion have been found in these caves, as well as remains of the Tasmanian Devil, now extinct on the mainland.

Exploring the region

**Princess Margaret Rose Cave** - explore the beauty of the cave, often referred to as “the jewel in the crown” of the Lower Glenelg National Park.

**Cape Nelson Light Station** was built in 1884 and only ten minutes drive from Portland, the lighthouse complex includes a spectacular light tower and two lightkeepers residences.

**Mt Richmond National Park** is the perfect place to have a picnic, take a walk or enjoy the magnificent views. It is home to spectacular spring wildflowers and abundant wildlife in unspoilt bushland.

**Cape Nelson State Park** is located 11km south west of Portland along the Cape Nelson Road. This park features spectacular coastal cliffs, diverse bird life, picturesque walks and picnic areas amid the unusual Soap Mallee (*Eucalyptus diversifolia*), unique to this park.

Local attractions

Be sure to visit Portland’s Maritime Museum and Discovery Centre for more information about the coast of Portland, its parks, features and attractions.

Victoria’s coastal water habitats

A system of Marine National Parks and Marine Sanctuaries offer wonderful recreation opportunities. **Check separate marine park notes for more information.**