Victoria’s unique coastline
The southern coastline of Australia has been isolated for millions of years from other continents due to ocean currents. This has resulted in our marine life evolving in many different ways. Ninety percent (90%) of all marine life here is found nowhere else. Home to over 12,000 species of plants and animals, it is considered one of the most biodiverse and unique marine ecosystems in the world. For this reason, this significant marine environment is protected for the future.

Personal safety
Beware of strong current exposure of the coastline.

Beware of sudden changes in weather, especially when boating on open water. Wear shoes that grip well when walking on rock platforms. Watch where your hands are at all times to avoid potentially dangerous creatures. Be aware of large unexpected waves when walking on shore, especially on rock platforms.

There are no surf lifesaving inside and outside marine animal sanctuaries.

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Dogs are not permitted in Discovery Bay Marine National Park.

Discovery Bay Marine National Park is part of a system of 13 marine national parks and 11 marine sanctuaries in Victoria. By keeping these areas in a natural state, we will protect this unique marine environment into the future.

The establishment of marine protected areas was based on scientific research. It followed ten years of community and industry consultation. An ongoing research and monitoring program forms part of Parks Victoria’s management of these areas. Victoria was the first jurisdiction in the world to create an entire system of fully protected marine national parks at the same time.

Parks Victoria is responsible for the day-to-day management of Victoria’s marine national parks and marine sanctuaries.

Marine pests
Marine pests are non-native plants or animals that can have a detrimental impact on native marine ecosystems. They are a significant threat to the health of the marine environment. Marine pests can wipe out native species by preying upon or out-competing them.

Pests can arrive in new areas in a variety of ways, and preventing their spread is one way visitors can help protect the marine environment. Park users should wash down all equipment and dry it thoroughly before changing locations to minimise the risk of spreading these pests.

You may carry fin-fish on board your boat within park boundaries if you caught the fish outside the park, and you may also carry (but not use) a fishing rod. Spear guns are not permitted within any of Victoria’s marine protected areas, either in a boat or elsewhere.

No fishing, netting, spear ing, taking or killing of marine life. All methods of fishing, from the shore or at sea, are prohibited.

No taking or damaging of animals, plants and objects (artefacts)

Education and research
The network of marine national parks and sanctuaries provides excellent sites for research and education opportunities. All research must be approved before commencing. Schools, researchers or other groups visiting Discovery Bay Marine National Park or nearby Discovery Bay Coastal Park need to register their visit with local rangers on 13 1963.

Restrictions
For the protection of the marine environment, a number of activities are prohibited within the boundaries of Victoria’s marine national parks and marine sanctuaries.

Rangers and Fishery Officers regularly patrol these areas and enforce regulations.

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Protected network
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Enjoying the park
Walking trails along Cape Bridgewater provide excellent views of the marine national park. Surfing and bird watching is popular. Intertidal areas with colourful rockpools can be explored at low tide. At times, rough swell and ocean currents make much of the park inaccessible to divers. Please remember all forms of fishing and collecting are prohibited in the park to keep the ecosystem healthy.

Marine life
Great White Sharks, Blue Whales, fur seals and dolphins all come to the park to feed. Not all of the life protected in this park is large—rock platforms are blanketed with barnacles and shellfish, and a very rare crustacean; the Southern Hooded Shrimp Athanopsis australis has been found here.

The Bonney Upwelling
The Bonney Upwelling occurs when cold, nutrient rich water is brought up from the ocean floor. These nutrients trigger the growth of microscopic plants— which form the building blocks of a complex food web. Animals such as Blue Whales feed on swarms of crustaceans known as krill and sponges filter tiny invertebrates from the water. Sharks, seals, gannets and many other animals feed on the fish of fish also benefitting from the nutrient rich waters. Upwelling events like this only cover 1% of the ocean surface worldwide, but account for half of the global fisheries production. This is the only deep water upwelling event which occurs in Australian waters.

Shipwrecks
Three wooden sailing barques, the Jane, the Ann, and the Marie are thought to be in the vicinity of the park. Historic shipwrecks are protected under the Heritage Act 1995 and removal of any artefacts or objects from these sites are not permitted.

If you would like further information about Victoria’s marine national parks and marine sanctuaries, contact the Parks Victoria Information Centre on 13 1963 or visit the Parks Victoria website at www.parks.vic.gov.au.

How to get there
Discovery Bay Marine National Park is approximately 19 km west of Portland and 380 km west of Melbourne. The main access to the marine national park shore is via a short walk from Whites Beach or Blacks Beach. Boat access is from the beach at Bridgewater Bay or Portland Harbour boat ramp.

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Deep water
The average depth increases gently away from the shoreline to a maximum depth of 75m in the south-west area of the park. In the deep water in the west of the park, sponge gardens thrive. Sponges can be found on most reefs throughout the park. Sponges are unique filter feeding animals, and come in a wide variety of colours, shapes and sizes.

Sandy seafloor
Descartes Bay has a sandy seafloor. The sandy areas of the marine national park are home to a large variety of marine creatures. Some samples of the sediment in the park found over 688 microscopic organisms in 0.1m²! Most of these animals are very small crustaceans known as amphipods.

Boulder field
The base of these underwater cliffs is surrounded by massive basalt boulder fields lying on top of calcarenite limestone reef.

Seal colonies
Australian and New Zealand Fur Seals can often be seen swimming or resting on the rocks from the viewing platforms at the tip of Cape Bridgewater. The seals live and breed here year-round in two distinct colonies. A 2.5 kilometre section of the Great South West Walk starts at the carpark at Fisherman’s Cove and follows the clifftops to the lookouts.

Rockpools
Whites Beach has a small intertidal area for exploration. Common species of seaweed on the intertidal reefs include Neptune’s Necklace, Sea Lettuce and a range of encrusting red algae. Barnacles, sea anemones and crabs all live in and around the rockpools. The beach is generally unsafe for swimming, with strong rips and high energy waves crashing onto the rocks.

Steep cliffs
Descartes Bay Marine National Park Boundary
The MNP covers 2770 hectares adjacent to Cape Bridgewater along the coast from Blacks Beach to Whites Beach and offshore to three nautical miles, the limit of Victorian waters. Between Whites Beach and Cape Duquesne the park boundary commences 500 m from the coastline. Discovery Bay MNP abuts the Discovery Bay Coastal Park and includes the areas between high and low water mark that were formerly part of the Coastal Park. The park extends 200m beneath the seabed.

No fishing
No taking

To Portland
17km