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 organisms. Some samples of the sediment in the park found over 688 microscopic organisms in 0.1m²! Most of these new 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.

Basalt reef

Just south of the sandy stretch in Descartes bay is a narrow band of high profile basalt reef with vertical walls and cliffs up to 30 metres high beneath the surface of the water. This is the largest basalt outcrop along the Victorian coastline and a significant natural feature.

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, seaweed, elephant snails, sea urchins 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.

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.

Steep cliffs

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