Guide to Kiteboarding

Kiteboarding is an exhilarating sport with several locations on Port Phillip and Western Port enjoying an excellent world-wide reputation as kiteboarding venues. Kiteboards are classified as the equivalent of a boat by Marine Safety Victoria meaning operators of Kiteboards are required to abide by the same regulations as a boat operator.

Kiteboards are a vessel

Naturally Kiteboarders share the water with swimmers, anglers, surfers, divers and other vessels. Marine Safety Victoria, the state wide regulator for marine activities, has determined kiteboards are vessels as they navigate a path and transport people from one point to another. Other vessels include – sailing boats, windsurfers, personal watercraft, powerboats, paddle and pedal powered craft.

Use of Kiteboards is governed by:
- Marine Act 1988, Marine Regulations 2009
- Vessel Zoning and Operating Rules
- Local Port Rule and Harbour Masters Directions

Safety Guidelines

Kiteboarding is a physically demanding activity and as with any sport there are risks of physical injury resulting from accidents or mishaps on the water. It is easy to kiteboard safely with a little forethought and common sense.

Before using your kite on or near the water it’s important you:
- are in good physical condition
- are a proficient swimmer
- wear a helmet and the appropriate Personal Flotation Device (PFD)
- know how to self rescue

It’s important to think not only about your own safety but also the safety of other water users in the area.

Following the C.L.E.A.R. safety guidelines will help you enjoy your kiteboard experience safely:
- Check CONDITIONS including wind speed and direction, waves, tides and currents. Consider possible changes to conditions and always keep the downwind area clear.
- Always LOOK before you launch, land, jump or jibe and look ahead to where you are going.
- Check your EQUIPMENT before you use your kite and use a kite leash and a quick release on anything you hook into. Practise using your safety equipment and techniques regularly so that using them becomes instinctive and never exceed manufacturer’s specifications.
- Have a respectful ATTITUDE towards the conditions and risks on the water. Always seek and listen to local advice, don’t exceed your limitations and use good judgement to prevent situations rather than rely on skills to get out of them.
- RESPECT and be courteous to all other water and beach users, the law, the environment and fellow kiteboarders at all times and follow right of way rules.

Ultimately you are responsible for minimizing the risk to yourself and others. By kiteboarding responsibly you help protect the long term future of this great sport.

Rules and Regulations

5 knot speed restrictions

In Victoria all vessels including kiteboards must slow to less than 5 knots when they are within:
- a distance of 50m from a swimmer
- a distance of 50 m from another vessel (however kiteboarders can exceed 5 knots when within 50m of another kiteboarder but only in a kiteboard operating area)
- a distance of 100m of a vessel or a buoy with the diver below – Code A white/blue flag displayed.
- 200m of the waters edge for most of Port Phillip and Western Port.
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- 760 m of the waters edge from Dromana to Blairgowrie (due to the very shallow nature of the shore that enables swimmers to swim further from shore).
- 50m of any wharf, jetty, slipway, diving platform, boat ramp or other structure.

This means kiteboarders must either alter course or depower the kite and ‘body drag’ until the appropriate distance from swimmers, divers vessels or structures.

5 knots is equivalent to a fast walking pace or approx 9.2 kph.

Other Rules for Kiteboarders

No boating zones
Kiteboarders are not permitted within ‘No Boating’ Zones – generally shown by signage on the foreshore and yellow special marks on the water.

Personal Floatation Devices (PFDs)
Within the enclosed waters of Port Phillip and Western Port Kiteboarders are required to wear a Type 1, 2 or 3 PFD.

Kiteboarding near other vessels
Less manoeuvrable vessels generally have right of way. Kiteboarders should be aware of and give way to larger, less manoeuvrable vessels. For safety, kiteboarders should give large vessels such as ships a wide berth and keep clear of all other vessels.

Approaching other Kiteboarders
When approaching another kiteboarder or any other vessel head-on, always alter your course to the right (starboard) - never to the left (port). This is known as the ‘starboard rule’ and applies to vessels operating under either wind or power.

When two kiteboarders are moving towards each other and each has the wind on a different side, the kiteboarder who has the wind on the starboard (i.e. right side, where right leg/arm are leading in the direction of travel) has right of way. In sailing terms, a kiteboarder with right of way is entitled to insist on exercising their right of way, warning the opposing kite boarder by shouting "starboard" very clearly and in good time.

Kiteboard Rigging Areas
Where they are provided, use rigging areas to prepare your kite. This gives other beach users fair access to the beach and increase safety.

Contact the local council for advice on areas set aside for rigging kiteboards.

Boating & Swimming Zone Review
There is wide agreement that our current boating and swimming zones are no longer appropriate for contemporary recreational needs. As local Port Manager, Parks Victoria has conducted a thorough review of all zones throughout Port Phillip and Western Port.

Contemporary and future uses, safety, practicality, simplicity of identification and compliance are the guiding principles for the establishment of the new zones.

Following significant public consultation, revised boating zones were approved by Marine Safety Victoria and will be phased in over several years.

For the latest information on the zone changes visit www.parkweb.vic.gov.au

To join the mailing list for regular updates send an email to info@parks.vic.gov.au requesting to be added to ‘Recreational Boating & Swimming Zone Review’ mailing list.

Local Port Manager
Parks Victoria is the local port and waterway manager for the local ports of Port Phillip and Western Port.

- Parks Victoria has the accountability for the control of vessel activities and movements in the local port.
- Parks Victoria Rangers are authorised under the Marine Act 1988 and can issue infringement notices or prosecute people who break the law.
- The Victorian Water Police enforce the Marine and other Acts on Victorian Waters. The Victorian Water Police work in partnership with Parks Victoria on Port Phillip and Western Port to ensure that the water is used safely.

Parks Victoria distributes comprehensive waterproof boat guides for Port Phillip and Western Port. For your free copy, contact the Parks Victoria Information Centre on 13 1963.

Other sources of information
Marine Safety Victoria: www.marinesafety.vic.gov.au
Kite Boarding Victoria: www.kbv.org.au

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