

Port Phillip Heads Marine National Park

Visitor Guide



Port Phillip Heads Marine National Park protects a diverse marine environment comprising Swan Bay, Mud Islands, Popes Eye, Point Lonsdale, Point Nepean and Portsea Hole. The park presents internationally recognised dive sites, offering excellent diving and snorkelling opportunities for varying levels of experience.



Things to see and do

Diving and snorkelling

Divers and snorkellers have a wide choice of exciting destinations within the six sectors of the Marine National Park.

Portsea hole is popular with experienced divers and reaches depths of up to 30 metres. It is one of the most popular recreational dive sites in the bay.

Popes Eye offers protection from tidal currents, allowing this site to be suitable for all levels of diving.

In the entrance to Port Phillip – known as ‘The Rip’, appropriately qualified divers can experience spectacular wall diving and challenging drift dives, with outstanding invertebrate life rivaling the colour and diversity seen on tropical coral reefs.

Swan Bay and the surrounds of Mud Islands, and the intertidal reefs at Point Lonsdale and Point Nepean, allow beginner and experienced snorkellers to experience Victoria’s underwater life in relative ease.

Water sports

Surfing and body boarding on the outstanding breaks at Point Lonsdale and Point Nepean, canoeing and sea kayaking in Swan Bay and safe swimming on sheltered beaches are all popular activities.

The surf breaks around Point Nepean are very popular for surfing, although these breaks are only accessible by boat as there is no shore-based access for surfers.

Other activities

Popes Eye is a popular tourist destination for underwater photography, bird watching and education programs.

You don’t have to be on or under the water to enjoy the park’s diverse marine environment. There are many wonderful coastal settings for nature observation such as mudflat wading, bird watching, rockpooling or just walking on the beach with the family.

Looking after our Marine National Parks

People are encouraged to visit Marine National Parks and Marine Sanctuaries, however extractive or damaging activities are prohibited within their boundaries in order to preserve marine biodiversity and maintain or enhance the condition of these areas.

All methods of fishing from the shore or at sea are prohibited, including fishing, netting, spearing, taking or killing of marine life. The taking or damaging of animals, plants and objects (artefacts) is also prohibited.

You may carry fin-fish on board your boat within park boundaries if you caught the fish outside the park. 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.

You may also have abalone or rock lobster and associated equipment (securely stowed) on board the boat provided that you are travelling straight through the park by the shortest practicable route.

There are strong penalties under the National Parks Act for fishing in Marine National Parks and Marine Sanctuaries. To report a fishing offence call Department of Primary Industries on 13 FISH (13 3474).

Be prepared and stay safe

Personal Safety

- Practice safe boating, follow all signs and markers correctly, and do not anchor in shipping channels.
- Ensure adequate protection from the sun and wind.
- Diving should only be undertaken by trained and experienced divers, or go with a licenced tour operator.
- Beware of sudden changes in weather, especially when boating on open water.
- Beware of strong currents and undertows when snorkelling or at the beach.
- Wear shoes that grip well when walking on rock platforms.
- Watch where your hands are going at all times to avoid potentially dangerous marine creatures.
- Be aware of large unexpected waves when walking on shore, especially on rock platforms.
- Stay away from cliff edges and bases.
- Due to the presence of unexploded ordnance from previous military uses, there is no access from the water to beaches surrounding Point Nepean.

Caring for the marine environment

- Dogs and other domestic animals are not permitted on Mud Islands. Dogs must be under effective control in all other areas.
- Discarded gear and rubbish can endanger birds and marine animals – please take all rubbish away for disposal or recycling.
- Always replace any organisms or rocks you may have disturbed.
- Keep clear of bird nesting or roosting areas.
- Please do not feed any wildlife.

Other resources

Visit www.parks.vic.gov.au for other visitor guides for Marine National Parks and Marine Sanctuaries.

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