

The Lakes National Park

Tatungalung Country

Visitor Guide



The Lakes National Park is a peaceful bushland retreat in the Gippsland Lakes, fringed by Lake Victoria and Lake Reeve. Occupying 2,390 hectares of low lying woodland and coastal heath, it consists of Sperm Whale Head peninsula, Rotamah and Little Rotamah Islands.



Welcome to Country

The Gunaikurnai people are the Traditional Owners of the Country featured in this visitor guide.

Through a new way of managing public land called Joint Management, the State has created an equal partnership with the Gunaikurnai people. The benefits of this partnership are many and include: the knowledge and culture of traditional owners incorporated into natural resources (land) management, cultural awareness and knowledge of local history, improved park management through knowledge-sharing and increased opportunities for new initiatives.

By conserving and protecting the natural environment and cultural values, the education and enjoyment experience is enhanced for all community members and visitors.

The Lakes National Park is one of the jointly managed parks within Gippsland. This agreement recognises the fact that the Gunaikurnai people have always been connected to their land and are the rightful people who speak for that Country. These parks and reserves are cultural landscapes which are part of our living culture.

Getting there

The Lakes National Park is in East Gippsland about 300 km east of Melbourne. The park is at the eastern end of Loch Sport, 63 km east of Sale. There is boat access from Painesville.

Things to see and do

Walking

Lake Reeve Nature Trail & Lookout Tower - 30 minutes return

Lake Reeve provides important feeding and roosting habitat for a number of waterfowl species, and is one of Victoria's most important areas for wading birds. The lake is a significant feature of the Gippsland Lakes system and is listed under the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance (RAMSAR). A short walk will lead you from the Lookout Tower car park down through a range of habitats to the shores of Lake Reeve. The numbers below denote the features along the nature trail.

Early beginnings

Start your walk at the Lookout Tower providing views of the Ninety Mile Beach and Lake Reeve. If you were here a few million years ago you would have been at sea. Over five million years ago the land to the north was pushed up to form the Great Dividing Range. It was only during the last million years that the Gippsland Lakes came into

being. The lakes were formed when the sea deposited sand, creating a barrier which enclosed the bay that once existed here.

1. Open woodland

Much of the vegetation in the Park is woodland of Shining Peppermints and Saw Banksia. The main shrub here is the rare Ribbed Thryptomene, found here and in South Australia's York and Eyre Peninsulas and in Tasmania.

2. Forests

This eucalypt is a Manna Gum featuring dark rough bark. This tree grows in wetter areas than the Shining Peppermint. The run-off water from the slope provides them with additional moisture. Manna Gum is one of the eucalypts which form the diet of koalas.

3. Wild Cherry tree

The Wild Cherry tree's fruit begins to form from December to May. From July through to November the stem above the fruit swells to become fleshy red berries.

4. A change of habitat

This paperbark scrub is different from the other habitats you have walked through. Less light is able to get through the Swamp Paperbarks' dense leaf canopy. Birds such as yellow robins, grey fantails and thornbills build their nests in the protection of the dense foliage.

5. The shoreline

Wander quietly to the edge of Lake Reeve and keep a look out for waterbirds. Black Swans, pelicans, grebes, ducks and cormorants are often seen feeding in these brackish waters. If you are lucky you may spot the rare. White-bellied Sea-eagle as it hunts for prey.

The vegetation along the shoreline is salt marsh, bordered by plants such as the succulent glasswort. Its cactus-like shape helps it store water and salts. The lake shore vegetation has adapted to regular flooding and saline conditions.

6. Location of former Grass tree

This was the location of an old Grass Tree (*Xanthorrhoea australis*). Grass trees are common throughout coastal areas; however, this particular tree was the only evidence that grass trees once existed in this section of the park.

7. Mystery tree

Look above you. This dead tree – otherwise known as a 'stag' – is covered in wounds. Each of the gnarled swellings in the branches is an attempt by the tree to block off a wound caused by either an insect or fungus.

Even though the tree is dead, it still has an important role to play in this habitat. It provides home for many different animals – from possums through to insects.

The Lakes National Park



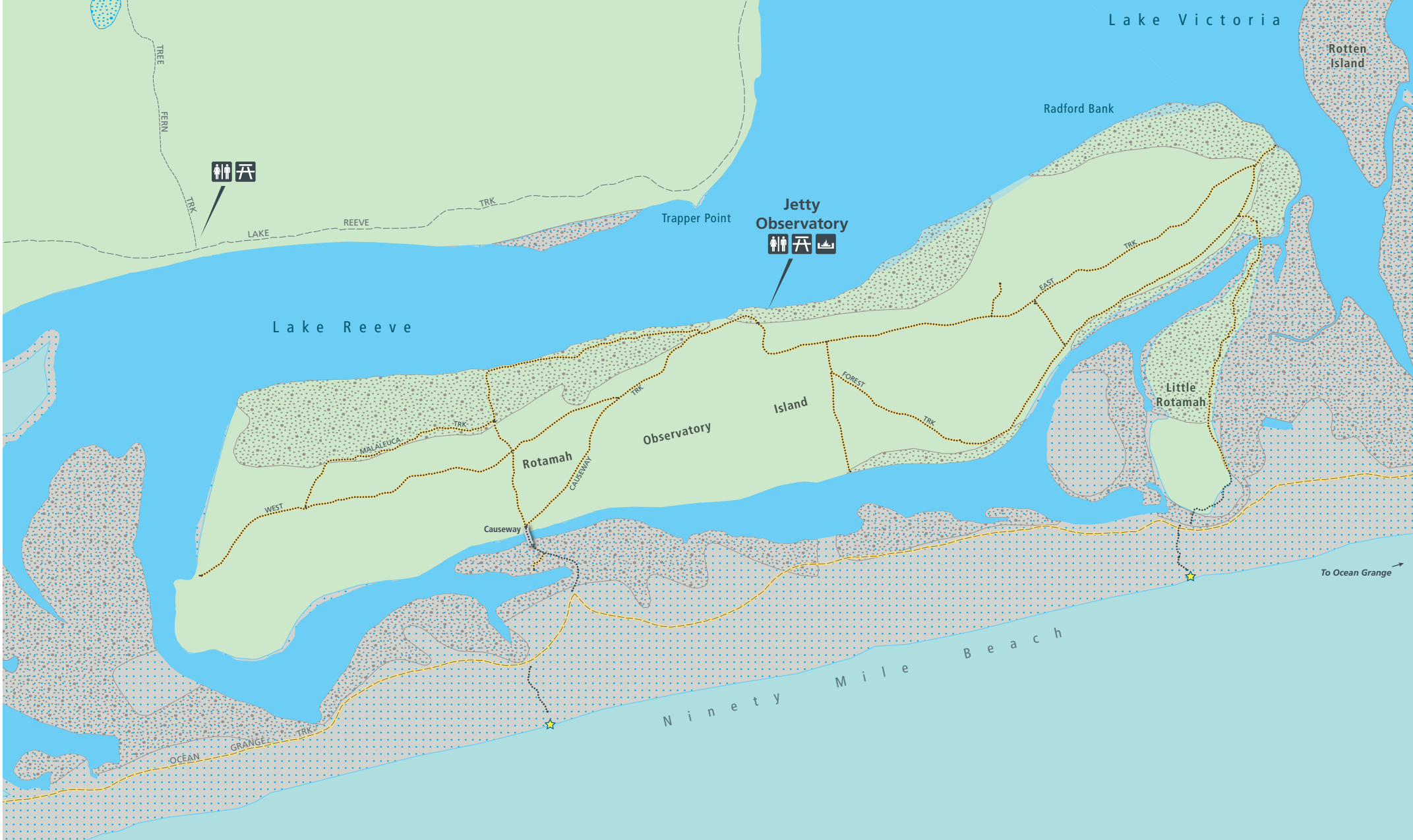
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|--------------|------------------|-----------------------|---------------|--|------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Information | Gas barbecue | Bird hide | Main road | Walking track | The Lakes National Park | Wetland |
| Toilets | Untreated water | Parks Victoria office | Sealed road | Management vehicles/walking track only | Other park/reserve | Area subject to inundation |
| Picnic table | Camping area | Beach access | Unsealed road | Seasonal road closure | Gippsland Lakes Coastal Park | Ocean |
| Fireplace | Self-guided walk | | 4WD | | Lake | |

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The Lakes National Park

Rotamah Island



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8. Forest Red Gum

This tree is not only magnificent but is estimated to be over 300 years old. See how the tree has formed a thick bark over an old wound. This is done to prevent any fungus or insects from attacking the tree. One can only imagine what the park looked like when this tree was a seedling.

9. Banksias

There are two types of banksia trees here. In front of you is the tall Coast Banksia which has a plain leaf edge with a white underside. Next to it is the Saw Banksia. As its name suggests, its leaves have a saw tooth, or serrated edge. Banksia flowers are an important source of food for Honeyeaters and Pygmy Possums.

10. Sheoaks

This tree is the Drooping Sheoak. These unusual trees have extremely small green drooping leaves which are really stems. This is thought to be an adaptation to cope with dry coastal conditions. The stems have a thick outer coating (cuticle) which helps lessen the water loss through evaporation.

Picnicking

The most popular of several picnic areas is at Point Wilson, the site of the original settler's homestead. There are gas barbecues at Point Wilson as well as wood fired barbecues (BYO wood), a day's shelter, toilets, water and a jetty. Fires are prohibited at Dolomite Swamp, Netting Boundary, Trouser Point and Cherry Tree, however gas barbecues are permitted.

Camping

Camping is permitted at Emu Bight, near the shore of Lake Victoria. A communal shelter and toilets are provided. Campers need to bring their own firewood and water supplies. Fires may only be lit in the fireplaces provided and are not permitted on individual campsites. Bookings are required. Go to <http://www.parks.vic.gov.au/stay>

Flora and fauna

Eucalypt and Banksia woodland are widespread in the sandy soils of the park. Areas of coastal heath are interspersed with swampy, salt marsh vegetation.

The park is most spectacular in spring, when wildflowers are on show. Several rare plant species feature, including Ribbed Thryptomene which, apart from this area, is found only in Tasmania and the York and Eyre Peninsulas in South Australia.

More than 190 species of birds have been recorded in the park including the rare White Bellied Sea Eagle and the endangered Little Tern. You will also see Eastern Grey Kangaroos, Black Wallabies, Echidnas and Wombats.

Rotamah Island

Rotamah Island is a naturalist's bushland delight. Accessible only by boat, the island is surrounded by Lake Victoria and Lake Reeve to the north and the dunes of Ninety Mile Beach to the south. A number of walking tracks leave from the picnic area and jetty.

Camping is available to educational groups, but must be booked in advance through the park office.

Walking

90 Mile Beach Walk – 3.8km, 1.5 hours return

From the jetty, walk along the Causeway Track to the beach. Return via Fenceline Track and Lake Reeve Track.

West End Walk – 4.8km, 2 hours return

Starting at the jetty, follow the Causeway Track and West Track to the end of the island. Return via Melaleuca Track and Lake Reeve Track.

Rotamah Loop – 7.6km, 3 hours return

From the jetty and picnic area, follow East Track over the footbridge onto Little Rotamah Island. Return via Ocean Grange Track or the 90 Mile Beach to Causeway Track. Alternatively visit Ocean Grange by following the track down and back (additional 4.5km, 1.5-hour return).

East End Walk – 4.6km, 2 hours return

Follow East Track from the jetty and picnic area. This track offers some fantastic views before heading back along Forest Track

Be prepared and stay safe

The Lakes National Park is in the West and South Gippsland fire district. Rotamah Island is in the East Gippsland District. Bushfire safety is a personal responsibility. Anyone entering parks and forests during the bushfire season needs to stay aware of forecast weather conditions. Check the Fire Danger Rating and for days of Total Fire Ban at www.cfa.vic.gov.au or call the VicEmergency Hotline on 1800 226 226.

No fires may be lit on Total Fire Ban days. On Code Red Fire Danger Rating days this park will be closed for public safety. Check the latest conditions at www.parks.vic.gov.au or by calling 13 1963. For emergency assistance call Triple Zero (000). If there is a green emergency marker sign near you, read the information on the marker to the operator.