

Fact Sheet



Recreational horse riding in Belfast Coastal Reserve

Belfast Coastal Reserve offers a unique opportunity for horse riding in the coastal environment, along sandy stretches of beach pounded by waves from the Southern Ocean, or sheltered by offshore rocky reefs. Special regulations apply to riders to ensure all visitors enjoy the area safely and sustainably.



Where can I ride?

Recreational horse riding is allowed at the water's edge on all beaches in Belfast Coastal Reserve. Riding is allowed on designated beach access tracks, all open roads and car parks.

Levys Beach carpark, Rutledges Cutting ('The Cutting') carpark, Killarney Beach carpark and Killarney Boat Ramp carpark are the only carparks recommended for horse floats (Please refer to the *Belfast Coastal Reserve - Recreational User Map* on the Parks Victoria website). Please park floats in a manner that does not inconvenience other reserve users.

Plan your ride with caution. Horses unfamiliar with waves crashing on beaches may react fearfully; riders should be aware of the conditions their horse can safely handle. It is safest to time your ride within the periods of low tide and ride on the widest beaches.

Group rides

If you plan on riding in a group of four or more horses, a permit is required – please contact Parks Victoria.

Please ride no more than two abreast, and ride single file on tracks and when passing others.

The threats to beach-nesting birds

The beaches of Belfast Coastal Reserve provide significant habitat for wildlife species, including beach-nesting birds. Hooded Plovers are a threatened beach-nesting bird species

inhabiting the reserve. Their eggs are well-camouflaged and laid in nests that are simply shallow scrapes in the sand.

Parent birds see an approaching horse as a threat to their offspring. They will leave their nest to keep its location hidden, and won't return until the 'threat' is well out of sight. While the nest is unattended, eggs are vulnerable to being eaten, trodden on, or dying due to extreme heat or cold.

What riders can do to help

- Hooded Plover nest sites are protected by signage and exclusion fencing. It is an offence to enter a Hooded Plover nesting area. Please keep a respectful distance from these sites, and do not loiter nearby.
- When entering the beach, keep to designated tracks to avoid damaging the surrounding dunes. Trampling vegetation and riding in sand dunes causes habitat degradation and erosion. It can also disturb significant Aboriginal cultural heritage sites prevalent in the reserve.
- Be mindful that horses can spread weeds in fodder and faeces, and soil-borne diseases in soil on hooves.
- Time your ride with low tide, and plan to ride on wider beaches in the reserve. Always keep to the water's edge.

Beach riding regulations

In early 2020, updated regulations will apply in the reserve. Recreational horse riders will need to adhere to these or risk a fine:

- Keep as close to the water's edge as is safely possible
- Horses are not permitted in dunes. On the beach, horses are not permitted within 5m of the dunes. Horses must not be ridden where this distance can't be maintained, such as during the highest tides.
- Horses are not permitted in Hooded Plover nesting sites
- Horses must not gallop, and must slow to walking pace on all access tracks and when within 20m of other beach users
- Horses must give right of way to all pedestrians
- All horse faeces must be removed. Washing down horses in carparks or other areas is not permitted
- Horse riding is not permitted between sunset and sunrise
- Groups of four or more horses require a permit