



French Island National Park

Visitor Guide with Map

Although close to Melbourne, French Island National Park is a mystery to many people due to its isolated location in Western Port Bay. As a result, the park features some fantastically underrated opportunities for walking and cycling among a diverse landscape of mangroves, saltmarsh, heathland and open woodlands.



Welcome

French Island National Park is part of an Aboriginal cultural landscape in the traditional Country of the Bunurong People. Parks Victoria respects the deep and continuing connection that Bunurong Traditional Owners have to these lands and waters, and we recognise their ongoing role in caring for Country.

Getting here

French Island National Park is accessible by ferry from Stony Point, 80 km south-east from Melbourne, and Cowes, Phillip Island.

Ferry: Take the Western Port Ferries passenger ferry from Stony Point (10 minutes) or Cowes (25 minutes) across to French Island. You will arrive at Tankerton Jetty. Tickets are available for purchase on the ferry or online:

www.westernportferries.com.au. It is recommended you book ahead. For the ferry timetable and weather conditions, visit their website or call 03 5257 4565. Please note: Ferry services can be cancelled at very short notice.

The only roads in the park open to vehicles are Link Road, Clump Road and Causeway Road (south of the junction with Link Road).

Things to see and do

Wildlife viewing

The vegetation at French Island National Park is rich and diverse, containing over 580 indigenous plant species, including more than 100 native orchid species.

Over 230 bird species have been recorded, including rare birds such as the white-bellied sea-eagle, king quail and orange-bellied parrot, as well as 33 species of waders that forage along the coast at low tide. The island supports a large population of long-nosed potoroos and contains the most significant population of koalas in Victoria. The koalas reproduce so successfully that they eat themselves out of house and home.

Eastern barred bandicoots were released onto French Island in 2019, and since then the population has spread from a single area within the park to the entire island.

Bandicoots and potoroos are mainly active at night, so you will be lucky to catch a glimpse of them. Instead, keep an eye out for their distinctive cone-shaped diggings, or you may encounter them when staying at Fairhaven Campground.

Walking and cycling

Walking tracks range from short walks to half and whole day options starting from Tankerton Jetty.

Track name	Grade	Distance	Time	Suitable for
General Store	2.2	3 km one-way	1 hour (walk)	 
Coast Road Walking Track	2.2	5.3 km one-way	1.5 hours (walk)	 
Red Bill Manna Gum Woodland Track	2.2	6.8 km return	1.5-2 hours (walk)	 
Wetlands Circuit	3	9.6 km return	2.5 hours (walk)	 
Highlights Circuit	3	14 km loop	4.5-5 hours (walk)	 
Link Road, Mount Wellington	-	27 km return	-	
Bluegums	-	10 km one-way	-	
Gartsides	-	24 km one-way	-	

Please note all tracks are accessible for walking or cycling.



General store

Grade 2.2, 3 km one-way, 1 hour walking



Head east through the small island township, past the French Island community hall and CFA station to the General Store. Keep an eye out for a koala or local birdlife including purple moorhen, swamp harriers or Cape Barren geese.



Coast Road Walking Track

Grade 2.2, 5.3 km one-way, 1.5 hours walking



Take this track to reach Fairhaven Campground. Head north on this unsealed gently undulating sandy track. Two lookouts provide views across saltmarsh, mangroves and Western Port Bay to Hastings. Walk through heathland and messmate heathy woodland. Enjoy wildflowers in spring and look for the white-bellied sea eagle.



Red Bill Manna Gum Woodland Track

Grade 2.2, 6.8 km return, 1.5-2 hours walking



Starting at Fairhaven Campground, head north on Coast Road and turn left at Red Bill Manna Gum Woodland Track. View koalas, saltmarsh, Red Bill Creek and a variety of shorebirds.



Wetlands Circuit

Grade 3, 9.6 km return, 3.5 hours walking



Starting at Fairhaven Campground, head east along Pinnacles Track. Points of interest include The Pinnacles Lookout, wildflowers including orchids, birdlife and the seasonally filled Deuchers, Heifer, Pobblebonk and Punt Swamps. The topography is mainly flat and gently undulating and at 60m above sea level, The Pinnacles offers expansive views of Phillip Island, Western Port Bay and the west coast wetlands of the park.



Highlights Circuit

Grade 3, 14 km loop, 4.5-5 hours walking



Head east past the community hall and General Store. Look out for koalas before turning left at Clump Road. Take the second left towards The Pinnacles, where you can take in views over Western Port Bay and French Island, before heading through messmate woodland and back along the coast to Tankerton Jetty. Take plenty of water. Please allow a day to complete this walk.



Link Road, Mount Wellington

27 km return

Ride north on Coast Road and turn right at Red Bill Road. Follow the circuit turning right at Clump Road, left at Link Road, right at Mt Wellington Road and right at Tankerton Road. Points of interest include wildflowers including orchids, birds of prey and king quail habitat.



Bluegums

10 km one-way to the entrance

Bluegums can be accessed via Tankerton Road, Mount Wellington Road and Saltmine Point Road. From here there are numerous trails to follow to view the old Bluegums Homestead, shearing shed and chicory kiln. Bluegums is in the south-east corner of French Island and offers expansive views to the south and east, with native grasslands surrounded by forest. Please allow a full day when visiting.



Gartsides

24 km one-way

Gartsides can be accessed via Tankerton Road, Mt Wellington Road, Mcleod Road and Causeway Road. Gartsides features an old farming site and an old salt works from circa 1890s. Please allow a full day when visiting.

Camping facilities

Camping is available at Fairhaven Campground located 5km from the Tankerton Jetty on the west coast foreshore. Fairhaven Campground offers 20 individual sites for up to 2 people per site, with the opportunity to stay in an idyllic natural setting.

This is a walk-in camping site suitable for swags and tents only. Campsites are free but must be booked online at bookings.parks.vic.gov.au/book.

Only basic toilet facilities are provided and due to the highly combustible vegetation of the island, no open fires are permitted at any time. A portable gas stove, or similar, is essential, although there are two gas BBQ plates available. Please clean after use and be considerate of other visitors. Bring your own drinking water, untreated water is available for washing hands and dishes but is not suitable for drinking unless treated.

The General Store is approximately 6.5km away.

Camping area facilities	Tents	Picnic tables	Toilets	Barbecue	Fire pits	Dogs allowed
Fairhaven Campground						

What makes this park special?

As a wetland of international significance, the wetlands surrounding French Island are protected under the Ramsar Convention. Migratory waders, such as the eastern curlew, may be seen feeding on ghost shrimps and crabs, while the tiny, red-necked stint searches nearby for worms and small crustaceans.

Caring for the park



Help us look after your park by following these regulations:

- Dogs and cats are not permitted.
- Please take rubbish home with you for recycling, composting or disposal.
- No fires may be lit at any time.
- Only portable gas stoves are permitted in the Fairhaven Campground. Ensure that:
 - a three-metre area is cleared of anything flammable;
 - at least 10 litres of water is available for immediate use;
 - always supervise the barbecue and make sure you can put it out if necessary. Ensure it is completely out before you leave.
- All native plants and animals are protected. Leave the park as you found it.
- Firearms and drones are prohibited in national parks. Flying drones in parks can disturb wildlife and annoy other visitors.

Be prepared and stay safe



Medical assistance is limited on French Island. Assistance is by air ambulance helicopter only. Please ensure your first aid supplies are well equipped. Ambulance services are not free, or covered under Medicare, please consider your options, including Ambulance Victoria membership to protect against the cost of ambulance treatment and transport.

- There is no drinking water available in the national park. Please ensure you carry enough water to enjoy your time here.
- Watch out for snakes which are more active in spring, summer and autumn. If you see a snake, stand still and don't panic. Snakes nearly always move away when they feel footstep vibrations.
- It is advised to wear long pants, gaiters and sturdy walking boots. Due to the often sandy and wet conditions encountered, it is highly recommended that you use a mountain bike when cycling. A repair kit is also essential.

Emergencies

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.

This park is in the Central Fire 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 [emergency.vic.gov.au](https://www.emergency.vic.gov.au), on the VicEmergency smartphone app or call the VicEmergency Hotline on 1800 226 226. No fires may be lit on Total Fire Ban days.

On Catastrophic Fire Danger Rating days this park will be closed for public safety. Do not enter the park. If you are already in the park, leave the night before or as early as possible in the

morning. Warnings signs may be erected, but do not expect a personal warning. Check for park, facility and road closures and the latest conditions at parks.vic.gov.au or by calling 13 1963.



Want to learn more? Visit the French Island National Park webpage for more information, including accessibility and current park conditions
www.parks.vic.gov.au/places-to-see/parks/french-island-national-park

Last updated: August 2026

French Island National Park

Overview map



www.parks.vic.gov.au
Disclaimer: Parks Victoria does not guarantee that this data is without flaw of any kind and therefore disclaims all liability which may arise from you relying on this information. Cartography by Parks Victoria July 2026.
For mobile App search for Avenza PDF Maps

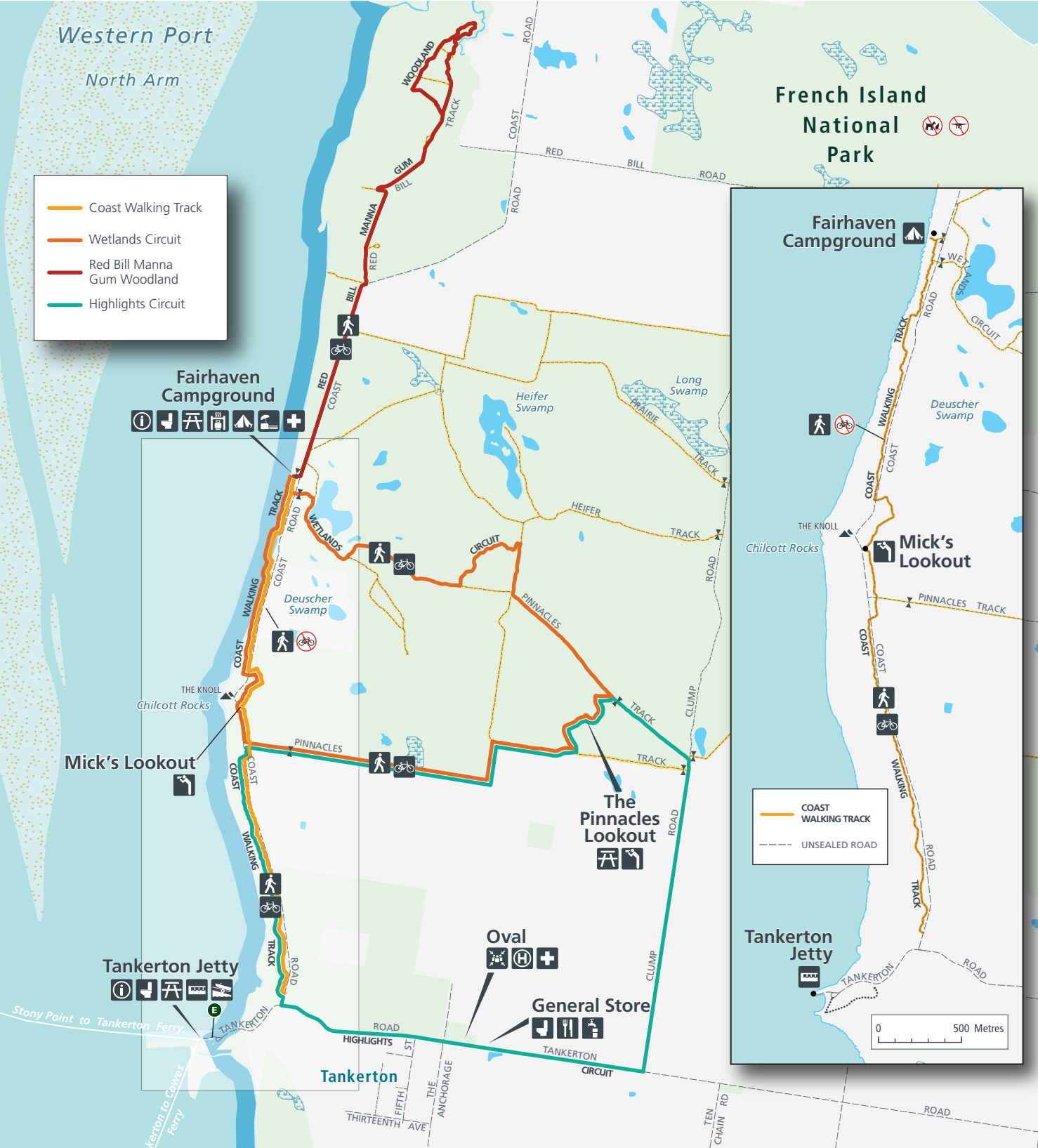
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|--|--|---|---|---|---|---|
|  Information |  Barbecue (gas) |  Jetty |  AED (Defibrillator) |  No taking |  No drones |  Sealed road |
|  Toilet |  Camping |  Lookout |  Parks Victoria office |  No fishing |  ESTA emergency marker |  Unsealed road |
|  Picnic table |  Beach |  Boat ramp |  Bushfire refuge area |  No spearfishing |  Main road |  4WD |
|  Food / shops |  Water |  Helipad |  Gate |  No dogs or cats |  Highway |  Walking track |

Drones are not permitted anywhere within the National Park



French Island National Park

West Coast inset map



 Information

 Toilet

 Food / shops

 Picnic table

 Barbecue (gas)

 Camping

 Beach

 Jetty

 Helipad

 Lookout

 Walking

 Bike riding

 Boat ramp

 AED (Defibrillator)

 Bushfire refuge area

 Water

 No dogs or cats

 No bike riding

 No drones

 ESTA emergency marker

 Gate

 Unsealed road

 4WD

 Walking track

 Management vehicles only

 French Island National Park

 National Park boundary extents (150m)

Drones are not permitted anywhere within the National Park