

Mornington Peninsula National Park

Visitor Guide



Mornington Peninsula National Park is renowned for its historic features, outstanding scenic headlands and sandy beaches along the Bass Strait coast. It is popular for swimming, surfing, diving, fishing, walking and nature sightseeing. Parks Victoria aims to protect the natural and cultural features of the park while encouraging visitors to appreciate and enjoy the area.



Mornington Peninsula 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 there

The national park is 90 kilometres south of Melbourne. It includes all of the Bass Strait ocean coast between London Bridge (Portsea) and Bushrangers Bay (Cape Schanck), plus a stretch of largely inaccessible coast from Stockyard Creek to Flinders and an area north of Cape Schanck called Greens Bush. Most access roads to the national park are signposted from Point Nepean Road. The eastern part of the park, including Cape Schanck, can be reached from Boneo (Rosebud-Flinders) Road.

Things to see and do

Popular visitor areas include the historic Cape Schanck lighthouse precinct; the ocean beaches of Gunnamatta, Sorrento and Portsea; the rugged Flinders coastline and the walking tracks through the wildlife haven of Greens Bush.

There are electric barbecue facilities at Fingal Picnic Area (near Cape Schanck) and Sorrento Back Beach.

A kiosk operates at Sorrento Back Beach and takeaway food is often available during summer holidays from nearby Southern Peninsula villages.

Walking

Walking tracks follow much of the coastline and through Greens Bush. Arrow markers outline tracks; orange markers indicate longer 'through tracks' and blue markers indicate 'circuit walks'.

For the ultimate challenge, try the 100km Mornington Peninsula Walk which links existing tracks across the Southern Peninsula; traversing wild ocean coastlines, peaceful bay beaches and tranquil bushland. A separate brochure and map is available.

The most popular walks are:

Greens Bush Walks

Situated between Arthurs Seat and Cape Schanck, Greens Bush is the largest remnant of bushland on the Mornington Peninsula. The area contains a variety of vegetation communities and is a wildlife haven, making it an excellent place for nature walking.

Baldry's Circuit Walk

Starting at Baldry's Crossing, a short (1.6km) and longer (3.6km) circuit walk meanders through the peaceful eucalypt woodlands and cool, moist fern gullies of northern Greens Bush.

Bushrangers Bay

A 2.6km track from Cape Schanck carpark to Bushrangers Bay provides some spectacular coastal scenery, finishing at a sandy beach surrounded by striking basalt cliffs. Swimming is hazardous at this unpatrolled beach due to strong rips and large waves. The walk can be extended on to Boneo Road carpark via the Two Bays Track, a further 2.5km.

Two Bays Walking Track

This 8.9km walk, an excellent way to see Greens Bush, is a section of the 26km 'cross peninsula' bush corridor from Dromana to Cape Schanck. The track takes visitors through the heart of Greens Bush, passing through eucalypt forests, stands of grasstrees, pockets of Melaleuca swamp, fern gullies, coastal heathlands and open grasslands.

The track is identified on signage by a circular symbol displaying the Blue Wren, a stunning bird which can often be seen along the walk.

Fingal Track

From Fingal Picnic Area, a 3km (return) track leads through dense Moonah woodland to lookouts over Bass Strait. Access down to the beach is via a long, steep staircase which may not be suitable for visitors with low mobility.

Longer walks to Cape Schanck (2km to the south) and Gunnamatta Beach (5km to the north) are also available from the picnic area. Be aware of high tides that may prevent through access to Gunnamatta Beach from Fingal Beach.

Coppins Track

This historic track starts at the café/kiosk at Sorrento Back Beach and winds 3km along the cliff top to Diamond Bay. It was one of the first developments to promote tourists to the area (c1870).

Farnsworth Track

This track links London Bridge carpark to Portsea Surf Beach via two scenic lookouts. Start at Portsea for the best views and an alternate return route is available along the beach (loop return 2km).

Lifesaving Track

This 11km track was constructed in the 1890s to provide better access to the coast after two devastating shipwrecks. Several lookouts provide breathtaking views down the coast, with good vantage points at the Bay of Islands, St Paul's, Koonya Ocean Beach and No 16 (the 16th lifesaving point). Detours to Diamond Bay, Jubilee Point and St Paul's are well worth the trip.

The Coastal Walk

For those feeling more energetic, consider the 26km Coastal Walk which extends from Cape Schanck to London Bridge. This two-day

walk features a network of cliff top tracks with spectacular ocean views and dense coastal vegetation, as well as sections of long beach walks which pass by sculpted sand dunes and tidal rock pools. The Coastal Walk is identified on signage by the circular Hooded Plover symbols.

Dogs and horses

Dogs are prohibited throughout the Mornington Peninsula National Park at all times, including in vehicles.

Horse riding is only permitted between Boag Rocks and the beach access track at Paradise Drive (St Andrews), with access from Truemans Road only. Penalties apply for any breach of regulations.

Camping

Lightwood Creek Camp is located mid-way between Baldrys Crossing and Boneo Road on the Two Bays Walking Track. It is a minimal impact camping area in an open and level grassy site within a bush setting near Lightwood Creek, accessible only by foot. Nearest vehicle access is 1km away at Rogers Road Gate 3 or from the Baldrys Crossing / Boneo Road trailheads of Two Bays Walking Track.

The camping area consists of two defined zones with space for 7 sites for up to 4 people. No fires are permitted, and a toilet is provided.

There is a creek nearby and limited rainwater stored in a tank at the Lightwood campsite, both of which must be treated before drinking.

Fees do not apply to this campground, but bookings are advised to ensure a camp site is available.

Other activities

Ocean fishing (regulations apply), surfing and swimming are also popular along the coast. Portsea, Sorrento and Gunnamatta surf beaches are patrolled during summer holidays. Please swim between the flags as ocean beaches are dangerous for swimming.

Plants and animals

Mornington Peninsula National Park is home to a diversity of plant and animals, including a number that are listed as threatened in Victoria.

Greens Bush is home to eastern grey kangaroos, black wallabies, possums, koalas, echidnas and a range of birds and reptiles.

Fascinating marine life live in the rock pools at Sorrento, Cape Schanck and Mushroom Reef Marine Sanctuary. Whale and dolphin watching can be enjoyed from lookouts along the coast.

Beach-going visitors with a keen eye might be lucky enough to spot the nationally significant Hooded Plover. These small, well camouflaged shorebirds feed in the intertidal zone on many of the park's beaches. As they lay their eggs directly onto the sand between the high-tide mark and the foredune, you can help their plight by avoiding this area, keeping away from their nest sites.

History

Indigenous history

The Bunurong People have been caring for their Country for thousands of years. You may observe evidence of their ancestors through the exposure of shell middens in the delicate sand dunes. The middens are found in a highly vulnerable landscape, where vegetation is easily disturbed leading to erosion. Always stay on formed walking tracks to avoid disturbing these protected significant cultural sites.

Early settlement

Mornington Peninsula National Park has evidence of a rich and varied European history, including some of the earliest settlement in Victoria. Discover the Peninsula's history by visiting some of the following sites:

- Heritage listed Cape Schanck lighthouse, which has been safely guiding vessels since 1859.
- Collins historic settlement site and settlers' graves, near Sorrento; marks the site of the first official European settlement in Victoria in 1803.
- Coolart Homestead and farm buildings feature a magnificent late Victorian mansion surrounded by wetlands teeming with wildlife.
- Neighbouring Point Nepean National Park contains historic military forts, a Quarantine Station and pioneer cemetery.

Caring for the park

Help us look after your park by following these guidelines:

- Dogs, cats and motorbikes are not permitted in Mornington Peninsula National Park.
- Please take rubbish home with you for recycling and disposal.
- Keep to the formed walking tracks.
- Bicycles are not permitted on walking tracks.
- Firearms and fires are not permitted in the park.
- All native plants and animals are protected. Leave the park as you found it.
- Do not feed the animals.
- Snakes live in this park and sometimes sunbake on the paths. Do not approach.

Be prepared and stay safe

Mornington Peninsula National 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 www.emergency.vic.gov.au, on the VicEmergency smartphone app or call the VicEmergency Hotline on 1800 226 226.

Some sites may be closed during Severe/Extreme/Code Red Fire Danger Rating days. 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.