

Port Campbell National Park and Bay of Islands Coastal Park

Visitor Guide



Pounded by wild seas and fierce winds, the coast of Port Campbell National Park and Bay of Islands Coastal Park has been sculpted over thousands of years. Towering limestone rock stacks, arches and islands have been carved out of the soft cliffs by rain, wind and ocean waves. Many ships have come to grief on the rocky coastline, earning it the title of the Shipwreck Coast. These two parks offer a variety of activities including walking, fishing, canoeing and photography.



Welcome

Through their rich and diverse culture, Aboriginal people have been intrinsically connected to Country across this area of western Victoria for tens of thousands of years. Parks Victoria acknowledges the Eastern Maar as the Traditional Owners of Port Campbell National Park and Bay of Islands Coastal Park and recognises their continuous connection to Country.

Getting there

Port Campbell National Park is located approximately 380km or 4.5 hours away from Melbourne via the Great Ocean Road. It is 230km or 3 hours away via the inland route. Bay of Islands Coastal Park is approximately 20km further west stretching from Peterborough to Warrnambool. The direct route from Adelaide is approximately 670km or 7.5 hours.

Things to see and do

Port Campbell National Park (Princetown - Peterborough)



Twelve Apostles

These rock stacks and islands are formed by a combination of the waves and winds from the Southern Ocean battering the coast, and seeping rainwater eroding the softer limestone.

There are currently seven rock stacks comprising the Twelve Apostles - six are on display in the classic view millions of people enjoy each year. The seventh is located several metres away from the corner of the main viewing platform. Onsite storyboards briefly explain their formation and history.

Car and bus parking facilities are located on the inland side of the Great Ocean Road. Access the viewing platforms via an all abilities footpath that passes under the Great Ocean Road.

Gibson Steps

Park at the Twelve Apostles Visitor Centre. A gentle 1.1km track takes you to Gibson Steps Lookout and when open, 89 steps lead down the cliff face to a wild ocean beach. If the tide is low, you can view the rock stacks 'Gog and Magog' up close. The beach is subject to closures due to high tides and large ocean swell. On-site signs at the kiosk will advise if it is closed. No dogs are permitted in this park.

Loch Ard Gorge

A spectacular beach inside an impressive gorge. Looking out towards the 'Loch Ard' shipwreck site, this gorge was the place of an amazing tale of survival. Several easy walking tracks with storyboards in this area highlight nature, history and geology.

London Bridge

A lookout viewing a natural rock formation previously featuring a double arch. The inner arch collapsed in 1990 leaving two people stranded on the outer side. They were later rescued by helicopter.

The Grotto

The Grotto is a cave and sinkhole located about halfway up the cliff from sea level. The paved pathway leads to a decked staircase that descends into a viewing area. Enjoy the view of the rock pools carved out in the jagged-edged limestone. Visitors must remain behind the safety barriers and observe safety signs.

Bay of Islands Coastal Park (Peterborough - Warrnambool)

A stunning collection of rock stacks and sheltered bays with clifftop walks, views and small beaches near Peterborough. Breathtaking and equally beautiful to the Twelve Apostles are the Bay of Martyrs, Bay of Islands, Sandy Cove and Childers Cove.

Dog friendly areas in the Bay of Islands Coastal Park



Dogs are generally not permitted in the parks however, dogs on lead are welcome at:

- Halladale Walking Track, between the Peterborough township and the Bay of Martyrs carpark (dogs are not permitted on Bay of Martyrs beach)
- Wild Dog Cove beach
- Worm Bay beach
- Sandy Cove beach.

Walking tracks

Twelve Apostles to Gibson Steps – 2.2km return, 1hr

A gentle clifftop walk along a gravel path takes in glimpses of the Southern Ocean. The walk starts from the south side of the Twelve Apostles kiosk and reaches the lookout at the Gibson Steps carpark.

Loch Ard Gorge has three easy, gentle walking tracks

- **Geology Walk – 1km return, 40mins**
Discover the secrets of the forces that shape the coastline on this easy self-guided walk.
- **Shipwreck Walk – 1.4km return, 50mins**
This easy walk follows the tragic tale of the Loch Ard shipwreck site to the cemetery. This amazing story of courage and survival is featured in Warrnambool's Flagstaff Hill Maritime Village.
- **Living on the Edge – 3.2km return, 1.5hrs**
Discover life on the edge of the sheer cliffs. This easy walk encompasses the Muttonbird Island viewing platform, Thunder Cave and Broken Head.

Port Campbell Discovery Walk – 4.4km return, 1.5hrs

A spectacular undulating walk that passes through cliff-top heathland. Start from Port Campbell Beach by crossing the mouth of Campbells Creek or drive up to the Town Scenic Lookout and start from there. Views above the small harbour.

Halladale Walking Track – 4km return, 1hr

This spectacular cliff-top heathland walk begins at Peterborough township near the Golf Course and through to the Bay of Martyrs, with numerous coastal lookouts. Dogs on leash are permitted on this walking track.

Great Ocean Walk – 104km one way, 7 days. Long distance.

Starting from Apollo Bay and ending at the Twelve Apostles, sections of the walk can be experienced to suit your schedule. Plan carefully to stay safe. For information visit greateoceanwalk.com.au

Wildlife watching

The two coastal parks provide important habitats for a wide range of wildlife, some rare, threatened or endangered. Look for snakes, echidnas, wallabies and other wildlife that call this place home. Enjoy your park visit and respect the nature of the parks. Do not climb over barriers - stay on tracks.

The range of birds found here offers excellent birdwatching. The Rufous Bristlebird is a resident rarity in the parks' heathland, often seen dashing across walking tracks and carparks.

Little Penguins come to shore just after sunset and can be seen and heard from viewing platforms at the Twelve Apostles and London Bridge.

Thousands of Muttonbirds (Short-tailed Shearwaters) can be seen in the evening returning to their burrows on Muttonbird Island (Loch Ard Gorge) from September to April. Peak viewing times are January and February.

Many of the small beaches in this area are nesting grounds for the endangered Hooded Plover. Hooded Plovers breed between August and April and have very sensitive nesting sites. These shy beach-nesting birds are vulnerable to disturbance and need your care to survive. Please keep well clear of nesting birds and observe signage to help keep them safe.

Swimming and SCUBA diving

The beaches in Port Campbell National Park and Bay of Islands Coastal Park are not patrolled by surf lifesavers and are not recommended for swimming. Many beaches are exposed to unseen dangers such as ocean currents, rips and reefs. Parks Victoria recommends swimming only at beaches patrolled by lifesavers. The nearest patrolled beach is in Port Campbell. Patrolling is seasonal, look for and swim between the surf lifesaving flags. Obey safety warning signs.

When the sea is calm, there is excellent wreck and reef diving off Port Campbell National Park and Bay of Islands Coastal Park. SCUBA diving opportunities are also available in local marine national parks and marine sanctuaries. Marine protected area visitor guides provide more information. Please remember that all wrecks and artefacts are protected by law. Visit parks.vic.gov.au for further information.

Fishing

Curdies Inlet and Gellibrand River are suitable for fishing. Ocean fishing from the beach at Newfield Bay and the Port Campbell jetty.

Fishing is not permitted in marine national parks and marine sanctuaries. See marine protected area visitor guides for park boundaries and activity guidelines. Please obtain a Victorian Recreational Fishing Licence before you fish.

For further information

Port Campbell Visitor Information Centre

26 Morris Street, Port Campbell 3269
Tel: (03) 5598 2500

Flagstaff Hill – Warrnambool Visitor Information Centre

89 Merri Street, Warrnambool 3280
Tel: (03) 5564 7837

Canoeing

The Gellibrand River and Curdies River are great for canoeing. Access points are located at river boat ramps.

Photography

Spectacular views from lookouts and walking tracks across these two parks offer excellent photography opportunities. The use of drones is not permitted in national parks.

Facilities

Twelve Apostles kiosk and visitor area

The kiosk is open daily with a selection of food and beverages, as well as sunscreen, hats and insect repellent for purchase. Opening hours fluctuate seasonally.

Wheelchairs are available on a first come first served basis for short-term use on-site. Toilets and parking are available.

Accessibility

Many of the viewing platforms, pathways and carparks are accessible to people with limited mobility. Accessible toilets can also be found at Twelve Apostles and nearby towns including Princetown, Port Campbell and Peterborough. For further information about access here please visit parks.vic.gov.au or Port Campbell Visitor Information Centre.

Camping

Camping and accommodation are available in nearby towns - see map. There is no camping in these narrow coastal and national parks and sleeping overnight in the park and carparks is not permitted.

Caring for the park

Help us look after your park:

- Please take all rubbish with you for recycling or disposal
- Dogs and other pets are not permitted, except for designated dogs on lead areas in Bay of Islands Coastal Park
- Do not climb over barriers - stay on tracks and observe safety signage
- Fires are not permitted.

Be prepared and stay safe

Crumbling cliffs

Stay away from cliff edges and the base of cliffs - they can collapse at any time without warning. Keep to designated walking tracks and lookouts.

Port Campbell National Park and Bay of Islands Coastal Park are in the South West 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, on the VicEmergency smartphone app or call the VicEmergency Hotline on 1800 226 226.

On Catastrophic Fire Danger Rating days these parks will be closed for public safety. Warning signs may be erected, but do not expect a personal warning. Check the latest conditions at 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.

Updated May 2023

Port Campbell National Park & Bay of Islands Coastal Park

West



- 1 Peterborough Walking Track
- 2 Discovery Walk



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|----------------------------|---------------|-----------------------|------------------|------------------|---------------|-----------------------------|
| Visitor Information Centre | Walking track | Parks Victoria office | Caravan park | Steps | Sealed road | Port Campbell National Park |
| Parking | Picnic table | Swimming | Fuel | Dog walking area | Unsealed road | Other park/reserve |
| Toilets | Boat ramp | Kiosk | Patrolled beach | Great Ocean Road | Walking track | Marine park |
| Disabled access | Lookout | Camping | Dog on lead area | Main road | | Wetland |



Port Campbell National Park

East



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|----------------------------|---------------|-----------------------|-----------------|------------------|------------------|-----------------------------|
| Visitor Information Centre | Information | Lookout | Camping | Dog on lead area | Great Ocean Road | Walking track |
| Parking | Walking track | Parks Victoria office | Caravan park | Steps | Main road | Port Campbell National Park |
| Toilets | Picnic table | Swimming | Fuel | Great Ocean Walk | Sealed road | Other park/reserve |
| Disabled access | Boat ramp | Kiosk | Patrolled beach | Dog walking area | Unsealed road | Marine park |

