

Mushroom Reef Marine Sanctuary

Visitor Guide



Teeming with marine life from colourful anemones to the rare Black and White Sea Star, Mushroom Reef Marine Sanctuary is a fascinating place to explore. At low tide, a magnificent mushroom-shaped reef is exposed to reveal an intricate honeycomb of bays and pools.



Getting there

Mushroom Reef Marine Sanctuary is located in Flinders and can be accessed via Golf Links Road. Golf Links Road provides access to West Head, then down to Flinders Ocean Beach where Mushroom Reef Marine Sanctuary is accessed.

Things to see and do

Rock pooling

At high tide, the coastline is spectacular enough, but the breaking waves generally conceal the offshore reefs.

At low tide, the sea withdraws to expose a huge mushroom-shaped platform. A line of cobbles stretches out to sea, forming the stalk of the mushroom. At the tip, sections of reef branch out on either side to form the mushroom cap. Other reefs lie to the left and right and further out to sea, creating a mosaic of sheltered bays and pools.

For thousands of school children, this reef is their first exposure to the wonderful creatures that live along our rocky shores – the numerous crabs that scurry under rocks, multicoloured cushion and common sea stars, molluscs of all shapes and colourful anemones.

Diving and snorkelling

This area is popular for diving and snorkelling on the subtidal reefs.

A diverse range of creatures shelter under the loose rocks and within the crevices and cracks of the reef, which is formed of ancient basalt that has weathered to form a multitude of micro-habitats.

Plants and animals

The rocky shores and surrounding reefs at Flinders are famous for their diverse marine life. For more than a hundred years, scientists and naturalists have frequented the reefs. The area has revealed numerous species previously unknown to science.

If you look carefully you may see the amazing Black and White Sea Star, one of only two sea stars known to brood its young in its stomach.

Fish such as Saddled Wrasse and Magpie Morwong swim hastily between the fronds. Strange box-like cowfish and Weedy Seadragons, Victoria's marine state emblem, beat their small fins continuously to hover secretively over the seagrass beds.

The bottoms of the rock pools are covered in colourful seaweed and the surrounding seabed in dense meadows of seagrass.

Caring for marine protected areas

People are encouraged to visit marine protected areas, however to protect these special places, all forms of fishing are prohibited. The collection or damaging of all animals, plants and objects, including dead shells, is also prohibited.

There are strong penalties under the *National Parks Act* for fishing in marine national parks and marine sanctuaries. To report a fishing offence, call the Department of Environment and Primary Industries on 13 FISH (13 3474).

Rangers and Fisheries Officers regularly patrol these areas and enforce regulations.

Marine sanctuary boundary

Shoreline boundary markers are located on land at the edge of the sanctuary and point inwards to the protected area. The offshore boundary extends to the south for approximately 1km.

Get involved

If you would like to learn more about the sanctuary and participate in community-based survey and research, you can get involved with the ongoing Sea Search Intertidal Reef Monitoring Program.

More information is available at www.parkconnect.vic.gov.au

Be prepared and stay safe

Personal safety

- Mobile phone coverage cannot be relied on in the marine environment. Carry a registered distress beacon for safer boating.
- Check the marine weather report. Beware of sudden changes in weather, especially when boating on open water. Practice safe boating and follow all signs and markers correctly.
- Wear shoes that grip well when walking on rock platforms. Stay away from cliff edges and bases and beware of large unexpected waves when walking on shore and on rock platforms.
- Never put your hands where you cannot see your fingertips (under seaweed or rocks) to avoid potentially dangerous creatures.
- Be aware of strong currents and undertows when swimming and snorkelling.
- Diving in these waters should only be undertaken by experienced and qualified divers.
- For emergency assistance call Triple Zero (000).

Mushroom Reef Marine Sanctuary



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|-------------|------------------------|--|---------------|---------------------------------------|
| Parking | Boat ramp | Shore boundary marker | Main road | Bathymetry
-1 metres
-96 metres |
| Information | Hang gliding | Offshore boundary marker (unmarked in water) | Sealed road | |
| Toilets | No dogs | Park | Unsealed road | |
| Lookout | Beach access via steps | Waterbody | Walking track | |
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