

Victoria's Marine National Parks and Marine Sanctuaries

- Snorkelling and Diving

Exploring our unique and diverse underwater worlds

Victoria has an outstanding diversity of marine habitats along an accessible and relatively short section of coast, providing many opportunities for divers and snorkellers. The State's coastal waters are home to over 12,000 species of plants and animals, from spectacular algal communities and colourful invertebrates to large mammals such as playful fur seals and majestic whales.

Many of Victoria's marine animals and plants are found nowhere else apart from southern Australia and a significant number of species are only found in Victorian waters.

The Victorian Government has created a highly protected system of 13 Marine National Parks and 11 smaller Marine Sanctuaries to ensure that representative samples of Victoria's diverse and amazing marine environment are conserved for future generations. By keeping some of these areas in a natural state, free of damaging human activities, we can help to ensure their ongoing protection.

These parks and sanctuaries will, from 16 November 2002, protect 5.3% of Victoria's coastal waters, safeguarding important marine and coastal habitats and species, significant natural features, cultural heritage sites and aesthetic values.

As well as protecting the environment, the marine national parks and marine sanctuaries offer wonderful tourism and recreation opportunities, including some of the best diving and snorkelling anywhere in the world.

Each marine national park and marine sanctuary has been chosen to protect a unique combination of plant and animal species and marine habitats, from towering kelp forests, colourful sponge gardens and rocky reefs to seagrass meadows, sandy plains, and stunning underwater canyons.

These areas also include the resting-place of several historic shipwrecks, providing divers and snorkellers with further opportunities to explore this fascinating and important part of our cultural heritage.



Snorkelling

What you're likely to see

Many of Victoria's outstanding dive sites, including those in southern Port Phillip Bay, at Wilsons Promontory and at Port Campbell, have now been protected within marine national park and sanctuary boundaries, for current and future generations of dive and snorkel enthusiasts to enjoy.

The southern end of Port Phillip Bay is already an internationally recognised dive area, and the Port Phillip Heads Marine National Park will further enhance diving opportunities within easy access of Melbourne, Geelong and the Mornington and Bellarine Peninsulas.

In the Rip, spectacular wall diving and challenging drift dives can be experienced by appropriately qualified divers, with some outstanding invertebrate life, rivalling the colour and diversity seen on tropical coral reefs. Sheltered rockpools at Point Lonsdale and Point Nepean provide beginner and experienced snorkellers with an opportunity to experience Victoria's underwater life in relative ease.

Pope's Eye is a popular tourist destination for snorkelling, scuba diving, underwater photography, bird watching, and for education programs. Despite its small size, more than 30 dive and snorkelling operators (mainly from the southern end of the bay at Portsea, Sorrento and Queenscliff) regularly use Pope's Eye because of its relatively easy access and the amazing diversity of marine animals and plants.



Parks Victoria Ranger

"Victoria's system of Marine National Parks and Marine Sanctuaries provides total protection for their unique inhabitants, offering unlimited opportunities for us all to learn more about this stunning underwater world."

For more information call the Parks Victoria Information Centre on 13 1963 or visit our website at www.parkweb.vic.gov.au

For further information

For further information on individual marine national parks and marine sanctuaries, as well as background on Victoria's marine parks system, refer to Parks Victoria's website at www.parkweb.vic.gov.au

The Department of Natural Resources and Environment website at www.nre.vic.gov.au/coastsandmarine is also a good source of information

Training and certification is required to SCUBA dive in Australia.

A number of commercial tour operators or dive training centres throughout Victoria conduct dive certification courses and snorkelling tours. Your local Tourism Information Centre can provide you with further information on licensed tour operators and dive shops.

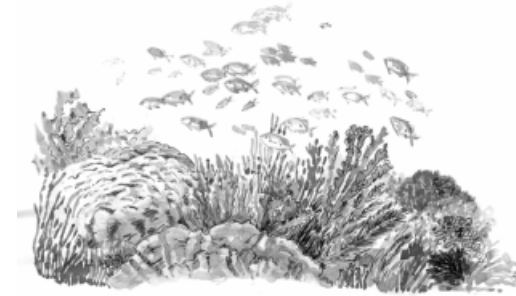
For more detailed information on Victoria's shipwrecks refer to the on-line shipwreck register on the Heritage Victoria website at www.heritage.vic.gov.au

- **SCUBA diving is a potentially high-risk activity and should only be undertaken by appropriately qualified people who have completed recognised training and certification**
- **For your own safety, only undertake activities appropriate to your skills and abilities. Take all necessary precautions, be aware of changing conditions, and watch for potential hazards, such as rips**

The granite boulders of Wilsons Promontory Marine National Park create spectacular wall and cave diving among a sea of colourful invertebrates such as sponges, ascidians, and bryozoans. In amongst the boulders divers can experience large schools of fish including butterfly and magpie perch, morwongs, colourful wrasse and stunning blue groper.

Spectacular above and breathtakingly beautiful below, the Twelve Apostles Marine National Park has some of the most unique underwater scenery in the world, featuring awesome sub-tidal canyons, arches, cliffs and walls lined with an amazing diversity of invertebrates, and sponge gardens in which colourful seastars can be found. In addition there are also a number of highly significant and historic shipwrecks.

New marine national parks including Point Hicks, Bunurong, Point Addis and Discovery Bay, as well as marine sanctuaries such as Beware Reef, The Arches and Marengo Reefs, can be added to the list of wonderful dive locations.



Butterfly Perch over sponge garden

In the absence of fishing and other extractive uses, the habitats in the marine national parks and marine sanctuaries will remain intact, allowing the size, diversity and abundance of fish and other species to increase, all adding to the enjoyment of the dive experience.

Some of Victoria's most notable shipwrecks also lie within these protected areas, especially in the waters off Port Phillip Heads, Wilsons Promontory and Point Hicks. For instance, Lonsdale Reef near Point Lonsdale has at least four visible and recognisable shipwrecks - the iron sailing barques *George Roper*, *Holyhead* and *Gange*, and the gold rush steamer *Conside*.



Scuba Diving

Personal and environmental care

As users of the marine environment you can minimise your impact while snorkelling or diving by keeping in mind the following points:

- enjoy the marine environment without removing the plants and animals
- minimise your impact while diving and snorkelling by:
 - being careful to avoid damage to marine life caused by fins
 - developing good skills in buoyancy control
 - securing all gauges and pressure hoses to avoid snagging them on objects
- take any rubbish home with you - do not dump rubbish into the sea
- avoid stressing marine life by not chasing or grabbing free-swimming animals
- exercise great care if approached by large marine animals (including birds) and avoid blocking their paths if moving
- take care where you anchor your boat (anchor in sand, rubble or mud, avoiding sensitive areas, and use mooring buoys where provided)
- do not pollute the water with sewage - if your vessel has an onboard toilet, ensure that it has an approved sewage holding facility and that sewage is disposed of appropriately on land
- take the time to learn more about Victoria's marine animals and plants and the habitats they depend upon
- be aware that a number of marine animals are potentially harmful if not treated with respect and care, so ensure that you familiarise yourself with these species
- minimise your impact on the sea by disposing of waste materials at home or work appropriately

Remember, Marine National Parks and Marine Sanctuaries are NO TAKE ENVIRONMENTS.

Restrictions

For the protection of the marine environment, a number of activities are prohibited within the boundaries of Victoria's marine national parks and marine sanctuaries.



No fishing, netting, spearing, taking or killing of marine life. All methods of fishing, from the shore or at sea, are prohibited



No taking or damaging of animals, plants and objects (artefacts)