

Personal safety

Diving should only be undertaken by trained and experienced divers

Beware of sudden changes in weather, especially when boating on open water

Beware of strong current and undertows when snorkelling or at the beach

Wear shoes that grip well when walking on rock platforms

Watch where your hands are going at all times to avoid potentially dangerous creatures

Be aware of large unexpected waves when walking on shore, especially on rock platforms

There are no surf lifesaving patrols in Merri Marine Sanctuary. The nearest patrolled beach is at Lady Bay. It is recommended that swimming be contained within flagged areas patrolled by surf life saving clubs.

Caring for the marine environment

Discarded gear and rubbish can endanger birds and marine animals – please take your rubbish home

Always replace any organisms or rocks you may have turned over

No Dogs are allowed in Merri Marine Sanctuary.

The intertidal zone in Victoria is protected – both inside and outside marine national parks and sanctuaries. Visit

www.depi.vic.gov.au for more information.

To report a fishing offence call **13 FISH** (133 437)

Enhance your visit by exploring with a licensed tour operator.

www.parks.vic.gov.au for a list of operators who run activities in this park.

Victoria's unique coastline

The southern coastline of Australia has been isolated for millions of years from other continents due to ocean currents. This has resulted in our marine life evolving in many different ways. Ninety percent (90%) of all marine life here is found nowhere else. Home to over 12,000 species of plants and animals, it is considered one of the most biodiverse and unique marine ecosystems in the world. For this reason, this significant marine environment is protected for the future.



Seastars shelter in the rockpools at Merri Marine Sanctuary

Protected network

Merri Marine Sanctuary is part of a system of 13 marine national parks and 11 marine sanctuaries in Victoria. By keeping these areas in a natural state we will protect this unique marine environment into the future.

The establishment of marine protected areas was based on scientific research. It followed ten years of community and industry consultation. An ongoing research and monitoring program forms part of Parks Victoria's management of these areas.

Victoria was the first jurisdiction in the world to create an entire system of fully protected marine national parks at the same time.

Parks Victoria is responsible for the day-to-day management of Victoria's marine national parks and marine sanctuaries.

Marine pests

Marine pests are non-native plants or animals that can have a detrimental impact on native marine ecosystems. They are a significant threat to the health of the marine environment. Marine pests can wipe out native species by preying upon or out-competing them.

Pests can arrive in new areas in a variety of ways, and preventing their spread is one way visitors can help protect the marine environment. Park users should wash down all equipment and dry it thoroughly before changing locations to minimise the risk of spreading these pests.

Please report any suspected marine pests to the Department of Environment and Primary Industries on 136 186. For more information on marine pests, visit www.depi.vic.gov.au/marinepests

Education and research

The network of marine national parks and sanctuaries provides excellent sites for research and education opportunities. All research must be approved before commencing. Schools, researchers or other groups visiting Merri Marine Sanctuary need to register their visit with local rangers on **13 1963**.

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.

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



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)

You may carry fin-fish on board your boat within park boundaries if you caught the fish outside the parks, and you may also carry (but not use) a fishing rod. Spear guns are not permitted within any of Victoria's marine protected areas, either in a boat or elsewhere.

You may also have abalone or rock lobster and associated equipment (securely stowed) on board the boat provided you are travelling straight through the park by the shortest practicable route.

There are strong penalties under the National Parks Act for fishing in marine national parks and marine sanctuaries. Parks Victoria is serious about compliance. Offenders will be caught.

To report a fishing offence call the Department of Environment and Primary Industries on **13 FISH** (133 474).



Old Wife

If you would like further information about Victoria's marine national parks and marine sanctuaries, contact the Parks Victoria Information Centre on **13 1963** or visit the Parks Victoria website at: www.parks.vic.gov.au

parknotes

Merri Marine Sanctuary



Sea life prospers in the cold, crystal-clear waters off Victoria's west coast near Warrnambool. At the mouth of the Merri River, 29 ha of precious habitat for many marine species are protected in Merri Marine Sanctuary. Two small islands in the middle of the sanctuary are important roosting areas for Little Penguins and Short-tailed Shearwaters. Beneath the surface of the water, a spectacular array of marine plants and animals thrive.



Giant Cuttlefish



Snorkelling and diving

The sanctuary is one of the most popular scuba diving areas around Warrnambool. Areas around Middle Island and Pickering Point are also used for snorkelling. Take care, as the sanctuary is regularly exposed to large swells from the Southern Ocean. There are a number of dive groups in the area that dive the sanctuary. To find a list of licensed tour operators visit www.parks.vic.gov.au



Coastal walking and beach activities

A walking track follows the coastline along the cliffs. A footbridge allows pedestrians to cross the Merri River. Near the footbridge is a flat expanse of sand and cool blue sheltered water. Here, on calm days, Stingray Bay is an ideal location for beach activities. Dogs are not permitted within the Marine Sanctuary or on Pickering Point or Thunder Point areas.



Bird watching

Merri is a haven for many bird species. Birdwatchers are likely to see Australasian Gannets, Crested Terns and Pacific Gulls. Penguins, Pied Cormorants and Shearwaters nest on Merri and Middle Islands. The shallow sandy areas are important feeding areas for shorebirds. 51 conservation listed shore or sea birds have been sighted in and around Merri Marine Sanctuary.

Caring for Country

Through their cultural traditions, Aboriginal people maintain their connection to their ancestral lands and waters. Parks Victoria recognises this connection and acknowledges the Traditional Owners and Aboriginal Communities of these areas.

How to get there

The Merri Marine Sanctuary is on the Victorian south-west coast at Warrnambool, located between the Harbour Breakwater and Thunder Point Coastal Reserve - approximately 260 km west of Melbourne. Access to Thunder Point and Pickering Point is via Macdonald St. A footbridge leading from Viaduct Rd also provides access to the walking track.

Enjoying the park

Visitors can enjoy the park from land or in the water. Scuba dive or snorkel and discover Sea Sweep, Pot-bellied Seahorses and colourful sea life underwater. Stroll along cliff top paths and take in views of the sanctuary and out to the Southern Ocean.

Pickering Point

When conditions are safe, the rock pools at Pickering Point are popular for families and school groups to explore and learn about our marine life. More than 80 species of invertebrates have been found on Pickering Point's intertidal reef. The western portion of Pickering Point intertidal reef is particularly diverse and has been designated a Special Protection Area. Please help us protect the sanctuary by leaving everything as you find it.

Middle and Merri Islands

Little Penguins and Short-tailed Shearwaters live in burrows and nests on Middle Island. Trampling is a major threat to these birds' eggs and young; therefore the islands are not accessible to the public. The vegetation consists of coastal plants, including Seaberry Saltbush, Beaded Glasswort, Coastal Pigface and Cushion Bush.

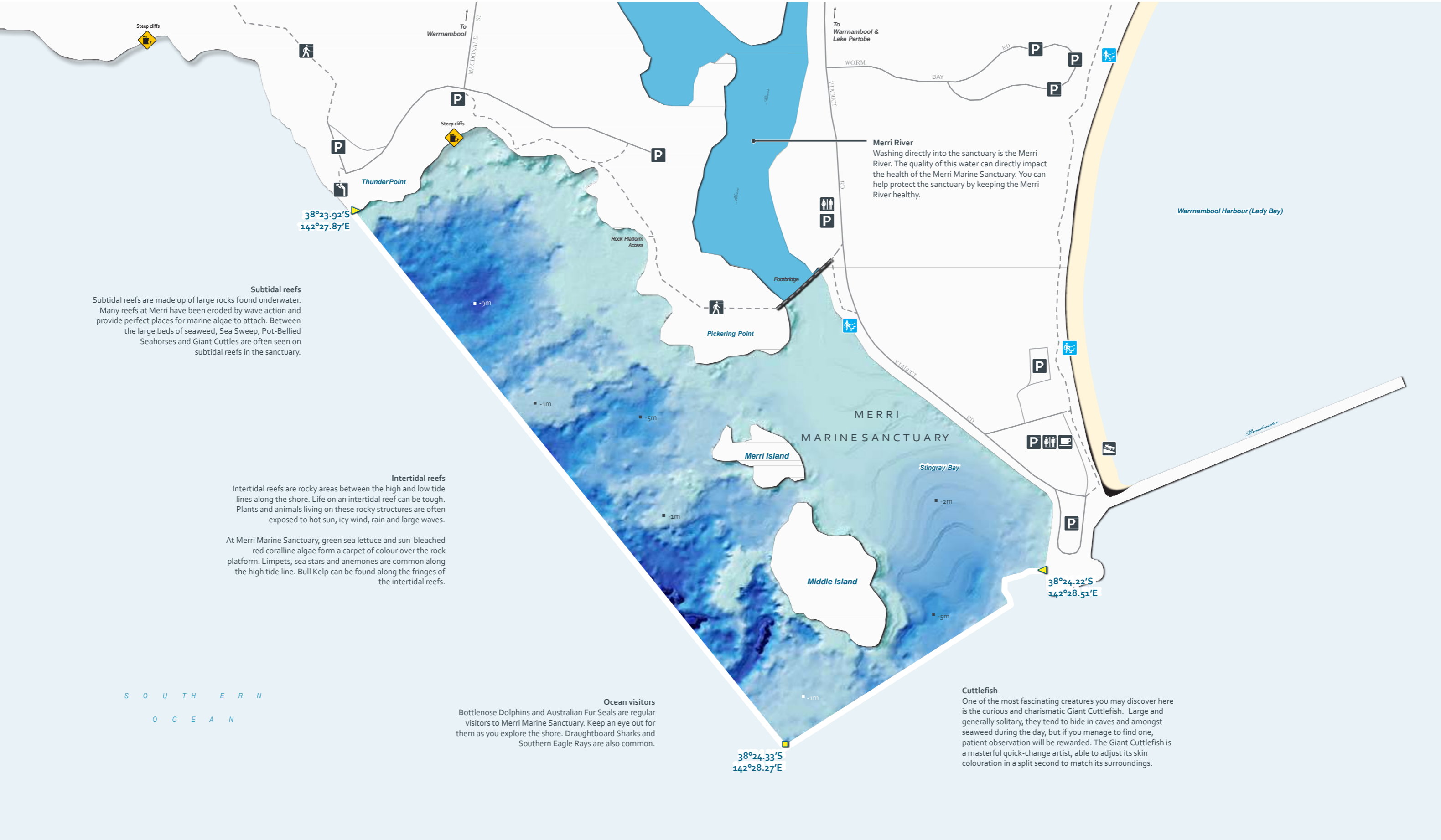
Shipwrecks

The Warrnambool shipping trade commenced in the early 1840s. Early photos show sailing ships anchored in the area now known as Stingray Bay. Middle Island was the site of a light station and cottage, which have been relocated to Flagstaff Hill Maritime Museum. The coastline in the Warrnambool area is home to numerous shipwrecks, including the remains of a wrecked steel barge. Removal of artefacts or objects from these sites is not permitted.

For more information call the ParksVictoriaInformationCentre on 13 1963 or visit our website at www.parkweb.vic.gov.au

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S O U T H E R N
O C E A N



Merri Marine Sanctuary boundary
The Merri Marine Sanctuary includes an area below the mean high water mark between Thunder Point in the west and Breakwater Rock in the east. It extends from the footbridge on the Merri River to the south-west for approximately 200 metres. The sanctuary surrounds Middle and M Islands.

No fishing **No taking**

- Parking
- Toilets
- Lookout
- Boat ramp
- Walking track
- Cafe
- Beach access
- Sealed road
- Unsealed road
- Walking track
- Onshore boundary marker
- Offshore boundary marker (unmarked in water)

