

Point Hicks Marine National Park



Visitor Guide

The clear waters off Point Hicks are ideal for snorkelling and diving, with rich and colourful marine life and an amazing diversity of fish. The park also contains the sites of two shipwrecks - the *SS Kerangie*, lost in 1879, and the *SS Saros*, which went down in 1937.

The Point Hicks Lighthouse Reserve and two camping areas at the mouths of the Thurra and Mueller Rivers east of the park provide a focus for walking and sightseeing in the adjacent Croajingolong National Park. Accommodation is also available at the caretaker's cottages at Pt Hicks Lighthouse.

Awaiting discovery

Although Point Hicks was the first part of the Australian mainland sighted by Captain James Cook in 1770, the area's underwater landscape is still largely awaiting discovery.

The reefs here are among Victoria's most interesting and beautiful, but were a deadly concern to early sailors who pressured the Government into constructing the lighthouse that still dominates the cliff tops. Fortunately today these underwater crags can be admired for their stunning sea-life.

Diving around Whaleback Rock or Sensation Reef is a truly amazing experience. The water is often very clear with sunlight glinting off schools of silver fish. As you drift down you feel dwarfed by massive granite boulders. A forest of gently swaying brown seaweeds covers the seafloor.

If you move the seaweed fronds aside, a remarkable mat of colourful sponges, sea-squirts, sea-moss and sea-fans of all shapes and sizes appear before you. Orange, red, purple, white and brown, the sponges intertwine in intricate and beautiful patterns.

Many other creatures are visible between the sponges, under rocks and poking out of the seaweed holdfasts. They include brightly coloured Sea-stars, Brittle Stars, Abalone, Fan Worms, large sea shells, Hermit Crabs and delicate nudibranchs (Sea Slugs). Fish comprise of schools of Butterfly Perch, Silver Sweep and Long-finned Pike, with Banded Morwongs common amongst the deeper boulders.

Point Hicks represents Victoria's warmer eastern marine environment. Many animals occurring here will not survive in the cooler waters further west. One of these is the Black Sea-urchin that mows down the seaweeds near its shelter, creating an open environment of pink coralline algae-encrusted rocks.



As well as subtidal reefs, the environment around Point Hicks includes attractive intertidal rock platforms and offshore sands. The seafloor drops rapidly from shore, descending to 90 metres depth - one of the deepest marine areas within Victoria.

Point Hicks Marine National Park is part of a system of 13 Marine National Parks and 11 smaller Marine Sanctuaries created by the Victorian Government to ensure that representative samples of Victoria's diverse, distinctive and amazing marine environment are conserved for future generations.

These parks and sanctuaries now protect 5.3% of Victoria's coastal waters, safeguarding important marine habitats and species, and complementing our world-class national parks system on land.

By keeping some of these marine areas in a natural state, free from potentially damaging human activities, we will protect these environments into the future.



www.parks.vic.gov.au

Marine National Park boundaries

Point Hicks Marine National Park (4,000 ha) is located adjacent to Point Hicks in Croajingolong National Park. From the water, the eastern and western boundaries are indicated by yellow triangular shore markers. Whereas the western boundary extends to shore (east of Clifton Rocks) the eastern boundary stops 2 km from shore and heads west for approx 1 km just north Whaleback Rock. The boundary then extends north, meeting the shore at the eastern side of Stable Bay.

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 currents and undertows when snorkelling
- 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
- Stay away from cliff edges and bases

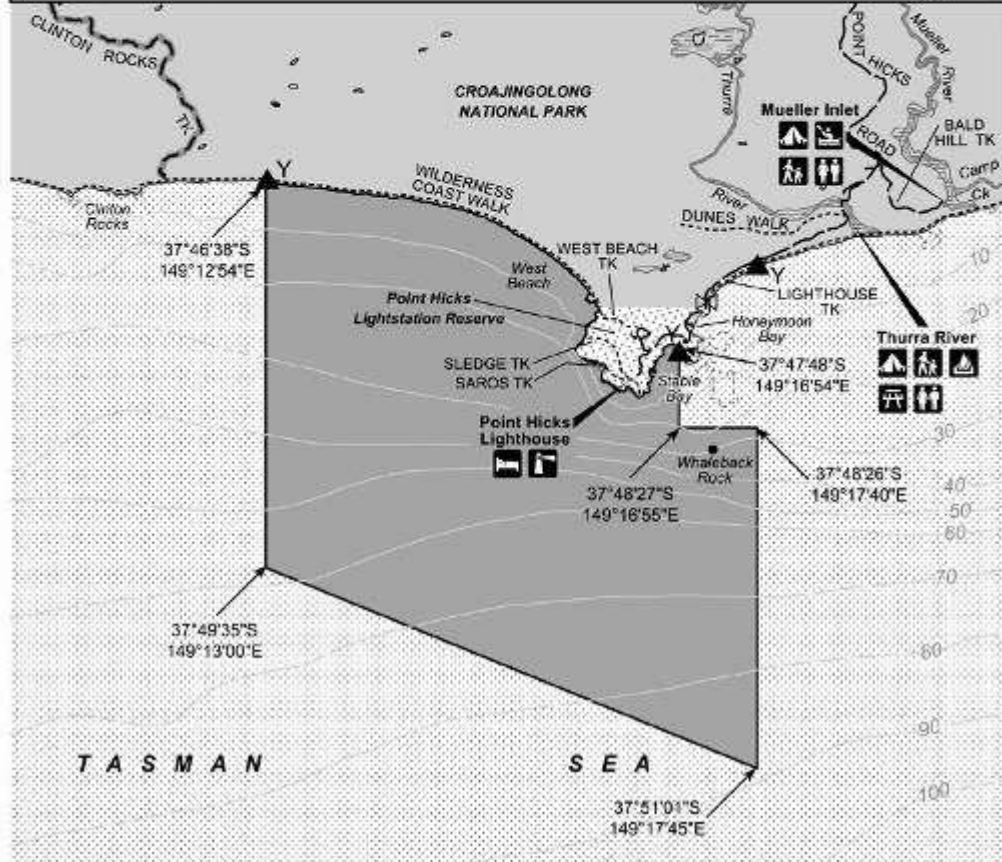
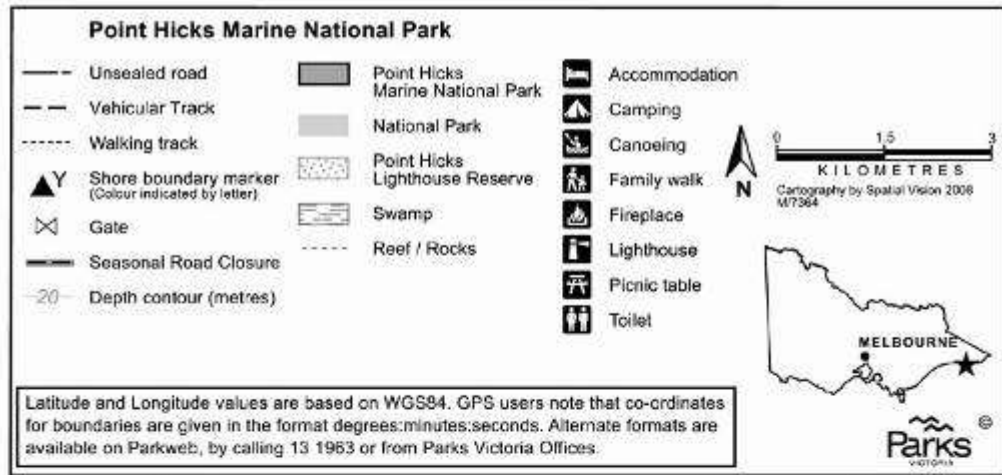
Caring for the marine environment

- Discarded gear and rubbish can endanger birds and marine animals - please take your rubbish home
- Always replace any organisms or rocks you may have disturbed
- Keep clear of bird nesting or roosting areas
- Keep clear of resting seals

This park is located in the East Gippsland Total Fire Ban District. Stay aware of fire and weather warnings.

Healthy Parks Healthy People

Visiting a park can improve your health, mind, body and soul. So, with over four million hectares of parkland available to Victorians, why not escape to a park today!



Restrictions

For the protection of the marine environment a number of activities are prohibited within the boundaries of Victoria's Marine National Park and Marine Sanctuaries.

There are strong penalties under the National Parks Act for fishing in Marine National Parks and Marine Sanctuaries. These restrictions and penalties apply in Point Hicks Marine National Park.

You may carry fin-fish on board your boat within park boundaries if you caught the fish outside the park, 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 that you are travelling straight through the park by the shortest practicable route.

To report a fishing offence call the Department of Primary Industries on 13 FISH (13 3474).

Parks Victoria is responsible for the day to day management of Victoria's Marine National Parks and Marine Sanctuaries. For further information contact the Parks Victoria Information Centre on **13 1963** or visit www.parks.vic.gov.au

Park notes on Victoria's Marine National Parks and Marine Sanctuaries, including boundaries and permitted and prohibited activities, have been produced to assist visitors to these areas.

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