



Australian Government
Director of National Parks

Tourism Australia

The Great Ocean Road

Where nature's drama unfolds at every turn.

The raw energy of the Great Southern Ocean meets a spectacular landscape to create awe inspiring scenery and a vast array of ever changing landscapes, communities, habitats and wildlife that will captivate and invigorate.

GEOLGY IN REAL TIME

Limestone layers have eroded at different rates to create tunnels and caves as well as spectacular natural structures like the Twelve Apostles and the Loch Ard Gorge. Erosion occurs at a rapid rate as the awesome power of the sea pounds the earth — collapsing one of the Twelve Apostles in 2005 and tumbling the London Bridge rock formation into the sea in 1990.

COASTAL LANDSCAPES

The breathtaking cliff faces of the Great Ocean Road fall away to a spectacular marine environment. The intertidal zone supports a vast array of crabs, molluscs, fish, seaweed and algae as well as fantastic bird life.

Over 170 bird species can be seen throughout the landscape, with the internationally threatened peregrine falcon nesting in the landscape's protected cliffs and rock stacks. You can often see many other species including albatross, gannets, honeyeaters, cockatoos and eagles.

At the base of the famous Twelve Apostles rock formation, a colony of around 1,000 little penguins can be seen

from special viewing platforms just after the sun goes down. Offshore islands provide a home for the critically endangered orange-bellied parrot.

A LIVING OCEAN

Beneath the ocean surface lies an explosion of life — 85 per cent of species found in the waters here are found nowhere else on earth.

Deep sea and reef fish, sharks, dolphins, octopus, sea dragons and the Australian fur seal all inhabit the area. Offshore reefs 30 to 60 metres underwater are home to brilliant sponge gardens and kelp forests where fish and other aquatic species such as sea dragons, sea slugs and sea stars make their homes. The diversity and abundance of marine wildlife has significantly increased since the introduction of a marine reserve system in 2002.

From June to September, the magnificent southern right whales come to the sheltered, nutrient-rich waters around Warrnambool to breed before making their way up the east coast of Australia. Mothers and calves have often been found as close as 100 metres from the shore.

WEEDY SEA DRAGON

The leafy-looking fins of the 46 centimetre weedy sea dragon provide excellent camouflage as they swim amongst seaweed. They are one of the only creatures in the world where the male cares for the eggs and carries them on his tail during the two-month gestation period. The weedy sea dragon is Victoria's marine emblem.

HEATHLANDS

The spectacular variety of plants in the 7,500 hectare Anglesea heathlands burst into life during spring to create an amazing wildflower display. More than 700 plant species have been recorded in the area, including 162 species in one hectare alone — the highest diversity of flora anywhere in Victoria. The 79 species of orchid found here makes it one of the most orchid-rich sites in Australia.

HINTERLANDS

Inland from the coastal landscape lies the cool, wet hinterland rainforests. Home to a variety of kangaroos, wallabies, possums, bandicoots, echidnas and bats, the Great Otway National Park is a landscape of tall eucalypts and mysterious beech forests, rushing waterfalls, cascading streams and secret pockets of fern gullies.

THE GREAT OCEAN WALK

The 104 kilometre Great Ocean Walk provides an opportunity to experience a range of natural environments — tall forests, deserted beaches and remote cliff-tops. The walk's 'step-on, step-off' approach means visitors can choose to walk the whole, or parts of the route, with options to pitch a tent or stay in luxury accommodation. For more information go to www.greatoceanwalk.com.au.

ROAD INTO HISTORY

The Great Ocean Road was part of a major plan to create employment for soldiers returning from the First World War. Fourteen years in construction, the Great Ocean Road is today recognised as a massive feat in engineering and planning and has been listed on Australia's National Heritage list.

Around 700 ships are believed to have been wrecked along the Victorian coast, but less than a third of them have been discovered. The ancient shipwrecks, which can be found along the coast line, tell dramatic tales of tragedy and survival of Australia's early European settlers trying to start a new life.



Weedy sea dragon



Hinterlands



HELP PROTECT THIS SPECIAL COASTAL ENVIRONMENT

You can make your own contribution to conserving our natural world when you visit the Great Ocean Road. Keep our marine environment clean — plastics and other rubbish can pollute our oceans and have severe effects on marine species. When fishing or walking, take your rubbish with you.

You can take a hands-on approach to conservation activities on the Great Ocean Road by:

- Reporting a whale sighting - take part in a community project to record whale sightings along the coast.

For more information go to: <http://visitgreatoceanroad.org.au/whale-sightings>

- Get hands on in the hinterlands – visit www.gorcc.com.au to find out more about the wide range of environmental coastal volunteer groups that operate in the region.
- Taking a walk on the wild side - taking part in a Conservation Volunteers Australia program to collect native seeds and undertake weeding, document wildlife through photography or help rehabilitate frog breeding sites. www.conservationvolunteers.com.au

For more information on this landscape or to learn about other naturally beautiful places which offer a different but uniquely Australian experience. Visit www.australia.com/nl