



Melbourne & Coastal Victoria

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Why Go?

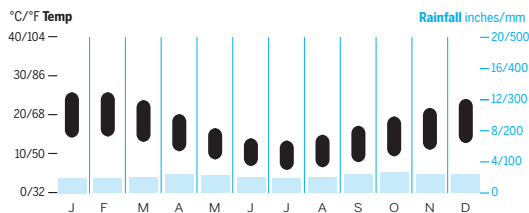
From windswept beaches to cosmopolitan seaside towns and legendary surfing spots, Victoria's coastline boasts stunning vistas, cool climates and the culture-packed city of Melbourne. It's a diverse coast; fairy penguins march up and down beaches in the popular tourist destination of Phillip Island, while Victoria's west coast faces onto Bass Strait and attracts surfers and those searching for the almighty Twelve Apostles.

Heading up the southeast coast from the hiking paradise of Wilsons Promontory is a long, cruisy expanse of beach that meets up with a popular, activity-filled lakes system around Lakes Entrance (Australia's largest inland waterway system). There are more stunning national parks on the approach to the Victoria–New South Wales border.

Melbourne's culinary focus stretches the entire way along the coast, while accommodation options include luxury eco-hostels and boutique B&Bs.

When to Go

Melbourne



February School-holiday crowds have packed up, leaving good weather for swimming and hiking.

April Enjoy quiet beaches and the Apollo Bay Music Festival.

November It's getting warmer and hiking trails are in full colour after spring.

Regional Tours

The **Great Ocean Road** is one of the most popular touring routes in Australia, and, blow us down with a limestone outcrop, it's worth the hype. Take plenty of time – two weeks is good – to get the best from this region.

Start in the surfing mecca of Torquay by checking out the waves at **Bells Beach**, then head to family-friendly **Anglesea** to see kangaroos grazing on its golf course. **Aireys Inlet** is next; tour the lighthouse then plan an overnight stay in the resort town of **Lorne**. Break up the sea views with a detour up into the rainforests of the **Otway Ranges**. Back on the Great Ocean Road, head to the fishing village of Apollo Bay for a day or two then continue west into the koala and lighthouse zone of **Cape Otway**. It's quite a stretch to **Port Campbell National Park** and its famed **Twelve Apostles**; take the time to count them and spend a night in **Port Campbell** to get a feel for the area. Look for whales off the coast around **Warrnambool** then continue west to quaint, and very Irish, **Port Fairy**. If there's time, head to tiny **Cape Bridgewater** to meet its seal population.

DON'T MISS

Who can resist the nightly parade of cute little fairy penguins waddling out of the ocean and into their sandy burrows at **Phillip Island**? Not the three million-plus tourists who visit annually, that's for sure. This little island in Western Port Bay also has fabulous surf beaches, a moto-GP circuit and wildlife parks.

For sheer natural beauty, **Wilsons Promontory** has it all. Jutting out into Bass Strait, this national park is isolated but accessible, boasting sublime ocean beaches and some of the best wilderness hiking in the state. It has a well-maintained network of trails and bush camping areas – you just need to grab a map, strap on a pack and disappear into the wilds.

Beaches

- » Surfing: try famous Bells Beach near Torquay
- » Isolation: Ninety Mile Beach attracts those seeking space
- » Beachside camping: camp for free by wild Johanna Beach

TOP TIP

Head to the wharf in seaside towns and buy fresh seafood straight off the boat. In particular, Lorne and Lakes Entrance will make the fishy foodie very happy. Cook it up on nearby public BBQs.

Fast Facts

- » Population: 5,444,000
- » Area: 227,500 sq km
- » Telephone area code: 03
- » Coastline: 2000km

Planning Your Trip

Avoid the coast from Christmas until late January, and during Easter; school holidays equate to packed beaches, booked-out accommodation and restricted access to popular hiking trails. See www.education.vic.gov.au for dates.

Resources

- » Visit Victoria (www.visitvictoria.com) Official state tourism site
- » Parks Victoria (www.parkweb.vic.gov.au) National park information
- » The Age (www.theage.com.au) Victorian news
- » Bureau of Meteorology (www.bom.gov.au/weather/vic) Weather forecasts