



Mornington Peninsula & Phillip Island

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Best Places to Stay

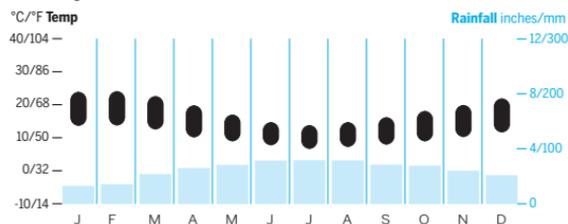
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Why Go?

It takes less than an hour to escape the urban sprawl and discover the holiday communities that curl around Port Phillip Bay's eastern half. At the tip of the peninsula, a world of rugged ocean surf beaches, sublime links golf courses and coastal bushwalks opens up. Away from the coast, the peninsula's interior is a wine- and food-lover's paradise, with more than 50 cellar doors and some of Victoria's finest winery restaurants. On the less-developed eastern side of the peninsula, it's a short ferry ride across to wild and isolated French Island and to Phillip Island, sheltering in the waters of Western Port Bay. To reach Phillip Island by car though, you need to drive the long way around. It's certainly worth it: apart from the famous nightly parade of little penguins, Phillip Island is blessed with wonderful surf beaches, accessible wildlife and enough activities to keep you (and the kids) busy for a week.

When to Go

Phillip Island



New Year's Eve Phillip Island goes off with the Pyramid Rock Festival

Nov-Dec The best time to view seals and penguins at Phillip Island

Feb-Mar The perfect time to hit the beaches and wineries, after the holiday crowds have departed

MORNINGTON PENINSULA

The Mornington Peninsula – the boot-shaped area of land between Port Phillip Bay and Western Port Bay – has been Melbourne’s summer playground since the 1870s, when paddle steamers ran down to Portsea. Today, much of the interior farming land has been replaced by vineyards and orchards – foodies love the peninsula, where a winery lunch is a real highlight – but it still retains lovely stands of native bushland.

The calm ‘front beaches’ are on the Port Phillip Bay side, where families holiday at bayside towns from Mornington to Sorrento. The rugged ocean ‘back beaches’ face Bass Strait and are easily reached from Portsea, Sorrento and Rye; there are stunning walks along this coastal strip, part of the Mornington Peninsula National Park.

The bay heads are so close that it’s just a short hop by ferry across from Sorrento to Queenscliff on the Bellarine Peninsula.

Information

Mornington Peninsula visitor centre (%1800 804 009, 5987 3078; www.visitmorningtonpeninsula.org; 359b Nepean Hwy/B110, Dromana; h 9am-5pm) The main visitor information centre for the peninsula can book accommodation and tours. There are also visitor centres in Mornington and Sorrento.

Getting There & Away

Moorooduc Hwy (11) and Point Nepean Rd (B110) both feed into the Mornington Peninsula Fwy (11), the main peninsula access. Alternately, exit the Moorooduc Hwy to Mornington and take the coast road around Port Phillip Bay.

Frequent Metlink trains run from Melbourne to Frankston, Hastings and Stony Point.



Mornington Peninsula Highlights

1 Swim with dolphins and soak up the history at **Sorrento** (p219)

2 Walk the cliff tops and surf the back beaches of **Mornington Peninsula National Park** (p222)

3 Catch a film at the **Dromana Drive-in** (p218), one of the few left in Australia

4 Settle in at dusk for the famous **Penguin Parade** (p225) at Phillip Island

5 Kick off with a long, liquid lunch then an afternoon of wine tasting at the **wineries** (p224) around Red Hill

6 Take the ferry to **French Island** (p223) and hike or cycle in blissful isolation

7 Catch a wave at beautiful **Cape Woolamai** (p226)

8 Cycle out to the peninsula’s tip at **Point Nepean National Park** (p221)

9 Challenge yourself to a round of golf at the **Flinders Golf Club** (p219)