

Southern beaches



Head south from Melbourne for stunning beaches and hot mineral springs on the Mornington Peninsula, to see the famous penguins at Phillip Island, and to experience the wilderness in the Gippsland's Wilson's Promontory. The Mornington Peninsula, on the eastern side of Port Phillip Bay, includes magnificent beaches, rolling hills of olive groves and vineyards as well as towns such as Sorrento, with its fine 19th century buildings, boutiques and galleries.

There are plenty of gay-friendly spots, including Max's Restaurant at Red Hill Estate, which is run by Max Paganoni and his partner Marcus Bradford.

Stop in at Mornington and take a break in one of its cafes (Boyz on the Beach is an excellent choice) and take a dip in a healing thermal pool at Peninsula Hot Springs at Rye.

Phillip Island is well known for its motorcycle Grand Prix, surfing and its nightly march of fairy penguins aptly called the Penguin Parade.

Approximately 26,000 little penguins live in the waters around Phillip Island.

About 4500 'march' each day at dusk back to their burrows around Summerland Beach on the far south-western point, watched by visitors in viewing stands and observation boardwalks at Phillip Island Nature Park. Other wildlife on the island includes koalas and Australia's largest colony of fur seals.

Occupying Victoria's eastern corner, Gippsland covers a vast and diverse landscape, from unspoilt beaches to enormous lakes and mountain ranges.

It includes Wilson's Promontory with its stunning bush and coastal scenery and acclaimed walking trails. Central Gippsland is gourmet country, dotted with wineries, cheese makers, farmers' markets, and fruit and berry farms. Explore historic gold towns and maritime villages such as Walhalla and Port Albert, or take to the slopes at the Mt Baw Baw Alpine Resort.

The Gippsland Lakes are fed by the waters of five major rivers and fringed by Ninety Mile Beach – perfect for swimming and sailing.

More information:
www.visitvictoria.com.au

travel tips

- ▲ Fancy a red wine mineral bath? Peninsula Hot Springs has not only tapped into the 50-degree water, but offers a luxury bathing experience using the healing powers of Tasmanian red wine. Combined with grape seed oil and seaweed extract, the skin is hydrated while the body is relaxed.
- ▲ The Gippsland region is also home to Croajingolong National Park, a World Biosphere Reserve. With more than 100km of pristine coastline and hinterland, it is a great place to go bushwalking, surfing or spotting various species of bird and plant life.

