

Australia's Coastal Wilderness

A pristine wilderness bordered by wild coastline

A UNIQUELY AUSTRALIAN INVITATION

Australia's Coastal Wilderness nestles in the far eastern corner of the continent, straddling the New South Wales and Victorian state border. It's one of Australia's most impressive wilderness areas, where warm temperate rainforests tumble towards a pristine coastline, revealing hidden treasures at every turn.

Standout icons in this diverse landscape are Croajingolong National Park and Nadgee Nature Reserve. Their ecosystems are so valuable that UNESCO has proclaimed the area a World Biosphere Reserve.

More than 50 mammal species and 1,000 native plant species live in this national park. The abundance of birdlife found here represents about one third of Australia's total number of bird species.

The national park derives its name from one of the local Aboriginal tribes, the Krauatungalung, meaning 'men of the east', who inhabited the area for 40,000 years before Captain Cook arrived in 1770.

Point Hicks was the first piece of Australia sighted by Cook before he pushed north to Botany Bay. This lookout is the perfect place to see humpback whales as they undertake their winter migration from Antarctica to warmer waters off the Australian coast.

Along the coastline, white-bellied sea eagles soar over granite cliff-faces, while offshore, a large colony of little penguins nest under the shadow of the lighthouse on windswept Gabo Island, lying just offshore from the picturesque community of Mallacoota.

Further south, the huge sand dunes at Thurra River rise to a height of over 100 metres above sea level.

Adjacent to Croajingolong National Park, the Cape Howe wilderness extends across the border into New South Wales where it meets the Nadgee wilderness. These adjoining areas are the largest unmodified coastal landscapes in south-east Australia. Together, they form the boundaries of the Biosphere Reserve.

Ben Boyd National Park, named after the prominent 19th century entrepreneur Benjamin Boyd, sits perched on the edge of a peninsula. Boyds Tower, at the entrance to Twofold Bay, was built by Boyd as a lighthouse and used for whale-spotting during the whaling days.

Another historic lighthouse, the Green Cape Light Station, keeps sentinel over the resident seal colony, its octagonal tower jutting out in dramatic contrast to the surrounding panorama.

The landscape is characterised by vivid rock formations, old sea caves, and banksia forests. Of special note are the red and white earth formations of The Pinnacles, formed more than 30 million years ago.

The heath lands and eucalypt forests in the park provide a sanctuary for threatened species such as the ground parrot, yellow-bellied glider, and long-nosed potoroo.

The Light to Light Walking Track from Boyds Tower to Green Cape passes through spectacular coastal scenery.

Northwards, in the unspoilt environment of Bournda National Park, the areas around the mouth of Wallagoot Lake offer a standout combination of ocean beaches, creeks, and lagoons.

The lake and its surrounds provide a valuable habitat for local and migratory water birds, including the endangered little tern. They also play a vital role in protecting the fish and prawn nurseries for which the lake is renowned.

This extraordinarily diverse landscape of forests, lakes and beaches, embraced by a dramatic coastline, is an unspoilt wilderness where natural beauty, history and living culture abound.

Key facts

- Croajingolong National Park covers 87,500 hectares and extends 100 kilometres along the wilderness coast of Victoria's East Gippsland region. UNESCO classified the area as a World Biosphere Reserve in 1977. It is home to more than 300 bird and animal species and over 1,000 native plant species.

The Light to Light Walking Track from Boyds Tower to Green Cape makes it possible to hike over 30km of unspoilt coast





- European settlers began to arrive in the 1830s, and pastoralists occupied most of the better arable land by the 1850s. In the early 1900s, two national parks were set aside around Mallacoota and Wingan Inlet. In 1970, Captain Cook National Park was established at Point Hicks. These parks were greatly enlarged and combined to form Croajingolong National Park in 1979.
- Cape Conran Coastal Park in East Gippsland covers more than 11,000 hectares of heathlands, easily accessible wild ocean beaches and banksia woodlands.
- Ben Boyd National Park consists of 10,260 hectares, along two stretches of coastline flanking Eden and Twofold Bay to the north and south.

Things to see and do

- Experienced walkers can take a long hike on one of the many coastal walks such as the 100 kilometre Wilderness Coast Walk from Croajingolong National Park to the Nadgee Nature Reserve in New South Wales.
- Paddle a kayak at Wingan Inlet.
- Enjoy a 4-wheel drive along the narrow Cicada Trail (closed in winter) to Thurra River and experience the Dunes Walk.
- Climb to the top of the lighthouse at Point Hicks or Green Cape for unrivalled views of the park and ocean. Spend a night in one of the Lighthouse Keeper's cottages for a very different experience.
- Walk from Boyds Tower to Cape Green along the Light to Light Walking Track.
- Stroll along the rocky cliffs. Strong winds and seas sunk many 18th and 19th century voyages, evidenced by the shipwrecks still visible along this coast.
- Grab your binoculars and watch whales and dolphins from one of the headlands.
- Scale Genoa Peak for 360-degree views of Bass Strait and Gabo Island.
- Visit the mysterious Clinton Rocks. See the giant granite boulders covered in bright orange lichen which line the coast.
- Make a splash. Surf and freshwater fishing, swimming, scuba diving, snorkeling, sailboarding, surfing and sea kayaking are all on offer.
- Rest awhile at the tranquil Lake Elusive where orchids and dazzling wildflowers bloom during spring and summer.
- Follow the Kangarutha Track in Bournda National Park. Listen to the bush erupt with the sounds of birds gathering their nesting material.
- Learn about Aboriginal traditions at one of the cultural centres in the region.
- Dine on fresh seafood or sample the delights of the local organic produce.
- Visit the Killer Whale Museum at Eden and hear the remarkable story of the killer whale called Old Tom and his relationship with early whalers.
- Savour the beauty of Mimosa Rocks National Park with its many coastal estuaries, lagoons and wetlands and a wide variety of forest types.

Suggested itinerary

The coastal towns of Eden, Merimbula, Mallacoota, Bemm River, Bermagui and Marlo are great bases from which to explore the national parks and attractions. Hire a car or campervan and drive the Sydney Melbourne Coastal Drive for easy access to Australia's Coastal Wilderness.

Croajingolong National Park is in the far eastern corner of Victoria, about 450 kilometres east of Melbourne and 500 kilometres south of Sydney. Access roads lead from the Princes Highway or from Mallacoota.

Ben Boyd National Park sits between Eden and Merimbula, off the Princes Highway. Visit the historic site of the Davidson Whaling Station, as well as Boyds Tower, at the entrance to Twofold Bay, and the Green Cape Light Station.

Keen hikers can walk the Light to Light Walking Track from Boyds Tower to Green Cape.

Visit Bombala and explore the towering forests of the South East National Parks, view the shy platypus in the rivers and streams or soak up the rich history of the area.

Rail and bus services provide daily access to the region from Melbourne, Sydney and Canberra.



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