The Lakes National Park

Visitor Guide

The Lakes National Park is a peaceful bushland retreat in the Gippsland Lakes, fringed by the waters of Lake Victoria and Lake Reeve. The park occupies 2,390 ha. of low-lying woodland and coastal heath, consisting of Sperm Whale Head peninsula, Rotamah and Little Rotamah Islands.

Location and access
The Lakes National Park is in East Gippsland, about 300 km east of Melbourne. The park is located at the eastern end of the township of Loch Sport, 63 km east of Sale. Boat access is possible from Paynesville (5 km).

From Past to Present
The area was once part of a large bay. Over many thousands of years, sands deposited by the sea have formed a series of barriers, such as the Sperm Whale Head peninsula. The outer barrier eventually enclosed the bay and formed the Ninety Mile Beach. These barriers are up to 38 m high.
Aborigines of the Kurnai nation were numerous in the area at the time of European arrival. The abundant wildlife around the Gippsland Lakes provided plenty of food. In the summer of 1840 explorer Angus McMillan reached the shores of Lake Victoria, and soon after, cattle runs were taken up and much of the area now covered by park was cleared for grazing. Through the efforts of Mr. F.W.C. Barton and the Field Naturalists Club of Victoria, 1,451 ha on the Sperm Whale Head peninsula was reserved in 1927 for the purposes of a national park, and proclaimed The Lakes National Park in 1956. Rotamah Island and Little Rotamah Island were added to the park in 1978. Natural bushland has since regenerated and much of the wildlife has returned to the area.

Plants and wildlife
Eucalypt and banksia woodland are widespread on the sandy soils throughout the park. Areas of coastal heath are interspersed with swampy, low lying areas which support salt marsh vegetation. From August to November the park is at its best with a spectacular show of wildflowers and one of the best display of heath are interspersed with swampy, low lying areas. These barriers are up to 38 m high.

Several rare plants species occur including Ribbed Thryptomene (Thryptomene micrantha) which, apart from this area, is found only in Tasmania and the York and Eyre Peninsulas in South Australia. More than 190 species of birds have been recorded in the park including the rare White Bellied Sea Eagle and the endangered Little Tern.

The park also supports a large population of Eastern Grey Kangaroos and Black Wallabies including Brush-tailed and Ring-tailed Possums. Less common mammals include Sugar Gliders, Pygmy Possums and the endangered New Holland Mouse. You may be lucky to spot a rare Large-footed Myotis, one of eleven bat species found within the park.

Things to see and do
Rotamah Island
Rotamah Island is accessible only by boat. A number of walking tracks leave from the picnic area and jetty, including a short stroll to the famous Ninety Mile Beach. The Bird Observatory, run by Birds Australia, is available for accommodation throughout the year. The resident wardens regularly run natural history education courses. (See separate parknote).

Picnicking
The most popular of several picnic areas is at Point Wilson, the site of the original settlers' homestead. There are barbecues, a day shelter, toilets, water and a jetty. You'll enjoy watching the kangaroos, but please do not feed them because our processed foods are not part of their normal diet.

Camping
Camping is only permitted at Emu Bight, close to the shore of Lake Victoria. A communal shelter, fireplaces, toilets and water are provided. A small fee is charged and sites must be booked through the park office.

Walking
A network of walking tracks exist and the gently undulating tracks are suitable for family outings. The self guided Lake Reeve Nature Trail, featuring the Lookout Tower, is a popular short walk through several habitats with many points of interest along the way. (See separate parknote).

Lookout Tower
Situated at the beginning of the Nature Trail, the Lookout Tower gives magnificent views of Lake Reeve and the Gippsland Lakes system.

Bird watching
Many birds species can be observed throughout the park or alternatively, from bird hides situated at Lake Killarney and on Rotamah Island.

Park Information Centre
Call into the park office during office hours and view the information displays, exhibits and ‘touch table’.
For further information contact
Parks Victoria Information Centre
Ph: 13 1963 or visit the website
www.parkweb.vic.gov.au

Parks Victoria
P O Box 40
National Park Road
Loch Sport 3851
Ph: (03) 5146 0278

Sale Visitor Information Centre
Princes Hwy Sale 3850
Ph: 1800 677 520
Fax: (03) 5144 1108
email: toursale@i_o.net.au

Caring for the environment
Help us look after this park by following these regulations:

Fires are not permitted on the Ninety Mile Beach.

Camp fires may only be lit in fireplaces provided.

Fires must be completely extinguished with water before leaving.

Fires are not permitted on days of Total Fire Ban.

All native plants and animals in the park are protected by law.

Dogs, cats, firearms and generators are not permitted.

Please take your rubbish home.

N.B. The drive from the park office to Point Wilson covers 15 km and takes 20 minutes.