History

Indigenous history

Point Nepean is part of Boonwurrung country. The Boonwurrung people lived on and around Point Nepean for thousands of years gathering shellfish and other foods along the coastline. The interaction with early settlers and ceremony make it an important place. Extensive shell middens are reminders of their enduring association.

Early settlement

Point Nepean has evidence of some of the earliest European settlement in Victoria, including pastoral activities and lime burning. Shepherd’s Hut, located in the Quarantine Station, is one of the earliest intact limestone buildings in Victoria. Its cellar dates to 1845.

Quarantine Station

Established in 1852, it was the place for quarantine purposes in Victoria until 1979 and closed in 1980. The site later become home to the Army Officer Cadet School (1952–1985) and the School of Army Health (1985–1998). In 1999, selected buildings were used to accommodate Kosovo Refugees. Visitors can see remarkably intact historic buildings with artefacts spanning over 140 years of quarantine and army use.

Defence

The entrance to Port Phillip was the most heavily fortified port in the Southern Hemisphere. There are many Colonial and Commonwealth structures from 1880s–1940s located around the entrance to Port Phillip, and from 1952 the buildings also housed the Army Officer Cadet School. Walkers and cyclists can take Coles Track which links the Quarantine Station to Gunners Cottage and Fort Nepean. A self-guided walk brochure and audio tour is available at the Point Nepean Information Centre.

Range Area Walk

The 1.8 kilometre walking meanders through coastal scrub, a former Rife Range and passes Monash Break and Light. Climb the Monash Light tower and take in sweeping views of the park and coastline. The Range Area was used to train cadets in the Army Officer Cadet School; training included firing rifles, grenades and machine guns. The walk links the Quarantine Station and Cheviot Hill, and provides access to Happy Valley Track.

Wilsons Folly Track

This 1.7 kilometre walking track links London Bridge Scrub remaining on the southeast of the town of Mornington Peninsula, passing through pockets of Coastal Banksia sands, Moorsun woodland and native grasslands.

Bay Beach Walk

The 2.8 kilometre walk along Fort Phillip Bay Beach can be accessed at the Quarantine Station, Observatory Point and The Bend. Remnants of the former quarantine cattle jetty still exist at Observatory Point, where you can view the southern end of Fort Phillip. Hooded Plovers regularly nest along this beach, seasonal management may apply. Swimming is not recommended due to the strong currents, unpredictable waves, and proximity to the Rip.

Location and access

How to get there

Point Nepean is located 90km from Melbourne. Visitors can catch a train from Melbourne to Frankston and then a bus to Portsea (stops at park entrance gate) and walk in the Sorrento to Queenscliff ferry. The ferry operates on the hour from 7am to 6pm (with extended summer hours).

Getting around the park

Visitors can park at the Quarantine Station and begin their park discovery from here. Alternatively, visitors can park at Gunners Cottage and walk or cycle the 2.6 kilometres to Fort Nepean. Bikes can be hired from the Point Nepean Information Centre. An all-terrain beach wheelchair is available for visitors who are frail or have physical disabilities. The chair can be borrowed for free and booked in advance by contacting the Information Centre. Wheelchair access is available in key areas, see map.

A hop on hop off shuttle service operates from 10:30am to 4:00pm daily between the Quarantine Station and Fort Nepean. Timetable information can be obtained from the Point Nepean Information Centre, at designated stops or at www.parks.vic.gov.au. Tickets can be purchased at the shuttle bus. Group bookings can be arranged by calling (03) 5986 5666 or email rosebudchart@venturbus.com.au.

Self-guided tours

Award winning virtual audio tours offering an insight into the history and cultural significance of the park are available for hire at the Point Nepean Information Centre. The audio guides can also be downloaded for free on an MP3 player at www.parks.vic.gov.au or to an iPhone through the iTunes store in advance to visit the park. Self-guided brochures are also available in the park for the Quarantine Station and Fort Nepean areas.

Want to volunteer?

If you are interested in lending a hand there are volunteer groups involved in maintenance, conservation and heritage protection programs, please call 13 63 13.

Point Nepean National Park

Open everyday End of Point Nepean Road, Portsea Vehicles can enter the park between 8am–5pm and exit at any time

Point Nepean Information Centre

Open everyday (except Christmas day) from 10am–5pm 13 1963 point.nepean@parks.vic.gov.au

Exploring the park

Quarantine Station

Discover the historical precinct which has almost 50 heritage listed buildings. The Quarantine Station was established in 1852 and from 1952 the buildings also housed the Army Officer Cadet School. Walkers and cyclists can take Coles Track which links the Quarantine Station to Gunners Cottage and Fort Nepean. A self-guided walk brochure and audio tour is available. Plan your visit at the Point Nepean Information Centre.

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Gunners Cottage

From here you can visit the historic Point Nepean Cemetery or walk the Walter Pinkerton Heritage Walk to the remnants of the former quarantine cattle jetty at Observer Point. Point Nepean Point walkers can take Coles Track to the Quarantine Station or Fort Nepean.

Cheviot Hill

Cheviot Hill is the park’s highest point and contains World War II fortifications. It overlooks Cheviot Beach, the site where former Australian Prime Minister Harold Holt disappeared without a trace in December 1967. A memorial is located about 500 metres further along Defence Road from Cheviot Hill.

Kenneth Carey, Fort Pearce and Eagles Nest

Explore the fortifications and lookout with stunning views of Bass Strait and Fort Philip. The Pearce Barracks site is where many of the army personnel stationed at Point Nepean lived. Eagles Nest was the site of Australia’s largest Disappearing Gun.

Fort Nepean

Discover a series of military fortifications dating back to the 1880s with stunning views of Port Phillip and Bass Strait. Explore the tunnels, forts and gun emplacements from which allied shots were fired for both World War I and II. A self-guided brochure and soundscapes are available.

Mornington Peninsula Walk

Experience the diversity of the Southern Peninsula on the Mornington Peninsula Walk. The walk can be completed in sections or as an approximately 100km continuous walk linking Point Nepean with the Bay Trail, Coastal Walk and the Two Bays Walking Track.