

# George Bass Coastal Walk



## Visitor Guide

What a sight it must have been when the explorer George Bass first sighted the coast of what we now call Victoria. And now it's your chance to follow the route of Bass' voyage of discovery along the Victorian coastline. The George Bass Coastal Walk offers panoramic coastal views from a narrow winding path, along cliff tops rising high above the pounding surf of Bass Strait.

### Location and access

The walk is situated 100kilometres south east of Melbourne between San Remo and Kilcunda. The walk commences at the southern end of the Punchbowl Road, off the Phillip Island Tourist Road. Visitors may also start the walk from the Bass Highway in Kilcunda.

The walk is 7km, taking approximately two hours one way. The Anderson to Wonthaggi Rail Trail can be used to extend your walk from Kilcunda to Anderson, or east to Wonthaggi.

### Remnants of history

For thousands of years the Bunurong indigenous people looked out over the treacherous stretch of water known today as Bass Strait. This area is marked by middens, hidden in the dunes behind sandy beaches along the coast.



George Bass ©RA

In 1797, George Bass set sail from Sydney Cove in an 8.7 metre whale boat to prove the existence of a strait between Tasmania and New South Wales. During this epic voyage George Bass discovered and named the first natural harbour on the southern mainland coast, Westernport Bay.

Matthew Flinders said of the voyage made by George Bass "A voyage expressly undertaken for the discovery in an open boat, and in which six hundred miles of coast, mostly in a boisterous climate was explored, has not

*perhaps its equal in the annals of Maritime history".*

William Hovell explored this coast on foot in 1826, describing the area in his diary "...the land here is high, soil light but not good, very thick of low stunted trees (She Oak) with low bush, excepting at, or near the point on the north side of the entrance, the land ends abruptly, towards the bay and the opposite side of the entrance, facing Cape Woolamai and in many parts ends in perpendicular bluffs".

### Flora and fauna

Although grazing occurred on this coast for many years, remnants of native vegetation cling stubbornly to the windswept cliff tops. These plants include Coast Beard-heath, White Correa, Sea Box and Coast Tea-tree. An attractive stand of Coast Banksia is thriving at Half Moon Bay and Boobiallas grow along the sheltered creek gullies. Extensive tree planting has been done by volunteers.

The low vegetation provides excellent opportunities for observing bird life along the coast. Pacific Gulls constantly patrol this coast exploiting the strong updraught created by the high cliffs. Black-shouldered Kites and Nankeen Kestrels may be seen hunting in the neighbouring farmlands.

Through winter, the high cliffs provide a vantage point to view Southern Right Whales on their annual migration to the warmer waters along the southern coastline of Australia.

### Please take care

Caution must be exercised when undertaking this walk. The track follows a narrow strip of public land along cliff tops, consisting of slashed track through grassland. The track surface can be slippery, so sturdy footwear should be worn.

Beaches along the walks are unsuitable for swimming due to the presence of strong undertows, rips and steep sloping sandy bottoms. Fishing or walking near the waters edge can be extremely dangerous; swells and large waves can crash up against the rocky coastline.



