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IMAGES JACK MURPHY, AL MCGLASHAN, WILLIAM DAVIS, SUPPLIED

10 TOP FISHING DESTINATIONS IN VICTORIA

Trav hitched up the boat, Jack grabbed an esky and the boys headed to every corner of the state to find out where the fish bite best...

Every fisho worth his salt has a secret fishing spot, where it seems like the fish never stop biting. The sun always sets on glassy waters while pelagics feverishly compete for the evening hatch. The esky is always full and cold, and sleep is only broken by the smell of fresh, butcher-cut bacon grilling on an open fire.

Well, luckily for you, we're going to let you in on our best-kept secret fishing spots in Victoria. But shhh, keep it to yourself!



MORNINGTON PENINSULA

Ever since Nan and Pop could tow a trailer, the Mornington Peninsula has been a popular fishing destination. Its shoreline is dotted with colourful boat sheds clad in seashells and overlooking sandy beaches. It's a postcard-perfect scene, bound to inspire nostalgia in fishos from Melbourne and beyond. Some of our favourite table fish call this place home, including whiting, squid, garfish and snapper. It's only a stone's throw from Melbourne and a golf-putt away from some of the best fish and chip shops in the country. You know, just in case.

Snapper is the species that defines most Victorian boaties, and when the AFL grand-final siren sounds, fishermen turn off the TV and hook up the family runabout. With a full thermos, a block of pilchards and a pack of size 3/0 octopus hooks, the masses hit the ramps in anticipation of a 'big red'.

01



FACT FILE

DISTANCE FROM MELBOURNE: ONE HOUR'S DRIVE SOUTHEAST

FAMOUS FOR: BOAT SHEDS, BEACHES, SNAPPER AND FISH AND CHIP SHOPS

02

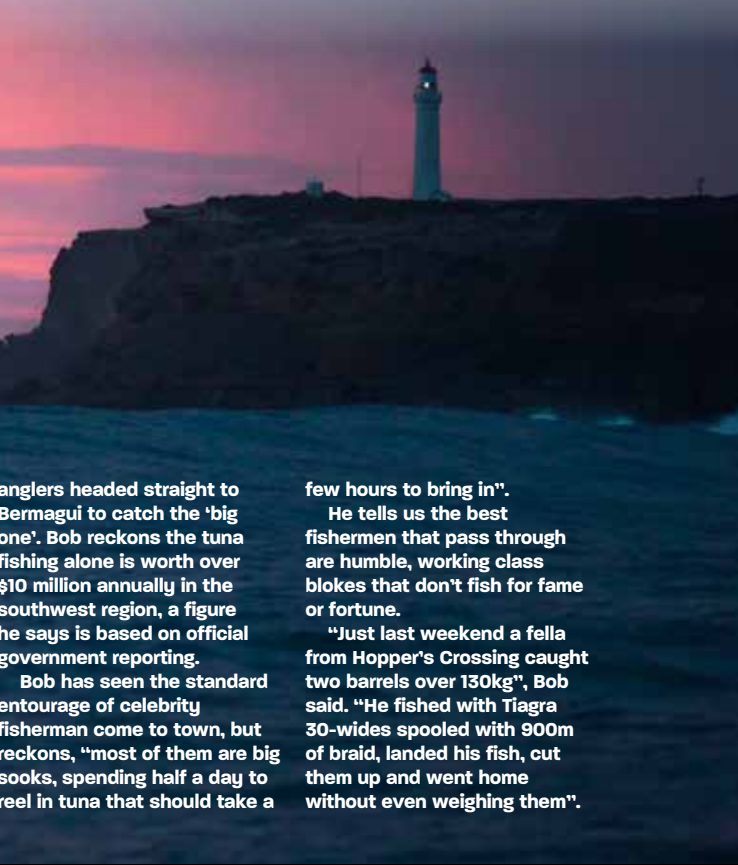
PORTLAND

Portland is fast becoming the game-fishing capital of Victoria. Last year, the local ramp had over 400 boats in a single day. That's why the State Government spent \$7 million on revamping the boat ramp and harbour in 2014. They're chasing tuna, and it's a big water battleground, popular with blue-collar boaties armed to the teeth with vibe lures, skirted lures and deep-diving Rapalas. As well as tuna, Portland has a big reputation as an albacore and dolphinfish destination. Bottom bouncing with electric reels for big eye, trumpeter and other googly-eyed bottom feeders is also growing in popularity. Keep your eyes peeled for 200-tonne blue whales, too!

FACT FILE

DISTANCE FROM MELBOURNE: FOUR HOURS SOUTHWEST, OR 360KM

FAMOUS FOR: TUNA BARRELS, WHALES, QUALITY RAMPS AND WIND GENERATORS



"I LIVE HERE"

Bob McPherson has lived in the area for 35 years. He's a plumber by trade, but can be commonly found scouting the boat ramp or spinning a yarn in the tackle shop. If there's a big fish caught off Portland, rest assured Bob will know about it. The bluefin fishery off Portland was largely untapped until 2006. Before then, most

anglers headed straight to Bermagui to catch the 'big one'. Bob reckons the tuna fishing alone is worth over \$10 million annually in the southwest region, a figure he says is based on official government reporting. Bob has seen the standard entourage of celebrity fisherman come to town, but reckons, "most of them are big sooks, spending half a day to reel in tuna that should take a

few hours to bring in". He tells us the best fishermen that pass through are humble, working class blokes that don't fish for fame or fortune. "Just last weekend a fella from Hopper's Crossing caught two barrels over 130kg", Bob said. "He fished with Tiagra 30-wides spooled with 900m of braid, landed his fish, cut them up and went home without even weighing them".






03

PORT FAIRY

For boaties who like a splash of history, hitch up and head to Port Fairy. It's one of the prettiest ocean entrances in Victoria, with historic sandstone buildings lining the timber piers, which hold boats fast in the current of the Moyne River. Lee Marvin and John Denver were two notable tourists in the '70s, drawn by the lure of catching a big shark. At one point in its history, Port Fairy held the record for the biggest tuna caught by an angler in Victorian waters. It was 85kg, and took the anglers over four hours to land in more than 500m of water.



FACT FILE

DISTANCE FROM MELBOURNE: THREE-AND-A-HALF HOURS SOUTHWEST, OR 290KM

FAMOUS FOR: BEAUTIFUL SEASIDE VILLAGE WITH SHARK FISHING PEDIGREE



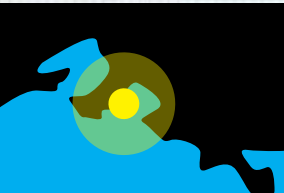
PORT FAIRY GETS OUR SEAL OF APPROVAL



04

WESTERNPORT BAY

Westernport Bay is a swirling mass of silty water, wrapping itself around French and Phillip Islands. It can be a boatie's nightmare. The run-out tide stands up in a southerly breeze and sandbars appear like desert fortresses at low tide. The locals say there are two types of fishermen in Westernport; those who have run aground, and those that will. But fish seem to love the fast water, and those who master the tides often catch big bags. The key to Westernport is to hit it up at slack water, or an hour either side of it. Fish the channels in between tides, then sit on the banks and backwaters during the tidal run. Use dropper rigs to keep bait off the bottom, adjusting sinker weights to hold your position in the current. Summer is the best time of the year, however you can pretty much count on catching a fish year-round at Westernport. The North Arm is the equivalent of the Nepean Highway, carrying every species imaginable up and down the Bay, from Yarringah to Stony Point and east from Tankerton to the Eastern Channel. At high tide, fish the edge of weed beds for whiting, garfish, calamari and trevally. A burley trail will help bring the fish on. Popular spots are the Tyabb banks, Middle Spit, Tortoise Head and Tankerton. Chase the big one around the change of tide in the deep water off Lysaghts and in the channels.



FACT FILE

DISTANCE FROM MELBOURNE: AN HOUR'S DRIVE SOUTHEAST TO HASTINGS, OR 74KM

FAMOUS FOR: BORTIES WHO RUN AGROUND, PROLIFIC WHITING AND SNAPPER



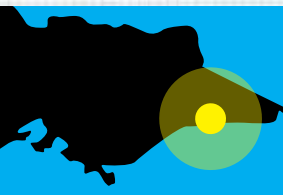


EAST GIPPSLAND

Many Victorian fishermen cut their teeth at sleepy little coastal towns in East Gippsland. Places like Mallacoota, Bemm River and Marlo can hold their heads high in fishing folklore. The area is distinguished by tannin-stained water running down from the Great Dividing Range, finding its way to the Tasman Sea through the Snowy, Bemm, Cann and Wallagaraugh Rivers, to name a few.

East Gippsland can lay claim to some of the best bream and flathead fishing in the state, and the author loves nothing more than piling up the tinnie, grabbing a handful of bass yabbies, German beers and heading to a quiet East Gippsland channel for a flathead drift or black bream session at sunrise.

05



FACT FILE

DISTANCE FROM MELBOURNE: SIX HOURS TO MALLACOOTA, OR 515KM



FAMOUS FOR: PRETTY, TANNIN-STAINED RIVERS, BIG BREAM AND BIGGER FLATHEAD

KILLER EAST GIPPSLAND COMBOS

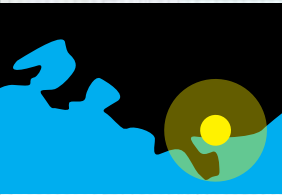
- Drift the drop-offs with small live baits on dropper rigs
- Cast DOA prawns or live

- prawns towards large, fallen trees on the river bank
- Flick lightly-weighted bass yabbies onto sandbanks at dawn and dusk
 - Small metal vibes are deadly in this region at all depths
 - Go dip netting on moonless nights for all your bait needs – and your entrée!

06

PORT WELSHPOOL

Port Welshpool is another industrious coastal town where colourful trawlers line the jetties and young families enjoy fish and chips in the local parks. The area overlooks Wilsons Promontory, and its waters are famous for huge snapper and gummy sharks. In December 2010, Brendon Wing, host of *YoufishTV*, had an amazing session in the Singapore Deep channel off Port Welshpool. In two sittings Brendon and his crew caught 32 snapper between 7-12kg.



FACT FILE

DISTANCE FROM MELBOURNE: TWO-AND-A-HALF HOURS SOUTHEAST, OR 200KM



FAMOUS FOR: THUMPER SNAPPER, GUMMY SHARKS AND COLOURFUL LOCAL TRAWLERS



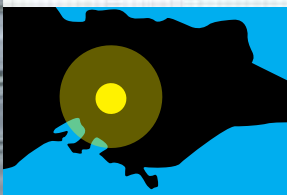
07

LAKE EILDON

As you slowly troll a minnow pattern Rapala lure on Lake Eildon, nestled in a valley of the Central Highlands, it's hard to imagine this waterway is only two hours' drive north of Melbourne. And when the fishing is slow in the lakes and rivers, just slink into the trout farm for a sneaky 'takeaway' rainbow trout. Don't catch a big one, though. It could be costly at \$20 per kilogram!

Over 100 years ago, Lake Eildon was developed as a water-storage facility for Victoria's northern plains. Fish stocks are regularly maintained in the lake, where trout over 10lb (4.5kg) are regularly caught. Anglers can also find redfin, golden perch, and Murray cod in the lake and adjacent rivers.





FACT FILE

DISTANCE FROM MELBOURNE: TWO HOURS NORTH, OR 140KM

FAMOUS FOR: TROUT FISHERY IN MELBOURNE'S BACKYARD, TROUT FARMS, WATERSPORTS



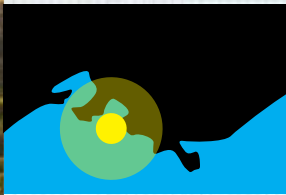
08

PHILLIP ISLAND

The Island' is a virtual 360-degree fishing platform, surrounded by Bass Strait to the south and Westernport Bay to the north. It's a showcase of everything fishy in Victoria, with great angling for whiting and squid among the weed beds and shallow channels, snapper and gummy sharks on the deeper reefs and salmon and sharks from the beaches. Oh, and mako sharks are only a boat trip away in Bass Strait.

Even trout are represented on Phillip Island. Try fishing at The Rhyll Trout and Bush Tucker Farm. If the fishing is slow, check out the seals at The Nobbies, or the famous fairy penguin parade at Summerland Beach.





FACT FILE

DISTANCE FROM MELBOURNE: TWO HOURS SOUTHEAST, OR 140KM

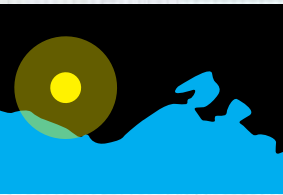
FAMOUS FOR: PENGUINS, SEALS AND FAST MOTORCYCLES



09

LAKE BULLEN MERRI & LAKE PURRUMBETE

Many Victorian boaties drive past these old craters, missing the opportunity to catch a whopping trout or salmon. The lakes are stocked with browns and rainbows, as well as quinnat and Atlantic salmon. Don't drop your rod here, though, the lakes are up to 200ft (60m) deep! Trolling is a popular method, but you'll need to get down deep with weighted line and downriggers. With your sounder fine-tuned, work the thermoclines with Rapalas and Tassie Devils. In the morning and evening, the fish will rise from the depths, and offer some surface and sight-casting action.



FACT FILE

DISTANCE FROM MELBOURNE: TWO-AND-A-HALF HOURS SOUTHWEST, OR 200KM

FAMOUS FOR: DEEP VOLCANIC CRATERS, CLEAR WATER, BIG SALMON AND TROUT

Images for illustrative purposes only.

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10 QUEENSCLIFF

It's a chilly Friday afternoon in Melbourne. The clock hits 5pm. You rush home, load up the family, hook up the boat and cruise down to Queenscliff, arriving just after sunset. Pulling up at The Queenscliff Inn, the smell of a red wine beef ragu in flaky pastry hits your nostrils. Thoughts of work are replaced with thoughts of a local Pinot Noir and a big, comfy mattress.

Located on the Bellarine Peninsula, you might know Queenscliff as the home to the Searoad Ferry, but it's much more than that. Queenscliff has a rich maritime history and heaps of things to see and do, particularly fishing. Known for southern calamari squid, flatties, whiting and even gummies, it's a fisho's dream – and only an hour from Melbourne!

Visit www.visitgeelongbellarine.com.au for more information on Queenscliff. 🐟

“WE WENT HERE...”

THE MUST-DOS IN QUEENSCLIFF (IN NO PARTICULAR ORDER)

- 1 Have a beef ragu at the Queenscliff Inn
www.queenscliffinn.com.au
- 2 Gobble down brekky at Belsize
www.twitter.com/belsizeco
- 3 Get lost in history at the Maritime Museum
maritimequeenscliffe.org.au
- 4 Catch a squid off the Queenscliff Pier and learn about the lifeboat shed
- 5 Get a 360-degree view from the Queenscliff observation tower
www.queenscliffharbour.com.au
- 6 Roll into Rolling Pin Pies and Cakes for Australia's Best Pie
www.rollingpin.com.au
- 7 Check out the two lighthouses, white and black
- 8 Jump on a South Bay Eco Tour and get up close and personal with seals and dolphins
- 9 Have a spectacular meal with a tasty cider at the buzzing Flying Brick Cider Co
www.flyingbrickciderco.com.au
- 10 Have a boogie aboard The Blues Train. A real life movin', groovin' steam train!
www.thebluestrain.com.au

FACT FILE

DISTANCE FROM MELBOURNE:

ONE-AND-A-HALF HOURS SOUTHWEST, OR 100KM

FAMOUS FOR:

A RICH MARITIME HISTORY AND BIG, TASTY CALAMARI SQUID



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— Kevin Smith

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— Warren Steptoe



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