



# A Bay for all Seasons



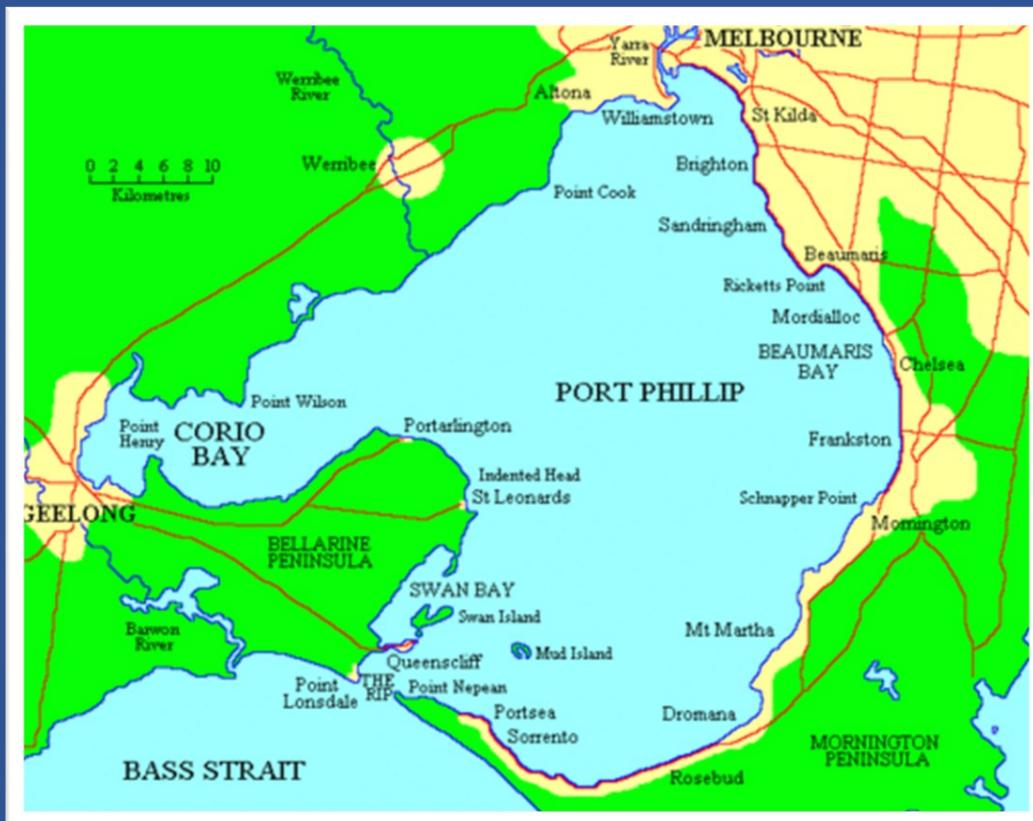
## Victoria's Port Phillip Bay

By

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**Port Phillip Bay**, sometimes known as the “Bay for all Seasons”, because of its tendency to produce all four seasons of the year in a single day is situated on the central south coast of southern Victoria, in Australia. The Bay opens out through a narrow entrance, known as “**The Rip**”, into the Bass Straits.

**Port Phillip Bay** encompasses Victoria's two largest cities — metropolitan **Greater Melbourne** in the bay's main eastern portion north of the Mornington Peninsula, and the city of **Greater Geelong** in the much smaller western portion (known as the **Corio Bay**) north of the Bellarine Peninsula. The suburbs of both Geelong and Melbourne are scattered about on all sides of the Bay's shoreline.



**Port Phillip Bay**, showing “**The Rip**” and locations of Greater Melbourne to the northeast and Greater Geelong located about 40 miles to the southwest. Melbourne is Victoria’s largest city, whilst Geelong is the second largest Victorian city and is also Australia's second fastest-growing city. Geelong is also known as the “**Gateway City**” due to its critical location to surrounding western Victorian regional centers, such as Bendigo, Ballarat, Torquay, and Warnambool. It is also the hub through which much of the grain grown in the state of Victoria is exported.

Geographically, the bay covers an area of about 750 square miles, the majority of which is navigable, although considered extremely shallow for its expanse — the deepest channels being only 24 meters (although this may have been increased recently due to dredging), but about half the bay is shallower than 8 meters. The Bay provides many sanctuaries for seals, whales, dolphins, corals and numerous kinds of seabirds and migratory waders. Nearby Phillip Island, in Westernport Bay, located on the eastern side of the Mornington Peninsular is also renowned for its sanctuary for miniature penguins.

Pre settlement by Europeans, the traditional aboriginal owners of the land around Port Phillip was divided between the territories of the Wathaurong (west), Wurundjeri (north) and Boonwurrung (south and east) nations, to which acknowledgment to the traditional owners of the land in which we live, is made. The bay was initially known as “**Narm-Narm**” by the people of the Kulin Nation.

The first Europeans to arrive in Port Phillip Bay were the crew of **HMS Lady Nelson**, under the command of John Murray. This was followed only ten weeks later by **HMS Investigator** under the command of Matthew Flinders, in 1802. Later expeditions into the bay took place in 1803 to establish the first settlement in Victoria, near Sorrento, but this was abandoned in 1804. It was not until some thirty years later, settlers from Tasmania returned to Port Phillip Bay to establish the city of Melbourne, located at the estuary of the **Yarra River**, in 1835, and later Geelong, at Corio Bay, in 1838.

Murray of **HMS Lady Nelson** named the bay Port King after the Governor of New South Wales, Philip Gidley King, but in September 1805, Governor King formally renamed it **Port Phillip**, in honor of his predecessor **Arthur Phillip**. Murray chose to moor the **Lady Nelson** off what has now become known as Sorrento Beach. During this voyage of discovery Murray logged his first encounter with local Aboriginal peoples. This meeting was initially friendly, starting with trading, eating, and exchanging gifts, but this tranquil gathering was suddenly set upon by a large band of Aboriginal people in the form of a violent ambush.

As a result of Murray's and Flinders' voyage reports, King sent Lieutenant Charles Robbins in **HMS Cumberland** to explore Port Phillip fully.

A convict settlement was established in Port Phillip Bay in 1803 when **HMS Calcutta** and **HMS Ocean** arrived with a total of 402 people, amongst which were 307 convicts. The Penal settlement was eventually established at a place then known as Sullivan Bay, very close to where Sorrento now stands. The convicts were employed building stone walls to segregate farmland, amongst other toilsome tasks. These walls are still standing, and many examples can be widely seen throughout southern Victoria, to this day.

**Port Phillip**, having been abandoned in 1804 was then left dormant until 1835, when settlers from Tasmania led by John Batman and John Pascoe Fawkner (who had been at the Sorrento settlement as a child) established Melbourne on the lower reaches of the Yarra River. In 1838 Geelong was founded and

became the main port for the expanding wool industry of the Western District. For a time, Geelong rivalled Melbourne as the leading settlement in Victoria, but the Gold Rush which began in 1851 gave Melbourne a decisive edge as the pivotal town in Victoria, mainly due to its superior transport links with the outside world.

The discovery of the Victorian high yielding Goldfields soon transformed a remote dependency into a state of worldwide fame; it attracted a population, very large in number for the times, and it grew rapidly.

The discovery of abundant quantities of gold created “Gold Fever” and made Melbourne the richest place in the world within a short span of only 3 years. Between 1850-1860s the discovery of gold had done for the colony the work equivalent to that of an age and had far reaching implications to the most distant corners of the earth. It also attracted gold prospectors from all global regions. These prospectors became known as “Diggers”, the slang term, which is sometimes, nowadays, used to identify Australians.

The Gold Rush in the Victorian brought a diverse population of prospectors to the rural regions, although it was mostly, English, Irish or Scottish. From Europe and western world arrived Hungarians, Germans, Scandinavians and Italians, Poles, and also Americans, to name but a few nationalities. Mainly younger men who had left their own countries for the lure of gold, and to seek their fortunes. The Chinese population in 1853 reached 2,000 in Victoria, as many came to fill the jobs that were abandoned or created in the mine sites, opening trade stores and provided many services for the miners. They too became rich through their support services to the mining communities.



The memorial at Sorrento marking the site of the first British settlement on Port Phillip Bay in 1803

(Unknown photographer)

Both Melbourne and Geelong have continued their expansion and are now modern, multi-cultural, thriving, and ever developing cities. Melbourne, the second largest city in Australia, is primarily a culturally diverse, financial and business center, and often considered the most livable city in the world. Whilst Geelong, no less important, is a hub for manufacturing and exports of bulk and hydrocarbon products, both contribute significantly to the economy of the State of Victoria, and the country.

Geelong and Melbourne, as with most rural townships in Victoria are well connected by good quality roads but by far the most pleasant way of travelling between Geelong, Port Arlington, and Docklands in Melbourne is by the passenger ferry across Port Phillip Bay.



Port Phillip Ferry, operates regularly linking Geelong, the Bellarine Peninsula at Port Arlington, and Docklands in Melbourne with their wave piercing catamaran ferries, **Bellarine Express** and more recently introduced **Bellarine Flyer**

[https://www.abc.net.au/news/2019-11-29/ferry-service-begins-between-geelong-and-melbourne/11746152?utm\\_campaign=abc\\_news\\_web&utm\\_content=link&utm\\_medium=content\\_shared&utm\\_source=abc\\_news\\_web](https://www.abc.net.au/news/2019-11-29/ferry-service-begins-between-geelong-and-melbourne/11746152?utm_campaign=abc_news_web&utm_content=link&utm_medium=content_shared&utm_source=abc_news_web)

Bellarine Express, a 36-meter Incat ferry owned by Port Phillip Ferries shown berthed alongside the ferry landing.



(<https://www.vesselfinder.com/vessels/BELLARINE-EXPRESS>)

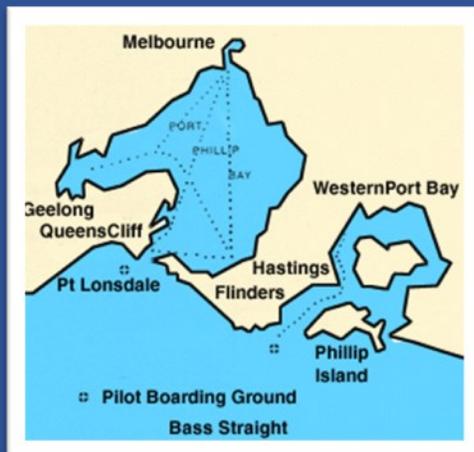
Port Phillip Ferries runs two routes to Docklands, from Geelong and Portarlington. The average transit time is 90 minutes Geelong to Docklands and 70 minutes from Port Arlington to Docklands.

The map below depicts the routes across Port Phillip Bay between respective destinations.



(Courtesy Port Phillip Ferries)

Pilotage is compulsory for all vessels over 35m, except for coastal vessels where the Master hold a current Pilot Exemption Certificate. Port Phillip Pilots have a legacy that dates to 1839, although there are claims that Pilot Services were available prior to that date, making it one of Melbourne’s longest established organizations. Port Phillip Sea Pilots offer services to ship bound for Melbourne, Geelong, or Westernport Bay on a 24/7 basis. The Pilot Service is fully owned and operated by the pilots themselves.



Map showing the Pilot Boarding Ground and the area serviced by Port Phillip Pilots.

Melbourne pilots are experienced ship master’s with extensive local knowledge of the channels, depth of water, currents and dangers within and around the port for which they are licensed

The original Port Phillip pilots camped on a beach near Queenscliff. This is the site of the present Pilot Station. Pilots were originally taken to and from ships by 30ft. whaleboats which were often manned by the colony convicts themselves, through the treacherous heads.

The narrow entrance to the Bay, known as the “Rip”, between Point Lonsdale and Point Nepean, is characterized by strong tidal streams made turbulent by the uneven contours of the seabed.

End

**References:** Port Phillip Ferries, Port Phillip Pilot Service, ABC, Wikipedia, Geelong Advertiser.

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