

Cape Bridgewater

Portland Victoria
Australia



Portland – Victoria's Birthplace



THE BLOWHOLES:

The volcanic rock at the base of the cliff is formed mainly of basalt (black) and scoria (purple). Scoria is eroded more readily by the sea than basalt, causing channels and tunnels to form. This process of erosion not only creates blowholes, but in time destroys them. Before the turn of the century there was a blowhole on the Cape which roared so loudly, that when conditions were favourable it could be heard in Portland. Sometime around 1900 it collapsed, but new ones are forming and when a good swell is running, spectacular spouts of sea spray are pushed high into the air. This coastal area is so intriguing, that it is possible to sit and watch for hours. The aboriginals attached many legends and myths to the Blowholes and remainders of middens (scatterings of shells) can be seen along the cliff-tops.

PETRIFFIED FOREST:

There are many conflicting theories on how the Petrified Forest was formed. The most widely accepted theory was written by Dr. N.A. Boutakoff, Dr.Sc., (then Director of Geological Survey, Dept. of Minerals and Energy) in his book-"The Geology and Geomorphology of the Portland area."

The theory is that there was once a forest of trees, probably Moonah (Melaleuca Lanceolata) which was eventually smothered by a large sand dune. Water seeping down through the sand formed a crust of sandstone on the outside of the tree trunks, gradually increasing in diameter. At the same time, the decaying organic matter of the trees produced an acid which dissolved the sandstone crust from the inside, thus pushing out the crust on a chemical front. So from small trees grew large "petrified trunks". They are not petrified wood, but sandstone and are of no value once removed from the site. Over the years they have suffered considerably at the hands of the so-called collectors, so please respect our fabulous natural attraction, and leave it there for others to appreciate.

STONY HILL:

Stony Hill is the highest point on the Cape, rising 140m above sea level. It is the cone of a former volcanic vent, the plug of which is exposed in the cliffs of the south coast. Stony Hill is part of the Western rim of a volcano which once occupied the area of Bridgewater Bay. The south wall has subsided and is under the sea, with lava visible from the volcano flow on the west side at the base of the cliffs. Cape Bridgewater was once a volcanic island, but the evolution of a sand spit linked the island to the mainland, forming dunes which have since calcified and turned to limestone.

SEAL COLONY

The recent erection of a viewing platform at the Seal Colony at Cape Bridgewater has created huge interest. It must be pointed out, that the walk is quite strenuous and takes approximately 2 hours return. The colony consists of up to 650 Australian Fur Seals, and visitors are guaranteed to see the seals. To access the walking track (which is part of the Great South West Walk) drive to the top of the large hill just past the kiosk and Surf Club at Bridgewater, to the gravel car park which is the starting point. Follow the signs and the track to the end of the Cape, and remember to take a drink, a snack and sun protection.

SHELLY BEACH:

Follow the narrow windy track that leads from Bridgewater Road, here you'll find various shells or take a stroll along the beach to Bishop Rocks.

BRIDGEWATER BEACH:

The beach provides a fantastic year round play ground for locals and visitors. The beach itself is 4km long, with wide sandy areas to enjoy. "Bridgie Beach" is a fantastic base for any water side activity such as surfing, wind surfing, sea kayaking, swimming and much more.

FRESH WATER SPRINGS:

The cliffs on the west coast of Bridgewater are composed of basalt covered by dune limestone. Water draining through the limestone is stopped by the presence of basalt. It flows along the line of contact and emerges as springs along the cliffs, providing fresh water for pools on rock platforms. In the early days of settlement, water was sometimes scarce, so cattle were driven or led down the cliff on a stone ramp especially made for the purpose. This was called the watering place. Stock drank from the springs and then were led back up to the grazing land on the cliff top. To see the springs and the watering place, walk west from the car park towards the blowhole, then north following the red track markers. The last marker (at the watering place) is green. The distance to the springs is about 2 kilometres. Along the way there are lookout points overlooking some very striking scenery

LIMESTONE CAVES:

Opposite the entrance to Bridgewater Lakes are the Tarragal Limestone Caves. The caves provide an excellent vantage point across Discovery Bay and the Lakes. And is home to a number of bats.

FRESH WATER LAKES:

A popular recreational area for fishing, swimming and water skiing. There is a fantastic shady grassed area with free electric BBQ's to sit back and relax and enjoy nature.

A 30 minute return walk to Discovery Bay is available from the car park.

PORTLAND SURF LIFE SAVING CLUB

The Portland Surf Life Saving Club patrols the picturesque Bridgewater Beach from 1st week in December through until Easter. On weekends and public holidays between 10am and 5pm.

CAPE BRIDGEWATER THE VOLCANO

The Great Cliff of Cape Bridgewater gives a fascinating view into the inside of a volcano because a fault line has split the lava vents down the middle. A walk around the Cape will take you to a range of volcanic features including lava flows, column lava, blow holes, gas bubbles, lava dykes and spectacular scoria crater.

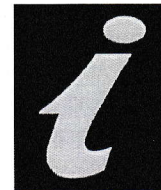
About 1 million years ago, during Pleistocene times, a large **ASH CALDERA** or **MAAR**, was erupting in what is now Bridgewater Bay. The walls of the caldera were built from layer upon layer of **VOLCANIC ASH**, or **TUFF**, from successive eruptions. The tuff from C. Bridgewater is yellow ochre in colour. The violent eruptions blew ash thousands of feet into the air and also blew out larger pieces of rock including **VOLCANIC BOMBS**.

Rising Sea levels during later Pleistocene times built a bridge of sand dunes between C. Bridgewater and the mainland coast. These have been hardened by rainfall and groundwater into dunes of **SANDY LIMESTONE** known as **DUNE CALCARENITE**. Overlying these, in places, are more modern Holocene sandy dunes. Water percolating through the limestone has created a variety of formations including the Petrified Forest, Caves, Springs and Blowholes.

The Bridgewater Fault split the **VENTS** of the Lateral Cones. The caldera to the east subsided and was breached by the sea. The soft ash layers were easily eroded away by powerful waves. Protected by the layers of **BASALT** and **SCORIA** the **LAVA FLOW** to the west resisted erosion and Cape Bridgewater became a volcanic island. The black basalt of the vents can be seen rising in the cliffs below Stony Hill through layers of ash.

Cape Bridgewater, once a volcanic island, and is located a short 20 minute drive from Portland. Along the road from Portland you may see many stone ruins in paddocks which are a reminder of the area's 1840's farming past.

There is a variety of Accommodation available at Cape Bridgewater; for a comprehensive list contact the Portland Visitor Information Centre



For more information on Cape Bridgewater and Portland & Surrounds, contact any of the Discovery Coast Visitor Information Centres.

Portland – Lee Breakwater Rd.

Ph. 1800 035 567

Nelson – Leake St.

Ph. (08) 8738 4051

Casterton - Shiels Tce.

Ph. (03) 5581 2070

Email.

portlandvic@glenelg.vic.gov.au

