

## Hidden Italy Mornington Peninsula guided walking tour

Mornington Peninsula is the south-eastern arm of Port Philip Bay, an hour's drive south of Melbourne. The Peninsula has been the city's summer playground since the 1870s when paddle steamers ran down to Portsea and it is easy to see why, it kind of has the lot. The inside of the bay, the 'front beaches', is lined with family-friendly beaches starting at pretty Mornington town and finishing in glamorous Portsea. The rugged outside of the peninsula, the 'back beaches', faces Bass Straits, it is a world of ocean surf beaches and coastal walks.

Away from the coast, the peninsula's interior is scattered with charming towns like Main Ridge, Red Hill and Merricks. It is a wine- and food-lover's paradise, with more than fifty cellar doors and some of Victoria's finest winery restaurants. There is also plenty of fine walking following well-marked coast trails through the Point Nepean and Mornington Peninsula national parks or exploring the forests of Greens Bush in the centre of the peninsula.

This tour presents some of the best that Victoria has to offer, starting a night in an historic hotel in the heart of 'marvellous Melbourne' before heading south to spend the next five nights based in a luxury hotel surrounded vineyards in the centre of Mornington Peninsula. From here we will explore the peninsula following walking trails that take us through national parks and vineyards and along the rugged coastline of Bass Strait. Along the way, we will visit the gorgeous towns of Sorrento and Portsea, Red Hill and Merrick, visiting some of the finest restaurants and wineries in regional Victoria.

### **The accommodation:**

The first night is at an elegant, four-star hotel in Little Collins Street in the centre of Melbourne which has been part of the city's history of over a century. The next five nights we will stay in lovely garden view rooms in boutique four-star hotel surrounded by three-four acres of gardens and vineyards in the heart of the Mornington Peninsula.

### **The food:**

All breakfast, dinners and most lunches are included in the cost of the tour (please see the itinerary for details). The restaurants have been chosen to showcase the variety and quality of the region's fine produce. Wine is included with the dinners.

### **The walks:**

These are walks, not hikes. The terrain on the peninsula is undulating without any long climbs. The walks range from 9 to 13 kms, including a walk that takes you above spectacular ocean beaches; another that passes through bushland in the Mornington Peninsula National Park to dramatic Cape Schanks; and a rail trail that winds through vineyards to a small coastal village.

### **Inclusions:**

6 nights twin-share accommodation with en suite bathroom  
6 breakfasts, 3 lunches and 4 dinners.  
Tastings at wineries  
5 guided walks  
All paid admissions/fees during the tour  
Private transport throughout

# Hidden Italy Mornington Peninsula guided walking tour itinerary

## *Day 1: Sunday*

Welcome to Melbourne! Your hotel is an elegant four-star hotel in the heart of the city, perfectly located to explore the laneways and shopping arcades; Federation Square and the National Gallery of Victoria. Dinner tonight is in a lovely Italian restaurant a short walk from our accommodation.

## *Day 2: Monday*

This morning we head south to the Mornington Peninsula, an hour and a half's drive away. On the way down, we will stop for a walk around the beautiful Royal Botanic Gardens at Cranbourne, visiting the Gardens wetlands and woodlands. **9 km, 2 hrs.** After a light lunch, we'll continue to Mornington Peninsula. Dinner is at our hotel's excellent restaurant.

## *Day 3: Tuesday*

This morning we drive to the 'back beaches', the dramatic rocky coastline that looks out over the Bass Straits. The walk starts at Dragons Head and follows a winding trail to historic Sorrento, the standout town on the peninsula for its beautiful limestone buildings, ocean and bay beaches and buzzy seaside atmosphere. **11 kms, 3 hrs.** You'll have the afternoon free to have lunch and explore the town before heading back to base. Dinner will be at a nearby Italian restaurant, well-known for its seafood.

## *Day 4: Wednesday*

Today's walk follows a section of the Two Bays walking trail that takes you through the Mornington Peninsula National Park passing through bushland rich in wildlife including birdlife, kangaroos and wallabies, finishing at the spectacular Cape Schanck. **13 kms, 3.5 hrs.** After freshening up back at base, we will enjoy a long degustation lunch in one of the region's finest vineyards. One back at our hotel, the evening is free.

## *Day 5: Thursday*

This morning we walk out of our accommodation and follow a rail trail that winds through forest down to a lovely village that has views across the coast to Philip Island. 8 kms, 2 hrs. Here we will have lunch in one of the icons of the peninsula, a rustic bistro that dates from the 1920's and is renowned for using local produce. It also has an excellent art gallery. In the afternoon, we will visit two of the region's fine wineries. Dinner tonight will be at "one of the most exciting places to eat in the Mornington Peninsula" (Gourmet Traveller).

## *Day 6: Friday*

Our last walk on the tour takes us to the peninsula's western tip for a walk around Point Nepean National, known for its stunning coastal scenery. The walk combines bay and ocean views with the fascinating history of the area. **10 kms, 3 hrs.** The walk starts and finishes at posh Portsea, Victoria's equivalent of the Hamptons, where Melbourne's well-off have built their seaside escapes. You'll have the afternoon free to have lunch and explore the town before heading back to base. Our finale dinner will be at our accommodation's excellent restaurant.

## *Day 7: Saturday*

After breakfast, you will be transferred back to Melbourne CBD via Tullamarine airport.