

April 2012

## **Mornington and Main Street: It's such a temptation!**

### **Shopping...dining...wineries...galleries...water sports...golf...coastal cruising and more**

It's close enough to Melbourne for a day trip, but far enough to stay. And why wouldn't you linger for a night or two, when the seaside village of Mornington has so many attractions so close by? Think of fabulous shopping in more than 370 boutique shops on cosmopolitan Main Street, with a tantalising choice of around 60 restaurants and cafes. Think of fine wineries, galleries, historical walks, golf, fishing, sailing, horseracing, long coastal strolls and drives, and a beautiful beach right at the end of Main Street.

#### **Main Street: Mornington's heart**

The largest of the Mornington Peninsula's seaside villages, Mornington has retained its relaxed and friendly air. Walk along broad tree-shaded pavements down one-kilometre Main Street, and there's not a highrise in sight. But what you will see are intimate little courtyards, wide decks under shady verandahs and kerbside tables with a glimpse of the sparkling sea. How could you resist stopping for a coffee or glass of regional wine?

Main Street is simply packed with every imaginable kind of shop, from classy boutiques and imaginative gift shops, to equally fashionable homeware stores. You can fill your picnic basket or pantry from food stores specialising in regional and imported produce, and buy excellent regional wines. Indulge in day spas and beauty salons, then refresh yourself with a walk along the white sandy beach at Main Street's end.

#### **Wednesday Main Street Mornington Market**

Come any Wednesday, and your shopping options are even bigger. The Main Street Market has been running for nearly 30 years (pavements were widened specially to accommodate it) and is filled with crafts, clothing, accessories and jewellery; lots of produce from fresh foods to preserves, olive oil, pasta and sauces; and even masseurs and aromatherapists who'll instantly de-stress you.

#### **Art Galleries**

There are half a dozen art galleries around Mornington, two of them in the Main Street and others nearby. The largest is the Mornington Peninsula Regional Gallery, best known for its specialist collection of Australian prints and drawings.

#### **Wineries**

There are more than 50 cellar doors on the Mornington Peninsula, and around 10 are within an easy drive of Mornington. They're clustered around Moorooduc, a pretty area known for breeding champion thoroughbreds, and now for creating champion wines.

#### **Fishing, sailing and more**

Right at the end of Main Street are Mornington's beautiful white sandy beaches – try Mother's Beach, Mills Beach or Fisherman's Beach. You can take a stroll or swim, hire a boat, fish off the pier, arrange a fishing trip or learn to sail. There are barbecues in the park above the beaches, and the food stores down Main Street have everything you need for a gourmet barbecue or picnic.

### **Historical attractions**

Main Street is also loved for its **historical walk** of buildings including a tiny 1860 Court House, old banks where good food and wine is the new currency, and an impressive 1892 'coffee palace' which quickly changed into the Grand Hotel.

Pick up a self-guided walking tour map at the information centre in the old Court House, and you're on your way.

The **Mornington Peninsula Railway** operated for just over 100 years, from 1889 to 1981. It's been restored by the Mornington Peninsula Preservation Society, and the heritage cars, classic old steam and diesel locomotives make it a real enthusiast and family favourite.

Two nearby historic estates give you very different views of history: the imposing 1863 **Beleura** with its magnificent gardens (bookings essential), and **The Briars Park** with its more modest 1840s homestead which houses a priceless Napoleonic Collection of around 500 items. There's a 96-hectare wildlife reserve where you can stroll along walking tracks and boardwalks, watching out for native animals.

### **Great golf courses**

The Mornington Peninsula is renowned for the quality of its golf, and three courses are close by. The Mornington Golf Club's 18 holes have a beautiful bush backdrop and clifftop location, and you can see right across Port Phillip Bay to Melbourne from most tees. In nearby Moorooduc, Devilbend Golf Club is set amid a lush and peaceful flora and fauna reserve but be warned: there are some truly devilish challenges here. Mount Martha Golf Course is loved by beginners and intermediate golfers, and also has magnificent views of Port Phillip Bay.

### **Mornington Racing Club**

Thoroughbred horse racing fans take note: Mornington Racing Club has been voted the number one country racecourse three times. It's as professionally run as its city cousins, but has a relaxed air and a great social setting. Race meetings are held every month, with weekly meetings the norm over spring, summer and autumn.

### **Mornington: very well connected**

All roads lead to the Mornington Peninsula, with the Western Port Highway, Mornington Peninsula Freeway and the Nepean Highway providing very easy access. In early 2013, Peninsula Link will make your drive even smoother. You can reach Mornington on any of these routes, but once here, it's the coast road of about 30km that's the real delight. You can cruise along with the sparkling waters of Port Phillip Bay and white sandy beaches on one side, and seaside villages on the other.

The Mornington Peninsula Coastal Drive takes you from Mornington right through to the Mornington Peninsula National Park, the magnificent walks at Point Nepean, and to Portsea, one of Australia's richest postcodes. At nearby Sorrento you can drive your car on to the ferry, which takes you across the bay to Queenscliff on the Bellarine Peninsula. Otherwise, return from Portsea via the Mornington Peninsula Coastal Drive and meander your way to Mornington before jumping back on to a freeway to Melbourne

### **Staying in Mornington**

There's lots to choose from in and around Mornington, including 4-star motel suites, cute cottages and B&Bs. Just check out the options at [www.visitmorningtonpeninsula.org/accommodation](http://www.visitmorningtonpeninsula.org/accommodation)  
Want to know more about Mornington? Visit [www.mainstreetmornington.com.au](http://www.mainstreetmornington.com.au)

FURTHER INFORMATION:

Mornington Chamber of Commerce

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## **Main Street Mornington: Where a kilometre of fabulous shopping meets the sea**

Imagine this. A whole kilometre of cosmopolitan boutique shopping, with more than 370 retail outlets to explore. The pavements are broad and tree-shaded, with inviting courtyards, verandahs and kerbside seating for an espresso or glass of fine regional wine. The atmosphere is relaxed and friendly, and there's not a highrise building in sight. And right at the end of the street is the sparkling sea, where white sandy beaches tempt you to stroll in the freshest sea air.

Welcome to Main Street Mornington. One of the Mornington Peninsula's favourite streets in the region's largest seaside village, it's just 50 minutes from Melbourne on an easy freeway drive.

And it's full of surprises. Classy boutiques whose sister stores are in upmarket Melbourne suburbs. Cafes where coffee is an absolute passion, and where vine covered walls are reminiscent of Italy or France. Food stores selling the finest local and imported produce. The Main Street Wednesday market that's Victoria's longest running midweek regional market. Historic buildings dating back to the 1860s, including a magnificent 1892 hotel that began life as a 'coffee palace' because of the temperance movement.

So come and explore, relax, eat, drink, stroll and shop in one of Victoria's best and most vibrant village main streets.

### **Who shops on Main Street?**

Many Australian celebrities grew up on the Mornington Peninsula, have homes in this region or simply enjoy the coffee culture on Main Street. Celebrities spotted having coffee include Sam Newman, Paul Mercurio, Hugh Jackman and Debra Lee Furness, Cadel Evans, Debbie Flintoff-King, Jana Pittman, Tony Barber, Peter Mitchell, the Dado family, Jules Lund, Brooke Satchwell, Brodie Harper, Heath Meldrum, James Reyne and Dermott Brereton, just to name a few!

### **What's in store?**

If you adore beautiful little boutiques, this is your kind of town. You'll find dozens of them filled with fabulous fashion, then just down the street you'll find the shoes that go perfectly with that new outfit. In one of our gift shops or jewellers, just the right earrings or neckpiece will be waiting for you. (The kids are well looked after too, with a number of boutiques just for them.)

Many Melbourne shoppers discover that while our boutiques are on a par with those in the city, the shopping here is far more leisurely and more enjoyable. So if you never seem to find time to browse for gorgeous homewares, we have eclectic and classic design stores stocking contemporary, traditional and Asian-influenced furnishings, along with bright and breezy decorating ideas that are perfect for the beach house.

But when you're seriously shopping you need a coffee, lunch, a delicious little mid-afternoon pick-me-up by or a restorative glass of bubbly at the end of the day. Perhaps that's why Main Street has developed such a strong food and wine focus and coffee culture.

You're absolutely spoilt for choice here. Mornington restaurants and cafés make the most of the abundant local produce in this region, and they know just how to tantalise your taste buds.

You can choose from about 60 restaurants and cafes serving excellent coffee and light meals, along with modern Australian, Italian, Thai, Japanese, Chinese, Afghan, Mexican and other cuisines. Favourite spots for dining include intimate little courtyards, broad decks with a view of the sea and verandahs shaded by market umbrellas.

If you're packing a picnic or stocking the beach house pantry, just start at our huge Italian food and fresh produce store. Then drop into the seafood shop, visit the wine stores for our famed Mornington Peninsula wines, come to the Wednesday market and buy pasta, herbs, vegetables and more, then buy the basics at our supermarkets.

Need to relax? Drop into one of our day spas or beauty salons, and you'll step out feeling as fresh as the sea breezes down Main Street.

### **Wednesday Main Street Mornington Market**

A traditional street market that's held every Wednesday from 9am to 3pm no matter what the weather, the Wednesday Market has been running for nearly 30 years. It's Victoria's oldest midweek regional market, and it's been so successful that the pavements on Main Street were widened (some to nearly 10 metres) to comfortably accommodate stallholders and visitors.

It's a producers' market, so 'home made, home grown, home baked' is the mantra. Expect to find lots of crafts, clothing, accessories and jewellery; delicious produce including jams, preserves, olive oils, honey, nuts, pasta and sauces; fresh foods including fruit (look for locally grown strawberries in summer), vegetables and herbs; and instant relaxation from a massage or beautiful aromatherapy products.

### **Main Street's intriguing history**

In 1854 the new village of Mornington was called Snapper Point after a local headland, but was then named after a very grand personage: the 2<sup>nd</sup> Earl of Mornington who was British Foreign Secretary from 1809 – 12.

Historic buildings are dotted along Main Street, with some of the oldest and best preserved just across the road from the sea. You can pick up a self-guided walking tour map at the information centre in the 1860 Court House, the oldest public building in the village.

Other buildings of interest include the former State Savings Bank on the Esplanade (now a restaurant), the Old Post Office (now a museum), an Italian Renaissance-style building which housed three banks over the years but whose currency is now food and wine, and the Grand Hotel which began life as a coffee palace in 1892 when the temperance movement pushed for alcohol-free hotels. (Its status quickly changed in 1893 when it obtained a liquor licence from the hotel next door.)

### **Cool off on the beach**

When you've finished shopping, just cross over the Esplanade at the end of Main Street, and you're in nautical Mornington. There's a park with barbecues and a playground, secluded and safe white sand swimming beaches – try Mothers Beach, Mills Beach or Fishermans Beach - boat hire, an expansive pier where you can enjoy coffee, a cool drink or a meal, and the busy Mornington Harbour with yacht moorings, boat launching ramp and local anglers trying their luck for this evening's dinner. Snapper is a favourite catch, and there's an annual fishing competition.

Want to know more? Visit [www.mainstreetmornington.com.au](http://www.mainstreetmornington.com.au)

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## **Historic Mornington: From a convict bollard to coffee palaces**

Back in the mid 1850s, a petition was signed by more than 70 entrepreneurial townsfolk on the Mornington Peninsula. Off it went to Major General Edward Macarthur, the administrator in Victoria, requesting a pier be built at Schnapper Point as a vital link with Melbourne.

The signatories, from Schnapper Point, Mount Eliza and Mount Martha, recognised a good marketing opportunity when they saw one, as they said: "...we would respectfully call your attention to the fact that Schnapper Point presents considerable temptations to the tourist or invalid, who would readily avail themselves of its advantages except for the difficulty of approach".

They got their 46-metre pier in 1858 at an estimated cost of £8,761.25. The pier quickly fed into the social and economic heart of the Mornington Peninsula, with fishing boats, supply boats, paddle steamers and twice-weekly ferries full of visitors driving the growth of Schnapper Point.

So rapid was its growth that Schnapper Point (named after a local headland) was given a far grander name in 1861: Mornington, after the 2<sup>nd</sup> Earl of Mornington who had been British Foreign Secretary from 1809-12.

Mornington rapidly became the major commercial and legal centre for communities across the Mornington Peninsula and, with a population of around 25,000, it remains the largest of more than villages dotted along the coasts and hinterland of the Peninsula.

Walk Mornington's vibrant and cosmopolitan Main Street, and you can see many reminders of this early history. Start at the seaward end, dropping into the information centre in the Old Post Office Museum or the Old Court House where you can collect the self-guided walking tour brochure produced by the Mornington and District Historical Society.

### **Court House, 1860**

The oldest public building in Mornington, the tiny Court House cost £892 to build. A rear extension was added in 1862, but the public purse got excellent value for money as the Mornington Court of Petty Sessions was held here until 1988. The original Lock Up was officially declared a gaol in 1862, but 20 years later it was used mainly to hold the accused overnight or during court sessions.

Check out the notorious case of the 'Mornington Scandal' in the historical brochure, in which a former shire president was charged with forgery and falsification but got off lightly. Was improper influence brought to bear on the Solicitor General?

### **Old Post Office, 1863/64**

Just over the road from the Old Court House is the Old Post Office, built in Palladian Italian Renaissance style. It replaced the even older 1861 telegraph and post office building when lines of copper connected Mornington to Melbourne. But you can't stop progress, and the invention of the telephone in 1876 ultimately led to Mornington's first telephone exchange opening in this building in 1905.

The Post Office occupied the building for 100 years, transferring ownership to the Mornington Shire in 1964. Four years later the Old Post Office became a museum and home to the Mornington and District Historical Society.

### **The Old State Savings Bank**

This is next door to the Old Post Office and, rather curiously, the bank and residence was built in picturesque Swiss chalet style. The timber construction is unusual for a bank, but typical of the less formal design of rural State Savings Banks. It was completed in 1912, and since 1954 the building has been through a number of incarnations, including an office for police detectives.

Now it's a bright and breezy cafe, with the original pressed metal ceilings, fireplaces and some vintage furnishings.

### **The Mechanics Institute**

Not far up Main Street from the Old Post Office, the Mechanics Institute was one of many in the British colonies which provided education for the working man. Watch for the sculpted head of a Greek philosopher mounted on the keystone in the arched entrance to the building, which indicates a place of learning.

In front of the building, in the shade of two large plane trees, is the large Westminster Bollard. A gift to the Shire of Mornington from the City of Westminster in London, the bollard originally stood at the head of the steps leading down to the River Thames opposite Millbank Prison, where prisoners condemned to transportation to Australia boarded their ships. However many consider it a rather odd gift, as no convicts were actually sent to Mornington.

### **The Old Bank**

Cross over Main Street and walk up to number 62, a stately Italian Renaissance style building built in the early 1890s when Melbourne was enjoying boom times as a result of the goldrush. Moneyed bank directors felt they should work in appropriately grand surroundings, and three different banks have occupied these premises.

Look for the faded sign on the facade reading 'The Commercial Bank of Australia Limd', which should of course have read 'Ltd' or 'Limited'. (Perhaps the bank directors' literacy did not match their numeracy?) The last bank moved out in 1986, and money now changes hands for drinks and delicious restaurant meals.

### **The Grand Hotel**

The Gold Rush and the 1880s boom put a lot of money into a lot of pockets, so much alcohol was consumed. The temperance movement pushed for alcohol-free hotels, and the imposing Grand Coffee Palace at 126 Main Street was a most impressive example. Designed by noted architect William Pitt, who also designed Melbourne's magnificent Windsor Hotel, the coffee palace had a very short life. It was built in 1892, but the following year took over the liquor licence from the hotel next door. Locals were most relieved when the beer began flowing.

These are just some of Main Street's historical buildings, which you can enjoy with the Historic Main Street Mornington self-guided walking tour map. Collect a copy from the information centre in the Old Court House at the seaward end of Main Street, then stroll up one side of the street and down the other, watching out for the plaques on historic buildings.

### **Mornington to Moorooduc Historic Railway**



The railway was also important in opening up this region, and ran as a rural line from Baxter between 1889 and 1981. The Mornington Peninsula Railway Preservation Society was formed in 1984, and in 1991 visitors again boarded restored heritage cars pulled by classic old steam and diesel locomotives.

The Mornington Railway normally runs on the first three Sundays of each month (call the message line on 1300 767 274 for more information), travelling a scenic route from Mornington to Moorooduc in just under 20 minutes. A courtesy bus operates both ways between (is it Main St?) and the railway, for the four trips each Sunday.

Want to know more? Visit [www.mainstreetmornington.com.au](http://www.mainstreetmornington.com.au)

**FURTHER INFORMATION:**

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*Thanks to the Mornington and District Historical Society for historical information.*