

## Victor Harbor

Victor has been one of the premier tourist resorts for generations of South Australians. From the railway station, right in the centre of town, it is only minutes to the beach, shops and nearby hotels

The imposing brick station building at Victor Harbor, built in 1926, is the only example of its kind in South Australia. This station is the third building on the site since the days of the horse tram. The Coral Street manual barrier gates are the last remaining examples of rail/road crossing gates in the State and are an important link with our early history.

Granite Island, across the causeway, is one of the most popular attractions in the Victor region and a popular excursion is to ride the restored horse tram across the causeway and then walk around the rugged ocean side of the island and back to the mainland.

### Things to do at Victor Harbor

- ... Visit the Whale Museum in the restored railway goods shed just beyond the station
- ... Continue further past the goods shed to the terminus for the horse tram to Granite Island. The local Tourist Information office and a small café are sited here.
- ... Ride or walk across the causeway to Granite Island. Walk around the island and visit the penguin sanctuary. There is a restaurant and café at the jetty on the far side of the island.
- ... Visit the Greenhills Adventure Park and the Urimbirra Wildlife Park on the outskirts of the town. You will need to take a taxi or use your own car as they are 3km or so from town. Enquire at the station booking office if there is a minibus shuttle operating.
- ... Have lunch or afternoon tea at one of the many hotels and restaurants or just have a picnic in the seaside gardens or Warland Reserve (see the whale sculpture in its pond)
- ... Visit the National Trust Museum in the old station masters house. The entrance is near the old Rx loco in the park near the Whale Museum

Packages including venue admission and rail travel are often available  
- enquire when buying your tickets!

### For your comfort

- ... All *Cockle Train* carriages are **non-smoking** and we ask that you respect that.
- ... By government regulation, passengers **must not travel** on end platforms, in open doorways or in open centre vestibules of carriages. Please follow the instructions of our staff, so that everyone has a comfortable trip.
- ... We suggest that you take particular care when opening sliding windows and ensure that they are securely latched. Children, especially, should be discouraged from protruding arms and heads out of windows.

Acknowledgements: This brochure has been compiled with reference to publications of various SA railway authors including the late Kim Bird, John Ramsey, Roger Sallis and Dean Harvey. We thank them

## SteamRanger

PO Box 16, Melrose Park 5039

Visit our website

[www.steamranger.org.au](http://www.steamranger.org.au)

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### Bookings and Timetable Enquiries

Tel: 1300 655 991 Fax: (08)8391 1933  
On running days: (08) 8552 2782

“Cockle Train” seats are unreserved  
and tickets may be purchased at stations  
on the day of travel

# The Cockle Train

Goolwa  
to  
Victor

# Welcome Aboard!

A passenger's guide  
to travelling on SteamRanger's  
“Cockle Train”  
from Goolwa to Victor Harbor



## The Goolwa to Victor Harbor Railway Part of South Australia's Heritage

*South Australia's first railway venture was the opening of the Goolwa to Port Elliot railway line in 1854. As well as being the first line in the colony the section was also the first public line laid with iron rails in Australia.*

*The line was constructed to provide an outlet for the River Murray trade of the 19th Century, although this role diminished following the extension of the more direct line from Adelaide through Kapunda to Morgan*

*The original line headed directly inland from the jetty at Goolwa and travelled through the centre of the township towards Port Elliot. The present loop line was built later. The construction included a jetty and breakwater at Pt Elliot and a deep railway cutting to run the line out onto Pt Elliot jetty.*

*Unfortunately, it soon became apparent that Port Elliot was a bad choice as a harbour. A lack of shelter for shipping and the shallow anchorage made conditions dangerous to even the smallest ships. Seven ships were wrecked between 1853 and 1864 and it was decided to relocate the port facilities to nearby Victor Harbor. This extension was opened for traffic in April 1864. The Port Elliot facilities were abandoned following completion of the line to Victor Harbor.*

*The railway was extended northwards to Strathalbyn in 1869 by means of a line from Middleton, but it was not until 1884 that the line from Adelaide reached Strathalbyn and through travel was possible to the Capital.*

*Horses provided traction power until steam was introduced in 1884. Two horses often worked coupled together and were changed as necessary at intermediate stations. In 1875 records show that the railway operated 29 horses, travelling 7000 miles a month. A typical working life was 14 years!*



Like to know more?  
Ask your friendly Car  
Attendant



## Along the Line

### Goolwa

Goolwa, an aboriginal word for "elbow", was once a bustling river port and is noted for its historic buildings. Links with the past are clearly evident in the reappearance of steam driven river boats and a recent redevelopment of the wharf precinct, including a small brewery in the renovated goods shed.

An excellent historical Museum in Porter St, not far from the station, is well worth a visit

Regular cruises leave from the Goolwa Wharf to explore the lower reaches of the River and the Murray mouth. Across the river from the station is Hindmarsh Island which stretches across to the Murray Mouth and the entrance to the Coorong. A new high level bridge was opened in mid 2000 to replace the long established cable ferry service.

The large goods shed and wharf opposite SteamRanger's station bear testimony to a bygone era of hectic activity associated with the transfer of produce from paddle steamers to the railway for transhipment to Victor Harbor. The present station is maintained by SteamRanger, whilst a more recent addition is a sympathetically constructed shop for the Goolwa Arts and Crafts Society.

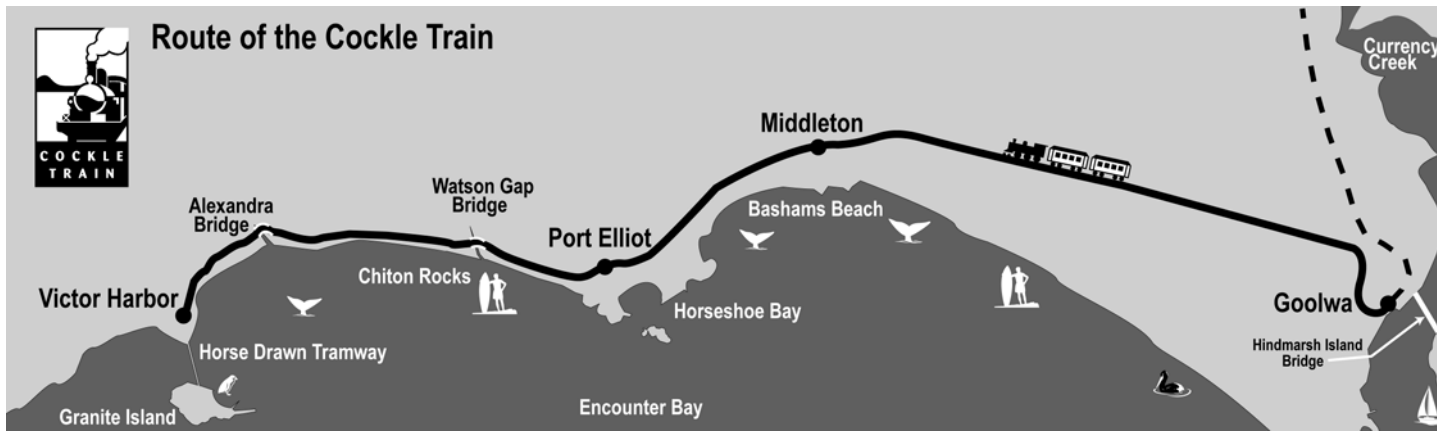
Leaving Goolwa the line winds around to the right as it leaves the river and then crosses the main Goolwa to Victor road near the football oval. Prior to 1915 the main line south from Strathalbyn skirted the main township and joined the Victor line here and trains were shunted back into a station near the Corio Hotel and Goolwa town gardens and then on to the wharf area. Evidence of the original lines is still visible, particularly in aerial photographs. From here the train travels across 6km of flat farmland to Middleton.

### Middleton

The original Middleton station, dating from the horse tram period, was located near the large "Bowmans" stone mill, seen on the right as the train enters the township. Prior to 1880s the original horse tram line from Strathalbyn came in from the north and joined the Goolwa line. If you look carefully, a cutting for the old horse tram route can be traced on the right side of the line near the main road level crossing. This route was closed and removed in 1885.

The present Middleton siding was established further to the east in 1926 adjacent to the historic double storied "Mindacowie" guesthouse located on the northern side of the main road. The modern Middleton Tavern has recently been built closer to the track. During the 1950's large quantities of sheep were railed from the local sheep sales and Middleton was second only to Strathalbyn for its volume of traffic on the line.

Closer to the coast now and the surfing beaches at Fishermans Bay and Basham Beach can be glimpsed across the sandhills. Whales and their calves are often seen here in the winter. Back to the rear of the train and across the bay are the beaches at the Murray Mouth with the Coorong stretching southwards in the distance.



### Port Elliot

On the outskirts of the township the rail line leaves the main Victor to Goolwa road and to seawards you might see a "bow string" girder bridge at the entrance to the caravan park. This was transported down from Adelaide where it carried Grand Junction Road across the Adelaide - Port Adelaide rail line

Look out for the Obelisk on the shoreline at Freemans Knob as the train enters Pt Elliot. This was used as a guide to shipping in the early days of settlement. The line swings to the right at this point and leaves the route of the original horse drawn railway route which ran away down on the left to the old wharf at Horseshoe Bay.

The present Port Elliot station office was built in 1911 to replace a smaller galvanised iron structure of the 1870's. National Trust members maintain the station, sell tickets for the Cockle Train, have an excellent historical display on early Port Elliot and operate a souvenir and local history book shop. Historical walks are conducted and delicious Devonshire Teas are often available on the station platform. You are welcome to break your journey at this point to explore the historic township. The return journey can usually be completed on a later train, but check with the guard for details as timetables differ from day to day.

### Leaving Pt Elliot

Quite a grade leaving the platform and a challenge for our loco crew! Then over the crest of the sandhills and onto the cliff tops with Victor Harbor in the distance. At Watson's Cap the train crosses over an arched reinforced concrete bridge built in 1906 to replace the original timber bridge constructed in 1863.

The timber piers of the old bridge can be seen on the seaward side of the railway.

The line skirts the Southern Ocean for over 3km after leaving Port Elliot. Surfing beaches at Boomer Beach, Chiton Rocks and Dump Beach are all within 100 metres of the line. This section arguably offers one of the most scenic vistas from a train carriage window in Australia.

Entering the outskirts of Victor, the line crosses over the Hindmarsh River on a five span concrete bridge built in 1907. This replaced the combined road/rail crossing known as the "Alexandra Bridge" originally opened in 1863. This and the Watsons Gap bridge (crossed earlier) mark important milestones in Australia's civil engineering history; the Watson's Gap bridge was the first of its kind

in the State and the Hindmarsh River bridge was the first to be built on the "beam and slab" principle in Australia.

A recent addition on the road side is a walking / cycle bridge which forms part of a pathway stretching along the foreshore from The Bluff to Middleton. As the train enters the station yard look out for the the authentic semaphore signal on the left, the restored electric turntable on the right and the historic stone walled railway crew resthouse on the left opposite the bowling green.



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