

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 the Signal Point River Murray Interpretive Centre.

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 late 2000 to replace the long operating cable ferry service. An excellent historical Museum in Porter St, not far from the station, is well worth a visit and Goolwa township is a short walk from the railway station, offering several hotels, restaurants and take-away food shops.

Things to do at Goolwa

- Take a river cruise from Goolwa Wharf
- Visit the attractions in the historic wharf area including the Goolwa Arts and Crafts shop with its unique craft and railway souvenirs.
- Walk across the bridge to Hindmarsh Island - a great viewing platform up and down the river!
- Visit the Museum in Porter Street and a number of art galleries
- Wander amongst the Market stalls near the station on Sunday mornings (once a month)
- Walk down to the Murray River Barrages and see the pelicans, gulls and other birds
- Just stroll around the historic township and have snack in the local cafes and hotel

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

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Bookings and Timetable Enquiries

Tel: 1300 655 991

On running days: (08) 8552 2782

"Cockle Train" seats are unreserved and tickets may be purchased at stations

The Cockle Train

Victor
to
Goolwa

Welcome Aboard!

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



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!



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Along the Line

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.

Leaving Victor Harbor

Passing along the foreshore, 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. A recent addition on the northern side is a walking / cycle bridge which forms part of a pathway stretching along the foreshore from The Bluff to Middleton.

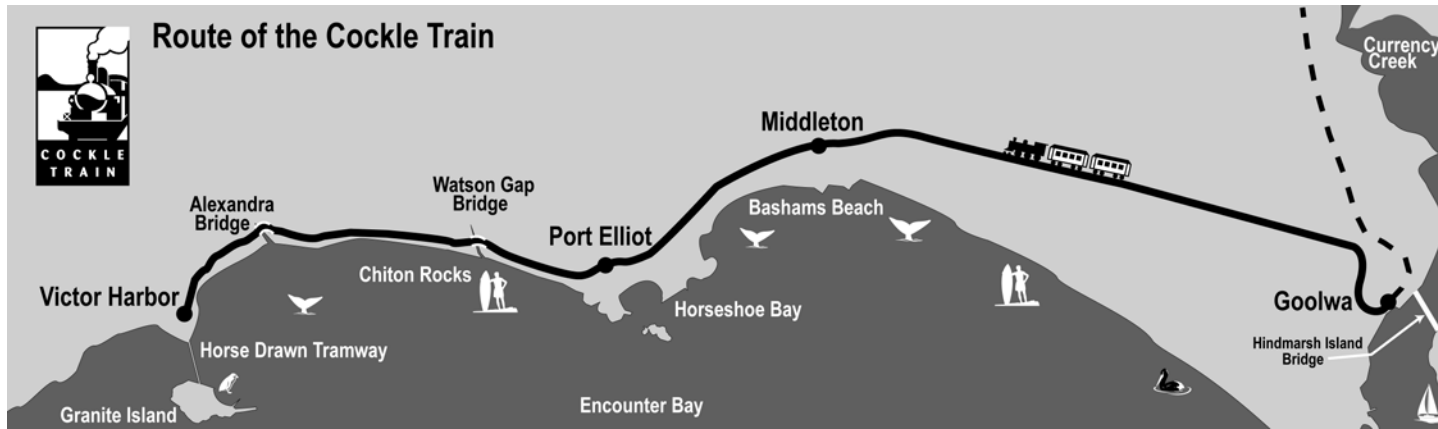
The line then skirts the Southern Ocean for over 3km before reaching Port Elliot. Surfing beaches at Dump Beach, Chiton Rocks and Boomer Beach are all within 100 metres of the line. This section arguably offers one of the most scenic vistas from a train carriage window in Australia.

A slight deviation away from the coast at Watson's Cap takes the train 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 Hindmarsh River and Watson's Gap bridges 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.

At Pt Elliot

The line climbs to the top of the sandhills and winds through the centre of the township. The present Port Elliot station office was built in 1911 to replace a smaller galvanised iron structure of the 1870's.

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. Pt Elliot National Trust members maintain the station and sell tickets for the Cockle Train.



The Trust has 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.

As the train leaves Pt Elliot for Goolwa, the line veers sharply to the left and joins the original horse drawn railway

route which ran away down on the right to the old wharf at Horseshoe Bay. From here to Goolwa there are sweeping vistas of the Southern Ocean on the right side of the train. Look out for the Obelisk on the shoreline at Freemans Knob which was used as a guide to shipping in the early days of settlement.

On the outskirts of the township the rail line rejoins 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 to Port Adelaide rail line. More surfing beaches at Fishermans Bay and Basham Beach and across the bay can be seen the beaches at the Murray Mouth with the Coorong stretching southwards in the distance.

Middleton

The present Middleton siding was established 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.

The original station, dating from the horse tram period, was located further towards Goolwa near the large "Bowmans" stone mill. From here, one line travelled the 6km across the plains to Goolwa and the other northwards to Strathalbyn. If you look carefully, a cutting for the old horse tram route from Strathalbyn can be traced on the left side of the line near the main road level crossing. This route was closed and removed in 1885.

Goolwa

Prior to 1915 the main Strathalbyn to Victor line skirted the main township before what is now the football oval 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. The present line curves sharply right from the original junction and winds back across the main road to emerge parallel with the river at historic Goolwa Wharf. The large goods shed and wharf opposite the 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.



The Cockle Train?

The wide stretches of Goolwa beach are famous for giant size cockles and the local Victor to Goolwa train soon became widely known as the "Cockle Train" and was patronised by fishermen seeking the much sought after shellfish. In holiday periods the train often reached five passenger cars. A particularly busy day was when the Milang Regatta was held and a connecting steamboat connected with the train at Goolwa.