The history of use of Victoria's coast

The human use of coastal regions of Australia has a long history. Before European settlement, various Aboriginal communities were concentrated in coastal regions because of the abundant resources they offered for their hunter-gatherer activities. Various sand dune, coastal wetland and aquatic species of flora were used for food and materials, and local stone was quarried and traded. Reptiles, birds, small marsupials, shellfish, crustaceans and fish were collected and hunted as a source of food, garments and equipment. Ancient middens, burial sites, quarries, camp grounds, fish traps and stone tools provide evidence of their custodianship of coastal regions.

With European settlement Aborigines were largely displaced into less hospitable regions and coastal resources were used less sustainably. In the 1800s whalers operated from Sealers and Refuge Cove on the eastern side of Wilson's Promontory. The state's earliest settlements sprung up along the coast at Sorrento, Phillip Island, Corinella, Portland and Port Albert and the present site of Melbourne. As the colony grew coastal environments were increasingly modified as a result of human activities. At Cape Schanck, for example, sheoaks were felled to provide fuel for baker's ovens, the bark of wattles was stripped for tannin, and limestone was extracted for building blocks and burnt to produce mortar for building in the new town of Melbourne. As the wealth of the colony increased people began to take holidays and retreats along the Mornington Peninsula, Phillip Island, Queenscliff, Torquay, Lorne, Port Campbell, Port Fairy and Warrnambool in the 1870s. About the same time water was pumped from the Yarra River to form a lake out of what was a coastal lagoon at Albert Park. The Yarra River estuary was dredged to allow navigation of its waters. An artificial entrance was excavated into the outer barrier island at Lakes Entrance in the 1880s facilitating safe passage into the Gippsland Lakes. In the late nineteenth century vast areas of coastal wetlands were 'reclaimed' to provide land for agriculture. This included the vast Koo Wee Rup swamp that drained into Westernport Bay, the extensive Carrum-Carrum Swamps which extended from Mordialloc to Frankston on the east shore of Port Phillip Bay, and the coastal swamps of the western and northern shores of Corner Inlet. The vegetated dunes along the coast of the Western District and Gippsland were used for grazing cattle, leading to the destabilisation of sand and its encroachment inland. In 1909 coal mining began in the coastal area near Wonthaggi, and by the 1920s there was mining for tin at Wilson's Promontory, for potash at Anglesea and quarrying for limestone at Walkerville. The Great Ocean Road, stretching from Torquay to near Warrnambool, began construction in 1919 as a memorial to those who died in the Great War. Wilson's Promontory and Point Nepean were used as training grounds and forts during World War II. Sewerage treatment works were established at Werribee in 1892 and at Carrum in 1975. The residential development of Port Philip's hinterland was largely completed by the 1960s. During the late 1950s and early 1960s there was considerable residential development of coastal land beyond the metropolitan region for holiday homes as well as primary residences.

Activities

1. Using an atlas and a base map of Australia map the *location* of Australia's state and territory capitals.
   a. Identify the bodies of water they are *spatially associated* with – rivers, bays or gulfs, seas and oceans.
   b. Discuss the importance of their coastal *location* on the development of these settlements.

2. List all the passive and active recreational uses of the coast you can think of. Now list the infrastructure that would be required to be built to facilitate these uses.

3. Explain the physical aspects of coasts that make them suitable for:
    - residential landuse
    - recreation
    - agriculture
    - wind farms
    - sea transport
    - ports
    - 'heavy' industries such as oil refineries, power plants and smelters
    - fish processing factories
    - ship-building facilities
    - salt works
    - sewerage and stormwater disposal
    - defence force bases

4. Examine two aerial photographs showing spatial change over time along the coast (your atlas may contain two such photographs).
    a. List the changes to the natural features of site evident from these aerial photographs. Categorise each of these changes to the natural system in which they occur: the lithosphere, hydrosphere, atmosphere biosphere.
    b. Analyse the factors that may have lead to the development of this resort, categorising these factors under (SHEEP) headings: social, historical, economic, environmental and political. The following questions may assist this analysis:
        - What physical features of this region make it appealing for a resort?
        - Could there have been protection of this region in the past, allowing it to remain pristine?
        - Could the local and state governments have encouraged the development of this resort to assist the local economy and generate jobs?
        - Do you think the local government may have changed the landuse zoning of this region to facilitate the construction of this development?
        - Could developers perceive there is money to be made from developing this type of resort?
        - Could changes in demographics (population size, population dynamics, wealth of the community) have caused an increase in the demand for this coastal resort?
        - Could cultural attitudes towards the type and frequency of holidays that people choose to take possibly increased the demand for this coastal resort?
        - Could people have more disposable income to spend on tourism and recreation than in the past?
        - Could the cost of traveling to locations such as this resort have been reduced over time?

5. Discuss the importance of coastal regions. Some aspects you may consider include:
    - their scenic and aesthetic value
    - the natural resources it contains, including fish, petroleum products, sand and other minerals, salt
    - a location for various different types of landuse
    - the 'natural services' it provides, such as clean air, water, a means of disposing of liquid waste
    - a means of transport
    - a venue for passive and active recreation
    - to maintain biodiversity
    - to provide habitat for flora and fauna
    - to protect the terrestrial environment from the sea
    - to allow people to be emotionally invigorated – to get away from it all.