

Cumberland River

Cumberland River is the first Early Cretaceous fossil locality you encounter on your discovery tour of the Otway Ranges. Cumberland River is situated on the Otway Coast, southwest of Melbourne and is thought to have been named by surveyor George Smythe in 1846 after the Duke of Cumberland or the schooner Cumberland in which Charles Grimes explored Port Phillip and King Island in 1802-03 (Eric Bird 2006 "Place names on the Coast of Victoria" The Australian National Placename Survey ANPS).

Cumberland River was one of the areas visited by Dr. Tom Rich and his associates as part of their exploration of the Otway Coast between 1979 and 1980. At low tide the rocky shore platform is exposed and it was here that Tim Flannery found a partial plesiosaur rib, northwest of the Cumberland River bridge. The rib is the only fossil found at this location, even though the area has been re-prospected a number of times since then. However, the constant erosion by the wave action could expose new fossil bones at any time in the future.



Photo: Lesley Kool