

How do I become a Park Ranger?

The role of a Park Ranger

Working as a Park Ranger is as varied as the environment they manage. To get an idea of the many responsibilities of a Ranger, let's look at some examples.

Below are a few examples of the many roles carried out by Park Rangers. These have been split into the two areas of conservation (making sure that both the natural environment and cultural sites are protected and maintained) and recreation (helping visitors to enjoy and understand parks).

1. Conservation

- Ongoing protection, enhancement and management of natural, recreational and cultural assets
- Identify weeds and pest animals and eradicate or control those that hold the most threat to native plants and animals
- Organise and conduct back-burning operations prior to the fire season
- Assisting with fire suppression (fire fighting) for fires on public land at a state-wide level
- Promote and maintain historic assets, such as gold mining sites and historic huts
- Develop co-operative relationships with local indigenous groups
- Identify and protect populations of threatened or endangered animals
- Work with volunteers on such projects as weed control, hut building and maintaining tracks and other infrastructure
- Grant permits and oversee researchers studying within the park
- Monitor and grant permits to businesses operating within parks, such as, hydroelectricity, café's and beekeeping

2. Recreation

- Maintain and develop facilities such as picnic areas, camping areas and toilets

- Create and maintain trails for visitor use – hikers, mountain bike riders, four-wheel drive programs etc.
- Approve licences and monitor the businesses within park boundaries, such as tour operators and ski resort operators
- Respond to emergency situations such as 'Search and Rescue'
- Management and development of staff, volunteers, contractors & work experience students
- Delivery of information, facilities, events and services to customers, schools and other stakeholders
- Planning, implementation and management of projects, programs and contracts
- Allocation of budgets, staff and resources to best meet business needs



A diversity of other roles

On a broader level, the role of a Park Ranger involves extensive planning, researching, strategic thinking and people management to effectively balance conservation and recreational values of each asset.

In addition to Park Rangers, Parks Victoria employs people from a diverse range of professions. These include (but are not limited to) the following:

- Conservation & environmental specialists
- Cultural & heritage managers
- Engineers & statutory planners
- Marketing, media & tourism professionals
- Education & Interpretation staff

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- Human resources
- Strategic planners
- Accountants & business managers
- Customer service & administrative officers

What qualifications are required to become a Park Ranger?

Parks Victoria highly recommends that people interested in pursuing a career as a Park Ranger complete an appropriate tertiary qualification in Natural Resources/Park Management or related discipline.

Recommended Tertiary courses

A number of Universities and TAFE colleges offer undergraduate and post graduate courses in Natural Resources Management, Recreation/Tourism or Environmental Sciences. These areas of study all relate directly to careers within Parks Victoria.

If you wish to obtain information on these programs, contact the Office for Prospective Students at the relevant University or TAFE.



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In addition to tertiary qualifications, most Park Ranger positions require some level of park or nature orientated experience.

Competition for positions at Parks Victoria and other park management agencies throughout Australia is strong, with many University graduates travelling interstate to gain experience before being selected. Popular areas for paid experience include tour guiding, gardening and landscaping, zoo keeping, seasonal fire fighting and tourist information centre work.

Volunteering

In addition to tertiary qualifications, volunteering is a great way to get experience in park management and to make a valuable contribution to the parks system

Friends groups make a huge contribution to Victoria's parks and are a great way to get involved and develop contacts within the parks system. Refer to Parks Victoria's website to find a friends group near you, or contact your local park office.

Parks Victoria's *Campground Host* volunteer program is another great way to get experience in parks. Operating over the Summer and Easter holidays, Campground Hosts are based in parks throughout Victoria to help Rangers look after campgrounds and to help visitors enjoy their visit.

Indigenous employment

Parks Victoria offers a number of opportunities for Indigenous employment, including cadetships and traineeships. Opportunities for Indigenous employment are advertised in the Koori Mail, major newspapers and on the Parks Victoria website.

Where are job vacancies advertised?

As vacancies arise (including permanent and casual/fixed term), positions are advertised in major newspapers and on the Parks Victoria website.

It may also be worthwhile investigating Park Ranger vacancies with other park management agencies throughout Australia. There is a list of park management agencies on Parks Victoria's website www.parkweb.vic.gov.au

Temporary and Seasonal staff opportunities

Parks Victoria employs temporary staff to fill specialist project roles or to support key work periods.

The popular Summer Ranger Program, provides a number of opportunities for fixed term employment in Ranger/Field Service Officer roles. Recruitment for the Summer Ranger Program is open to University students nearing completion of their studies.

Work experience

Parks Victoria supports secondary and tertiary work experience students.

When planning work experience you need to carefully consider which park will give you the best opportunities for the type of experience you wish to develop, as well as a park which is in close proximity to your home.

Contact your chosen park directly to apply for work experience opportunities.