

# Victoria's National Parks

## fact file

### What is a National Park?

National parks are areas of land that have been given national status because of their outstanding natural environments and features, scenic landscapes and diverse land types. All national parks are on public land, which means they have been reserved for everyone to enjoy.

Park management agencies throughout Australia and New Zealand use the following definition to describe national parks.

*"A relatively large area, set aside for its features of predominantly unspoilt landscape, flora and fauna, permanently dedicated for public enjoyment, education and inspiration, and protected from all interferences other than essential management practices, so that its natural attributes are preserved (Australian and New Zealand Environment and Conservation Council, 1970)."*

The National Parks Act is a law which was passed by the Victorian Parliament in 1975. Under this Act parks are named based on one to five criteria (called schedules).

The decision to place an area of land under a schedule is based on its size, diversity of ecosystem and significance of their conservation values.



Mount Buffalo National Park

### Who looks after National Parks?

Even though they carry the title national park, most national parks are managed by state or territory governments. This is because the Australian Constitution gives these governments control over management of public land. State and territory governments have organisations to look after parks and to provide facilities in them. For the state of Victoria, the park management agency is Parks Victoria.

Parks Victoria manages the state's national parks but also many other types of parks, reserves and built assets. In total Parks Victoria's estate is made up of approximately 18% of the state, 4.1 million hectares of public land. Currently this includes;

- 40 National Parks
- 13 Marine National Parks
- 11 Marine Sanctuaries
- 3 Wilderness Parks

## The Junior Ranger Way

Know before you go, respect parks and wildlife and leave no trace along your way, that's the Junior Ranger Way!

[www.rangerroo.com.au](http://www.rangerroo.com.au)

- 30 State Parks
- 31 Metropolitan Parks
- 63 Other Parks and
- Over 3000 Crown Land Conservation Reserves.

Parks Victoria also manages the recreational aspects of Port Phillip Bay and Western Port, the Lower Yarra, Lower Maribyrnong and Patterson Rivers.

### Why do we have national parks?

There are many reasons why we have national parks. Victoria's national parks and reserves system contains a wide range of habitats, and plays a vital role in protecting local native plants and wildlife. National parks are not only important for plants and animals but for many other reasons too. Here are just a few.

#### *National Parks...*

Help protect the natural environment, by being a haven from many forms of human activity. As part of the spread of European settlement, agricultural and urban development has had a severe impact on our native plant and animal communities. To be able to protect these precious species it is important that their protected habitat is as large as possible.

Are important environments for people as well as plants and animals. People come to national parks to enjoy scenery and fresh air. They also like to picnic, walk, climb, swim, cycle or just relax. Some areas are classed as 'wilderness' to allow people to experience an environment that has little evidence of human activity.

Are for studying the natural environment. Education and study are carried out in national parks to help us understand how undisturbed natural environments work. We also learn to enjoy and appreciate the natural

environment more by observing and studying it.

Attract park visitors and can bring enormous economic benefits to local towns in the form of tourism.

Protect rivers and water catchments. National parks help keep our environment healthy and productive, and this has economic benefits. Protecting areas in a healthy, natural state helps reduce soil salinity, reduce greenhouse gases and conserve a wide range of native plants and animals. Protecting rivers and their catchments is important in the production of clean water. An undisturbed cover of natural vegetation allows rainwater to filter slowly through the soil and into rivers, preventing erosion and allowing us clear drinking water.

Also protect evidence of human history. Many national parks contain signs of past Koori (Aboriginal) culture; such as paintings, burial grounds and ceremonial sites. There are also buildings and other evidence from early European settlement that are protected in national parks.

Are important for their intrinsic values and for future generations to enjoy and learn from. Even if some people don't visit national parks, many people want to know that large natural areas will still be there in the future for their children and grandchildren to enjoy. This is the emotional or spiritual value that national parks hold for so many people.

### Learn More

Visit Parks Victoria's website [www.parkweb.vic.gov.au](http://www.parkweb.vic.gov.au) for maps, information, management plans and more information on Victoria's amazing National Parks.