



Bushwalking in Victoria's parks

With a diverse range of natural environments including rainforests, sandy deserts, alpine meadows, coastal heathlands, rugged mountains and eucalypt forests, Victoria's national parks and reserves offer a great range of bushwalking options.

Walking is one of the least expensive forms of exercise and one of the most beneficial. It can improve cardiovascular fitness, reduce stress, help control weight and is especially beneficial if done regularly.

Victoria's parks cater for a wide range of bushwalking experiences ranging from short wheelchair accessible walks on formed tracks to challenging walks in remote wilderness, and everything in between.

Walking Safely

Remember to plan and choose a walk that suits your level of experience and fitness. Don't always rely on track signs to find your way, it is important that you obtain and view local bushwalking maps. Maps can provide you with an idea of the terrain, distances, water points, elevation and other important information for your walk. Basic park note maps are available free from the Parks Victoria website and topographic maps are available from map retailers, outdoor shops and some general stores.

Walking safely includes carrying and wearing appropriate equipment such as sturdy shoes or boots, layers of light clothing, a hat for protection against the sun as well as good quality sunscreen. Make sure you have adequate water and remember to drink it! Take at least one litre per person on most days and at least two litres on hot days.

If you are making an extended or difficult walk, make sure you advise at least two people. Don't forget to contact them when you've returned. If you are injured, you will need someone who can call for help. Walk in



a party of two or more people for safety. Five is the ideal group size.

If you become lost:

Try to retrace your steps until you reach the last recognisable place on the map. Remember to look for your own footprints. Alternatively, head for the nearest high point and climb to the summit. You might then be able to see roads and areas of habitation.

The Emergency Services Telecommunications Authority (ESTA) has placed emergency markers in many Victorian parks to help pinpoint exact locations. In an emergency, phone 000 and quote the nearest ESTA marker code and or your exact location.

fact file

Minimal impact walking

When bushwalking, it is important to play your part in protecting the environment by following minimal impact guidelines.

These include:

- Follow signs and stay on the designated roads and tracks to help prevent erosion.
- Remember most parks have a take in take out policy so take your rubbish out with you.
- Don't use soap or detergent in rivers or streams; they can harm aquatic life.
- Light fires only in fireplaces and in areas where fires are permitted.
- If possible bring your own portable gas stove.
- Take notice of all fire weather forecasts including total fire bans.
- Try to keep your group size between two and ten people, this helps to reduce the impact on tracks and campgrounds as well as on other walks and visitors to the park.

Some wonderful short walks

Point Nepean is renowned for its historic features, outstanding coastal scenery and panoramic views of Bass Strait, the Rip and Port Phillip Bay. There are four main walks within the park, each with its own podcast.

Yarra Bend Park offers a variety of walks including the 4.2km Dights Falls Loop Trail.

There are more than 130 bird species in Dandenong Ranges National Park, including the elusive lyrebird. Sherbrooke Loop passes through a variety of spectacular vegetation from moist temperate rainforests and ferns, to towering Mountain Ash Trees, giving you plenty of chance to hear and see some of the birds.

Further afield

Discover some of Australia's finest alpine national parks by trekking the Australian Alps Walking Track. The 650km walk from Walhalla to Canberra includes the Baw Baw, Alpine Kosciusko and Namadgi National Parks.

Renowned throughout the world, the Great Ocean Walk stretches from Apollo Bay to the Glenample Homestead, next to the 12

Apostles. The walk has been designed so that walkers either camp at designated campsites or 'step on and step off' the trail at a number of places to stay in local accommodation. The walk can also be conducted in full or in short steps. Note: campground bookings are required.

Wilson's Promontory National Park is a favourite for many walkers providing a range of day and overnight walking opportunities. Walks range from short wheelchair accessible tracks to multiday hikes into the wilderness. Campsite bookings are required.

Research

Remember national parks are wild areas where the weather can change from sunshine to snow in less than an hour. Rain can fall heavily and temperatures can drop below freezing. Always do your research so you have a good understanding of the local track conditions, bring suitable clothing and equipment, be aware of drinking water supplies (most areas in Victoria require water to be carried in or treated before consumption) and remember to check the local weather report via www.bom.gov.au before you go.

Want to Know More?

<http://www.parkweb.vic.gov.au>