

# Alpine National Park



## Valleys and Bluffs - around Mansfield and Whitfield

Enjoy some of Victoria's most spectacular rugged alpine scenery with panoramic views from many peaks. Discover the variety in landscapes featuring impenetrable rocky bluffs and escarpments towering above clear mountain rivers

### Getting there and getting around

This area of the Alpine National Park is situated approximately 200 - 250 km north east of Melbourne or 40 - 60 km south of Benalla.

The easiest access to Mansfield is via the Maroondah Highway (from Melbourne) or Midland Highway (from Benalla). Roads from Benalla, Mansfield and Myrtleford provide pleasant rural trips to Whitfield and the edge of the park.

### Car touring By 2WD

Several of the main attractions of the area are accessible in a 2WD conventional vehicle. The Howqua Hills Historic Area (Sheepyard Flat) beside the Howqua River provides 2WD access to numerous tranquil river flats, historic huts and mining relics.

Although steep and rough in sections it is possible to continue as far as Eight Mile Gap (Eagles Peaks Walking Track) and Refrigerator Gap below the impressive escarpment of The Bluff.

Along the Mansfield - Whitfield Road, Powers Lookout provides beautiful views across the upper King River Valley to the Wabonga Plateau in the Alpine National Park. Other park notes cover this area, along with Paradise Falls and Mount Cobbler, in greater detail.

### If you have a 4WD

There are many 4WD trips in the area, some of the more popular ones being the Bluff Link - Bindaree Roads below the escarpments of The Bluff, Square Head Ginny and Mt Lovick; Brocks Road to King Billy Saddle and the Howitt Plains; and Little Cobbler Track winding below the cliffs of Mt Cobbler and on through Bennies to Whitfield.

Many roads and tracks are closed seasonally during the colder, wetter months for environmental and safety reasons. Please keep to formed roads and respect seasonal road closures.

### Walking

Some of the best mountain walking country in Australia is found in the Alps. Some tracks are suitable for day and weekend family walks. Others are long, rough and challenging, requiring a degree of bushwalking skill and stamina. Further information should be sought before embarking on any of the walks mentioned here.

Shorter family walks can be undertaken to the historic Frys Hut from Sheepyard Flat, Ritchies Hut beside the Howqua River, Eagles Peaks from Eight Mile Gap (day) and The Bluff, either from near Bluff Hut or from the base of the escarpment near Refrigerator Gap (day).

Further north around Whitfield there are pleasant short walks to Paradise Falls, along the Rose River at Bennies and at Powers Lookout.

Longer more challenging day and overnight hikes can be undertaken to Mt McDonald, Mt Magdala, King Billies, Mt Howitt, Mt Cobbler and Mt Speculation. Around Ganter Hut is a fuel stove only area.

The long distance Australian Alps Walking Track (AAWT) passes through the area on its 650 km journey between Walhalla (in Gippsland) and Tharwa, (near Canberra). Bushwalking along the AAWT and other longer routes is only for the experienced - navigation and self sufficiency skills are a must.

Please keep to defined tracks and let someone know before you go.



Adults and child walking ©RA



## For further information

Parks Victoria  
Information Centre

**Call 13 1963**

or visit our website at  
**www.parks.vic.gov.au**

Park Office  
128 Highett St, Mansfield  
3722

Park Office  
Whitfield Road, Whitfield 3733  
**Phone 13 1963**

## Caring for the environment

Help us look after your park  
by following these guidelines:

Please take your rubbish  
home with you

All native plants and animals  
are protected by law. Please  
do not disturb them in any  
way

Dogs and other pets are not  
permitted

Firearms are only permitted in  
the park in accordance with  
Hunting Regulations

Choose a firm, dry, well  
drained camp site at least 20  
metres from any watercourse

Where toilets are not  
provided, bury your waste at  
least 100 m from water or  
camp sites

Wash up away from streams  
to protect the fragile stream  
environment

Use a portable stove instead  
of lighting a fire - especially  
above or near the tree line

Collect only dead fallen timber  
for firewood and ensure the  
area around your campfire is  
cleared of all flammable  
material for a distance of at  
least 3 metres

Always check fire danger  
forecasts. No fires (including  
stoves) on days of Total Fire  
Ban.

The park is located in the  
North-East Total Fire Ban  
District

## Healthy Parks Healthy People

*Visiting a park can improve  
your health, mind, body and  
soul. So, with over four million  
hectares of parkland available  
to Victorians, why not escape  
to a park today!*

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## Tour guides

A number of licensed tour operators run tours  
(4WDing, walking, horseriding and rafting) in the  
area.

Contact Tourism Alliance Victoria for details on  
(03) 9650 8399 or visit their website  
[www.tourismalliance.com.au](http://www.tourismalliance.com.au)

## Fire in the Alps

During the summer of 2006 a number of fires  
swept through the Australian Alps. As a result  
some roads and tracks have been closed  
temporarily in the interest of public safety.

To assist with regeneration please keep to tracks  
and trails, especially in fire affected areas.

## In the past

Aboriginal people used the King and Howqua  
areas as major trade routes across the Great  
Dividing Range. They also had several quarries in  
the area that yielded the hard greenstone which  
was highly valued for tools and weapons.

European settlement began in the 1840s, when  
grazing commenced, followed by the discovery of  
gold in the Howqua Valley in the 1860s.

## Plants and animals

The area contains a range of habitats, from the  
alpine herbfields of Mt Howitt, The Bluff and Mt  
McDonald, to riparian forests of Manna Gum  
along the valley floors. Mountain Gum - Snow  
Gum forests grow on more sheltered sites  
between 1000 and 1400 metres with a grassy or  
heathy understorey.

The Subalpine heath and woodlands dominated  
by Snow Gum widely found on the upper  
mountain slopes are home to mammals such as  
Brown and Swainsons Antechinus, Feathertail and  
Sugar Gliders, Mountain Brushtail and Ringtail  
Possums.

Mammals typical of the valley forests are the Bush  
Rat, Greater Glider, Wombat, and Long Nosed  
Bandicoot. The endangered Long Footed Potoroo  
has recently been found in the area.

Common bird species are the Gang-gang  
Cockatoo, Crimson Rosella and Brown Thornbill.  
The rare Powerful Owl is also found in the area.

The endangered Spotted Tree Frog lives in the  
region. Reptilian residents include the commonly  
seen Jacky Lizard and Water Skinks. Alpine  
Copper-head snakes are present at higher  
altitudes, with Tiger and Brown snakes resident  
lower down.



*Koalas have been re-introduced to the Howqua Hills  
Historic Area*

## Other publications

For more details of the Alpine National Park see  
the following maps and publications:

### Maps

Natmap 1:100,000 Whitfield

Natmap 1:100,000 Buffalo

VicMap 1:50,000 Buller - Stirling

VicMap 1:50,000 Tamboritha - Moroka

VicMap 1:50,000 Howitt - Selwyn

S.R & P.N Brookes maps:

1:50,000 Wabonga Plateau

1:50,000 Watersheds of King, Howqua and  
Jamieson Rivers

### Alpine National Park park notes

#### *Valleys and Bluffs*

- car tours and walks around Wabonga Plateau,  
Mount Cobbler and Powers Lookout

#### *Source of the Rivers*

- around Mitta Mitta, Tallangatta and Corryong

#### *The High Country*

- around Bright, Mt Beauty and Omeo

#### *Wilderness and the Snowy*

- around Benambra, Buchan and Jindabyne

#### *Our Mountain Heritage*

- around Heyfield, Licola and Dargo in the  
Wonnangatta - Moroka area

Horseriding in the Alpine National Park

### Books

The Australian Alps Walking Track and Alpine  
National Park by John Siseman (Pindari  
Publications)

Victoria's National Parks Explorer's Guide (See  
Australia Guides)

Explore the Australian Alps - Car touring guide to  
the Australian Alps national parks by Australian  
Alps Liaison Committee (New Holland Press)

August 2012  
Printed on Australian-made 100% recycled paper

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## Cross country skiing

Cross country skiing on the Bluff or Cobbler Plateau is for the experienced only, due to both the remoteness of the area and required navigation and skiing skills. A 4WD vehicle is necessary to access both areas and even then a relatively arduous walk may be encountered.

Mount Stirling, and Mount Buller to a lesser extent, offers a range of cross country trails more suitable for inexperienced or family groups. Both these areas are outside the Alpine National Park and managed by the Mt Buller Mt Stirling Resort Management Board.

## On horseback

There are many opportunities to explore and enjoy the mountains and valleys of the Alpine National Park on horseback, particularly in the Howqua Valley. Restricted times and group sizes apply so please refer to the Alpine National Park - Horseriding park note or call **13 1963** for further details and special conditions.

## Fishing

The Howqua, King and Rose Rivers together with Lake William Hovell (which is not in the park) provide good fishing opportunities. Check your Fishing Guide for trout seasons and freshwater cray regulations and ensure that you hold a current Victorian fishing licence.

## Setting up camp

There are numerous ideal sites in the area for dispersed bush camping without facilities, however please do not drive over vegetation to set up your camp.

### For bushwalkers

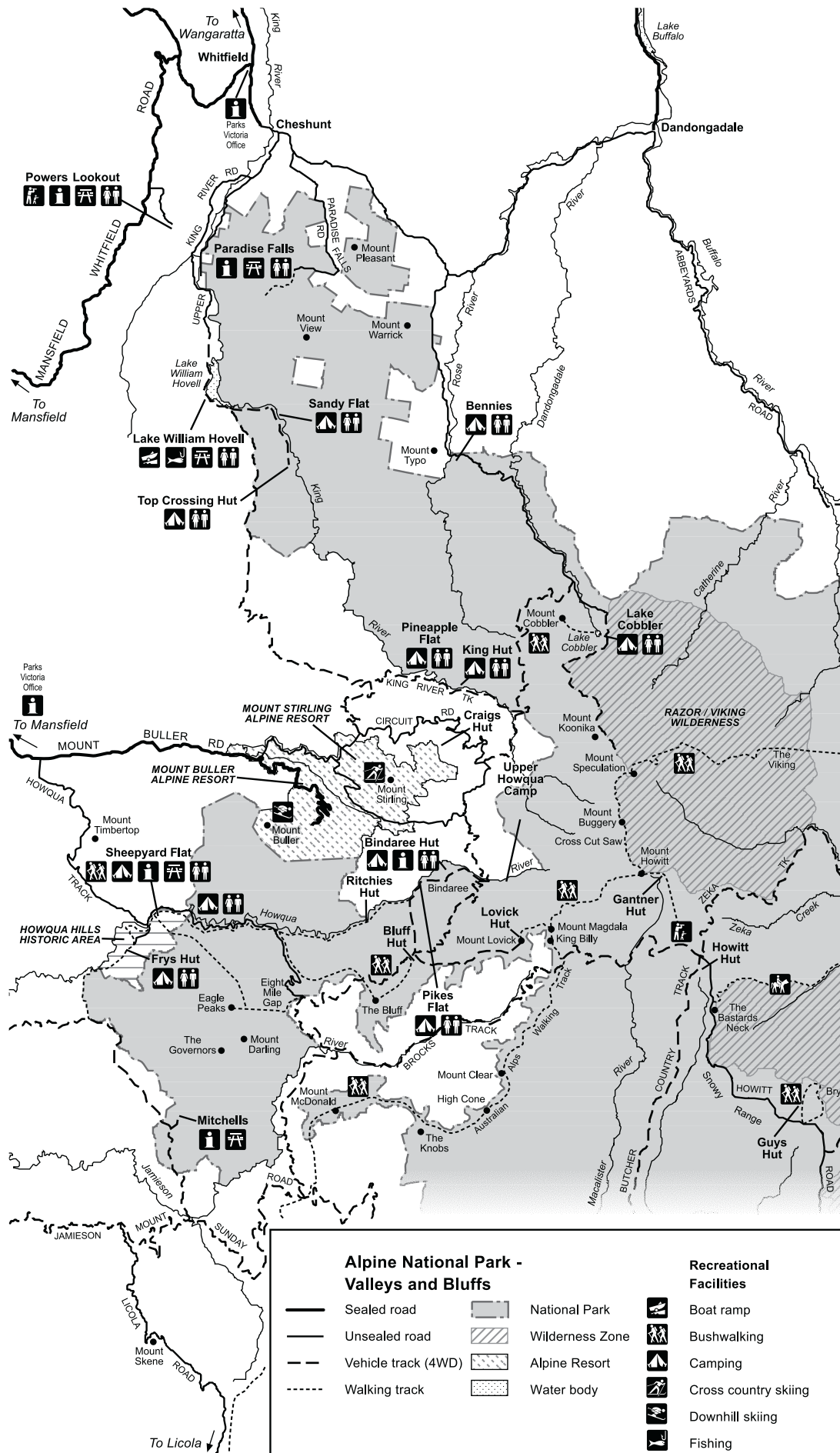
Dispersed camping is allowed however please ensure you are at least 20 metres from any lake, river or stream. Refer to the camping guidelines listed in the 'Caring for the environment' section on the back page.

### For car based campers

Sites with facilities are:

- Sheeppark and Frys Flats, and several other flats upstream along the Howqua River
- Bluff Hut (4WD - seasonally closed road)
- Bennies camping area beside the Rose River (2WD access)
- Lake Cobbler (4WD access recommended - very rough 2WD past Bennies)
- Pineapple Flat (4WD access)
- King Hut (4WD access)

All campers should be fully self sufficient with food, water and camping equipment. Always carry a tent. Huts are for emergency use only.



## Huts

There are many old huts throughout the area, built by early graziers, privately for recreation (especially fishing) or by the former Forestry and Lands departments.

Frys Hut (built in 1930s) is typical of the distinctive bush architecture employed by Fred Fry, a well known local identity. He lived a solitary existence for many years in the Howqua Hills area, prospecting and packing supplies for government agencies and fishermen. He built other huts along the Howqua Valley, including Ritchie's, Pickering's, Gardner's and Bindaree Huts.

Please help us to look after the huts by:

- not leaving food in huts - this encourages rodents and spread of disease
- leave the hut in the same condition as you would like to find it
- use a fuel stove for cooking - many huts have burnt down due to carelessness with open fires.

## Wilderness

The AAWT traverses the Razor - Viking Wilderness, a large area of remote, undisturbed land with little evidence of European occupation.

There is no vehicle access into or within the Razor - Viking Wilderness. Likewise, there are no signposts or walking track markers. Here visitors need to be self-reliant, meeting nature on its own terms.

## Take care!

Mountain roads are often unsealed, narrow and winding. Take care as roads may be slippery at any time of the year. Deeper into the park many roads are suitable only for experienced four wheel drivers.

When driving through the park please remember:

- check road and track conditions before setting out on **13 1963**
- vehicles, including trail bikes, are restricted to formed roads. Vehicles must be fully registered and drivers licensed.

All visitors, especially walkers, should realise that weather conditions can change rapidly in alpine areas. Snowfalls can be experienced in the alpine area at any time of the year and water can be extremely scarce, so always be prepared with:

- warm clothing
- wind and waterproof jacket
- gloves, hat, sunglasses and strong footwear
- first aid kit and sunscreen
- energy food and water
- compass and relevant topographical map

