

Rubicon Trek



Many Melbourne residents are probably unaware that a small power station sits in the Rubicon Valley near the Cathedral State Park and Lake Eildon, just over two hours from Melbourne.

The Rubicon Historical Area has plenty to offer apart from the items relating to the power station and its history. There are an array of walking tracks and the area around the Rubicon and Big River State Forests offer four wheel drive tracks ranging from easy to difficult. On our journey many of the tracks were closed due to the seasonal closures, but we still managed to come across some

Only two and a half hours from Victoria's capital city you can find magnificent state forests with plenty of wildlife such as birds and deer, and a network of tracks, perfect for a day drive.

Story and pics by Sharyn and Paul Vanderhorst.

deep snow as we drove up around Mount Bullfight which sits 1469 metres above sea level.

Our trek wanders up through the valley where you can set off on foot and explore the historical area. The old tramway is a

moderate walk of around 17 kilometres which features old trestle bridges which should be crossed with caution. This walk also unveils the Rubicon and Royston dams which feed down through aqueducts to supply water to the stations.



The tracks in this area become very wet during winter.

You will come across many structures owned by the power company, and these must not be interfered with in any way.

Tall Timbers

This region's most significant features are its tall mountain ash forests, with their understorey of tree ferns, and adjacent gullies of cool temperate rainforest. Large pristine areas of these and other vegetation types within the adjoining catchment area are of botanical significance.

The highest elevations, such as Lake Mountain, Mount Donna Buang and Mount Torbrek, are characterised by sub-alpine vegetation, and receive regular snowfalls over the winter months. You may, in a good season, even find snow in the lower sections of the park and extending down into the valley as we did on this trek.

Wildlife Abounds

Around 40 native mammals are known to occur in the adjoining Lake Eildon National Park and these extend into the surrounding state parks. The large areas of undisturbed old and mixed-age forests are particularly important for the conservation of hollow-dwelling species including bats,

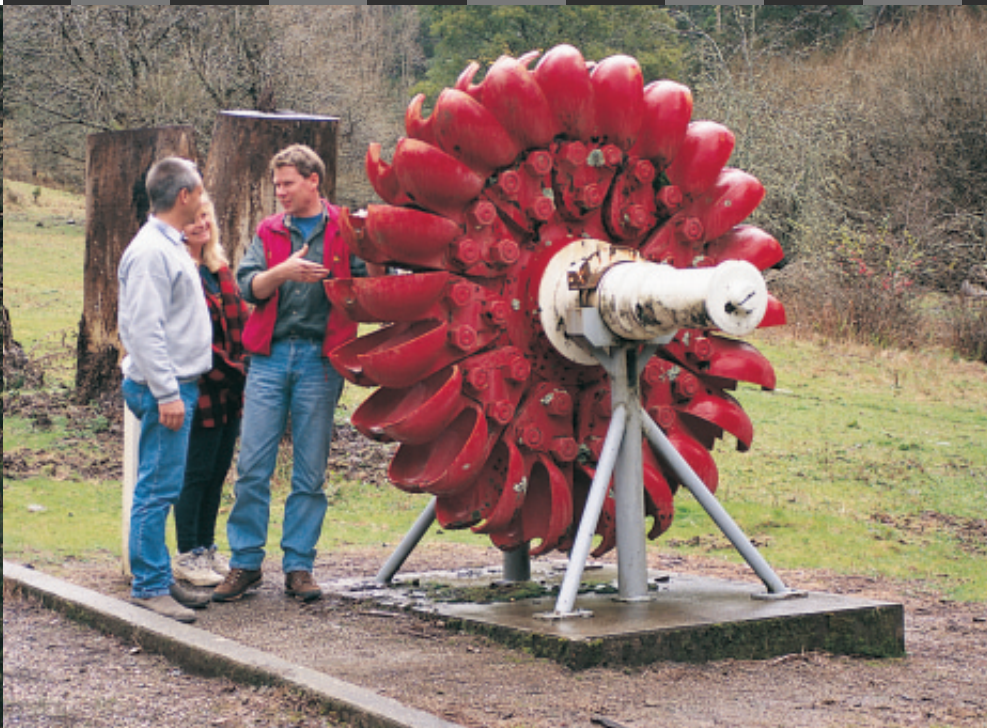
owls and parrots, along with the endangered leadbeater's possum.

The area also provides habitats for a large number of native birds. Significant hollow-using species are the sooty owl, and barking owl. Other important species perched higher in the trees include the pink robin, the large yellow-tailed black cockatoo, the colourful Australian king-parrot and crimson rosellas. Quite common too are the lyrebirds which can often be seen fleeing from your approaching vehicle down into the safety of the gullies.

We were also fortunate enough to come across a sambar deer whilst doing this trek. The large proud-looking deer, with sizeable antlers was unaware of our presence and wandered down from the snow covered peaks to the roadside. The animal, with its strong stench and white rump, then led us down the road before making a hasty retreat back up the mountainside.

Deer habitat the surrounding state parks and the bountiful snow which has fallen during the 2000 season has forced this magnificent species down to the lower reaches of the park.





closed in this region along with many which have a seasonal closure applied. The closure is generally June through to October.

Restrictions for firearms, open fires and deer stalking vary through this area, depending which state park or national park you are in. Check with Parks Victoria for information on each individual park.

There are many power stations and private property in this region so remember to keep out of these. The aqueducts which run down the mountain side carry swift flowing water so ensure all small children are kept away from these open waterways.

Much of this area forms the catchment for Melbourne's water supply, and access is limited to protect water quality. This sees many seasonal closures in place from as early as April and through to November. There are many interesting visitor areas in the surrounding region such as Mt Donna Buang, Badger Weir,, Keppel Falls, Cambarville, Lady Talbot Forest Drive, Lake Mountain and the Big Peninsula Tunnel.

Standard

The standard of this trek is easy to medium depending on the rainfall. A good rainfall will make the tracks, especially Bullfight Track, very slippery and there are a couple of bogholes to contend with.

In the drier months you could undertake this trek by yourself, but in winter I suggest, as we did, bring along a friend just in case you get stuck.

While in winter you may get the chance to drive along some snow covered tracks, summer is the more favourable time for this trek as it allows you to explore many of the tracks which are closed during the winter period.

Trek Start and Finish

Our trek starts at the township of Taggerty and finishes on the Snobs Creek Road which leads north to Thornton and then Taggerty. Depending on seasonal closures you could also turn right at Snobs Gap and head south towards Cambarville Junction, Lake Mountain or the extensive network of tracks around the Matlock – Woods Point area.

Camping, Accommodation and Supplies

This short trek, due to it's close proximity to the Melbourne suburbs, is intended as a day drive but you could extend your visit talking in the other tracks in the region to make this a

weekend jaunt.

Camping areas can be found just near the Rubicon Historical Area at Kendells A and B which are in our trek notes.

Outside the trek noted route you can also stay at the Cathedral State Park, Barnwell Plains at Mount Torbreck Scenic Reserve and the Lake Eildon National Park which is further north.

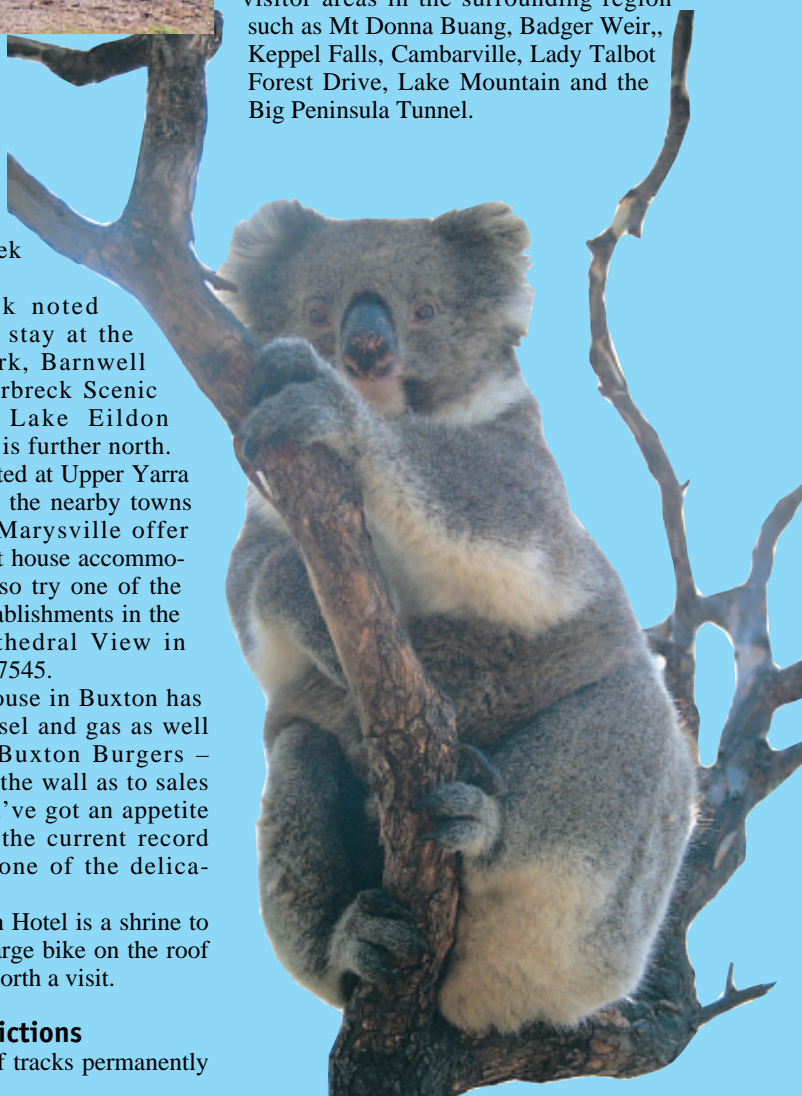
Camping is permitted at Upper Yarra Reservoir Park while the nearby towns of Warburton and Marysville offer motel, hotel and guest house accommodation. You could also try one of the bed and breakfast establishments in the region such as Cathedral View in Buxton Ph:(03) 5774 7545.

The Igloo Roadhouse in Buxton has unleaded, super, diesel and gas as well as their infamous Buxton Burgers – they keep a tally on the wall as to sales each year and if you've got an appetite you may well beat the current record for woofing down one of the delicacies.

The nearby Buxton Hotel is a shrine to the roadbike with a large bike on the roof and more inside it's worth a visit.

Permits and Restrictions

There are plenty of tracks permanently



TREK NOTES

- 0.00 (0.00)** MaroonDAH Highway Taggerty. Turn right on the Taggerty Thornton Road.
- 10.00 (10.00)** TR Rubicon Road.
- 14.8 (4.8)** Bridge and gravel road PSA.
- 15.6 (0.8)** Kendells A Camping Area on left PSA.
- 17.1 (1.5)** Kendells B Camping Area on left PSA.
- 17.5 (0.4)** Intersection Rubicon Road and Royston Road TL along Royston Road. Continuing ahead takes you to the Historical Area and falls. You can head up into this region if seasonal closures do not apply and return to this intersection to complete our trek.
- 0.00 (0.00)** Intersection Rubicon Road and Royston Road. Take Royston Road.
- 0.4 (0.4)** SP Rubicon State Forest PSA.
- 3.0 (2.6)** Bridge over creek PSA.
- 5.9 (2.9)** Y intersection. Rubicon River Road and Royston Road PSA.
- 6.2 (0.3)** Cross Royston Aqueduct.
- 7.3 (1.1)** Royston Dam on left PSA.
- 7.6 (0.3)** Intersection Browns Road and Royston Road. VR continuing along Royston Road.
- 11.6 (4.0)** Y intersection Royston Road and Quartz Road. VL on Royston Road.
- 13.7 (2.1)** Intersection Royston Road and Bullfight Road. VL on Bullfight Road.
- 13.9 (0.2)** Bridge over creek PSA.
- 18.0 (4.1)** Track to Stillmans Lookout on the left. This walk should take 10 minutes.
- 18.1 (0.1)** Boghole which could prove impassable in very wet weather.
- 19.5 (1.4)** Intersection, Snobs Gap. Turn left along Snobs Creek Road which will take you to Thornton. If you want to investigate the area even more turn right and use the Royston 1:25 000 topographical map to head south into the Big River State Forest and Lake Mountain Alpine Reserve.

Recommended Maps

An overview of the area can be obtained by using the Eildon Big River Forest Adventurer Map, which is mapped by Rudi Paoletti from Paoletti's Maps and Videos. It's up to date and will serve you well in this area.

For more detail go for the 1:25 000 topographical maps of Rubicon, Royston and Torbreck.

All of these maps are available at good map shops.

Further Information

This area is great for a day drive and there are plenty of other things to do too. If you like horse riding you can take a ride in the fresh mountain air with Rubicon Valley Horseriding. This establishment has been operating for over 25 years, and can be found on the road leading into the Rubicon Historical Area or Ph:(03) 5773 2471

On your way home you can also stop into the Buxton Trout and Salmon Farm where you can catch your own fish or purchase smoked or fresh Atlantic salmon and rainbow trout. This is Victoria's oldest commercial trout hatchery and they are located on the highway in Buxton Ph:(03) 5774 7370.

Information on the state and national parks can be obtained from Parks Victoria by phoning Ph:13 19 63. ■

Legend

- TL** Turn Left
- KL** Keep Left
- TR** Turn Right
- KR** Keep Right
- TOL** Track on Left
- LAF** Leave as Found
- TOR** Track on Right
- PSA** Proceed Straight Ahead
- VL** Veer Left
- RS** Retrace Steps
- VR** Veer Right
- SP** Sign Posted
- XR** Cross road

For more treks and four wheel drive information check out the Nissan website nissan.com.au/Patrol

