

# Melba Gully

## Great Otway National Park



### Visitor Guide

Known as the Jewel of the Otways, this is one of the wettest places in Victoria with an annual rainfall of over 2000mm. The gully has prolific plant growth and is a dense rainforest of Myrtle Beech, Blackwood and Tree-ferns, with an understorey of low ferns and mosses.



*Spot-tailed Quoll*

*Experience the magic, imagine the past and walk into an ancient world*

### Rainforests

Melba Gully introduces you to Victoria's cool temperate rainforest which has evolved over millions of years.

The Myrtle Beech are survivors from an ancient wetter climate and were once common in the gullies of the Otway Ranges. They are closely related to beech trees in Tasmania's rainforests, reminding us of the original landlink with the island.

Rainforests all over the world are home to more than half of all species.

### Enjoying the park



#### Madsen's Track Nature Walk

This 35 minute loop walk is an adventure into a world of ancient, mossy trees and cool fern gullies.

Start at the picnic area and follow the information signs along the track and listen for the soothing sound of Anne's cascades.

Rest at the site of the Big Tree; a huge old Otway Messmate, which has fallen and started recycling back into the forest floor sustaining new life and growth.

Please stay on the walking track to prevent damage to the sensitive environment.

Good walking shoes are recommended as the track is steep in places.



#### Birds and animals

Melba Gully is home to a range of shy and nocturnal animals including possums, Swamp wallabies, Spot-tailed quolls and native bush rats.

Many birds thrive in the rainforest including the Australian Ground Thrush, Suberba Fairy-wrens,

Yellow Robins, Grey Shrike-thrushes and Rufous Fantails.

Perhaps the most unusual inhabitants are the glow worms, which can be seen at night along the walking tracks. Please do not touch them.

The carnivorous Otway Black Snail (*Victaphanta compacta*) is endemic to the region and can be seen along the track during wet weather.



Picnic tables, a gas barbecue and toilets are provided. Camping is not permitted.

### Steam, sawdust and sightseers

Settlers began clearing the forest in the 1880s. Transport was a major problem and a narrow gauge railway was built from Colac to Beech Forest in 1902 and then to Crowes in 1911.

Sawmills were established in the forest and timber tramways were built to carry logs and timber to the railway line. There were two sawmills and a tramway in Melba Gully.

Mrs Jessie Fry named the area "Melba Gully" (after Australia's famous singer Dame Nellie Melba) in 1921. The picnic area is on the site of Mrs Fry's tearooms.

Through the 1930s and 1940s Melba Gully was a popular picnic and lunch spot for bus tourists. Business came to an end in 1948 when a bus length limit was imposed on Otway roads.

The property was sold in 1958 to Mr and Mrs Axel Madsen, who generously offered it to the Victorian Conservation Trust in 1975. The Trust later transferred it to the Crown to be managed by Parks Victoria and donated further parcels of land in 2003.

### Caring for Country

Through their rich and diverse culture, Indigenous Australians have been intrinsically connected to Country for tens of thousands of years.

The spiritual and physical connections of the Gadubanud people are still celebrated today.

Parks Victoria recognises this connection and acknowledges the Traditional Owners and Aboriginal communities of these areas.

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