Yarra Ranges National Park

O'Shannassy Aqueduct Trail

Nestled above the floor of the Upper Yarra Valley, the O'Shannassy Aqueduct Trail follows the historic open channelled O'Shannassy Aqueduct, meandering through pristine forest that has been protected for nearly 100 years for water harvesting. The trail stretches 30 kilometres through mature fern gullies, creeks and plantations and offers spectacular views of the valley below.

Have fun, feel great and spend time with family and friends while exploring the aqueduct trail by bike. The aqueduct trail offers an excellent opportunity to relax in a peaceful environment while enjoying a walk, riding your bike or studying nature. There are fantastic picnic, sightseeing and photo opportunities available. Bring your binoculars and camera and take advantage of the fantastic bird watching opportunities.

Planning your walk

The O'Shannassy Aqueduct Trail extends from Parrot Road near Woori Yallock to the O'Shannassy Weir in East Warburton. The trail provides for short, medium and long distance walks and rides with several access points available. The three metre wide hard surface is shared by walkers and bike riders.

For a longer hike, the trail can be linked to the popular Warburton Rail Trail at several locations. Most of the trail is gentle and is ideal for the whole family and people of limited experience or mobility. There are some steep sections, including access from the valley floor, that are more challenging and moderate fitness is required. Individuals should take care and adhere to advisory signage. Organising car shuffles can be a useful way to maximise your walking experience.

Be Safe, Be Prepared

Before you put on your walking boots to explore this outstanding trail, plan ahead. Know your entry and exit points.

- Be self-sufficient with drinking water
- Carry enough food for your walk
- On longer walks carry warm and wet weather clothing, just in case
- A hat and sunscreen are essential
- Always wear sturdy footwear
- Plan your walk and ensure you return from walking well before dusk
- Depending on your carrier, mobile phone coverage may be limited in some areas along the trail
- Be alert! Snakes, leeches and wasps are all a part of the bush environment
- Supervise children at all times
- Avoid walking on days of high fire danger

Be fire ready and stay safe

On days of forecast Code Red Fire Danger this park will be closed for public safety. If you are already in the park you should leave the night before or early in the morning for your own safety. Closure signs will be erected and rangers will patrol where possible, however you may not receive a personal warning that the park is closed so check by calling 13 1963 or visit www.parks.vic.gov.au.

For up to date information on fires in Victoria or general fire safety advice call the Victorian Bushfire Information Line on 1800 240 667 or visit www.cfa.vic.gov.au.

For more information call Parks Victoria on 13 1963 or visit www.parks.vic.gov.au
A rich heritage

The forests surrounding the weir have been managed for water harvesting for nearly 100 years, providing an invaluable water source and contributing to the supply of approximately 50% of Melbourne’s water.

In its prime, the gravity fed O’Shannassy Aqueduct delivered 90 million litres a day to the Surrey Hills Reservoir. The construction of an open steel flume section of channel and the picturesque Dee Slip Bridge remain today and serve as a strong reminder of the challenges the aqueduct faced.

In 1997, the channel and surrounding area was decommissioned by Melbourne Water and bestowed to Parks Victoria in 2005 for inclusion into the Yarra Ranges National Park.

Plants and animals

The natural forest of Mountain Ash, Tree ferns and cool temperate rainforest surrounding the aqueduct provides a haven for many native animals. A keen eye and ear will discover Kookaburras, Eastern Rosellas, Lyrebirds, Superb Fairy-wrens, magnificent Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoos, Wallabies and Echidnas.

Prior to 2009, 80 per cent of the O’Shannassy catchment was ‘old growth’ with many Mountain Ash trees over 100 years old. Around 93 per cent of this area was burnt during the devastating Black Saturday fires of February 2009. Although the forest has been transformed into young stands, it continues to deliver valuable water to our reservoir system.

Further afield

While you are here, take some time to explore the scenic wonders and culture of the Yarra Valley.

The township of Warburton is one of Melbourne’s most recognised rural destinations and should not be missed. Call in for supplies and explore the many cafés, restaurants, shops and landmarks.

Enjoy the Rainforest Walk on the southern slopes of Mount Donna Buang with its spectacular observation platform.

For the more adventurous, take the Mt Victoria trail link to the summit of Mount Donna Buang with exceptional views of the national park, Alps and the city of Melbourne from the observation tower.

Upper Yarra Reservoir Park is located at the uppermost point of the Yarra River accessible to the public. Picnic facilities and camping grounds amid eucalypt bushland and spectacular scenery make a visit here a memorable experience.

Discover Victoria’s gold mining heritage - Located between East Warburton and Upper Yarra Reservoir Park, the Little Peninsula and Big Peninsula Tunnels highlight the area’s rich goldmining heritage.

Accommodation

Pre-book your accommodation. The popular camping ground at Upper Yarra Reservoir Park can be used as a base for extended visits to the Yarra Ranges National Park and the wider region. A wide range of accommodation is available in nearby towns along the Warburton Highway.

Camping is not permitted along the aqueduct.

How to get there

The start of the O’Shannassy Aqueduct Trail is around 70 kilometres from Melbourne. Follow the Maroondah Highway through Lilydale and turn onto the Warburton Highway. From Lilydale travel 25 minutes to Woori Yallock, turn left towards Healesville on the Kooweerup-Healesville Road for 5 minutes, turn right into Dalry Road then left onto McMahons Road to Parrot Road.

If you are on foot or bicycle you can take the Lilydale Warburton Rail Trail from Lilydale to Woori Yallock. Alternatively car parking is available at Ewarts Road via Don Road at Launching Place, Dee Road at Millgrove or Yuonga Road via the Doona Buang Road from Warburton.