Dandenong Ranges National Park
South
Visitor Guide

The southern section of Dandenong Ranges National Park covers Ferntree Gully, the oldest area of the national park, One Tree Hill in the west and Sherbrooke area in the east. Enjoy magnificent scenery of the Mountain Ash forests while driving through the park, go for a walk or spend some time in one of the picnic areas. You might even be lucky enough to hear the call of the park’s most famous inhabitant, the Superb Lyrebird.

Opening hours
Dandenong Ranges National Park is open every day, including weekends and public holidays.
Opening times apply to vehicle traffic for the One Tree Hill Picnic Ground, which has an automatic gate in operation and is open 6.00am to 9.00pm daily.
The Ferntree Gully entrance of the 1000 Steps has automatic boom gates that close at 9.00pm, preventing access to the 1000 Steps and Kokoda memorial walk (can exit at any time over road spikes).
The Eagles Nest and Valley picnic grounds close at 6pm during Daylight Saving and at 4.00pm at other times of the year.

Getting there
The national park is located about 40km east of Melbourne. From the city take the Eastern Fwy (M3) and exit onto Springvale Rd (Route 40). Turn left onto Burwood Hwy (Route 26) which merges on to the Mount Dandenong Tourist Rd just past the Upper Ferntree Gully Railway Station.
If you are using public transport there is easy access to the Ferntree area from the Upper Ferntree Gully Railway Station. Bus services also stop at the station.
The Sherbrooke area can be accessed via Sherbrooke Rd off the Mount Dandenong Toruist Rd or via the Monbulk Rd between Belgrave and Kallista.

Things to see and do
Walking
Kokoda Track Memorial Walk (incorporating the 1000 Steps walk) – 3.0km, 1.5hrs return
This steep walk starts at the back of Ferntree Gully car park. Created in the early 1900s, the 1000 Steps Walk was originally made from tree fern trunks laid along the wetter areas of the track to make the climb a little easier. These were replaced by wooden palings, and more permanent concrete steps were installed in 1950.
The veterans of the Kokoda campaign adopted this park as their memorial site in 1998. The similarity of the walk to the first 100 metres of the Kokoda Track in Papua New Guinea resulted in the establishment of fourteen plaques along the walk, dedicated to the Australian Military Forces who fought and died on Kokoda. The 1000 Steps represent the ‘Golden Staircase’, a name given by Australian soldiers to the 2000 steps cut by the Australian Army Engineers and others into the track between Uberi and Imita Ridge.

The Kokoda Track Memorial Walk represents an area of historical significance and every effort is undertaken to retain this heritage.
The 1000 Steps are very popular with people exercising and can get busy during weekends and summer evenings.

Ramblers Track Loop – 1.5km, 45mins return
Take this short walk to experience the lush surroundings of the Ferntree Gully Creek. The area is home to both the Rough and Soft tree ferns. Crimson Rosellas and possums favour the newly forming fern fronds as a food source.

Leaving from the children’s playground at the Ferntree Gully picnic area, follow Ramblers Track up the hill. Turn left, where the track connects with the lower section of the Kokoda Track Memorial Walk to return to the picnic ground.

Lyrebird Loop – 4km, 2hrs return
This walk passes through remnant Cool Temperate Rainforest and Wet Forest, offering a welcome relief in hot weather where some plants interlink overhead to provide shade.

Starting at the back of the Ferntree Gully car park, Lyrebird Track is a steep climb up to the One Tree Hill Picnic area that avoids the busy 1000 steps. From there, continue down Ramu Avenue, turning left into Link Track and then right, back down Lyrebird Track to the picnic ground.

Sooty Owls and Superb Lyrebirds can often be sighted and heard in this area. The corridor is also a favourite spot for Goulds Wattle and Chocolate Wattle Bats, which can be spotted in the evenings.

Belview Loop – 4.5km, 2.5hrs return
This walk passes through open Shrubby Foothill and Grassy Dry Forest. You will notice cleared areas on both sides of the track – these are known as “fuel breaks” and were created following the 1968 wildfires which burnt significant areas of the hill to reduce the risk of severe fire and enable easy access for fire vehicles.

Swamp Wallaby, Possums and Gliders frequent this area, together with the Blue-tongue Lizard known to wander the drier slopes.

Start at Lyrebird Track, which is a steep climb to Link track. Follow Link track to Belview Terrace. Turning left, continue to the bottom of the track and turn left into School Track. This will bring you back to the picnic ground near where you started the walk.
Sherbrooke Falls – 2.4km, 1hr return

Tracks leading from Sherbrooke and O’Donohue Picnic Ground provide the easiest walk to the falls through the attractive landscape of tall Mountain Ash and tree ferns. The falls are most inspiring after rain when the swollen Sherbrooke Creek rushes over the rocks.

Hardy Gully Nature Walk – 700m, 45 minutes circuit

Starting at Grants Picnic Ground, this walk takes you back in time to ancient origins – remnant Cool Temperate rainforest which are threatened throughout the world. Interpretive panels reveal secrets of the forest.

Margaret Lester Forest Walk – 300m, 30min circuit

Located at Grants Picnic Ground, this hard-surfaced track has been especially designed for people with limited mobility. The track follows a steady gradient weaving through spectacular Mountain Ash forest.

Eastern Sherbrooke Forest – 7.1km, 2hr circuit

This is a round trip starting and finishing at Grants Picnic Ground. The route follows Lyrebird Walk, then Neumann Road, passing though cleared areas of bush created by the successive wildfires of the early 1900’s. At Paddy Track Junction turn south and cross Hardy Creek before climbing Welch Track and following Coles Ridge Road back to the picnic ground.

Most of the walk is through Mountain Ash and Messmate Stringybark forest. There are steep sections on Paddy Road and Welch Track which may be slippery when wet.

Sassafras Creek Walking Track – 17km, 6 hours one way

Meandering and criss-crossing the cool, clear waters of the Sassafras, Woori Yallock and Menzies Creeks is this 17 kilometre track. It passes through fern-filled gullies, eucalypt covered ridges and over numerous bridges and boardwalks.

The walk can be undertaken from either direction, starting from the quaint little township of Sassafras, or from Emerald. You can also break up the walk into shorter sections, stopping off at any of the picnic grounds along the way. The walk is generally moderate to easy with some undulating terrain and some steeper sections.

Picnics

Ferntree Gully

This is a large picnic area, just as you enter the park from south west. It offers multiple picnic tables and shelters, barbecues, toilets and a playground. There is also a café for last minute supplies or refreshments after a walk. This a gateway to many of the parks most popular walks, including the 1000 steps.

One Tree Hill Picnic Ground

This large picnic ground at the top of the 1000 Steps/Kokoda Track Memorial Walk is well-equipped with an electric barbecue, picnic tables, a shelter and toilets. It provides access to many surrounding walks.

Sherbrooke and O’Donohue Picnic Grounds

Theses scenic and peaceful picnic grounds, surrounded by Mountain Ash trees and ancient tree ferns, are perfect for family gatherings or as starting points for the many surrounding walks.

Grants Picnic Ground

Set in the rainforest and surrounded by trees fern and Mountain Ash, this is a lovely sheltered spot to enjoy a picnic.

There is a bird feeding area at Grants Picnic Ground. Visitors must purchase a token from ‘Grants on Sherbrooke’ kiosk to enter the fenced area and get a measured amount of seed to be offered to the wild birds. Visitors are not permitted to bring in their own seed nor offer seed or other food items to birds outside of this area.

Olympic, Kays and Beagleys Picnic Grounds

These three picnic grounds are all easily accessible within a short walk along the Sassafras Creek using the Sassafras Creek Walking Track. The forest surrounding the grounds is dominated by the towering Mountain Ash, Mountain Grey Gum and Messmate (eucalypt) trees. While the mid-canopy contains soft and rough tree ferns that provide protection for the delicate fern species on the ground floor.

Bike riding

Bike riders are welcome to explore the network of cycling tracks that wind through the park, including roads, vehicular tracks and ‘Management Vehicle Only’ (MVO) tracks, unless they have been closed to bicycles.

Tracks closed to cyclists display a ‘No Bikes’ symbol. Any track may be closed to cycling at short notice, particularly if the track conditions become very muddy, eroded or dangerous.

For further information refer to the maps.

Facilities

There is a café and gift shop at the Grants picnic area and the Ferntree Gully picnic area.

All of the picnic areas have tables. The Grants, Sherbrooke and O’Donohue picnic grounds all have barbecues and toilets.

There are accessible toilets at One Tree Hill, Grants, Sherbrooke and O’Donohue, and Grants has three designated disabled parking bays.

Please take all rubbish away with you for recycling and disposal.

TrailRider all-terrain wheelchair

A TrailRider all-terrain wheelchair is available for park visitors with significant physical disabilities to access various walking trails in the park. The TrailRider chair is fitted with an electric motor to assist operators on hilly trails.

The TrailRider requires a minimum of two operators, however four operators are recommended for long trails or walks with significant gradients. Passengers in the chair must provide their own bike helmet and wear it when using the chair.

The chair can be borrowed for free at Grants Picnic Area in Kallista and bookings can be made in advance. Please contact the Grants on Sherbrooke Restaurant on (03) 9755 2888.

Be prepared and stay safe

The Dandenong Ranges National Park is closed when there is a SEVERE Fire Danger Rating at local Ferny Creek or Coldstream weather stations or if there are strong winds.

Dandenong Ranges National Park is in the Central fire district.

Bushfire safety is a personal responsibility. Anyone entering parks and forests during the bushfire season needs to stay aware of forecast weather conditions. Check the Fire Danger Rating and for days of Total Fire Ban at www.cfa.vic.gov.au or call the VicEmergency Hotline on 1800 226 226. No fires may be lit on Total Fire Ban days. Closure signs will be erected but do not expect an official warning. Check the latest conditions at www.parks.vic.gov.au or by calling 13 1963. For emergency assistance call Triple Zero (000). If there is a green emergency marker sign near you, read the information on the marker to the operator.