

DESTINATIONS

HIGH COUNTRY

Victoria

There are literally hundreds of tracks through Australia's tallest mountain ranges, but we've selected a few of our favourite tracks.

Mansfield State Forest This one-day mountain track drive takes in some spectacular mountain scenery along the edge of the Alpine National Park.

The drive from Mansfield to the hamlet of Merrijig (last chance to top up supplies) is along sealed roads, through pleasant pastoral country. A little more than a kilometre east of Merrijig is the turnoff onto the graded dirt Howqua Track, which climbs over the Timbertop Saddle before dropping down to Sheepland Flat, in the Howqua River valley. Sheepland Flat offers plenty of flat grassed camp sites and has drop dunnies.

There's also bush camping along the Howqua River at Fry's Hut, Davons Flat, Pickering's Flat and Tunnel Bend. It's only a short walk from the Sheepland Flat to Fry's Hut track to the Howqua Hills historic area. Aborigines used the Howqua River as a major trade and war route across the Great Dividing Range. They also had several quarries in the area that yielded stone for tools and weapons.

The discovery of alluvial gold at Cameron's Creek in the 1860s heralded major changes for the valley, but the rush was short-lived and by 1905 all major gold mining operations had come to an end.

The best preserved relic in the area is Fry's Hut, built by Fred Fry in the late 1930s and remained his home in this remote valley until his death in 1971.

The track crosses a shallow creek and then climbs steeply out of Ware's Flat, on its way to an old slate mine on Mitchells Track. The track runs through the old mine site, with a dizzying drop off to the west.



Not far from the mine site the track plunges very steeply down to a bush camping area at Mitchell's Hut. This section of the track is pure clay and becomes treacherous after only light rain.

Wren's Flat bush camping area is on the bank of the Jamieson River. It's a pleasant walk along the bank to the ruins of a hut and a large swimming hole. From Wren's Flat it's a graded road drive south east to Licola, or north west to Jamieson.

The Jamieson Licola Road This is a scenic run through mountainous country and an interesting way to travel from the Victorian Alpine country to Gippsland.

Today, Jamieson is a sleepy little village, but during the 1850s gold rush to the Howqua, Jamieson and Goulburn Rivers region it was an important supply town. It's worthwhile walking around the town for a few hours and taking in the historic sites. Jamieson has supplies and fuel, as well. Jamieson Licola Road (also known as Heyfield Jamieson Road) is graded dirt and gravel until just north of Licola and is a comfortable soft-roader drive, with only a few rough stony patches, in the high mountain area. The road climbs steadily to the snow line and peaks at Mount Skene, where the trig point is surrounded by beautiful snow gums. The C486 descends gradually, emerging from the forests into cleared pastoral country north of Licola.

Mt Kosciusko Views This High Country trek starts at the pretty town of Corryong, in the foothills of the Australian Alps, and finishes in the mountain tourism centre of Jindabyne. In between is some of the best mountain scenery and steep track driving in Australia.



From the township the route runs west for nearly eight kilometres, before taking the turnoff to Omeo. The bitumen continues for another 30 kilometres, before turning to gravel some 10 kilometres north of the Alpine National Park boundary.

The Wheelers Creek Hut track runs off the main road and winds through heavily wooded, hilly country, crossing Wheelers Creek in two places before reaching Wheelers Hut.

After Wheelers Hut the climb rate increases as the road leads to Wild Boar Track. This two-rut path runs the ridge line through Mt Gibbo Scenic Reserve, offering panoramic views of the high peaks of the Australian Alps. Kosciusko is usually clearly visible, with a mantle of snow that endures into summer. There are several very steep climbs and descents that prepare the crews for what is to come.

The Wild Boar Track intersects the Mt Pinnibar Track at a dizzying height above the green paddocks of Tom Groggin Station and the descent is among the steepest in the High Country. Traction control or axle diff locks are comforts on this long downhill run, that has a loose surface when dry and is treacherously slippery when wet.

The scenery as you emerge from the steep, forested slopes to the gently undulating grazing land beside the Murray River is special. There are a number of route and camping choices at the Tom Groggin crossroads.

Dogman Hut camping area is just beside the Tom Groggin Station paddocks and on the banks of the fledgling Murray. After fording the River the drive to Jindabyne is all-bitumen, but interesting, because it runs via Thredbo Alpine Village.

The Deddick Trail The Deddick Trail features some of the steepest tracks in the Victorian High Country. It's no place for soft-roaders and is a challenge for quite capable 4x4s.

The only formed campsites on the Trail are a couple of grassed areas on New Country Creek, at the base of the infamous 'Staircase' climb that can accommodate at most four vehicles.

However there's good camping at the start and the end of the Trail.



A start at McKillops Bridge camping area after breakfast should see you at Raymond Falls camping area by nightfall.

The Deddick Trail climbs steadily from its beginning on the McKillops Bridge to Bonang road and there are several spots along the way where you can appreciate the mountain scenery.

About six kilometres along the Trail is a very steep, shaly climb, cut into the edge of the hillside. This section is certain to get you focussed! The climb eases at the 1000-metre mark and then undulates along heavily wooded saddles towards the Mount Gelantipy Plateau. When we ran the Deddick Trail we found plenty of use for our chainsaws, clearing fallen burnt-out trees from the track. Debris will continue to be a hazard for the next few years.





From the Plateau the Trail runs slowly downhill at first, but then the slope increases as the track plunges 700 vertical metres, down to the New Country Creek valley. From the shade and cool of the Creek the Deddick Trail climbs very steeply once more, up what is known as 'The Staircase' – a series of very steep climbs, punctuated by drainage humps, that takes you back up to the 900-metre mark.

After the steep climb the Deddick Trail undulates through heavily wooded plateau country to its southern intersection with Yalmy Road. From there, the roads are graded gravel for the 45-kilometre finishing leg to the camping area at Raymond Falls.

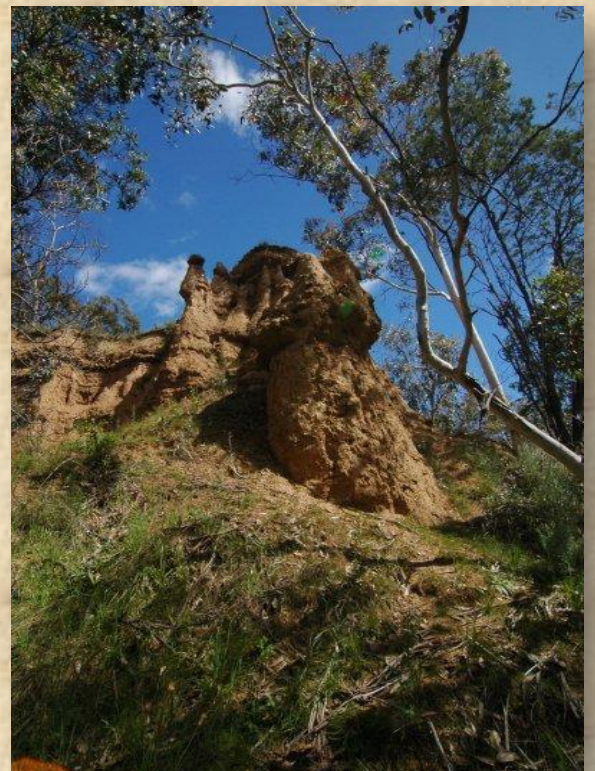


This grassy site has a drop toilet and water. The short walk from the camping area to Raymond Falls is a must-do.

Omeo to Dargo High Plains This is a comfortable two-day trek through some spectacular High Country, with an overnight camp on the scenic Dargo River. It's an easy soft-roader trip, in good weather.

Omeo nestles in the foothills of the Victorian Alps and is rich in gold mining history, including the Oriental Claims Area, just out of town. Omeo has ample supplies, a camping area and several motels. You can also try your fly-fishing hand in the nearby creek.

Upper Livingstone Road and Birregun Road are well-graded gravel surfaces that wind steadily up to a plateau, before the track heads down into the Dargo River Valley.





On the way you'll come across Dog's Grave - a beautifully worked memorial to a drover's dog.

From this spot it's an easy 30-kilometre run to our suggested campsite at Upper Dargo.

The best positions are close to the river bank, near the shade of trees that line the bubbling stream. The Dargo River is an ideal swimming location and a perfect fishing spot.

Our trek turns north on the Dargo High Plains Road and heads for the Alpine beauty around Hotham Heights. This stretch of good gravel road is one of the most beautiful drives in the High Country. Along the way is ample evidence of the summer cattle grazing lifestyle that is soon to be no more. The fences and gates will one day be gone and nature will rule this high altitude country once more.



**Bridgestone's
Dueler 673 M/T
(LT)**
is our tyre choice
for this trek

BRIDGESTONE
Your Journey, Our Passion

FACT FILE

Where

Northern Victoria

Time required

Two weeks minimum

Best time to go

Spring, Summer, early Autumn

What to do

Camping, fishing, bushwalking, bird watching, four wheel driving, horse riding, mountain bike riding, rafting, canoeing

Maps

Rooftop Maps

sales@rooftopmaps.com.au

maps@ftmaps.com

www.feathertopmapping.biz/

Camping

Numerous bush camps and private camp sites. Refer to maps.

Permits

No permits necessary, but check track conditions

Track closures

Parks Victoria

www.parkweb.vic.gov.au/1process_content.cfm?main=9&page=2

Last fuel

Corryong, Omeo, Mount Beauty, Bright, Mansfield, Thredbo, Buchan

Contact

Parks Victoria

www.parkweb.vic.gov.au/1park_display.cfm?park=41