

# Baw Baw National Park

## Visitor Guide



Spectacular summer wildflower displays and snowy woodlands in winter highlight the changing beauty of Baw Baw National Park. Gnarled Snow Gums and Alpine heaths stretch across the Baw Baw Plateau, while majestic tall forests grow within the surrounding river valleys. Whether shooting the rapids on the Thomson River or skiing a cross country trail, Baw Baw National Park offers a wealth of natural experiences.



### Getting there

Baw Baw National Park is situated approximately 120 kilometres east of Melbourne and 50 kilometres north of the Latrobe Valley. The main access to the plateau is from the Mount Erica and St Gwinear carparks along signposted roads off the Thomson Valley Road, north of Erica. The Baw Baw Alpine Resort which adjoins the park can be reached from the Princes Highway at Drouin by following the Mount Baw Baw Tourist Road.

### Things to see and do

#### Walking

There are many kilometres of walking tracks traversing pristine sub-alpine plant communities and unique landscapes.

If walking in winter, Please do not walk on the trails set aside for skiers at Mount St Gwinear or at the Baw Baw Resort. Foot prints present a real hazard to skiers and can lead to serious accidents.

A track for walkers only starts behind the information board at St Gwinear car park and leads to a viewing platform overlooking the Latrobe Valley. The walk takes about 45 minutes. Please keep to the marked route and do not venture beyond the lookout area.



#### Beech Gully Track – 400m, 30 minutes return

Starting at the Mount Erica carpark, the Beech Gully Nature Walk provides an excellent introduction to the plants and wildlife of the Mountain Ash forests and cool temperate rainforests of the southern slopes.



#### Mount St Gwinear Track – 6km, 3 hours return

The walk to the summit of Mount St Gwinear winds through heathland and Snow Gum forest. The magnificent views, stretching across the valleys of the Thomson and Aberfeldy Rivers and into the Victorian Alps, are a perfect reward.



#### Mushroom Rocks – 3km, 3 hours return

Commencing at the Mount Erica car park, this popular walk along a section of the Australian Alps Walking Track leads to a maze of giant granite tors.



#### Australian Alps Walking Track – 650km

Beginning in the old gold mining town of Walhalla and ending near Canberra, the 650km trail embraces the best of the Alps. See Australia's highest peaks, snow-capped mountains and plains, cattlemen's huts, tall forests, snow gum woodlands and many historic sites.

#### Scenic drives

There are some great drives in and around the park. Take a drive along Thompson Dam Access Road for spectacular views of the dam wall. Mount St Gwinear Road up to Mount St Gwinear carpark is another lovely drive through the changing forest.

Roads throughout the area are narrow and winding but offer marvellous scenery with panoramic views. Take care when driving as many of the roads are regularly used by logging trucks.

The road past Walhalla into the Aberfeldy River valley is unsuitable for caravans. Many of the tracks in the Thomson and Aberfeldy Valleys are suitable for 4WD vehicles only. Many roads and tracks are closed during the winter months.

The Mount St Gwinear Road is a declared hazardous road during winter (bus drivers require an appropriate licence). Snow chains must be carried during the declared ski season and fitted when and where directed.

#### Camping

Dispersed bush camping is permitted on the Baw Baw Plateau. The Plateau is a fuel stove only area, therefore no camp fires are permitted.

The area falls within domestic water supply catchments, so please bury waste at least 100m from any water.

The Aberfeldy River campground is accessed via Walhalla or across the dam wall of the Thomson Reservoir. The Eastern Tyers Camping Area is the first overnight stop from Walhalla on the Australian Alps Walking Track. Both have toilets, picnic tables and fireplaces.

### Canoeing

The Thomson River is excellent for canoeing and rafting on Grade 3 water. The best river levels depend on water releases from the Thomson Dam. Canoes can be launched at Beardmores Track, Low Saddle Track (4WD only) or at the Narrows. There are no riverside camping facilities in the park.

### Fishing

The Thomson and Aberfeldy Rivers are an excellent location to try your luck at fly fishing. Check your Fishing Guide for seasons and regulations and ensure that you hold a current Victorian fishing licence.

### Hunting

The hunting of Sambar Deer only by method of stalking is seasonally permitted in a section of the park. Before undertaking this activity, seek further information from Parks Victoria or the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP) and ensure that you hold a current Victorian game licence.

### Horse riding

Some parts of the park can be explored on horseback. Horses may be ridden on Low Saddle Track (seasonally) and the Old Tramway adjacent to the Thomson Valley Road. Horse riding is not permitted elsewhere in the park. There are also plenty of horse riding opportunities adjacent to the park within State Forest and the Walhalla Historic Area. Horse based camping is not permitted within the park.

### Exploring the history

In 1860, the renowned government botanist, Ferdinand von Mueller made the first recorded ascent of the Baw Baw Plateau. He named the peaks Mount Mueller and Mount Erica, after himself and a flowering plant of the locality respectively. Ferdinand used this expedition to further refine his theories about the relationship between Victorian and Tasmanian vegetation.

In 1906 the Public Works Department constructed a walking track between Warburton and Walhalla. The track gave access to the Beech forests and fern gullies of the upper Yarra, the spectacular Yarra Falls and the Baw Baw Plateau. Opened by the Governor of Victoria, the Yarra Track became one of Victoria's most popular walking routes.

Unfortunately, the Black Friday fires of 1939 burnt the huts and most of the area traversed by the track. The track was never rebuilt, although bushwalkers can follow part of the original route by following the Australian Alps Walking Track between Walhalla and Mount Whitelaw.

### Plants and wildlife

The Baw Baw Plateau features extensive sub-alpine woodlands dominated by Snow Gum with a scrubby understorey of Mueller's Bush-pea, Alpine Pepper and Dusty Daisy-bush. Wet alpine heathlands and thick spongy beds of sphagnum moss surround clear pools of water. With such a diverse array of plants these heathlands provide a spectacular display of wildflowers in late spring.

The upper slopes of the range support tall open forests of Alpine Ash, Shining Gum and Tingaringy Gum. At lower altitudes tall forests of Mountain Ash, Messmate and Silver Wattle grow and are often shrouded in mist. Pockets of cool temperate rainforest with a lush understorey of ferns flourish within the sheltered gullies. Due to the rain shadow created by the Baw Baw, the Thomson and Aberfeldy River valleys are dominated by dry forests of Silvertop, Messmate and Peppermints with an open understorey of small shrubs, grasses and bracken.

### Mount St Gwinear in winter

Mount St Gwinear is a family friendly snow attraction with free entry, which offers toboggan runs, cross country trails, a snowplay area and a heated shelter room. Hot and cold drinks and snacks are available from a food van on weekends and school holidays.

Snow can be expected from late June to mid-September.

The car park is at an altitude of 1280 metres, so weather conditions can be extreme. Warm clothing (preferably woollen), solid footwear and adequate wet weather gear is essential.

### Tobogganing

There are two toboggan runs. The hire of toboggans can be made at Parks Victoria's office on site for a cost of \$4 per hour with a \$10 refundable deposit. Additional hours will be taken out of the deposit. Cash only.

If you intend to bring your own toboggan, remember that only plastic moulded toboggans are allowed on the runs.

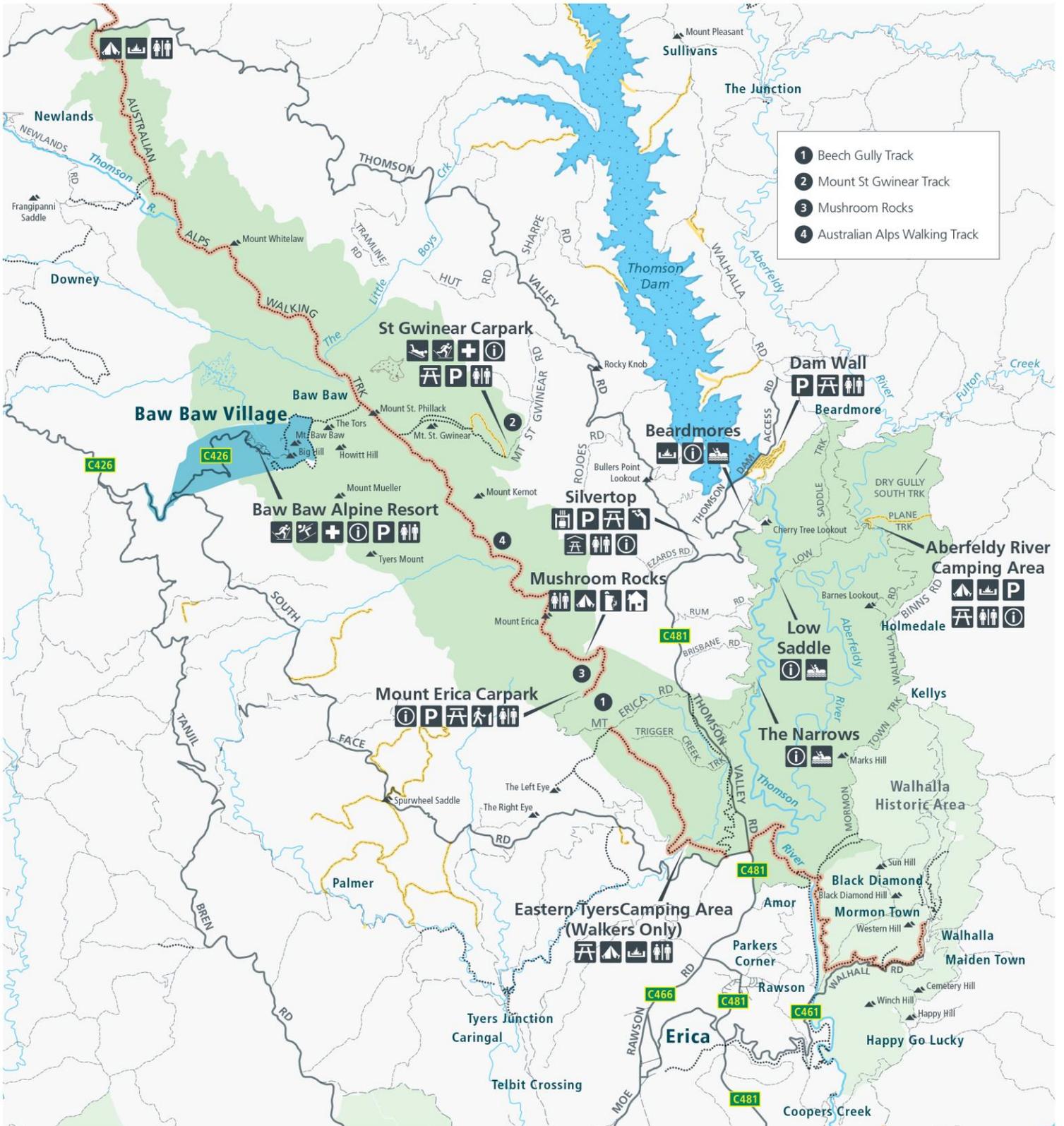
### Snowshoeing

Snowshoeing is permitted on the ski trail network. Snow shoes are either BYO or hire from suppliers. There is a short Winter Walking Track leading to a lookout that starts at the St Gwinear carpark and extends approximately 600m (1.2km return).

### Cross country skiing

Mount St Gwinear offers access to 12km of cross country skiing trails, with the first Main Trail departing from the Mount St Gwinear car park. There is a loop that visitors can undertake accessing five trails. These trails are called Cascades Trail, Saints Trail, Tullicoutty Trail and Gwinear Trail. There is an access point on the Saints Trail at Phillack Saddle to link onto a cross country ski trail (Tanjil) for those accessing the Baw Baw Resort Alpine Village.

# Baw Baw National Park



- 1 Beech Gully Track
- 2 Mount St Gwinear Track
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- 4 Australian Alps Walking Track

Parking	Cross-country skiing	Sheltered area	Australian Alps Walking Track	Waterbody
Information	Downhill skiing	Picnic table	Walking track	Alpine Resort
Toilets	Tobogganing	First-aid	Management vehicle/walking track only	Wetland
Lookout	Self-guided walk	Main road	Major river	Subject to inundation
Gas barbecue	Camping area	Sealed road	Minor river	Mountain/hill
Fireplace	Abseiling	Unsealed road		
Historic hut	Whitewater rafting	4WD		
			Baw Baw National Park	
			Other park	



## Caring for the park

Help us look after your park by following these guidelines:

- Dogs and other pets are not permitted in the park.
- Bicycles may only be ridden on formed roads and tracks open to the public. Cycling is not permitted on the Baw Baw Plateau.
- Your rubbish is your responsibility - carry out what you carry in
- Firewood gathering is not permitted within the national park. Refer to [www.delwp.vic.gov.au](http://www.delwp.vic.gov.au) for firewood collection advice
- Baw Baw Plateau is a fuel stove only area, therefore no camp fires are permitted.

## Be prepared and stay safe

The Baw Baw National Park is in the West and South Gippsland fire ban 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](http://www.cfa.vic.gov.au) or call the VicEmergency Hotline on 1800 226 226. No fires may be lit on Total Fire Ban days. On Code Red Fire Danger Rating days this park will be closed for public safety. Do not expect an official warning. Check the latest conditions at [www.parks.vic.gov.au](http://www.parks.vic.gov.au) or by calling 13 1963. For emergency assistance call Triple Zero (000).

### Wheel chains

When visiting Mount St Gwinear in the snow season, it is compulsory to carry wheel chains at all times and to fit them where directed.

Bus drivers should note that 13km of gravel road leading to Mount St Gwinear is a 'Declared hazardous area' and drivers of vehicles with 12 seats or more must have a licence with the appropriate VicRoads Hazardous endorsements.

Road conditions are continually assessed by Parks Victoria rangers and wheel chains will only need to be fitted if there is ice or snow on the road. Wheel chains give your tyres greater traction on ice/snow, thus giving the driver improved vehicle control. So remember, wheel chains must be fitted to the vehicle's drive wheels (some modern cars are front wheel drive, not rear; please check with the hire company). You will often be requested to fit wheel chains before any snow is encountered as chain fitting sites are chosen for the following reasons:

- They are the safest possible location;
- They are flat, with available parking space; and
- They are away from any snow clearing machinery.

When using wheel chains, the following driving tips may be helpful:

- Do not exceed 40 km/h
- On steep descents, engage low gear and don't apply the brakes with any force
- Vehicles travelling uphill generally have the right of way
- Do not brake or steer erratically
- It is advisable to carry a large sheet of plastic as fitting wheel chains can be a muddy job.

### Parking at Mount St Gwinear

When visiting Mount St Gwinear on weekends during snow season, you will be met in the car park by a parking attendant.

Here are some useful tips when parking in an alpine area:

- Leave the car in gear with front wheels pointing downhill
- If adverse weather conditions are forecast, or it is snowing on arrival, it is advisable to fit wheel chains when parking as it is difficult to fit chains to a snowbound vehicle
- Anti-freeze should be added to the vehicle's radiator before leaving home
- Lift windscreen wipers from windscreen to place in a plastic bag to avoid wipers from sticking to the glass
- Clear all glass and mirrors of ice and snow before attempting to drive home.

**Last updated March 2017**