

Cathedral Range State Park

Visitor Guide



The Cathedral Range is a spectacular seven kilometre ridge of sharply upturned sedimentary rock. A variety of walking tracks ranging from easy to challenging offer the opportunity to explore the park's main features and climb the peaks to enjoy views of the forests and farmland in the valley below.



Parks Victoria acknowledges the Taungurung Clans as the Traditional Owners of Cathedral Range State Park and pays our respects to their Elders, past, present and emerging. All Aboriginal artefacts are protected by law and must not be removed or disturbed.

Getting there

From Melbourne follow the Maroondah Highway to Buxton. Continue past Buxton for 9.5km and turn right into Cathedral Lane to find the park entrance 2.5km on your right. Roads within the park are not suitable for coaches beyond Little River Bridge.

Things to see and do

Picnics

Bring the family and enjoy a picnic at the Sugarloaf Saddle Day Visitor Area. No bins are provided – please take your rubbish home with you for recycling or disposal.

Walking

Walking tracks lead to all the major features of the park and vary in difficulty from an easy stroll around the Friends Nature Trail (Grade 2) to the very challenging, steep and exposed Ridge Track (Grade 5). The tracks are graded using the Australian walking track grading system and are graded from 1 to 5, where grade 1 is the easiest and grade 5 the most difficult. Due to the park's rugged natural terrain, it is not suitable for wheelchair users.

Walking times are intended as a guide only. They do not allow for rest stops. Times may vary significantly depending on fitness level and hiking experience. All trails are marked with trail head signage however track markers along some routes are limited. Hikers are advised to carry a map and always know what trail they are on.

Look out for native orchids which appear in spring and early summer, and for kangaroos, wallabies, echidnas and lyrebirds along the tracks. Satin Bowerbirds may be seen at the base of the range, beside the Little River. Koalas can be seen in the valley, particularly along the nature trail at Cooks Mill.

The Friends Nature Trail – 2km, 1 hour circuit Grade 2

This is an easy circuit walk through Manna Gum forest crossing footbridges over Storm Creek and Little River, and passing the old sawmill, a heritage site that operated in the 1940s and 1950s. Follow the signs from Cooks Mill.

Little River Track – 2.7km, 45 minutes one way Grade 3

This easy walk along the river between Neds Gully and Cooks Mill camping areas contains gentle hills and a few steps. It is a great place to see and hear the lyrebird, one of the park's iconic species.

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Neds Gully Track – 2.2km, 1 hour one way Grade 4

This steady uphill hike starts near the camping area and winds steeply up Neds Gully to Neds Saddle. From Neds Saddle the tracks lead to Cathedral Peak, Little Cathedral, Neds Peak and The Farmyard. Suitable for fit hikers with some bushwalking experience.



Neds Peak Track – 250m, 15 minutes one way Grade 4

This short but steep walk climbs from Neds Saddle to Neds Peak. It features a number of obstacles and limited signage; some bushwalking experience is recommended.



Cathedral Peak Track – 650m, 45 minutes one way Grade 4

This challenging rocky track is suitable for fit hikers with some bushwalking experience. It rises steeply from Neds Saddle in a westerly direction to the southern slope of Cathedral Peak offering rewarding views over the Acheron River Valley, and then heads north to the peak.

From here, extend your walk by continuing north along the Ridge Track to the junction with Little Cathedral Track. Continue to Little Cathedral or return to Neds Saddle along the Little Cathedral Track.



Little Cathedral Track – 1.2km, 1 hour one way Grade 4

Heading north from Ned's Saddle, this rocky trail leads to Ridge Track and onwards to the summit of Little Cathedral Peak. The track is rough and has some steep sections and a number of obstacles; some bushwalking experience is recommended.



Ridge Track – 3.8km, 2 hours one way Grade 5

This steep and challenging track is only suitable for experienced bushwalkers. It travels along the rugged ridgeline from The Farmyard to Cathedral and Little Cathedral Peaks, crossing very exposed rocky outcrops with 360 views. There is limited signage along the way; look for markers to help keep to the track. Beware of rapidly changing weather conditions and strong winds.



Saint Bernards Track – 1.5km, 45 minutes one way Grade 3

This pleasant walk starts at Cooks Mill and winds through open eucalypt forest to Jawbone Carpark and Jawbone Creek Track. It has some short steep sections.



Jawbone Creek Track – 1.4km, 1 hour one way Grade 4

This track starts at Jawbone Carpark on Cerberus Road and climbs steeply to The Farmyard. Some bushwalking experience recommended.



North Jawbone Track – 700m, 20 minutes one way Grade 3

This track branches from Jawbone Creek Track just below The Farmyard and leads to amazing views from North Jawbone Peak. It has some short steep sections and a few obstacles; some bushwalking experience recommended.



South Jawbone Track – 300m, 15 minutes one way Grade 3

From The Farmyard, follow the signposted South Jawbone Track leading to sweeping views on South Jawbone Peak. This track has some short steep sections and a few obstacles; some bushwalking experience recommended.



Razorback Track – 2.4km, 2 hours one way Grade 5

This challenging and steep track links The Farmyard to Sugarloaf Peak, crossing very exposed rocky outcrops, providing impressive views. There is limited signage along the way; look for markers to help you keep to the track. Beware of rapidly changing weather conditions and strong winds.



Wells Cave Track – 550m, 45 minutes one way Grade 5

This extremely challenging track is suitable for very experienced bushwalkers only. It climbs north from Sugarloaf Saddle Day Visitor Area to Sugarloaf Peak, the highest point on the range and is a challenging approach. The route involves short sections of free climbing, up near vertical rock faces, which is not recommended for small children. Avoid this track if you are uncomfortable in high open and exposed places and do not attempt in wet or windy conditions. Carrying backpacks is not recommended, as the track involves squeezing through the very narrow passage of Wells Cave. Recommended as an ascent route only. Descend via Canyon Track.



Canyon Track – 650m, 45 minutes one way Grade 5

This challenging track climbs steeply from Sugarloaf Saddle Day Visitor Area to Sugarloaf Peak and is suitable for experienced bushwalkers only. The route involves scaling some very steep sections of rock face. Although not easy, it is less challenging than the Wells Cave approach.



Messmate Track – 4.4km, 1.5 hours one way Grade 3

This moderately steep track winds through dense messmate forest, connecting Sugarloaf Saddle Day Visitor Area to Cooks Mill via Tweed Spur Road.

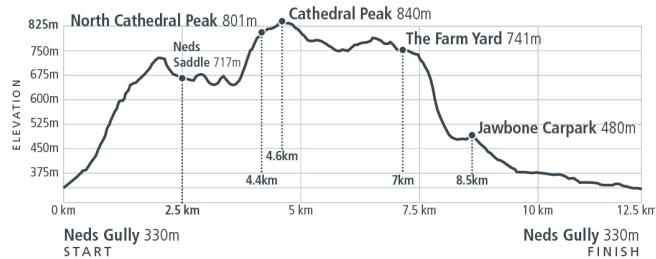
Longer walks

Linking some of the iconic walking trails within the park, the northern and southern circuits both offer full day hikes taking in the stunning views along the Cathedral Range. These circuits involve traversing rocky and steep terrain with little to no modification of the natural environment and are both grade 5 under the Australian Walking Track Grading system, based on the most difficult sections. These circuits require a good level of fitness and experience.



Cathedral Range Northern Circuit – 12.5km, 6 hours Grade 5

Northern Circuit



From Neds Gully Carpark cross over the suspension bridge, turning left through Neds Gully Camping Area. Follow the Little River Trail before soon turning right onto Neds Gully Track. The track climbs steadily up rocky steps and uneven ground to Neds Saddle. Take Little Cathedral Track, heading north. This narrow rocky track follows the contour before joining Ridge Track.

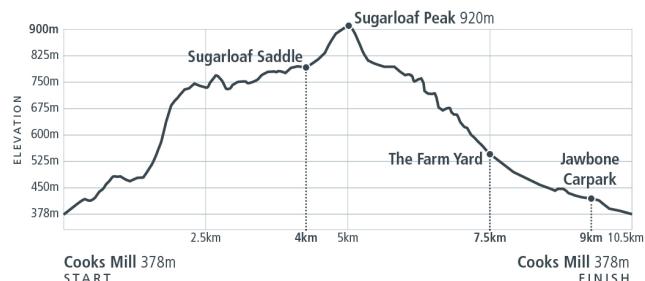
At the intersection with Ridge Track take the optional detour north to Little Cathedral Peak or continue on the circuit, heading South, climbing again to North Cathedral Peak and Cathedral Peak. Keep a close lookout for trail markers along this section to remain on track. Passing the Cathedral track intersection, that takes you back to Neds Saddle, continue south along the rugged and rocky Ridge Track, enjoying the sweeping views across the Acheron Valley. This is one of the most challenging sections of the hike as the trail follows the exposed rocky ridgeline. At the next junction follow the right fork to the Farmyard, the only camping site on the range.

From here another optional detour up South Jawbone Track will reward you with stunning views from South Jawbone Peak. From the Farmyard follow the signs to Jawbone Creek track and descend to Jawbone Carpark. At the top end of the carpark take Saint Bernards Track down to Cooks Mill Camping area and finish the hike with a gentle stroll along the Little River Track and finally finishing back at Neds Gully.



Cathedral Range Southern Circuit – 10.5km, 5 hours Grade 5

Southern Circuit

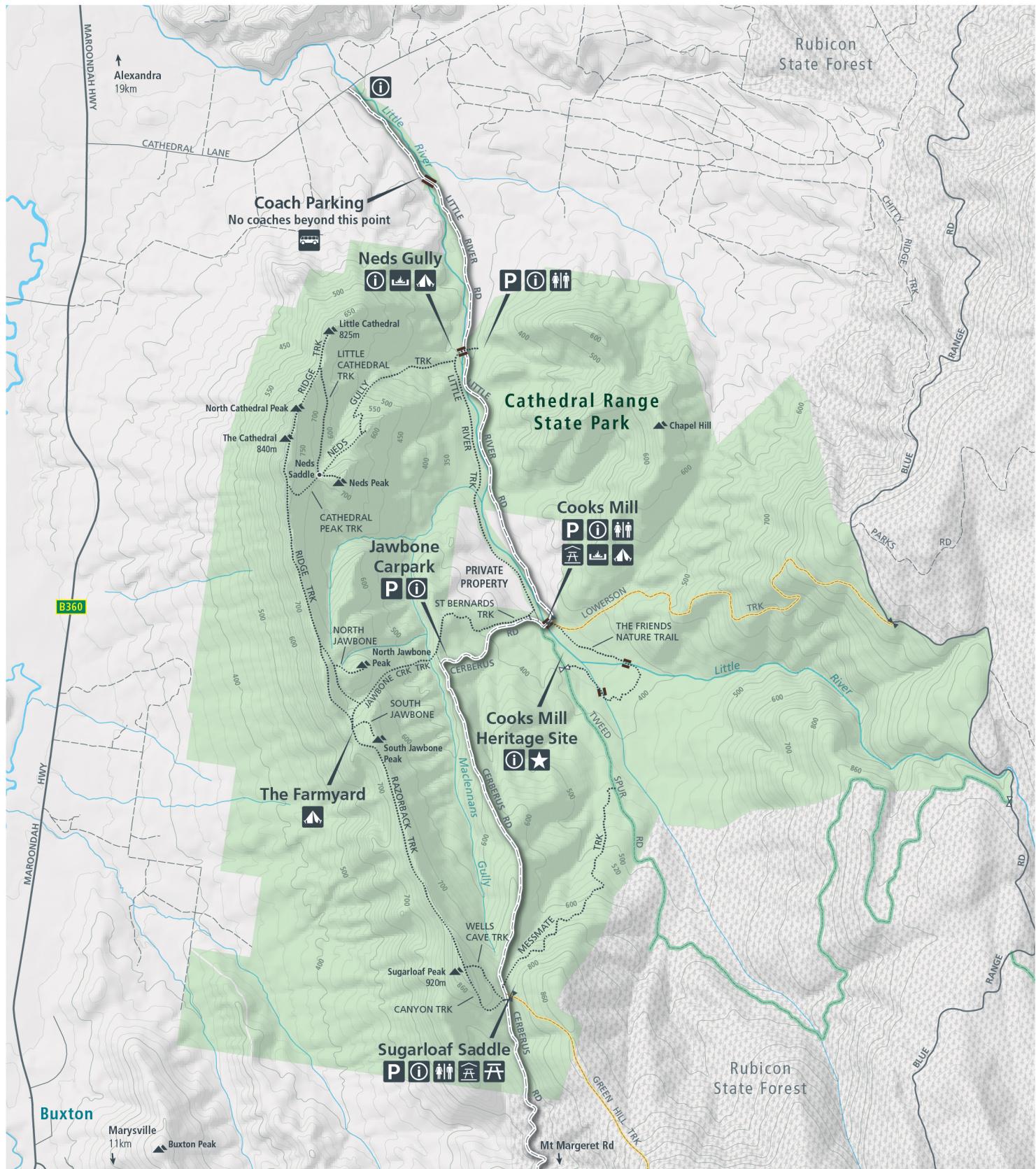


Starting at Cooks Mill Camping area head south following the signs to Tweed Spur Track, the first part of this circuit follows this unsealed four wheel drive track. Continue along Tweed Spur Track keeping an eye out for the trailhead sign for Messmate Track branching off to the right. This moderately steep track winds up the hill through dense messmate forest before reaching Sugarloaf Saddle Day Visitor Area.

Opposite the day visitor shelter, cross Cerberus Road and take the track to the left, Canyon Track. This challenging climb is more like rock climbing than walking as the trail quickly ascends up the rocky slope to Sugarloaf Peak, the highest peak on the range.

Cathedral Range State Park

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	Parking		Fireplace		Peak		Main road
	Information		Lookout		Gate (permanently locked)		Sealed road
	Toilets		Point of interest		Gate (seasonal closure)		Unsealed road
	Sheltered area		Camping		Bridge		4WD
	Picnic table		Coach parking		Highway		Walking track
							Management vehicles only
							Seasonal closure
							Access road
							Cathedral Range State Park
							State forest



0 500 1000 1500 2000 2500 3000 Meters

Take in the 360 degree views as you continue north along the ridge line known as the Razorback Track. The path is not clearly defined in places so keep a close eye out for trail markers as you scramble along the rocky ridge. The Razorback track ends at the Farmyard, the only camping site on the range. From here take the optional detour up South Jawbone Track to be rewarded with stunning views from South Jawbone Peak.

From the Farmyard follow the signs to Jawbone Creek track and descend to Jawbone Carpark. At the top end of the carpark take Saint Bernards Track, this pleasant downhill track winds its way through open forest returning to the starting point at Cooks Mill.

Rock climbing

There are rock climbing areas available for all levels of ability from the beginners' area at The Boulders near Sugarloaf Saddle, to the many challenging climbing routes on North Jawbone.

Please contact a licensed rock climbing guide for more information.

Camping

Camping is available at Cooks Mill, Neds Gully and on the range at the overnight hike-in site, The Farmyard. No facilities are provided at The Farmyard, which is accessible only to hikers. No bookings or fees required. Fires are not permitted – please bring a portable gas stove or similar for cooking. No drinking water is available – please bring all the water you need with you.

A shady campground by the river, Cooks Mill has sites suitable for tents, campervans and a small number of caravans. Pit toilets, fireplaces, picnic tables and shelters are available. Neds Gully camping area is accessible via a short walk across the swing bridge from Neds Gully Carpark. There is no vehicle access, so it is suitable for tents only. Pit toilets and fireplaces are available.

Camping fees apply and pre-booking is required for Neds Gully and Cooks Mill camping areas. Prior to your visit please book online and check for changes in conditions through www.parks.vic.gov.au or by calling 13 1963. Individual sites cannot be reserved – please select your site upon arrival.

No cooking plates are provided at Cooks Mill or Neds Gully so please bring your own. Bring your own drinking water and fire wood. Fires are permitted only in fire places provided by Parks Victoria. Wood for camp fires must not be collected from the park or surrounds. Firewood may be purchased from Taggerty and Buxton.

Caring for the park



- All plants, animals, other natural features and cultural sites are protected and must not be disturbed or removed.
- There is no rubbish collection in the park, please take all your rubbish home with you for recycling and disposal.
- Dogs and other pets are not permitted in the park.
- Firewood collection is not permitted in the park. Please bring any firewood you need with you.
- Fires must only be lit in the fireplaces provided that:
 - It is not a day of Total Fire Ban.
 - Never leave the fire unattended. An adult must supervise at all times.
 - Put the fire out with water, not soil. Make sure you have at least 10 litres of water available for immediate use.
 - If the campfire is cool to touch, it is safe to leave.
- No fires are permitted to be lit on the range at any time.
- Feeding wildlife is bad for its health. It is an offence to feed or leave food where it is accessible to wildlife. Penalties apply.

- Please abide by speed limits within the park, drive safely and watch for wildlife. No vehicles, including bicycles, are permitted on walking tracks.
- Loud noise can disturb wildlife. Please respect the local wildlife and your fellow campers and keep noise to a minimum.
- Firearms are not permitted in the park.

Be prepared and stay safe



In an emergency call Triple Zero (000) for fire, police and ambulance. If there is a green emergency marker sign near you, read the information on the marker to the operator.

Do not camp under or near large trees – branches may fall and swing away from the tree at any time.

Cathedral Range State Park is in the North 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 in the 'Prepare and Get Ready' tab at www.emergency.vic.gov.au, on the VicEmergency smartphone app 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. 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.

Walking on the range: plan and prepare

The Cathedral Range is a special place that has a lot to offer hikers, but it should not be underestimated. The range is dominated by rocky ridges and outcrops and walks on the range involve climbing steep rock faces and traversing rock steps, uneven and slippery track surfaces. Weather conditions can change quickly making it important to always be prepared for all types of weather.

To help you safely enjoy walking on the Cathedral Range:

- Always wear sturdy shoes with good tread, a hat and weather proof clothing. Carry water proof clothing, sun protection, map, compass, GPS, torch, fully-charged phone and basic first aid kit.
- A topographic map of Cathedral Range is recommended.
- Carry adequate drinking water and food. Water is not available on walking tracks.
- Phone signals are unreliable. Telstra is the best network but coverage is limited and cannot be guaranteed. Hikers should consider carrying a radio or personal locator beacon.
- Walking alone is not recommended.
- Before setting out on your walk let someone know where you are going, your expected time of return and vehicle details. Let your contact know when you have returned.
- Allow plenty of time – don't head up on the range for a walk in the late afternoon. Due to difficult terrain on the range, distances may take much longer to walk than you expect.
- Keep to defined, marked walking tracks and do not cut corners. It is easy to lose sight of the trail and triangular trail markers are only sparsely provided.
- Sugarloaf Peak walks are not recommended for young children.
- The range is best avoided on days of extreme weather. Do not climb the range on days of Total Fire Ban.
- Carry out all rubbish, including food scraps.
- Toilets are not provided along the range or at The Farmyard hike-in camping area. Bury all waste and toilet paper at least 15cm deep and at least 100 metres from campsites and watercourses. Mix waste with soil to aid decomposition and to discourage animals digging up the waste.