

Castlemaine Diggings National Heritage Park

Visitor Guide



Travel back in time to the Victorian Goldrush. Explore the evocative remains of abandoned mines and settlements and learn about the living culture of the Dja Dja Wurrung People. Enjoy self-guided walks in shady Box-Ironbark forest and discover the Park's golden heritage hidden in the hills and gullies. Walk or ride the Goldfields Track, or take a scenic drive to a picturesque picnic spot steeped in history.



Womin-dji-ka (Welcome)

Castlemaine Diggings National Heritage Park is part of the traditional lands of the Dja Dja Wurrung People *Djaara* whose rights were recognised through a Recognition and Settlement Agreement with the State of Victoria in March 2013. The Dja Dja Wurrung People maintain a close and continuing connection to *Djandak*, their traditional Country.

Djandak is a cultural landscape that includes both tangible objects such as scarred trees, oven mounds, rock wells and stone artefact scatters; and intangible stories. *Djandak* is a living entity, which holds stories of creation and histories that cannot be erased.

Experience a Welcome to Country at the Monster Meeting Site and learn more about Dja Dja Wurrung Culture from interpretive signs at the Garfield Water Wheel, Burns Hill, Welsh Village, Kalimna Point and Eureka Reef.

Parks Victoria pays our respects to Dja Dja Wurrung Elders, past, present, and future, and asks visitors to do the same. Aboriginal artefacts are protected by law, and it is prohibited to disturb them in any way.

Getting there

Castlemaine Diggings National Heritage Park is about 120km north of Melbourne. Turn off the Calder Highway at Elphinstone and travel 13km through Chewton to Castlemaine. The Park can also be accessed via the Pyrenees and Midland Highways.

A regular rail service runs between Melbourne and Bendigo stopping at Castlemaine. Hikers and mountain bikers can explore several sections of the Park along the long-distance Goldfields Track.

Accessibility

Most of the Park is rugged natural bushland and not suitable for prams or wheelchairs, except around the day visitor area at Vaughan Mineral Springs. The following locations have gravel paths with slight slopes that may be accessible with assistance: Forest Creek Gold Diggings Walk, Forest Creek Trail between Castlemaine and Chewton, and from the Garfield Water Wheel carpark to the foundations of the wheel.

Gold mining heritage

Gold was first discovered by Europeans in the Castlemaine area at Specimen Gully in 1851. The find triggered the Mount Alexander goldrush, bringing flocks of migrants from around the world, hoping

to strike it rich, and changing the physical and cultural landscape forever.

By 1852, the population on the Castlemaine Diggings was 40-60,000. The gold rush, and the social and political changes that it triggered, helped shape the multicultural democratic Australia of today.

This remarkable story is etched into the landscape of the Castlemaine Diggings, one of the best preserved mid-nineteenth century goldfields in the world, and Australia's first National Heritage Park.

Things to see and do

Bush walking

There are many walks in the Park ranging from short gentle strolls to longer hikes. See the 'Places to visit' section for details of featured walks. Heritage Notes interpreting the features along many of the walks are available from the [Park webpage](#).



Download the free Castlemaine Diggings Visitor Guide and Northern Walks maps from [Avenza Maps](#) before you set out. If you don't have the app installed, you will be prompted to download it (WiFi is recommended).

Once a map is downloaded to your phone, the app uses your GPS location service to show you where you are even if there is no mobile phone signal.

Bushwalkers may also wish to download free topographic maps of the area from [cartography.id.au](#). The maps are produced by Jase Haysom of Cartography Community Mapping. Parks Victoria accepts no liability for their accuracy.

Picnics

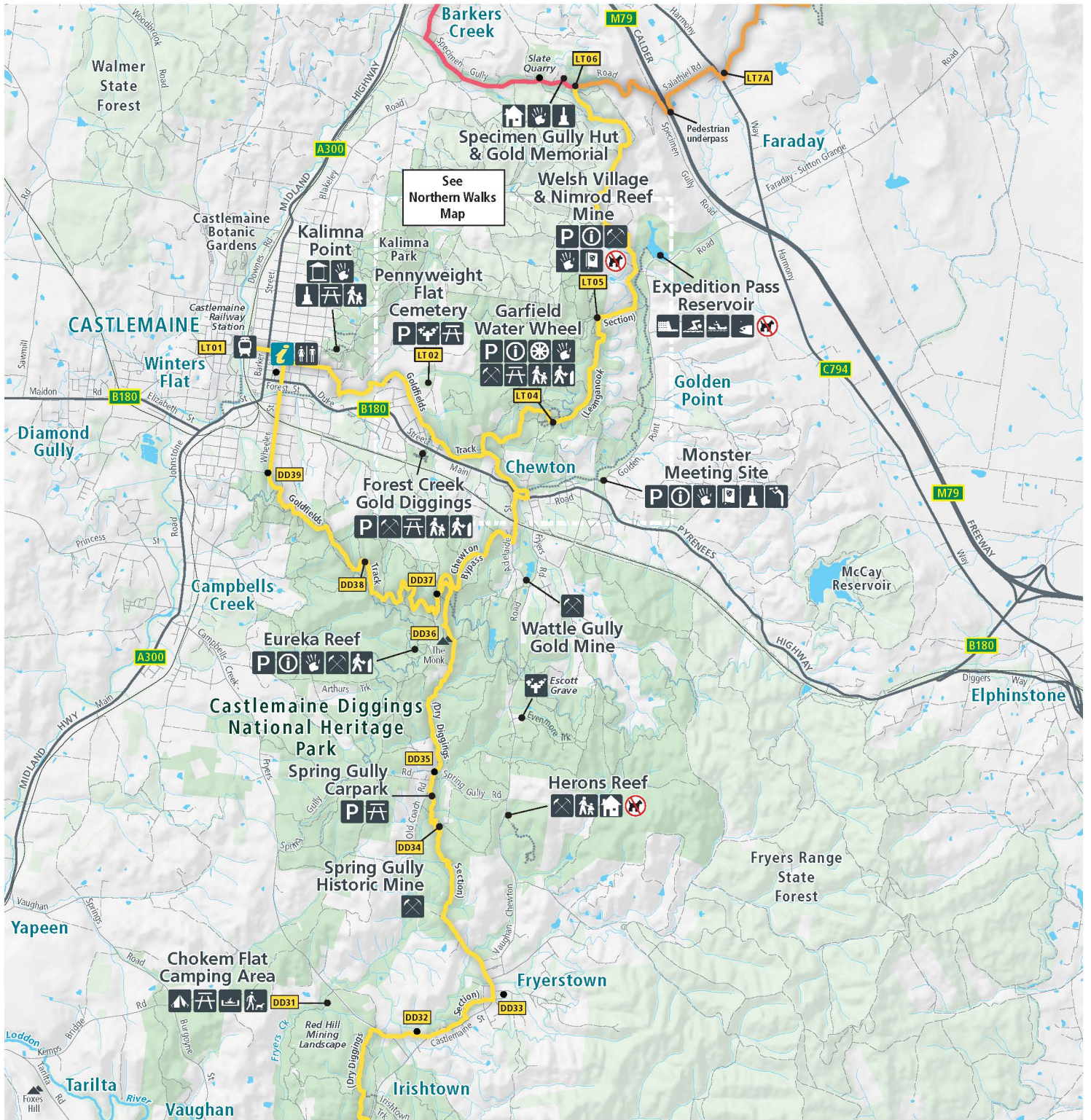
Kalimna Park, the Forest Creek Gold Diggings and Vaughan Mineral Springs (which also has toilets and free electric BBQs) are popular spots for a family picnic. All have tables and shelters. Picnic tables are also available at several other locations – check the Park maps.

Mountain-biking

Cycling is permitted on all formed roads, including Management Vehicle Only tracks and on the Forest Creek Trail (easy/green), Goldfields Track (moderate/blue) and Pennyweight Flat Cemetery Walk (moderate/blue) and Kalimna Park Circuit (moderate/blue). It is prohibited on all other walking tracks.

Castlemaine Diggings National Heritage Park

Northern & Central Diggings



P Parking

i Park information

📖 Visitor information centre

🚻 Toilet

🏠 Picnic area

🏛️ Rotunda

🏕️ Camping area

🔥 Fireplace

⛏️ Mine site

👋 Learn about Dja Dja Wurrung Culture

🏠 Historic hut

👨👩👦 Family walk

🚶 Self guided walk

👤 Mineral spring

🗿 Monument

🏘️ Cemetery

🏠 Historic site

🚶 Trailhead

🌊 Dam

🏊 Swimming

🚣 Canoeing

🔭 Lookout

🐕 Dogs on lead

🚫 No dogs permitted

🚂 Train station

— Freeway/highway

— Main road

— Sealed road

--- Unsealed road

— Vehicular track

⋯ Walking track

— Railway line

Goldfields Track

- 🚶** Shared trail
- 🚶** Walkers only
- 🚲** Cycling detour
- 🚂** Goldfields Track stop

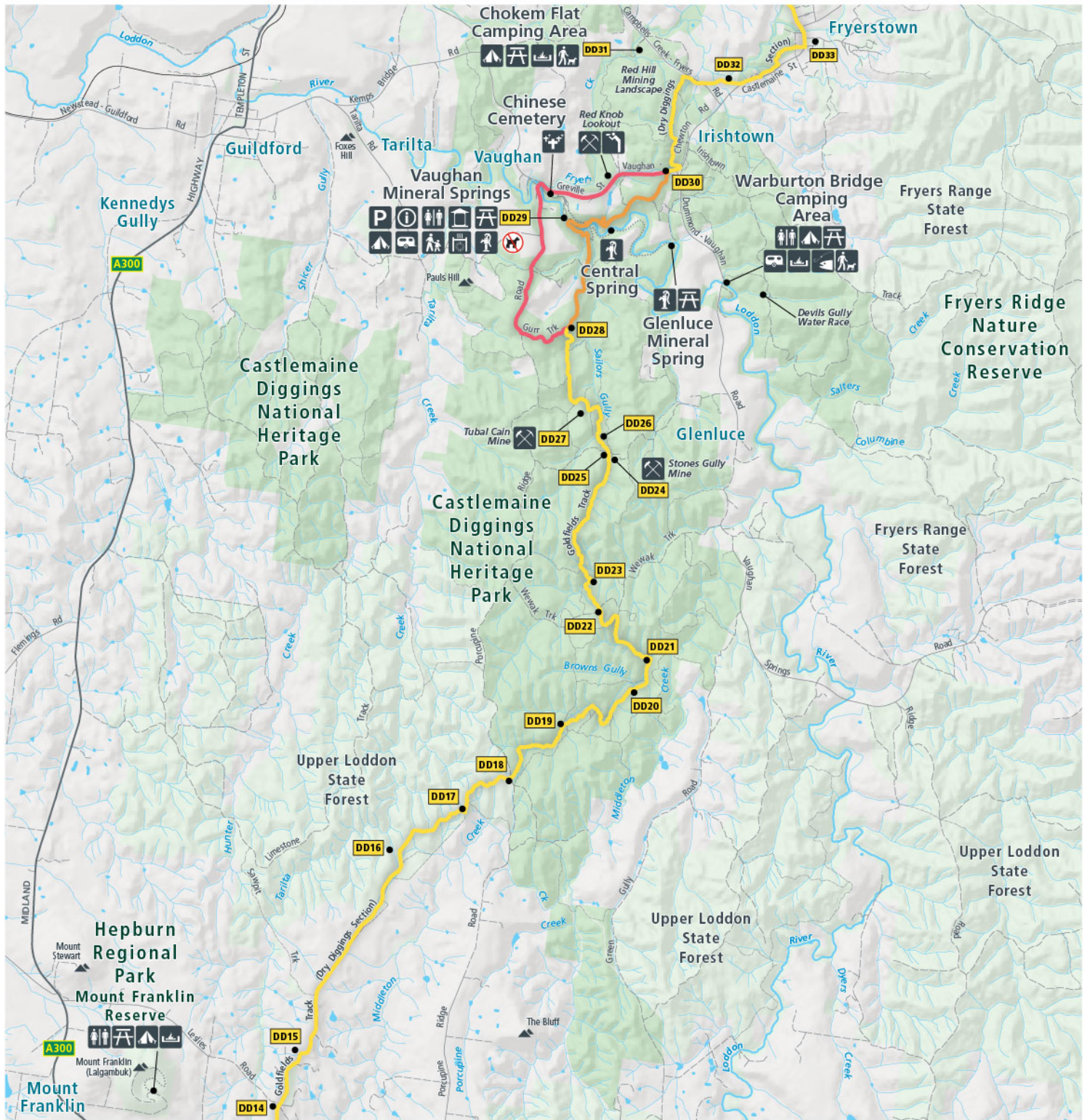
- 🌿** Featured park
- 🌿** Other reserves
- 🌳** Plantation



0 1 2 Kilometres

Castlemaine Diggings National Heritage Park

Southern Diggings



- Parking
- Park information
- Visitor information centre
- Toilet
- Picnic area
- Rotunda
- Camping area
- Fireplace

- Mine site
- Learn about Dja Dja Wurrung Culture
- Historic hut
- Family walk
- Self guided walk
- Mineral spring
- Monument
- Cemetery

- Electric barbecue
- Caravan site
- Fishing
- Lookout
- Dogs on lead
- No dogs permitted

- Freeway/highway
- Main road
- Sealed road
- Unsealed road
- Vehicular track
- Walking track
- Railway line

Goldfields Track

- Shared trail
- Walkers only
- Cycling detour
- Goldfields Track stop
- Featured park
- Other reserves
- Plantation



Scenic drives

Driving between heritage sites in the Park takes you through an ever-changing landscape of rolling hills and forests, gullies dramatically eroded by sluice mining, small towns with historic buildings, and picturesque rural communities.

Many roads are accessible to 2WD vehicles, but some tracks are only accessible by 4WD. Use the Park maps to plan your route.

The [Mount Alexander Diggings and Eureka Reef](#) audio tours visit seventeen heritage sites in and around the Park with stories and music about the sites that you can listen to as you explore.

Dog walking

Dog walking is permitted on all roads and on most walking tracks. Dogs must be kept on a lead and under control at all times. Please collect and remove your dog's droppings for the sake of other visitors and to avoid stress to native animals.

Dogs are prohibited in Expedition Pass Reservoir, at Vaughan Mineral Springs, Herons Reef, The Monk, Nimrod Reef Mine and Welsh Village.

Horse riding

Horse riding is permitted on all formed roads in the park, including Management Vehicle Only tracks, except at Vaughan Mineral Springs. Horses are prohibited on walking tracks, in camping areas and at Vaughan Mineral Springs.

Camping

Camping is available at Vaughan Mineral Springs, Warburtons Bridge and Chokem Flat Camping Areas. No fees or bookings apply. All sites are unpowered.

Fires are only permitted within the fireplaces provided and may already be in use. We recommend bringing your own portable camping stove or barbecue.

| Camping Area Facilities | Caravans | Picnic tables | Toilets | Barbecues | Fire pits | Dogs allowed |
|-------------------------|----------|---------------|---------|-----------|-----------|--|
| Camping Areas | | | | | | |
| Chokem Flat | ● | ● | | | ● |  |
| Vaughan Mineral Springs | ● | ● | ● | ● | |  |
| Warburtons Bridge | ● | ● | ● | | ● |  |

The peaceful **Chokem Flat** camping area is located on the banks of Fryers Creek, close to the Goldfields Track, and offers a convenient central base from which to explore the Goldfields. The campground is suitable for large groups and popular with prospectors. Dogs must be kept on a lead at all times.

The camping area at **Vaughan Mineral Springs** is located on the hill above the day visitor area with access to the toilets, picnic tables, shelter and electric barbecues provided there. It is popular with families and can be busy in school holidays. Dogs are prohibited.

Warburtons Bridge camping area is located in a scenic bend of the Loddon River. Go fishing, take a walk through the diverse mining landscape nearby or relax and enjoy the wildlife and spring wildflowers. Dogs must be kept on a lead at all times.

Prospecting

Fossicking and prospecting are permitted only in designated areas and prohibited within 50 metres of most walking tracks. Download the Castlemaine Prospecting Map from the parks.vic.gov.au or pick

one up from the Castlemaine Visitor Information Centre. Prospectors must hold a current Miner's Right.

Fishing

Fishing is possible all year round in Expedition Pass Reservoir, and at Vaughan Springs, Warburtons Bridge and other locations along the Loddon River when water levels are sufficiently high. A Victorian recreational fishing licence is required.

Places to visit

Garfield Water Wheel and the Northern Diggings

The Garfield Water Wheel is your gateway to the Northern Diggings. Marvel at the stone foundations of what was one of the largest water wheels in the world and learn about the spiritual connection between water and the Dja Dja Wurrung People.

Enjoy one of the self-guided walks from the Garfield trailhead, or drive to the Monster Meeting Site, Pennyweight Flat Cemetery or Nimrod Reef Mine and Welsh Village (parking on Welsh St).

Visit the Specimen Gully Hut, the site where the Mt Alexander goldrush began, and learn about this discovery and how the Dja Dja Wurrung people used slate from the local quarry and built shelters from the interpretive signs.

Relax on the banks of the Expedition Pass Reservoir, or go for a refreshing swim, fish or paddle. Enjoy a stroll and picnic in Kalimna Park or explore the Forest Creek Gold Diggings.



1 Garfield Mine Heritage Walk

Grade 2, 500m circuit, 15mins. Gravel and earth track. Gentle hills. Heritage notes available.

Starting from the Garfield trailhead, this short circuit walk explores the Garfield Mine. Numbered posts correspond with the information in the heritage notes and on the sign at the trailhead.



2 Garfield Bush Walk

Grade 2, 400m circuit, 10mins. Gravel and earth track. Gentle hills. Heritage notes available.

Starting from the Garfield trailhead, this short walk meanders through the bush offering you a taste of the Box-Ironbark forest.



3 Monster Meeting Site Walk

Grade 3, 5.5km loop, 2hrs. Gravel and earth track. Gentle to moderate hills. Some bushwalking experience recommended. Heritage notes available.

This loop walk takes you from the Garfield trailhead down to the site of Monster Meeting, where 15,000 gold diggers met in December 1851 to protest an increase in the mining licence fee. Explore well-preserved gold mining features and enjoy great views over Chewton and Forest Creek from the Burns Hill Lookout along the way.

Alternatively, park on Golden Point Road and take a short stroll to the Monster Meeting Site or walk up to the Burns Hill Lookout (Grade 3, 1km return, 20 mins). Experience a Dja Dja Wurrung Welcome to Country using the QR code on a sign at the Monster Meeting Site.



4 Pennyweight Flat Cemetery Walk

Grade 3, 6.5km loop, 2-2.5hrs. Gravel and earth track. Gentle to moderate hills. Some bushwalking experience recommended. Heritage notes available. Rated ■ (moderate) for mountain bikes.

This loop walk explores several mining features between the Garfield trailhead and the Pennyweight Flat Cemetery, where dreams of success on the goldfields came to a sad end.



5 Quartz Hill Walk

Grade 3, 3km loop, 1-1.5hrs. Gravel and earth track. Moderate hills, some steeper sections. Bushwalking experience recommended. Heritage notes available.

Trace the path of prospectors who followed the gold up through the gullies into the hills. Starting from the Garfield trailhead, this loop walk explores the upper reaches of Sailors Gully and Quartz Hill.



6 Welsh Village Walk

Grade 3. From Garfield trailhead: Grade 3, 5km loop, 2-2.5hrs. From Welsh St carpark: Grade 3, 1.2km loop, 45mins. Moderate hills, some steeper sections. Bushwalking experience recommended. Heritage notes available.

Step back in time amid the atmospheric ruins of the Nimrod Reef Mine and Welsh Village, an abandoned goldrush settlement, and learn about Dja Dja Wurrung Culture before and during the goldrush.

To preserve the unique heritage of Nimrod Reef and Welsh Village, dogs and bikes are not permitted beyond the carpark on Welsh St, and there is limited signage. Download the Castlemaine Diggings Northern Walks map from [Avenza Maps](#) before you set out.



7 Forest Creek Trail

Grade 2, 9km one way, 2-3hrs. Rated ● (easy) for mountain bikes. Some interpretive signs. Heritage notes available for parts of the trail.

Follow Forest Creek through what was once the richest goldfield in the world on this shared walking and cycling trail from the Western Reserve on Hargraves St in Castlemaine to Expedition Pass Reservoir at Golden Point. The trail is reasonably flat between Castlemaine and Chewton and suitable for all-terrain prams.

Follow the ■ red-capped posts and look out for interpretive signs. Visit other goldrush sites, like the Forest Creek Gold Diggings and Monster Meeting Site along the way.



8 Forest Creek Gold Diggings

Grade 2, 400m circuit, 30mins. Gravel and earth track. Slight hills, one short steeper section. Interpretive signs.

Discover how generations of miners won gold from Forest Creek. Interpretive signs explain the landscape features and environmental impacts of various types of alluvial gold mining, including shaft sinking, tunnelling and hydraulic sluicing. Picnic tables available.



9 Kalimna Park Circuit

Grade 3, 1.6km circuit, 45mins. Gravel and earth track. Gentle hills. Rated ■ (moderate) for mountain bikes.

Enjoy a family walk or bike ride at this popular spot on the edge of Castlemaine. Explore rich plant and animal life, including wildflowers and rare butterflies. Download the [Kalimna Park Circuit Walk Guide](#).

Eureka Reef and the Central Diggings

Explore well-preserved gold mining features on the self-guided loop walk at Eureka Reef or the 1.2km return walk along the Goldfields Track from the carpark on the Old Coach Road to the Spring Gully Historic Mine. Picnic tables are available at both carparks.

Enjoy a scenic drive through the Central Diggings and stop at the Wattle Gully Mine, the Escott Grave and Herons Reef and Cobblers Gully along the way.

Walk or ride the Goldfields Track to explore the gold mining relics of the Red Hill Mining landscape and Irishtown, visit historic Fryerstown, and take a detour to The Monk for views over the surrounding area from one of the highest points in the Park.



Eureka Reef Heritage Walk

Grade 3, 1.8km, 1-1.5hr loop. Gravel and earth track. Gentle to moderate hills. Heritage notes available.

This self-guided walk in relaxing bushland takes you back through 140 years of mining history. See the forest through the eyes of the Dja Dja Wurrung People, alluvial gold diggers and quartz reef miners. Numbered posts correspond to the information in the heritage notes and on the sign at the start of the walk.

The [Eureka Reef Walking Tour](#) also features stories and music about the stops along the way.

Vaughan Mineral Springs and the Southern Diggings

Vaughan Mineral Springs is a popular spot for spending time with friends and family. Sample the mineral waters, explore the Chinese Cemetery or follow the Goldfields Track along the Loddon River to Central Spring (Grade 3, 2km return, 45mins) once the location of Chinese market gardens.

The large open grassy areas at Vaughan are ideal for family games and picnics, and children will love the giant slide and a splash in the river on a warm day. Toilets, picnic tables, a shelter and free electric barbecues are provided.

There is plenty of wildlife along the Loddon River, and in autumn the leaves of introduced trees put on a striking display of red and gold.

Drive to Glenluce Mineral Spring to enjoy a peaceful picnic and explore the intriguing rock formations and pull over at Red Knob Lookout for views of impressive cliffs created by hydraulic sluicing.

Walk or ride the Goldfields Track to explore the remote heritage sites in the Southern Diggings.



Goldfields Track

Grade 4 (variable), 210km with shorter sections that can be walked in a day or less. Rated ■ (moderate) for mountain bikes. Gravel and earth shared use track. Gentle to moderate hills with steeper sections. Some obstacles. Bushwalking experience recommended.

The Goldfields Track passes through the Castlemaine Diggings on its way from Ballarat to Bendigo. The Dry Diggings and Leanganook Track sections offer walkers and mountain-bikers the opportunity to explore the Park's unique combination of natural beauty and gold rush heritage. Follow the ■ gold-capped posts.

Free GPS files can be downloaded from [goldfieldstrack.com.au](#) or drop into the Castlemaine Visitor Information Centre for more information. Refer to the Park maps to see which heritage sites can be visited along the Goldfields Track.

Plants and animals

The Box-Ironbark forest consists mainly of coppiced regrowth trees. The wattles begin to bloom in winter, followed by spectacular displays of wildflowers, including tiny native orchids, daisies, lilies, heaths and grevilleas in spring and early summer.

Many species of birds can be seen around the diggings, including resident and migratory species that follow the blossoms through Victoria's Box Ironbark woodlands. They share the forest with secretive Brush-tailed Phascogales, possums, gliders, Echidnas, Swamp Wallabies and Eastern Grey Kangaroos.

Good spots for birds and wildflowers include Kalimna Park, Eureka Reef, Herons Reef, and along the Loddon River at Vaughan Springs, Central Spring, Glenluce Springs and Warburtons Bridge.

Learn more and get involved

The [Castlemaine Field Naturalists](#) hold regular meetings and walks and maintain [castlemaine flora.org.au](#), a great resource for identifying local plants.

The [Friends of Kalimna Park](#) are actively involved in promoting and defending the biodiversity values of Kalimna Park.

The [Friends of the Box-Ironbark Forests](#) support conservation of private and public land in the Mount Alexander region and host regular bushwalks.

Taking care of the park



The Castlemaine Diggings National Heritage Park has been included on the National Heritage List as Australia's outstanding gold rush landscape. The Park's goldrush features are of great national cultural and historic significance. Left undisturbed, they will remain for many future generations to rediscover.

Help us look after your park by following these guidelines:

- No rubbish bins are provided. Please take all your rubbish away with you for recycling or disposal.
- Culturally important Aboriginal sites are found throughout this landscape. Please tread lightly and be mindful of conserving both physical and intangible heritage. All artefacts are of cultural significance and are protected by cultural heritage laws.
- Please do not touch the ruins or disturb the ground. All plants, animals, historical artefacts, archaeological sites and geographic features are protected by law.
- Prospect only where permitted.
- Firearms are prohibited.
- Light fires only in fire places where provided (see Park maps).
- No fires may be lit on a day of Total Fire Ban, including campfires, solid and fuel barbecues and ovens.
- Built in and portable gas or electric barbecues may be used, provided it is not a day of Total Fire Ban, and:
 - a three-metre area is cleared of anything flammable
 - at least 10 litres of water is available for immediate use
 - an adult is in attendance at all times.
- Vehicles, including motor bikes, may only be used on formed open roads. Drivers must be licensed and vehicles registered and roadworthy.

Be prepared and stay safe



The Castlemaine Diggings is a heavily mined landscape and contains a variety of ongoing hazards, including uneven and unstable ground, mineshafts, open cuts, quarries, and mine tailings. For your own safety, please stay on mapped tracks and supervise children.

- Comply with local signs and do not climb cliffs or over or around barriers and fencing.
- We recommend hiring an experienced local guide if you wish to safely explore mining relics located off the mapped tracks. Enquire at the Castlemaine or Maldon Visitor Information Centres.
- Do not park or camp under or near large trees. Branches may fall at any time and swing away from the tree.
- It can be cold and wet in winter and very hot and dry in summer so be prepared for adverse weather conditions.
- Mobile phone reception is unreliable in the Park, particularly in the gullies. You may get a signal by moving to higher ground.

Emergencies

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.

The majority of Castlemaine Diggings National Heritage Park is in the North Central fire district, with the area south of the Stones Gully Mine 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. We do not recommend visiting forested areas on hot, dry, windy days or when storms are forecast.

Check the Fire Danger Rating and for days of Total Fire Ban at [emergency.vic.gov.au](https://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 Catastrophic Fire Danger Rating days this Park will be closed for public safety. Do not enter the Park. If you are already in the Park, leave the night before or as early as possible in the morning. Warnings signs may be erected, but do not expect a personal warning. Check the latest conditions at [parks.vic.gov.au](https://www.parks.vic.gov.au) or by calling 13 1963.

Further Information

Call Parks Victoria on 13 1963 or visit [parks.vic.gov.au](https://www.parks.vic.gov.au)

Accommodation and guided tours of the goldfields can be arranged through the Castlemaine and Maldon Visitor Information Centres:

Castlemaine Visitor Information Centre

Market Building, 44 Mostyn Street, Castlemaine, VIC 3450

Phone: 1800 171 888 or (03) 5471 1795

Email: visitors@mountalexander.vic.gov.au

Website: [bendigoregion.com.au/visit-castlemaine-maldon](https://www.bendigoregion.com.au/visit-castlemaine-maldon)

Maldon Visitor Information Centre

Shire Gardens, High Street, Maldon, VIC 3463

Phone: 1800 171 888 or (03) 5475 2569

Email: maldonvic@mountalexander.vic.gov.au

Website: [bendigoregion.com.au/visit-castlemaine-maldon](https://www.bendigoregion.com.au/visit-castlemaine-maldon)

November 2022