

# GRAMPIANS PEAKS TRAIL

## *Walk Victoria's Icons*

Rising abruptly from the surrounding Western Plains, the Grampians, or Gariwerd as the area is known by Traditional Owners, is a series of rugged sandstone mountain ranges and is one of Victoria's most popular holiday destinations. The Grampians landscape is famous for its significant natural values, aboriginal culture, spectacular views and nature-based tourism experiences.

### Background

The Grampians National Park is a major visitor attraction for Victoria and Australia more broadly. It is the third most visited park in the state with over 1.3 million visiting per year for its natural and cultural values.

Parks Victoria is developing the Grampians Peaks Trail (GPT) which will showcase the beauty and majesty of the Grampians National Park's natural and cultural landscapes, providing world-class, iconic walking experiences that can be experienced in sections, or as one 13-day 160km journey.

The GPT Master Plan was completed in 2014 following extensive community consultation. Stage 1, a 33km three-day, two-night hike, was delivered in 2015 and Stage 2, the remaining 144km will be completed by the end of 2020.

Accordingly, the GPT was not envisaged when the current Grampians National Park Management Plan was released in 2003. Use and management of the GPT will be included in the new Greater Gariwerd (Grampians) Landscape Management Plan, as one of the visitor experiences in the landscape.

### What is the Grampians Peaks Trail?

Stage 1 of the GPT provided a new hiker camp and 16km of new trails in the vicinity of Halls Gap. With the inclusion of an existing camp and trails, this established a three-day, two-night 33km loop track experience, which has been used by over 10,000 people since opening in 2015. The budget for Stage 1 was \$1.3m funded by the Victorian Government.

GPT Stage 2 will provide another 11 camps and 144km of trails which, when completed in December 2020, combined with Stage 1 will deliver the total 12 camps and 160km of trails for the overall project. The Stage 2 budget is \$30.2m funded by the Victorian Government (\$20.3m) and the Federal Government (\$10.0m).

Each of the camps have been located to provide a unique experience and comprises of a main shelter for gathering and meal preparation, a separate toilet building, up to 12 tent pads, gathering spaces, boardwalks, and internal tracks positioned to minimise environmental impact. Ten of the camps are to be available for general use and one camp is intended for school groups. Some of the camps are in remote locations and only accessible by walking and helicopter (used for construction, toilet waste removal and emergencies) and other camps have road access for four-wheel drive management vehicles.

The 160km of Trail is comprised of approximately 100km of new tracks and 60km of upgraded existing tracks. A design objective was to maximise the use of existing tracks as part of vegetation management.

Most of the Trail meets Australian Standard Grade 4, with some areas being Grade 3 or Grade 5. This means the overall Trail is designed for experienced hikers, with some parts being long, steep, rough and arduous.

The track construction and surface treatment depends on the topography and geology at each location and includes benching/shaping of the ground only, stepping stones, stone paving or stone staircases. In some places, to facilitate safe navigation, infrastructure is being installed including either steel stairs (steep rocky areas), steel boardwalks (damp areas) or small bridges (creeks).



Stage 2 of the GPT will also deliver supporting infrastructure including:

- Signage – wayfinding, safety, interpretation
- Road access to some camps is being upgraded to provide for operations and maintenance support.

## Statutory compliance

All statutory compliance requirements have been considered and met during the planning phases of the GPT project.

Planning permits have been issued by the three local government authorities setting out the construction and operating requirements: Northern Grampians Shire Council, Ararat Rural City Council, Southern Grampians Shire Council.

Environmental planning has involved assessment regarding the Australian Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act and the Victorian Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act. Native vegetation removal is being conducted in accordance with the requirements for Crown land, as managed by Parks Victoria and the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning.

Parks Victoria is applying a best-practice approach to minimising or reducing native vegetation loss through strategies such as using existing tracks, avoiding highly sensitive locations, selective use of boardwalks, minimal-impact campsite clearings, and hand clearing tracks to minimum width.

Full Cultural Heritage Assessments have been conducted for all areas where works are to occur. This involved consultation with the three relevant Traditional Owner organisations, Barengi Gadjin Land Council, Gunditj Mirring Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation and Eastern Maar Aboriginal Corporation.

Project Governance has involved the following partners:

- Traditional Owner organisations: Barengi Gadjin Land Council, Gunditj Mirring Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation and Eastern Maar Aboriginal Corporation
- Local governments: Northern Grampians Shire Council, Ararat Rural City Council, Southern Grampians Shire Council
- Regional Development Victoria
- Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning
- Grampians Tourism.

## Who will use the Grampians Peaks Trail?

The GPT has been designed to provide varying experiences for multiple user groups including day walkers, free and independent walkers, walking groups, guided walkers, fully facilitated walkers and school groups. Options include single-day hikes, overnight hikes (1, 2 or 3 nights), as well as the entire 160km experience.

## Learn more about this project

- Web: [parks.vic.gov.au/projects/grampians-peaks-trail](https://parks.vic.gov.au/projects/grampians-peaks-trail)
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