

# Dandenong Ranges National Park



## Education Program

Dandenong Ranges National Park provides fantastic opportunities for students of all ages to connect with nature and learn in an outdoor environment. Explore different forest habitats including ancient rainforests. Observe the flora and fauna of the Dandenongs including the iconic Lyrebird and Mountain Ash, the tallest flowering plant in the world. Learn about park and fire management, human impacts, local history, and the importance of National Parks. Take a virtual tour of Victoria's special places or walk the famous 1000 steps and discover the link between the Dandenong Ranges and the World War II Kokoda campaign.

## Excursion Topics

### Creature Features

Nearly 200 fauna species call the Dandenong Ranges home. Students will learn about many of these animals by investigating a variety of animal bones, viewing a taxidermy animal collection to determine which have feathers, fur and scales and discovering how to identify the evidence that animals leave behind.

This session is complemented by a range of teacher led, outdoor activities that allow students to differentiate between living and nonliving things, identify plants and complete a Habitat Scorecard to assess the health of Dandenong Ranges National Park.

**Levels:** F - 4

**Learning areas:** Geography, Science, Mathematics

**Location:** Education Centre, Ferntree Gully Picnic Ground



### Victoria's Biodiversity

For such a small state, Victoria boasts an incredibly broad range of habitats from the Alps to the Mallee, Rainforests to Grasslands and Coastal to spectacular Marine environments.

In this session, students take a virtual tour of Victoria and discover the natural values, human impacts, and management strategies in Dandenong Ranges National Park

This session is complemented by a range of teacher led, outdoor activities that allow students to learn plant ID and mapping skills and gain an understanding of local park management strategies and community responses to fire.

**Levels:** 3 - 8

**Learning areas:** Geography, Science, Civics and Citizenship, Mathematics

**Location:** Education Centre, Ferntree Gully Picnic Ground

### Critters in Crisis

Australia has one of the worst native fauna extinction rates in the world. National parks and other protected areas provide refuge for many threatened, endangered and vulnerable native fauna species as they contain remnants of formerly widespread forests or other important vegetation types. The survival of the native fauna within a park is dependent on the protection and management of these vegetation remnants.

In this session, students learn about some of Victoria's threatened species and view a collection of taxidermy mounts of animals found in Dandenong Ranges National Park. Students also undertake a group activity to develop their own management strategies for a *Critter in Crisis* which are then presented to their peers.

**Levels:** 6 - 8

**Learning areas:** Geography, Science, Civics and Citizenship

**Location:** Education Centre, Ferntree Gully Picnic Ground



### Changes in the Ranges

Dandenong Ranges National Park has diverse habitats and a rich cultural history. Rotating through up to five activities, students use the Survey123 app to collect and compare data about biotic and abiotic factors in rainforest, wet forest, and dry forest habitats. They also discover the Aboriginal and European history of the Dandenongs and learn about management strategies that help park staff protect both the natural environment and park visitors.

After their visit, students can access Survey 123 data collected by participating schools as a digital resource to allow them to monitor the *Changes in Ranges*.

**Levels:** 5 - 9

**Learning areas:** Geography, Science, Mathematics

**Location:** Grants Picnic Ground

## Tread Lightly

Spending time in nature is great for improving mental, physical and spiritual health and wellbeing. Without adequate preparation, a park visit may lead to injuries, getting lost or inadvertently damaging the very features one came to visit in the first place.

In this session students will learn how to stay safe undertaking outdoor pursuits while minimising their impact on the natural environment.

This session is designed to be run in conjunction with the Kokoda Track Memorial Walk / 1000 Steps walk and is complemented by teacher led, outdoor activities examining management strategies and developing solutions for park management issues.

**Levels:** 5 - 10

**Learning areas:** Health and Physical Education, Geography

**Location:** Education Centre, Ferntree Gully Picnic Ground

## Kokoda

In 1998, Kokoda veterans adopted the 1000 Steps walking track and renamed it the Kokoda Track Memorial Walk due to its similarity to the Golden Staircase on the Kokoda Track in Papua New Guinea.

Students will learn about the Kokoda campaign, the challenges faced by soldiers and the qualities they needed to demonstrate while fighting on the Kokoda Track. They will also learn about the events that led to the war in the Pacific and the near invasion of Australia.

This session is designed to be run in conjunction with the Kokoda Track Memorial Walk / 1000 Steps walk.

**Levels:** 3 - 6, 9 - 10

**Key Learning areas:** History, Civics and Citizenship

**Location:** Education Centre, Ferntree Gully Picnic Ground



## ANZAC Service

This session is led by the Education Officer and is based on the ANZAC ceremony recommended for schools by the Department of Veterans' Affairs. Students are selected by schools to read key parts of the ceremony, lower and raise the Australian flag and lay wreaths at the base of the four pillars that display the key qualities of those who have served in Australia's Armed Forces. Students are also invited to participate in the singing parts of the ceremony.

This session is designed to be run in conjunction with the Kokoda Track Memorial Walk / 1000 Steps walk. A separate session on the Kokoda campaign is also offered.

**Levels:** F - 2, 5 -6, 9 -10

**Learning areas:** History, Civics and Citizenship

**Location:** Kokoda Terrace, Ferntree Gully Picnic Ground

## Living with the Forest - Fire in the Dandenongs

Fire is a natural part of the environment. Most plants have evolved to regenerate after fire however an increase in urbanisation in bushland areas has led to an increased risk to life and property. Historically, wildfires have occurred in the Dandenong Ranges roughly every five years however fire occurrence in recent years has decreased due to increased fire prevention works after the devastating fires of 1997 which killed three people and destroyed several homes.

Students will visit three sites in the National Park that have been burnt at different times over the last 80 years. They will collect data about fire risks and biotic and abiotic factors at each site to determine how fire has shaped both the landscape and the communities of the Dandenong Ranges and how fire is managed in one of the most fire prone areas in the entire world.

**Level:** VCE Geography - Unit 1

**Location:** Ferntree Gully Picnic Ground, One Tree Hill Picnic Ground, Grants Picnic Ground, Burkes Lookout



## Living with the Forest - Tourism in the Dandenongs

With nearly 4 million visitors per year, Dandenong Ranges National Park is the most visited National Park in Victoria and the general region is a highly popular destination for both domestic and international tourists.

Students will visit three sites in the National Park and the hills township of Sassafras to determine why tourists visit the Dandenong Ranges, how tourism has impacted on the National Park and wider area and what strategies have been implemented to ensure the sustainability of tourism in this beautiful part of Victoria.

**Level:** VCE Geography - Unit 2

**Location:** Ferntree Gully Picnic Ground, Grants Picnic Ground, O'Donohues Picnic Ground, Sassafras township

## Tertiary Groups

The Dandenong Ranges Education Program also caters for tertiary students. Contact the Education Officer to customise an excursion

## Delivery locations

Dandenong Ranges National Park is 40km south east of the Melbourne CBD. Education Sessions are delivered from Grants Picnic Ground in Sherbrooke Forest, and both the historic Education Centre and the Kokoda Terrace at the base of the 1000 Steps in the Ferntree Gully Picnic ground.

Ferntree Gully Picnic Ground and Grants Picnic Ground are both accessible by standard school buses and public transport. Free onsite parking is available for cars and school buses.



## Group size

Education programs cater for both individual classes and larger groups of up to 120 students. With larger groups, students rotate through both Education Officer led and teacher guided activities during their visit.

Activities provide a wonderful hands-on experience that enable students to explore the park in a fun and stimulating way.

Resources are provided for teacher led activities.



## Costs

Cost per student for an Education Officer led session is \$7.80. This will increase to \$7.90 per student from July 1<sup>st</sup>, 2023. Fees are GST inclusive.

ANZAC services are delivered free of charge as a community service

## Timetable

Programs generally run between 10am and 2.30pm allowing adequate travel time to and from the park. Start and finish times are flexible and lunch, play time and toilet breaks are scheduled into the excursion program.

## Sustainability

Education sessions are planned and delivered with sustainability in mind. Parks Victoria encourages teachers and students to plan for their excursion by choosing rubbish free food options and dressing appropriately for the weather and activities.

In line with park regulations, rubbish bins are not provided in the national park and participants must take any rubbish home.

Dandenong Ranges National Park education program builds complementary knowledge, skills and attitudes to support schools working to complete the Biodiversity module of the *ResourceSmart Schools* program.

## Accessibility

Outdoor components of excursions take place on unsealed tracks with uneven surfaces. A Hippocampe all-terrain wheelchair is available to use free of charge for students with restricted mobility. The wheelchair can be used on semi-rough walking track surfaces that are not accessible with a conventional wheelchair. School staff are responsible for the safe transfer of user.

Advance bookings are required.



## Incursions

The Education Officer is available for school incursions. This service will assist in keeping your costs down while allowing your students to access new knowledge and experiences.

## Bookings and further information

For further information contact:

**Julia Pickwick**

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