

Buchan Caves Reserve

Krauatungalung Country

Visitor Guide



Nestled in a picturesque valley in East Gippsland, the Buchan Caves Reserve hides an underground world of colour and enchantment just waiting to be discovered. Hundreds of caves are located in this region and some of the most spectacular limestone formations in Australia can be found here. The reserve is home to the Royal Cave and Fairy Cave, two of the finest caves in the region boasting elaborate stalactites and stalagmites and beautiful calcite.



Caring for Country together

Welcome to the lands of the Gunaikurnai people, the Traditional Owners of Country featured in this guide.

For Gunaikurnai, Country is the land, the waters, the people, and the stories, the past and the future. All of it is connected. All of it is important to us. Country heals us and connects us to our Ancestors, our culture, and our dreaming.

The Gunaikurnai Land and Waters Aboriginal Corporation and Parks Victoria work together to care for and protect the Buchan Caves Reserve. This is called Joint Management and was created in 2010 by a Recognition Settlement Agreement between the State of Victoria and Gunaikurnai Traditional Owners; the first to be made under the Traditional Owner Settlement Act.

Joint Management is an opportunity for Gunaikurnai people to have real influence over what happens on Country, combining traditional knowledge with western ways of land management.

By conserving and protecting our cultural landscapes, the experience is enhanced for all community members and visitors

Getting there

Buchan Caves Reserve is located 360km east of Melbourne. The Reserve is 60 mins from Bairnsdale via Bruthen (B500/C620/C608), or 45 mins from Lakes Entrance via Nowa Nowa (A1/C620/C608).

Things to see and do

Cave tours

Buchan Caves Reserve is famous for its honeycomb of caves full of spectacular limestone formations.

Royal Cave and Fairy Cave are open for guided tours daily, except Christmas Day. Tickets must be purchased 24 hours in advance on-line, at www.parks.vic.gov.au and search on "Buchan Caves Guided Tours". There are five tours daily between the September school holidays and Easter and three tours daily for the rest of the year and additional tours during peak period."

The caves were formed over many thousands of years by underground rivers cutting through limestone rock. The formations are created by rain water seeping through cracks and dissolving some of the limestone. As each droplet comes through the roof it deposits calcite which crystallises in a small ring. In time, stalactites are formed on the roof of the cave, and stalagmites build up from droplets which fall to the floor.

Parks Victoria

Phone 13 1963
www.parks.vic.gov.au

Walking

For the short easy walks, all you need are sturdy shoes with good tread and comfortable clothing. For the longer and more demanding walks, a reasonable level of fitness, good boots and plenty of water are recommended. For your safety please remain on the walking tracks.



Moon Hill Walk – 1.3km, 30 minutes return Grade 3

This short walk leads to viewpoints overlooking the reserve and the Buchan Valley. It passes Moon Cave along the way, so bring a torch and have a look in the entrance. The track continues past the Devils Punchbowl, a large collapsed cave system, to the top of the hill. From here you can see the extent of the exposed limestone on both sides of the valley in the reserve, a little further across visit the lookout for beautiful views of the Buchan Valley. While enjoying the view keep your eye out for the Buchan Blue Wattle which is native to this area.

If you continue on and join Northern Arm Track, it will lead you back to the campground, which will be an additional 30 minutes.



Spring Creek Walk – 3km, 1.5 hours return Grade 3

This superb walk splits into the higher Tea Tree Track and the lower Kanooka Track with both meeting at the Spring Creek Falls viewing platform. The Tea Tree Track is an adventurous walk that has some steep areas on its way up to the falls. A short distance along the track to your left, the rock type changes from the grey Buchan Caves Limestone to the older Snowy River Volcanics.

To come back, take the lower Kanooka Track. This track criss-crosses the creek and features mossy rocks, beautiful ferns and trees dominated by Kanooka Gums. Keep an eye out for Lyrebirds, Gippsland Water Dragons, Kookaburras, King Parrots and other wildlife.



Caves Reserve Track – 4km, 2 hours return Grade 3

This walk starts opposite the playground and follows a fire access track along a ridge to the north western corner of the reserve.

Turn left at the intersection to meet up with the Spring Creek Walking Track and the Granite Pools Walking Track. The Caves Reserve Track returns to the campground via the Northern Arm Track.



Granite Pools Walk – 4km, 2 hours return Grade 4

One of the steeper walks in the reserve, it makes its way through some tall timber and moss covered gullies. Look out for lyrebirds on your way and enjoy the wonderful views of the Buchan Valley.



FJ Wilson interpreted walk – 2km, 1 hour return Grade 2

This walk is named after Frederick Wilson, who came to Buchan in 1907 from Jenolan Caves in the Blue Mountains (NSW) and contributed significantly to the development of the reserve.

This walk starts about 100m east of the Visitor Centre following the Royal Cave exit track and ends near the Fairy Cave entrance. From here you can return along the main road through the reserve. Numbered posts along the walk refer to points below.

1. Discovering Passages

Behind this entrance a short tunnel leads to the Federal Cave. It is more than 400m long and contains very white and strikingly beautiful formations.

Discovered by Frederick Wilson and William Bonwick in 1915, the cave was opened to visitors in 1917.

Wilson and Bonwick discovered the Federal Cave by following a stream passage leading from the Royal Cave. This stream passage passes through Fairy, Royal, Federal and Dukes Caves, ending its journey at the swimming pool.

Until 1970 Federal Cave was lit by power generated here at the reserve. When electricity was connected to Fairy and Royal Caves, Federal Cave was closed and sealed off.

Interest in Federal Cave has grown in recent times and it is now available for specialised tours during Christmas, Easter and all school holidays. In 2007 a low voltage lighting system powered by solar energy was introduced into the Federal Cave by the Friends of Buchan Caves.

2. Limestone at Buchan

The limestone at Buchan formed about 380 million years ago under very shallow seas covering much of East Gippsland. A later period of movement of the earth's crust raised this area above sea level. Limestone is a rock that contains more than 50% calcium carbonate, which is usually present as the mineral calcite.

The skeletons of most marine animals that lack backbones, such as corals, starfish, sea urchins and shells are made up of calcium carbonate. Some algae can also produce calcium carbonate. The limestone here is composed of dark grey lime mud with numerous fossils scattered throughout.

Look at the small grooves in this rock, called 'Rillenkarren' or 'Solution Flutes'. They are formed by rainwater draining across the rock, gently dissolving the limestone. As time goes by, the grooves become deeper.

3. Hidden Fossils

The Royal Caves tour ends here. Although Royal Cave was discovered in 1910, this artificial exit tunnel wasn't completed until 1929. Look for fossils in the limestone wall built around the exit.

4. Natural Steps

Notice here how the steps have been made from the layers of limestone. These layers are known as 'bedding planes'. Vertical joint lines across the bedding planes allow water to seep through the rock from the surface, and over time this water action slowly dissolves the limestone.

This is how cave development begins. Good examples of fossilised coral and brachiopods can be found here in the rock.

5. Shh...what can you hear? From here, take a moment to stop and listen for Lyrebirds and Bell Miners. Did you know that the Lyrebird can perfectly imitate just about any sound it hears?

From here, head towards the Fairy Cave entrance and down the steps back to the main road. On your way back to the Visitor Centre take your time to look at the many ornamental trees planted in the reserve since the 1930s.

Flora and fauna

The Buchan Caves Reserve plays host to two significant flora species, Buchan Blue Wattle (*Acacia caerulea*) and the Leafy Greenhood (*Pterostylis cucullata*).

The reserve is a refuge for wildlife with over 100 species of birds recorded, including King Parrots, White Winged Choughs and Currawongs which can be seen around the camp area. Listen for the Bellbirds and Lyrebirds near the Fairy Cave entrance. Did you know Buchan Caves is home to an underground breeding habitat for the endangered platypus? The platypus are monitored by Parks Victoria and Gunaikurnai Rangers.

Kangaroos are plentiful throughout the reserve. At night the campground comes alive with Brush-tailed Possums and the calls of Boobook Owls.

Please do not feed the wildlife. They find their food in the wild. Feeding them can result in diseases, aggressive behaviour and an unnatural reliance on humans for food.

Dogs and other pets are not permitted in the park.

Picnicking

Buchan Caves is a great place for a family picnic. There are electric and woodfired barbecues to cook on and plenty of tables and shelters around the reserve. There is also a playground and a swimming pool which is fed from an underground stream. The Visitor Centre boasts an interpretive display of the cave systems.

Camping and accommodation

There is a range of accommodation options at Buchan Caves Reserve. Shared facilities include hot showers, toilets, a laundry, a camper's kitchen and electric and wood fired barbecues.

To book, go to www.parks.vic.gov.au/stay or call 13 1963.

Campground

The campground has 40 sites with power and an additional 21 sites without power.

Caves House – Country style accommodation

Historic Caves House offers a truly relaxing experience while staying at the Buchan Caves Reserve.

- Sleeps up to eight people with three bedrooms featuring queen size beds and one ante room with two single beds.
- All linen supplied
- Fully furnished throughout with a wood heater and split system air conditioning
- Beautiful covered front deck with river views
- Outdoor BBQ and fire

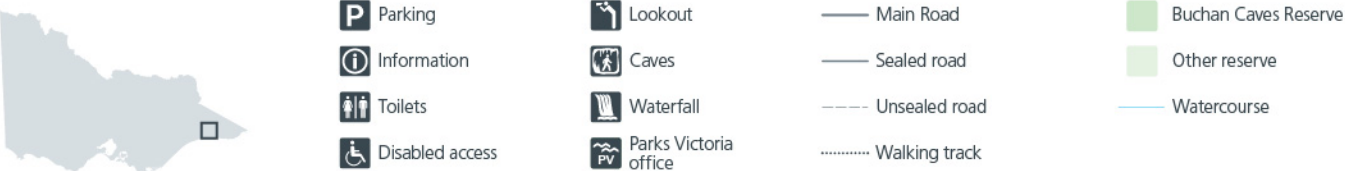
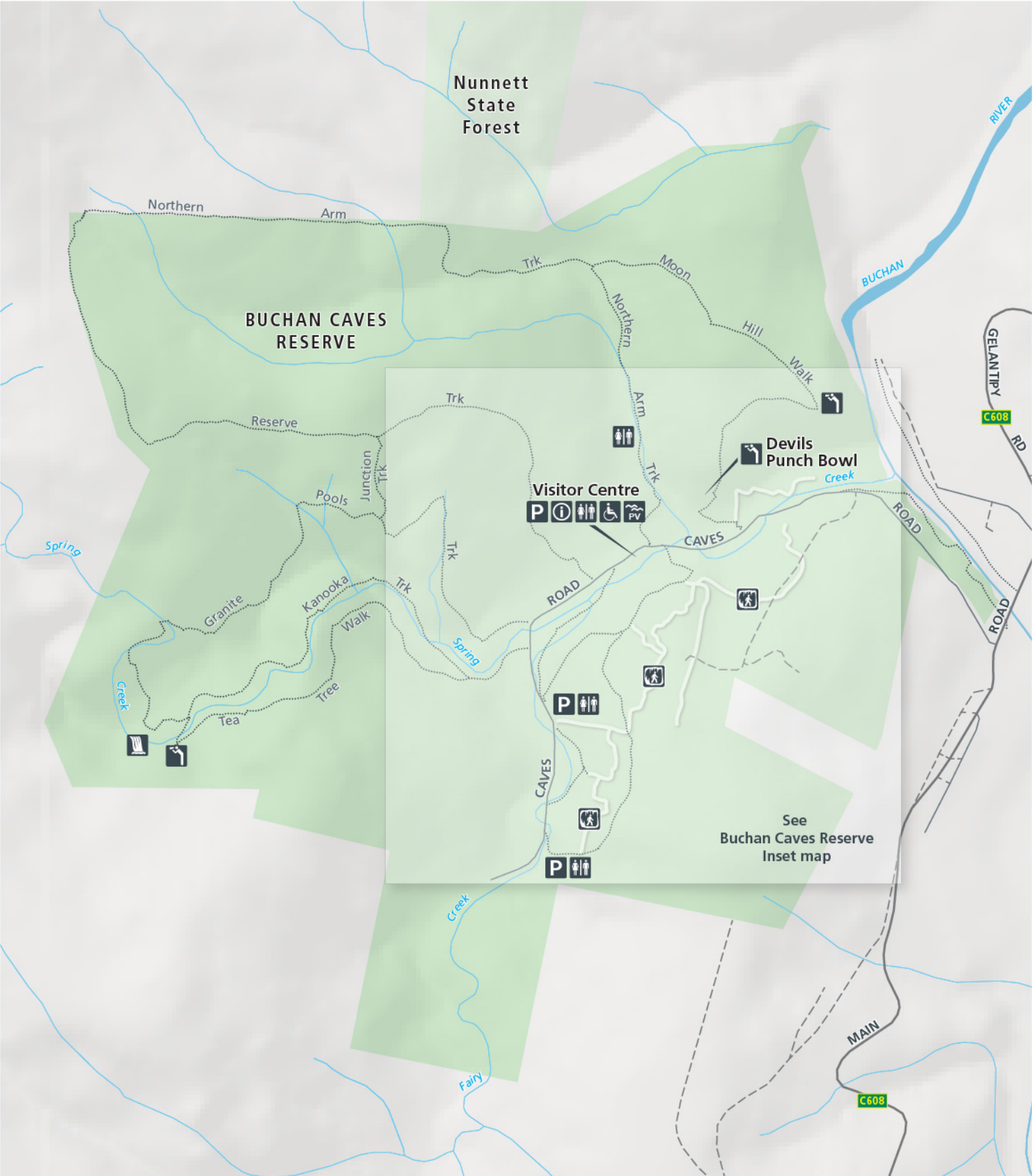
Be prepared and stay safe

For emergency assistance call Triple Zero (000). Buchan Caves Reserve is in the East Gippsland 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 at 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. Warnings signs may be erected, but do not expect a personal warning. Do not enter the Park. If you are already in the Park, leave the night before or as early as possible in the morning. Check the latest conditions at parks.vic.gov.au or by calling 13 1963.

Buchan Caves Reserve - Overview





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|------------------------|----------------|--------------------|-------------------------|
| Parking | Picnic table | Camping area | Cave network |
| Information | Shelter | Lookout | Walking track |
| Toilets | BBQ (electric) | Caves | Unsealed road |
| Disabled access toilet | Fire hose | Playground | Sealed road |
| Disabled access | Fireplace | Swimming | Buchan Caves Reserve |
| | Camp kitchen | Public telephone | Emergency assembly area |
| | Shower | Drinks / ice cream | |

