



Budj Bim National Park

Visitor Guide

Discover the rich cultural heritage of Budj Bim and the natural wonders of this ancient, volcanic landscape. Budj Bim National Park is home to a tranquil crater lake, lava canals and caves in a rugged bushland setting. Enjoy a picnic, camp and walk among Manna Gums teeming with native wildlife.



Welcome

"Ngatanwarr wartee pa kakay teen Gunditjmara mirring - Welcome brothers and sisters to Gunditjmara Country.

Our spirit is in this Country - its land, trees, rocks, plants and sky. It flows from Budj Bim to Tyrendarra and beyond to Koonang (the sea). It is a part of us and who we are, and we ask that you care for it when you visit.

Gunditjmara Country is a flowing and connected cultural landscape of special places: forests, mountains, lakes, streams, eel traps, rocks and pathways all woven together to form our Country.

The Aboriginal Traditional Owners welcome you to Budj Bim. We are happy and proud to share this special place with you and ask that you take the time to look, listen and feel the Country. The Creation Ancestors gave us a kinship system linking people to all things and the cultural responsibility to look after them all.

We have always understood the biodiversity of Country and our traditional ancestral knowledge is a vital part of managing this rich environment." – Gunditjmara Elders.

About Budj Bim National Park

Budj Bim National Park is Victoria's first co-managed national park. The partnership between Gunditjmara Traditional Owners and Parks Victoria was formalised through the establishment of the Budj Bim Council.

The Council forms part of the 2007 Native Title Settlement Agreement between the Gunditjmara and the Victorian Government. Through this partnership, Traditional Owners and Parks Victoria work together to manage and protect

this nationally and internationally significant cultural landscape.

Getting here

Budj Bim National Park is located 330 km southwest of Melbourne. Travel along the Hamilton-Port Fairy Road to Macarthur, then travel west on the sealed Mt Eccles Road.

Things to see and do

Discover the rich cultural heritage of Budj Bim and explore the natural wonders of this ancient volcanic landscape. The visitor area is home to a tranquil crater lake, lava canals and caves in a rugged bushland setting. Enjoy a picnic, go camping or take a walk among Manna Gums teeming with native wildlife.

Walking

Explore Budj Bim's dramatic volcanic features on foot. Wander through lava-flow canals, stroll around the crater rim, or follow the shoreline of Lake Surprise below. Along the way, you'll see the rocky lava formations, caves and canals while learning about the powerful volcanic forces that shaped the landscape.

All walks start from the picnic area or the Lake Surprise Lookout carpark. Before you go, wear sturdy walking shoes for the uneven terrain, and bring a hat, sunscreen and plenty of drinking water.



Natural Bridge

Grade Moderate, 3.4 km 2.5 hrs return

This short walk leads to the Natural Bridge, a lava canal, and a cavern which you can enter and explore. Carry a torch and wear appropriate shoes as the cavern is dark and

slippery. This walk can also be commenced after driving along the Natural Bridge Road to the Natural Bridge carpark. A 200 m walk from the carpark leads to the Natural Bridge cavern.



Lake Surprise

Grade Moderate, 2.5 km 1.5 hr circuit.

Lake Surprise is a hidden gem nestled within the volcanic landscape. Starting from the lookout, this walk descends to the lake shore and follows the water's edge, offering views of the crater lake and surrounding bushland. Please note that swimming is not permitted in Lake Surprise.



Crater Rim

Grade Moderate, 2.8 km, 2 hr circuit

Similar to the Lake Surprise Walk, this trail offers a different perspective of the volcanic landscape as it follows the higher crater rim. Along the way, enjoy views of Lake Surprise from two lookouts, including a dramatic cantilevered viewing platform. Tunnel Cave, a remnant of an ancient lava flow, is located 250 metres along the Crater Rim Walk. A torch is recommended for exploring the cave.



Lava Canal

Grade Moderate 6.6 km, 3 hr circuit

A longer and more challenging loop walk, this trail follows an ancient lava-flow channel and features uneven terrain throughout. Highlights include Tunnel Cave, the Lava Blisters and the Natural Bridge, offering a closer look at Budj Bim's remarkable volcanic landscape.

Cycling and 4WD

A network of shared-use tracks throughout Budj Bim National Park is open to both vehicles and mountain bikes. All track users should remain alert and be mindful of other visitors. Roads to the campground, Lake Surprise visitor area and Natural Bridge are accessible for 2WD vehicles. Other roads throughout the park are considered 4WD only.

Tracks designated **Management Vehicles Only** are closed to all public vehicles, including mountain bikes. These tracks remain open to walkers, providing quieter opportunities to explore the park on foot.

For experienced riders, the **Budj Bim Trail** extends beyond the national park and can be completed in a single day or as a 3-day journey. Camping is available along the trail at Allambie, Murphys Hut and Lake Gorrie. These campgrounds are located on Gunditj Mirring-managed land outside the national park.

Budj Bim Tours offer an excellent way to experience the Budj Bim Cultural Landscape and learn about Gunditjmar

culture and history. To book a tour, visit www.budjbimtours.net

Camping and picnicking

The picnic area provides a peaceful setting for day visitors, with sheltered picnic tables, barbecues and accessible toilets.

Located near Lake Surprise and next to the picnic area, **Budj Bim Campground** is set among rugged lava formations and tall, twisted Manna Gums. These trees are a favourite food source for koalas, so keep an eye on the treetops during your stay.

The campground's 17 campsites are nestled in sheltered hollows between rocky ridges formed by ancient lava flows. Facilities include toilets, untreated water, hot showers and fireplaces. Most sites accommodate up to 6 people and one vehicle, and some are suitable for small caravans and camper trailers.

As Budj Bim Campground is located within a national park, **dogs are not permitted**.

Please take all rubbish with you when leaving.

Bookings and fees apply, visit parks.vic.gov.au/stay

The Budj Bim Cultural Landscape World Heritage Area

Gunditjmar people have lived in the Budj Bim Cultural Landscape for at least 32,000 years and witnessed the last eruption of the Budj Bim volcano.

Around 30,000 years ago, Budj Bim erupted, sending a huge river of molten lava more than 50 km to the coast at Tyrendarra. The lava flow is one of the largest on the south-eastern Australian volcanic plain. As it spread across the landscape, it altered river and creek systems, creating extensive wetlands and swamps. Volcanic activity ceased here around 6,500 years ago.

The Gunditjmar adapted and enhanced this landscape by excavating channels to bring water and young eels from Darlots Creek into low-lying wetlands and ponds. These engineered waterways were connected by stone weirs, where woven baskets were used to trap and harvest mature eels.

Dating back thousands of years, the area shows evidence of large, settled communities systematically farming and smoking eels for food and trade.

This area is considered one of Australia's earliest and largest Indigenous aquaculture ventures. This complex, sustainable enterprise took place in a landscape carved by natural forces and full of meaning to the Gunditjmar people.

These engineered wetlands provided the economic basis for the development of a settled society with villages of stone huts built using stones from the lava flow. Early European accounts of Gunditjmara describe how they were ruled by hereditary chiefs.

European settlement in the 1830s brought significant conflict. The Gunditjmara fought to defend their land during the Eumeralla Wars, which continued more than 20 years. By the 1860s, many Aboriginal people had been displaced and the Victorian government established reserves to house Aboriginal communities.

Some Gunditjmara refused to leave their ancestral lands. Eventually, the government agreed to establish a mission at Lake Condah, close to some of the eel traps and within sight of Budj Bim.

Although the Lake Condah Mission closed in 1919, the Gunditjmara people continued to live in the region and care for their cultural heritage. In 1987, the mission lands were returned to the Gunditjmara.

Today, the Gunditj Mirring Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation represents the Gunditjmara people and works to protect their cultural heritage and traditional rights. Gunditj Mirring manages Indigenous Protected Areas surrounding Budj Bim National Park and along the Tyrendarra lava flow. Together with the national park, these areas form the **Budj Bim Cultural Landscape**.

In July 2019, the Budj Bim Cultural Landscape was inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List in recognition of the Gunditjmara people's remarkable achievement:

For 6,000 years, the Gunditjmara manipulated and managed the Budj Bim volcanic lava flow and creek flows to create and maintain an extensive hydrological engineering system of stone-walled channels and ponds, which maintained water flow to trap, store and harvest kooyang (short-finned eels). This highly productive aquaculture system provided an economic and social base for Gunditjmara society.

Budj Bim Cultural Landscape tourism

Experience the unique **Tae Rak Aquaculture Centre and Cafe** on the shores of Lake Condah. Discover the history, culture and innovation of the Gunditjmara people through interactive displays, local food and stunning views of this World Heritage-listed landscape.

Enhance your visit with a Gunditjmara-guided cultural tour, offering unique insights into the ancient aquaculture system, cultural traditions and living connections to Country. For more information and bookings, visit budjbim.com.au

Caring for the park



Help us look after your park by following these regulations:

- Dogs, cats and horses are not permitted.
- Take rubbish home with you for recycling and disposal.
- Bicycles are not permitted on walking tracks.
- Light fires only in fireplaces where provided. Ensure that:
 - a 3 m area is cleared of anything flammable
 - at least 10 L of water is available for immediate use
 - an adult is in attendance (awake, within 50 m and with a clear line of sight) at all times
 - you extinguish your fire with water, not soil. When it is cool to touch, it is safe to leave.
- 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 they meet the first three criteria above.
- All native plants and animals are protected. Leave the park as you found it.

Be prepared and stay safe



- Rocky, uneven, slippery tracks. Watch your footing.
- Be aware of falling tree branches.
- Carry at least 2L of drinking water.
- Stay on track for your safety – beware of steep drops.
- Snakes are protected here. If you see a snake on a track, leave it alone and wait for it to go.

Emergencies

For emergency assistance, call Triple Zero (000).

This park is in the South West 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. Do not enter the park. If you are already in the park, leave the night before or as early as possible in the morning. Warning signs may be erected, but do not expect a personal warning. Check for park, facility and road closures and the latest conditions at parks.vic.gov.au or by calling 13 1963.

Budj Bim National Park



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|  Budj Bim National Park |  Main road |  Walking track |
|  Reference area |  Sealed road |  Management vehicles only |
|  State forest |  Unsealed road |  Budj Bim trails |
|  Waterbody |  4WD | |

Budj Bim National Park

Lake Surprise Inset



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|  Parking |  Picnic table |  Caravan |
|  Information |  BBQ (Gas) |  Caving |
|  Disabled access |  BBQ (Wood) |  Self-guided walk |
|  Toilets |  Camping area | |

- Featured walks**
- 1 Natural Bridge (2 hrs)
 - 2 Lake Surprise (1 hr)
 - 3 Crater Rim (2 hrs)
 - 4 Lava Canal (2-3 hrs)

