Visitor Guide

Barmah National Park (28,521ha), together with the adjoining Murray Valley Regional and National Parks in New South Wales, forms the largest River Red Gum forest in the world. The complex ecology of the forest is closely linked to the Murray River and its flooding regime, creating a diverse natural habitat for a variety of wildlife, particularly waterbirds.

“Gulpa Gaka Anganya - Gaka Yawal Ngulla Yenbena Yorta Yorta Woka”
(Welcome friend - Come walk with us the people on Yorta Yorta Country)

The Aboriginal traditional owners, the Yorta Yorta people welcome you to Barmah National Park. We ask that you treat it with respect and care for it as an extension of yourself.

Kinship to land is a vital part of Yorta Yorta life. Areas such as Barmah National Park provide an important opportunity for kinship to land to continue.

“The dreaming gave us our lore that binds us to the land through fundamental values passed on by our creation ancestors. They explained to us how the natural world was created and how the geographical features where formed and must be cared for. To this day our spiritual connection to the waka (land) and walla (water) continues. As keepers of the land we are bound to continue to preserve our cultural connection.” - Yorta Yorta Elder

Knowledge and traditional management practices are now incorporated into Barmah National Park which is jointly managed between the Yorta Yorta and the state of Victoria. In October 2010, the State of Victoria entered into a Traditional Owner Land Management Agreement (TOLMA) with the Yorta Yorta people, to establish the Yorta Yorta Traditional Owner Land Management Board for Barmah National Park.

For more information call Parks Victoria on 13 1963 
or visit www.parks.vic.gov.au

A unique environment

The Barmah-Millewa forest is an internationally recognised wetland listed under the Ramsar Convention and represents all of the four freshwater wetland types in Victoria. The forest provides important habitat, particularly for waterbirds, with over 200 species of birds recorded. It is one of Victoria’s largest waterbird breeding areas. Brolgas, Night Herons, Spoonbills, Sea Eagles and Azure Kingfishers can all be seen in the park.

River Red Gums line the Murray River for most of its length. These iconic trees can reach 45 metres and live for more than 500 years. The trees need periods of flooding and can survive inundation for months. Their seeds are washed onto higher ground during a flood and germinate and grow before the next flood reaches them. Hollows and broken branches provide nesting for Galahs, Cockatoos, Cockatiels and various Parrots; while fallen branches provide habitat for other animals.

The park protects 38 rare or threatened plants including Fruit Saltbush and Winged Peppergrass. Yellow and Black Box grow on the ridges.

Wildlife abounds throughout the forest. Grey Kangaroos, Emus and Koalas are common.

Ulupna Island, bounded by the Murray River and Ulupna Creek, is higher than other parts of the forest and provides an excellent example of less frequently flooded River Red Gum forest. Mixed Box woodland is also common on the sandy ridges.

The narrow Barmah Choke forces the river’s flow into the Edward River in New South Wales and out onto the broader floodplain. Shallow widespread floods are common here.

How to get there

Barmah National Park lies along the Murray River between Barmah and Strathmerton, about 225km north of Melbourne. Major entry points are from Moira Lakes Road, Barmah-Picola Road and the Murray Valley Highway.

Royal Spoonbill

For more information call Parks Victoria on 13 1963 
or visit www.parks.vic.gov.au
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Enjoying the park

Major tracks in the park are suitable for two wheel drive vehicles. Seasonal road closures occur in wet periods. 

Camping ranges from isolated dispersed camping along the river bank to more populated camping along the sandy beaches.

Beware of camping under trees as River Red Gums can drop branches or fall over without warning.

Walking tracks near Barmah Lakes and Dharnya include Loops Track and Yamyabuc Discovery Trail (see below). Many longer walks are available as most of the forest is accessible by foot.

Fishing for Murray Cod, Golden Perch and Yabbies is also popular with many visitors returning time and again to fish their favourite spot.

A NSW Freshwater Recreation Fishing Licence is required for the Murray River. A current Victorian Recreational Fishing Licence is required for fishing in waters south of the Murray River.

Boating and canoeing are popular on the Murray River, Barmah Lakes and adjoining creeks. There are several boat launching areas.

Swimming can be enjoyed at the numerous sandy river bend beaches. Take care as cold water and fast currents can be hazardous and there may be submerged logs. Diving or jumping into the water can be dangerous.

Walking Tracks

Yamyabuc Discovery Trail - 1.5km – 0.5 hrs return
This self-guided walk begins at the Dharnya car park and will introduce you to some of the natural and cultural features of the Barmah forest.

Lakes Loop Track - 4km - 1.75 hrs return
Begin this circular walk at the Dharnya car park or join at Barmah Lakes campground, day visitor area or Rices Bridge.

The walk passes through mature and regrowth River Red Gums, passes a number of Aboriginal oven (cooking) mounds, skirts the edge of Barmah Lake, eventually reaching the Murray River and Broken Creek.

Broken Creek Loop Track - 3.5km – 1.5 hrs return
This circular walk begins behind the Visitor Centre and skirts Dharnya swamps, a low area subject to seasonal flooding. Walk through River Red Gum and Grey Box woodland to Broken Creek.

Continue downstream along Broken Creek where you can see Pelicans, Ducks, Egrets and Darters. There are a number of Aboriginal oven (cooking) mounds on the way to Rices Weir. See the fish ladder that allows fish to go back upstream past the weir. Return via Sandridge Track or continue on Lakes Loop Track to Dharnya.

Be fire ready and stay safe
On days of forecast Code Red Fire Danger this park will be closed for public safety.
If you are already in the park you should leave the night before or early in the morning for your own safety.
Closure signs will be erected and rangers will patrol where possible, however you may not receive a personal warning that the park is closed so check by calling 13 1963 or visit www.parks.vic.gov.au.
For up to date information on fires in Victoria or general fire safety advice call the Victorian Bushfire Information Line on 1800 240 667 or visit www.emergency.vic.gov.au.

European settlement

The area was first explored in the late 1830s and settled soon after. Sheep and cattle were grazed throughout the region and the rich River Red Gum forest was harvested for timber. Paddle steamers on the Murray River were the key mode of transport and heavily used for wool and timber trade.
Evidence of past logging practices can be seen with old mill sites and equipment still visible.
Eucalyptus extraction and charcoal production also occurred in the forest.

Protecting our River Red Gum forests
The Victorian Government created Barmah National Park, along with other new and expanded parks, in April 2010 to protect and enhance the River Red Gum forests in Victoria.

River Red Gum forests have high natural and cultural values. These forests are coming under increasing pressure from climate change, drought and reduced water flows in the northern rivers.

Protecting this precious environment relies on balancing recreational activities with preserving its natural beauty and conservation values.

The Yorta Yorta people have a long association with the national park. Scarred trees, mounds, stone artefact scatter, middens and burial sites can be found throughout the park. Protection of indigenous cultural heritage in the park is extremely vital. This heritage of the park gives amazing evidence of past use of the park, while offering strong indications towards how the park must be managed in the future.