

Pyrenees State Forest

The Pyrenees Ranges offer visitors a wonderful mix of natural and cultural history, with spectacular views, rugged mountain ranges, abundant wildlife, a rich mix of wildflowers and historic sites. The main attractions of the forest are the Waterfalls Picnic Area, Governor Rock Lookout and the Pyrenees Endurance Walk. Other nearby attractions include the Percydale Historic Area, the Landsborough Flora and Fauna Reserve and the numerous wineries located around the Ranges.

Getting there

The Pyrenees Ranges State Forest is in the Central Victorian Goldfields approximately 200 kms north-west of Melbourne near the town of Avoca. Avoca can be accessed via the Sunraysia or Pyrenees Highways. Once in Avoca travel west along Vinoca Road following the signs to the wineries then on to the Waterfalls Picnic Area.

History

The Jajowurrong people were the first to occupy the Pyrenees and knew the area as 'Peerick'. In 1836 Major Thomas Mitchell travelled through the region. After him came pastoralists and then in the 1854 gold was discovered. The foothills of the Ranges contain many relics from the gold mining era with mining holes and other relics still visible today. Slate quarrying also occurred in the forest, with the material obtained used to pave the footpaths of central Melbourne. Timber harvesting began in the 1840's to supply the growing communities surrounding the forest and continues today on a sustainable basis.

Flora & fauna

Rising nearly 800 metres the Pyrenees Ranges contains many natural attractions for the visitor. Box-ironbark forests are dominant on the foothills with mixed species stringybark forests being found at higher elevations.

Due to the diversity of the terrain, there are more than 200 species of plants and over 100 bird species recorded in the forest. Look out for Wedge-tailed Eagles high in the sky and, closer to earth, Parrots, Galahs and smaller migrant birds like Rainbow Bee-eaters. Also look out for kangaroos, wallabies, koalas and possums.

In the drier months, you may see echidnas on the tracks, and there are a variety of reptiles, including legless lizards, Bearded Dragons and Goannas.

The predominant trees are Ironbark, Yellow Box, Red Stringybark, Bluegum and Messmate. Orchids such as the Waxlip Orchid and Lilies abound, especially around the base of the range. A variety of Wattles and other wildflowers make spectacular viewing in the spring.

Walking tracks

1. Pyrenees Endurance Walk

Skill Level¹: Intermediate Fitness Level: Endurance
18km, 13 hrs one-way

The Pyrenees Endurance Walk is 18 km one way and is recommended as an overnight trip starting at the Waterfalls Picnic area with Camerons Track being the halfway point. This walk is considered to be reasonably difficult with some steep sections. In drier months, you will need to carry your own water.

2. Valley Walk

Skill Level: Basic Fitness Level: Low
1km, 20 mins return

A pleasant after lunch walk, this track is signposted from the Waterfalls Picnic Area and follows the course of the No.2 Creek upstream to a rock outcropping. Water flows in the winter months only, or after heavy rainfall.

There are numerous tracks throughout the forest, which also make ideal short walks. From the Waterfalls Picnic Area an easy walk along Ebling Track to Fraser Track and back will take approximately 1 hour or a walk along Waterfalls Track onto Schmidt Track to Sugarloaf Track and back will take 2 hours.

Picnic sites

For those seeking a picnic site in a relaxing forest setting, the Waterfalls Picnic Area is hard to beat, being easily accessible from Avoca, with toilets, picnic tables, fireplaces, rainwater and a short walk available for day visitor use.

Toilets, picnic tables, fireplaces and rainwater are also available at Cameron's Track Campground, with simpler facilities (picnic tables and fireplaces only) available at the Governor's Rock Lookout.

¹ To assist visitors in choosing walks, the walks are classified by skill level and fitness level. For a description of these classifications, refer to the Forests Note 'FS0020 - Bushwalking in State Forest'

Looking after our forests

- Minor forest (unsealed) roads can become boggy in winter. Stay on the major (sealed) roads in wet weather.
- Dogs must be under direct control at all times and should be kept on a leash when in picnic and camping areas or when near other visitors.
- Bikes and horses are not permitted on the walking tracks. Please observe access signs and help protect the forest.
- Don't disturb native plants or animals.
- There is no rubbish collection service, so please take your rubbish home. If you have the misfortune to come across other people's rubbish, do the bush a favour and take it out with you too.
- Take care with fire – observe all fire regulations and Total Fire Ban days. Use existing fireplaces rather than create your own. Never leave fires unattended. Ensure fires are safe and that they are completely extinguished when you leave.
- Only light fires in fireplaces or 30 cm deep trenches. Fires must be less than 1 metre square and at least 3 m clear of burnable material.
- Keep the size of your group small, ideally, less than eight people and go off peak.
- Vehicles and trail bikes must be registered and roadworthy and may only be driven on designated public roads and tracks.
- Make sure you tell someone where you are going and when you expect to return, and don't forget to let them know when you are back.

For more information

The Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE) is responsible for managing Victoria's State Forest. For further information contact the Department of Sustainability and Environment office at Maryborough (☎ 5461 0800) or Bendigo (☎ 5430 4444) or DSE's Customer Service Centre on 136 186.

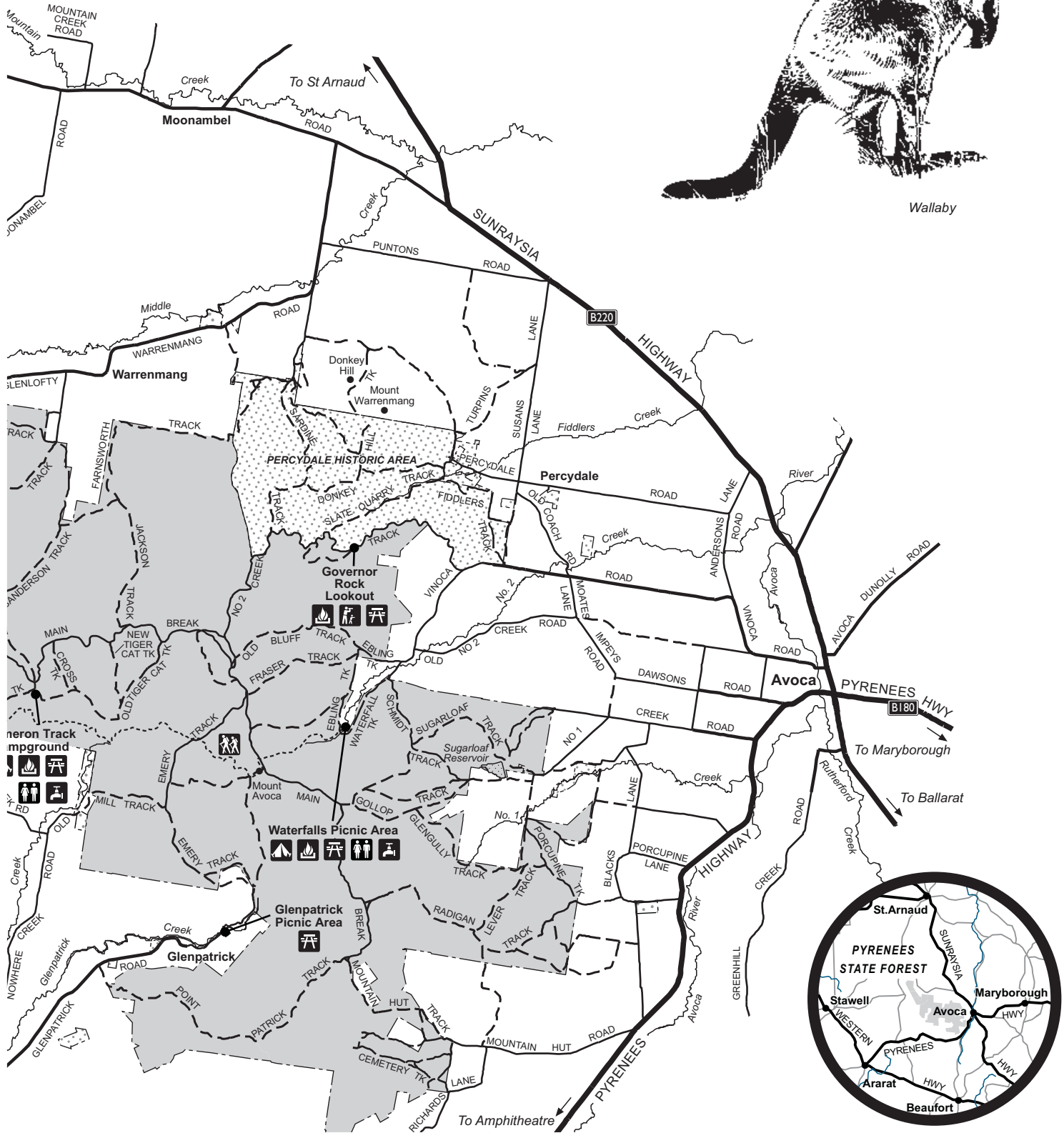
Visit DSE's Forests Service website

<http://www.dse.vic.gov.au>
then select "Forestry".

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