

Mitchell's Bridle Trail (& Jamieson Quicksilver Mine)

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Mitchell's Bridle Trail is located in the north-east region of Victoria, near Jamieson, and commences at the Granny's Flat Camping Reserve. A 40 minute, or 44 km journey from Mansfield (7.5 km from Jamieson) provides access to the camp site, whose grid reference is DU 301726, or map 63 E6 in the Vicroads Country Directory. The trail covers 24 km, and can be comfortably navigated in 2 days.

Getting there

Follow the Mount Buller road from Mansfield towards Merrijig for 4 km. Turn right at the sign for Jamieson and travel for 35 km. Turn left at the Heyfield (Licola)-Jamieson road in Jamieson. After 7.5 km on this gravel road you will reach the Granny's Flat Camping Reserve sign on your left. The campsite is down 1 km of windy road. This road is steep, but is accessible to all traffic, except after heavy rain, when it may become temporarily inaccessible to 2WD's.

For a shorter walking trip to the Quicksilver mine, follow the Heyfield (Licola)-Jamieson road to Axe Track, 28 km from Jamieson. Turn down the Axe Track (4WD), and travel down to the intersection with the Bridle Trail, just before the Jamieson River. A short walk 2 km east from this point, along the Bridle Trail, will provide access to the mine site, located on Quicksilver Creek.

Access can also be gained to the eastern end of the trail at the Mitchell's Homestead site, in the Alpine National Park on Mitchell's Road (4WD only). Please note that Ferguson track and the Silvermine Spur Track, which also link the Heyfield (Licola)-Jamieson Road and the Bridle Trail, are also 4WD only.

What facilities are provided?

Combined with the campsites at Granny's and Mitchell's Flats, there are 2 small campsites located on the river, at the intersection of Ferguson Track and Axe Track with the Bridle Trail. Toilets are located at Granny's Flat, however, the other sites have no such facility. Rubbish collection is not catered for, and all campers and walkers must remove their wastes upon departure.

Fireplaces have not been constructed, and firewood is not supplied, however fires are allowed, unless a *Total Fire Ban Day* has been declared. A 3 metre clearance is required around all fires in camp sites, and a 1.5 metre

clearance applies when using gas powered stoves and lights.

All campfires are to be properly extinguished, not buried, prior to departure from the site.

To help maintain the original condition of the reserve, disturbance should be kept to a minimum. Campers and walkers should:

- collect only fallen and dead wood for use in fires,
- refrain from throwing non-combustible objects into the fire,
- keep to tracks and designated camp sites,
- bury any human wastes in small holes, 100 metres away from camp-grounds, tracks and water.

Visitors are advised to boil the river water prior to drinking.

Campers should also be aware of the dangers of camping under trees, as limbs may drop unexpectedly.

Walking Tracks

Mitchell's Bridle Trail

Skill Level¹: Fitness Level:
24 km, 2 days

The trail follows the forests and meandering course of the Jamieson River, linking the Granny's Flat Camping Reserve to Mitchell's Flat, and is considered an easy to moderate walk. Tree species commonly seen along the riverbanks are characteristic of Australian dry foothill forests and valleys, including Manna Gum, Broad-leaved Peppermint, Blue Gum and Stringybark species.

The Jamieson River, which acts as the centrepiece for this walk, not only provides a serene and spectacular setting, but is also renowned for its high quality mountain fishing.

When using the river for fishing and swimming, care should be taken of strong currents, rocks and submerged objects.

Along the Bridle track, there are 2 sites of historical significance, the remnants of the Quicksilver mercury mine

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'

and the dwellings of the Mitchell and Hoskins families at Mitchell's Flat.

Quicksilver Mine

In 1893, mercury was discovered in the Jamieson River by Richard O'Brien, a local farmer. After several years, Tom Justice and O'Brien created enough publicity to lead to the creation of a company, consisting of Paddy Perkins and several other enthusiastic local men, and by 1900, a 140 foot shaft had been installed.

After geological surveys, which suggested the ore was insignificant, interest waned in the mine, but the founding men persevered. A takeover bid from an English company was offered in 1901, rumoured to be \$200,000 and all within the company were prepared to sell to cover their losses, and agreed to the sale. However, tragically Paddy Perkins suffered a stroke on his way to Melbourne to complete the sale, later passing away, and the papers detailing the sale never arrived in time. The mine continued to operate under its previous operators, persisting through turbulent times, with many setbacks to its operational capabilities, including fire and a period of war, when manual labour was difficult to find.

Following the fire of 1919, when the machinery was destroyed, the mine was abandoned by its owners. Since its closure several resurrections were attempted, however all failed within a matter of years.

Mitchell's Homestead

The story of Mitchell's Flat begins in the 1860's, when gold was discovered by Robert Wren and Thomas Laklen. After prospecting for 2 years, the claim was sold to Fred Mitchell, who named the creek after himself, and used the land to store abandoned mining equipment.

By 1881, all hopes of finding gold had disappeared, and William Hoskins of Jamieson, leased a 1,000 acre area at

Mitchell's Flat for agricultural purposes. The Hoskins family cleared and fenced off the land, installing stockyards and sheds to accommodate pigs, chickens and cattle. Orchards and an avenue of English trees were also established.

The Hoskins were renowned for their exceptional hospitality, and many outings were held at the homestead. By 1929 the Hoskins relinquished their lease, and the homestead was subsequently abandoned in 1936. Traces of the historic Mitchell's homestead have all but disappeared, thanks to the efforts of some careless campers, which led to its fiery destruction in 1989.

Useful maps and brochures

- Vicmap 1:25,000 *Jamieson* (8123-3-1)
- Bush Maps Victoria 1:50,000 *Lower Howqua Track*.
- Natmap *Mansfield*, 1:100,000 (8123)

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 Mansfield (☎5733 1200) or DSE's Customer Service Centre on ☎136 186.

Visit DSE's website

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

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