

The St Arnaud Range provided early Victorian settlers with a rich supply of resources including timber products, gold and silver, eucalyptus oil and grazing opportunities.

Go exploring in the forest to find evidence of these uses and discover the rich diversity of plants and animals found here. Our Box-Ironbark forests tell a fascinating story of change and survival. How you use the forest today will shape our forests future. How will you help shape the next chapter?

St Arnaud State Forests

The St Arnaud State Forest (managed by the Department of Environment and Primary Industries) is situated approximately 190 km north-west of Melbourne. The Forest offers visitors a wonderful mixture of natural and cultural history, abundant wildlife and a rich diversity of wildflowers.

Getting there

From Melbourne head northwest along the Calder Highway, turning left onto the Pyrenees Highway (towards Maryborough and Avoca). At Avoca, head northwest to St Arnaud along the Sunraysia Highway. The Basin is located approximately 3.7 km south from the township of St Arnaud, along the Sunraysia Highway.

History

The Wungaragira Gundidj Aboriginal Tribe once roamed this area, living solely off the land and only staying in an area for a certain time. The tribes lived a hunter and gatherer life, and respected the environment around them - nothing was ever wasted or overused.

The St Arnaud Range provided early Victorian settlers with a rich supply of resources including timber products, gold and silver, eucalyptus oil and grazing opportunities. The forest surrounding you has been an important source of timber for sawlog, fence-posts and firewood for the local community. For a number of years the forest has been managed for both commercial purposes and forest health. A number of mines have also operated in the area over the years, and their remains can still be seen scattered throughout the forest.

St Arnaud was one of Victoria's first towns to have a town water supply - the supply was gravity fed from Teddington Reservoir. The Pipeline is a tribute to the initiative of the early settlers to the area. The original water supply scheme had a capacity of 170 million gallons, which was held in a reservoir built at Teddington during 1898-99 by the St Arnaud Waterworks Trust. Water was conveyed from Teddington to the Black

Range Reservoir (now known as 'The Basin') through 22.5 kilometres of 10 inch (250 mm) diameter stave steel bound pipeline. Imagine digging a 22.5 km trench through these hard, stony soils with nothing more than basic tools and a creative mind!

The pipeline itself was quite a unique design, with lengths of tongued Oregon wood wrapped with wire and asphalt over the top. Voluntary community crews carried out pipe repairs, which included hammering wooden spikes into the pipe to seal leaks. Over the years, sections of the pipeline were replaced with wrapped metal pipes with lead joins and as well as cement pipes.



Photos: Relict Wooden Pipe, Metal Pipe

'The Basin' was constructed during 1898-99, and enlarged during 1938, it holds about 3.5 million gallons, and was connected to the Goldfields and Government Dams. After all of the forward thinking and hard work of the community, water supply was never assured due to the high evaporation rate of the Teddington basin. As a result, a second reservoir (Teddington No. 2) was constructed in 1929. Adequate water supply from both Teddington reservoirs continued to be a problem. In the 1940s, the St. Arnaud Waterworks Trust decided to supplement the supply from Teddington with water from the New Lonsdale Water Scheme.

At this time, water was still being piped from Teddington, but the pipeline was in a poor state of repair. 'The Basin' was also found to have a large evaporation loss. St Arnaud abandoned the Teddington Reservoirs as town water supply during 1955 though they still remain as a supply for the township of Stuart Mill and are maintained on a voluntary basis by local residents.

The township faced water restrictions in 1962 and 1967, and the St. Arnaud Waterworks Trust continued to press the State Rivers and Water Supply Commission for money to renew the pipeline from Teddington. Due to the cost of renewing the pipeline, the Water Trust decided that it was too expensive "for the amount of

water it would get from Teddington", and after this date there was no further mention of the renewal of the pipeline. 'The Basin' water storage is now managed by Grampians Wimmera Mallee Water, and is used by local piggeries and as an emergency town supply.

'The Basin' Picnic Area is a co-operative project between the Department of Environment and Primary Industries and the St Arnaud Field Naturalists' Club, to recognise and protect the area's rich and important biodiversity values, as well as its historical significance.

Plants, birds and wildlife

The shallow stony soils around 'The Basin' support Box-Ironbark and Heathy Dry Forest vegetation, with a diverse shrub understorey and ground layer of native grasses, orchids and lilies. Typical of the shrubs are Daphne Heath (*Brachyloma daphnoides*), Gorse Bitterpea (*Daviesia ulicifolia*) more commonly known as Egg and Bacon, Heath tea-tree (*Leptospermum myrsinoides*), Spiky Guinea-flower (*Hibbertia exutiaces*) and the rare Goldfields Grevillea (*Grevillea dryophylla*). Also notable during early spring is the Cypress Daisy Bush (*Olearia teretifolia*) with its eye-catching spires of white flowers.



Photos: Cypress Daisy Bush, Spiky Guinea-flower

The range of eucalypt species that typically occur in the Box-Ironbark Ecological Vegetation Class (EVC) are: Red Ironbark (*E.tricarpa*), Red Box (*E.polyanthemos*), Red Stringybark (*E.macrorhyncha*), Yellow Gum (*E.leucoxyton*) and Grey Box (*E.microcarpa*). The creekline at the south end of Pipe Track hosts ancient River Red Gums (*E.camaldulensis*) and Yellow Box (*E.melliodora*).



Photo: Pipe Track, St Arnaud South State Forest

The floral diversity attracts a number of rare birds, including the Swift Parrot (*Lathamus discolor*), which is an autumn/winter migrant from Tasmania and one of Australia's most endangered birds. The Painted Honeyeater (*Grantiella picta*), is normally found in more northerly climates but has also been found to frequent these forests.

The River Red Gums and Yellow Box trees provide habitat for the biggest and most mysterious of our owls - the Powerful Owl (*Ninox strenua*), which is often seen roosting with the remains of prey clutched in its sharp

talons. Other birds often seen overhead include the Little Eagle (*Hieraaetus morphnoides*), as well as a number of threatened woodland species (particularly the Brown Treecreeper (*Climacteris picumnus*), Black-chinned honeyeater (*Melithreptus gularis*) and the Crested Bellbird (*Oreoica gutturalis*). The White-winged Chough (*Corcorax melanorhamphos*) finds the bushland here much to its liking and family groups are frequently seen foraging through the leaf litter.

Reptiles in the local area are represented by the fierce-looking but harmless Shingle-back Lizard (*Trachydosaurus rugosus*), the Tree Goanna (*Varanus varius*) and many species from the Skink family. Less welcome but still a necessary part of the ecology is the Eastern Brown Snake (*Pseudonaja textilis*). Reptiles are seen more often in the warmer months and care should always be exercised when walking through bushy and grassy areas.

The Black or Swamp Wallaby (*Wallabia bicolor*) and the Echidna or Spiny Ant-eater (*Tachyglossus aculeatus*) are solitary animals that may be seen at any time of the year in the bush around 'The Basin'. Other mammals you may see at night include gliders and possums as well as small bats. Frogs are also found around 'The Basin'.

The plants and animals of the Box-Ironbark region are well adapted to their sometimes harsh environment, which includes exposure to temperature extremes, periods of water shortage and fire.



Photos: Echidna, Brown Snake, Powerful Owl

Geology and Geomorphology

Over the years there have been a number of dramatic worldwide changes in sea-levels, as well as major climate change. Periods of glaciation resulted in the lowering sea levels - naturally, as these ice caps melted sea level rose. If you were here about 545 million years ago when the bedrock formed, you would be at the bottom of the ocean!

The geology of the St Arnaud area mainly consists of sedimentary marine bedrock (sandstone, mudstone, shale and slate), that has later been uplifted, weathered and buried with soil. Minor igneous intrusions have also occurred throughout the area. Natural weathering and depositional events have continually modified the landscape, leaving us with the present landscape. Most of the area consists of low hills and plains, used mostly for livestock grazing and cropping.

Most of the gold found in the St Arnaud area has been hosted by quartz reefs buried below the surface. Over the years a large number of diggers and their families made their way to the 'goldfields' to try their luck.

Activities to enjoy in the State Forest

- Get active! Walk along one of the tracks around the Basin, ride your horse or bike along the bush roads and appreciate the beauty of the forest. Be sure to stay on formed roads when riding.
- Find a nice spot to relax, camp or have a picnic, remember to look after the forest by taking your rubbish home with you.
- Take your dog for a walk. Making sure your dog is under control at all times.
- Try your luck by fossicking or prospecting with a current Miner's Right. Remember any holes created by prospecting must be filled in.
- Enjoy a car or motorbike tour of the forest, exploring the extensive road network. Make sure you are licensed and registered and always stay on formed roads.
- Test your hunting skills with licensed firearms and protect the forest from pest animals such as foxes and rabbits.
- Explore and search the forest for clues that give us evidence from the past – remember to leave everything as you found it.

Lets look after our living museum!

- All native plants, animals, historic sites and geographical features are protected by law.
- Campfires are part of the outdoor experience. However sparks can easily start the bush burning. You can take care with fire by observing all fire regulations and Total Fire Ban days, always use existing fireplaces where possible or 30 cm deep trenches, collect only dead wood from the ground for campfires, ensure your fires is less than 1 metre square and at least 3 metres clear of burnable material, never leave fires unattended, and ensure fires are safe and that they are completely extinguished when you leave.

FOR YOUR OWN SAFETY

Look out for old mine shafts when walking through the forest.

Attractions

"The Basin" Picnic Area

Walk around and enjoy nature or submerge yourself in history - this site has both! The shallow stony soils around 'The Basin' support Box-Ironbark and Heathy Dry Forest vegetation, with a diverse shrub understorey and ground layer of native grasses, orchids and lilies. The flora diversity attracts a number of rare birds and other fauna. You may also find evidence of past gold mining activities scattered throughout the bush.

The Basin is a site along the Grand Circle Tour, which showcases places of interest in the St Arnaud State Forest, St Arnaud Regional Park and the St Arnaud Township.

Nature Walks / Cycle Tracks / Nature Drives

• *The Basin Walk*

Distance: 1 km

Time: 20 mins return

Gradient: Flat

Quality of Path: Formed track, some obstacles

Quality of Markings: Signposted

Steps: Occasional steps

Experience required: No experience required

Enjoy a short, easy stroll around The Basin to enjoy the sights and sounds of the bush. This short loop starts and finishes at the Basin Picnic area.



• *Pipe Gully Walk*

Distance: approximately 2 km return

Time: 1 hour return

Gradient: Gentle Hills

Quality of Path: Formed track, some obstacles

Quality of Markings: Signposted

Steps: Occasional steps

Experience required: No experience required

This walk is a short loop that takes you through a low-lying section of the forest - in the past low lying areas such as this were preferentially cleared because of their comparatively deep, fertile soils. These moist pockets of vegetation are crucial in times of drought for fauna species.



• *Moolerr Nature Drive*

Approximately 6 km return

Walk, ride your bike or drive around and enjoy the different vegetation types and structure throughout the forest. You will see sections of the forest that have been managed for timber, firewood and forest health. Enjoy a scenic drive along Narrow track through a more mature section of the forest. You will also pass through sections of the forest that are generally dominated by many small stemmed trees. The broad vision for our forests is for a landscape that more closely resembles the forests that existed before European settlement - fewer trees, wider-spaced and much larger and older than is currently the case.



Be aware of other road users, particularly bike riders and drive according to the existing road and weather conditions

Other Nature Drives in the area:

- Grand Circle Tour
- Centre Road Nature Drive

For more information on the Forests of St Arnaud or nature drives in the area, see the St Arnaud Forest Note.

Nearby attractions

Nearby Parks and Reserves:

- St Arnaud Range National Park
- Stoney Creek Nature Conservation Reserve
- Stuart Mill Nature Conservation Reserve
- Redbank Nature Conservation Reserve

These sites are not shown on the map. For further information on these sites contact Parks Victoria.

For more information

For further information contact the Department of Environment and Primary Industries office at St Arnaud (☎ 5495 1700) or DEPI's Customer Service Centre on ☎ 136 186.

Or visit the DEPI website:

<http://www.depi.vic.gov.au>

References

- Palmer, Y. (1980). *Track of the years: the story of St. Arnaud*. Melbourne University Press, Melbourne.
- St Arnaud Water Works Trust (1976). Preliminary Report on the St Arnaud Water Supply 1976. St Arnaud Waterworks Trust, St Arnaud.

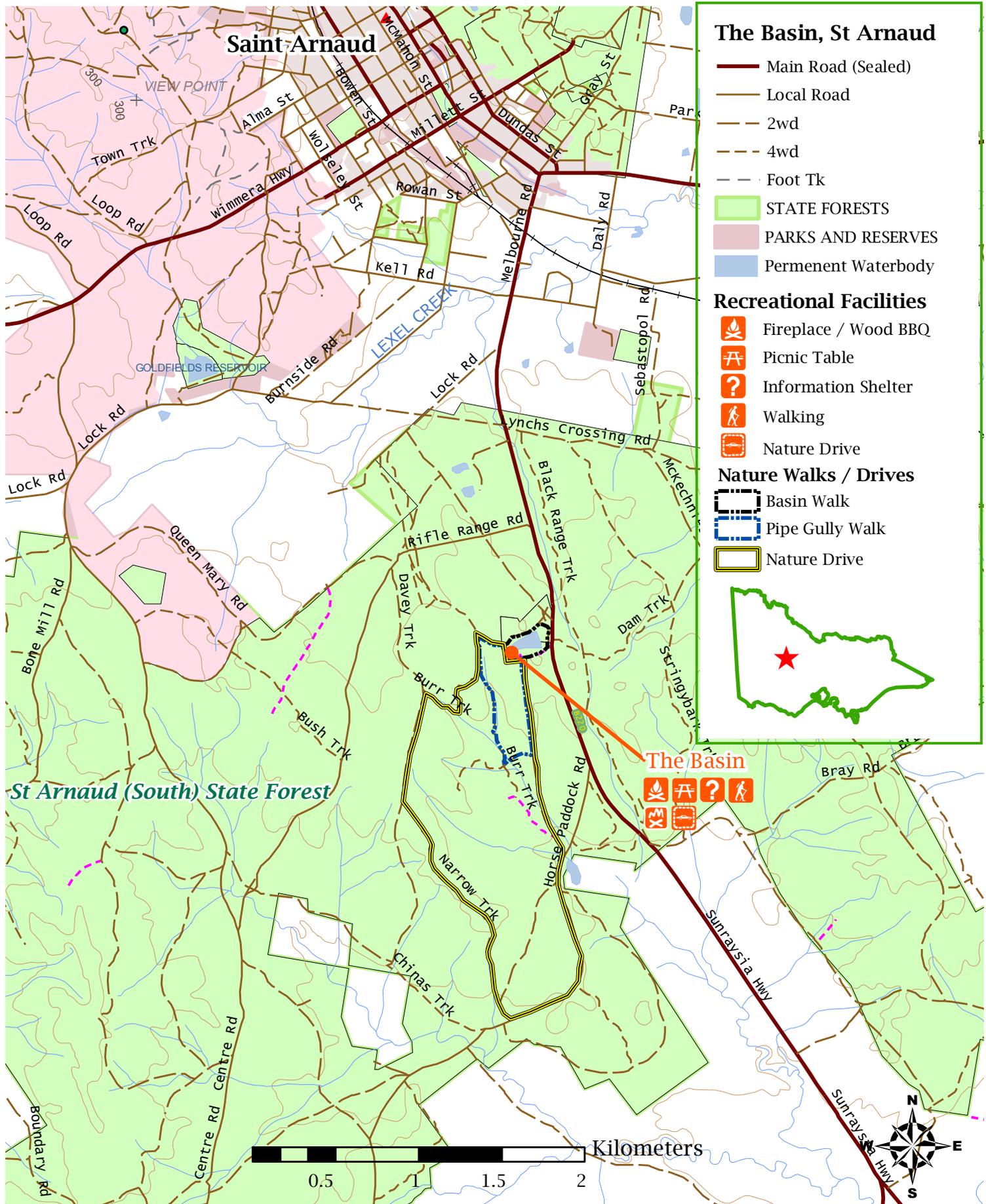
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Photos:

[echidna], (Photo: DEPI/Ouroumis)
[powerful owl], (Photo: Birds Australia/Drummond)
[Pipe Track], (Photo: STAFNC/Hughes)
[brown snake], (Photo: DEPI/McCann)
[cypress daisy bush], (Photo: NCCMA/Ian Higgins)
[spiky guineaflower], (Photo: DEPI/Camilleri)
[water pipes], (Photo: DEPI/Camilleri)

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