

Castlemaine is a golden town in the heart of Victoria. It grew up at the height of the Mount Alexander gold rush, when tens of thousands of people arrived after rich deposits of alluvial gold were discovered. The surrounding forests provided resources to build the town and local industries. The forests now provide an insight into these optimistic and prosperous times.

Our Box-Ironbark forests tell a fascinating story of change and survival. How you use the forest today will shape the forests future. How will you help shape the next chapter?

Getting here

Castlemaine sits amidst low red hills at the meeting of Barkers, Campbells and Forest Creeks, 120 km north west of Melbourne via the Calder Highway and 39 km south of Bendigo.

The golden olden days

The region is an ancient landscape which bears the imprint of many cultures. Over tens of thousands of years, Dja Wurrung Aboriginal people occupied and roamed the area. This is Jaara Jaara country and throughout the forests, this heritage is evident from the scar trees, rock wells, artefacts and ancient meeting places.

Before Europeans arrived, the forests were dominated by large, broad-crowned and widely-spaced trees abundant with hollows. Red Ironbarks were known as *yeeripp* by the Dja Wurrung. The forests provided plentiful supplies of wood, plants, and minerals. The limbs of Ironbarks were commonly used for making *wonguim* (boomerangs). The bark of box trees was used for constructing *willams* (bark huts). Box bark and coloured ochres were used for ceremonial purposes. The numerous animals inhabiting the timbered areas were hunted for food and skins.

Surveyor-General, Major Mitchell, passed through this area on his third expedition in 1836. Pastoralists followed soon after to squat and establish sheep runs on the grasslands.

Gold was found in the Mount Alexander area in July 1851. By October, 250 diggers had arrived and by December there were 20,000 searching for the shallow alluvial gold found along the creeks flowing from Mount Alexander to the Loddon River. The Mount Alexander alluvial fields were once the richest in the world.

Aboriginal people played an important role in daily life on the Victorian goldfields. In the words of Clark and Cahir: *"Aboriginal people were present on the Ballarat goldfields, and elsewhere, in many capacities, as Native Police, as miners, guides and gold finders, as wives and sexual partners, as farmers and entrepreneurs trading cultural items and food, and as local residents going about their everyday lives, staging corroborees and other forms of interaction with other inhabitants."*

In the 1850s, a huge Chinese camp estimated at over 3,000 people (some sources say 6,000) emerged along Campbells Creek, between this point and Guildford. They gathered for safety, as hostility to the Chinese was overt and overwhelming and there were numerous local conflicts, some of considerable proportions.

Only three years after gold was found in the area, most of the alluvial gold was taken and the population dropped dramatically to about 7,000. and has remained static ever since. The wide streetscapes, large houses and fine civic buildings remain, and along with the nearby Maldon township they remind us of these early days of prosperity and rapid growth.

The goldfields totally changed the landscape of surrounding forests. Each forest 'giant' has since coppiced – grown new shoots from its underground rootstock. Because the old tree stump has rotted away, the new growth appears to be separate trees (sometimes of up to 20 trunks) but they all come from the same surviving underground base of the tree, which may be hundreds of years old. Each clump is a ghostly impression of its original self, with the ancient rootstock hidden but alive.

The coppice regrowth trees tell a remarkable story of survival, transformation and regeneration. They form both relic and evolving forests and are, in a sense, archaeological features produced by human activity during the gold rush. The trees form part of cultural landscapes that also contain evidence of abandoned gold mines, earthworks, bush tracks and hut sites.

Our forests continue supplying local communities with valuable resources such as timber, honey, eucalyptus oil and gravel. Strict controls ensure forests are managed sustainably to ensure they are around for our grandchildren to enjoy.

Discover Natures Treasures

The forests surrounding Castlemaine are unique and support a diverse range of forest types. They have a vast number of environmental values as well as strong community ties and traditions.

Dominant tree species type and tree size throughout the forests vary according to the soils, aspect and history of an area. Understorey species include a number of rare and threatened species.

- Red Stringybark, Red Box and Long-leaf Box trees dominate the steep, exposed slopes and ridge tops, sparsely underlain by colourful shrub species such as Gorse Bitter-Pea, Rice flowers and Daphne Heath (surrounding Castlemaine).
- Red Ironbark and Grey Box trees occur on the undulating rises and low hills, with Yellow Gum lining the moist lower areas and Red Box on drier upper slopes. Stunning understorey species include Golden Wattle, Twiggy Bush-pea, Shiny Everlastings, Cranberry Heath and Flax-lilies (north west of Castlemaine).
- Gully lines to the south are commonly dominated by Yellow Box and Long-leaf Box trees, underlain by Silver Wattle, weeping grass, woodrush and other species (south).
- Small areas along drainage lines are dominated by shrubs such as Woolly Tea-tree, River Bottlebrush, Sweet Bursaria and Hop Goodenia.

Despite previous disturbances, numerous threatened plants and animals live in these forests. Visit during Spring and enjoy the spectacular wildflower displays. Over 500 native plant species are recorded here, including a large number of rare and threatened species such as Clover Glycine, Buloke, Fryerstown Grevillea, Scented Bush-pea, Golden Cowslips and Southern Swainson-pea.

Castlemaine forests are particularly known for their native orchids. Over 30 native species, including the newly discovered Midlands Spider Orchid (recently recommended for listing as threatened under the *Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988*). Other threatened orchids include the Veined Spider-orchid,



Midlands Spider Orchid



Rosemary Grevillia

Spiny Rice flower

Leek Orchid

Fringed Midge-orchid, Emerald-lip Greenhood, Large Rustyhood and Silurian Leek-orchid.

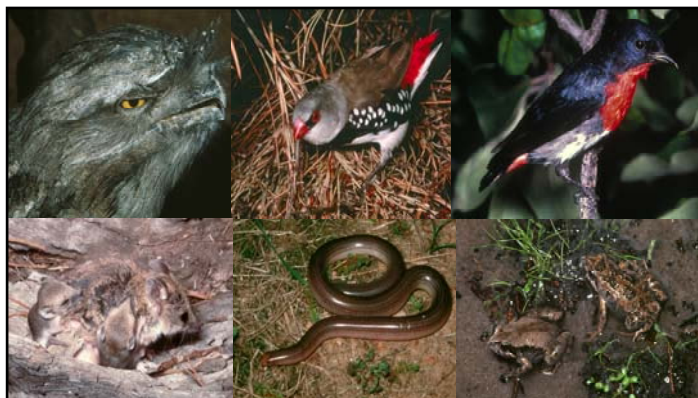
These forests are also home to a large number of native animals, including mammals, birds, reptiles and frogs. By

Eastern Grey Kangaroo (joey)
(DEPI: Camilleri)



day, enjoy the sights and sounds of wallabies and kangaroos bounding through the forest and numerous bird species twittering in the trees overhead. Visit the forest at night when the owls, gliders, possums and bats come out to play.

The area provides critical habitat for numerous threatened fauna species such as the Powerful Owl, Swift Parrot, Brown Treecreeper, Black-chinned Honeyeater, Diamond Firetail, Brush-tailed Phascogale, Fat-tailed Dunnart, Barking Owl, Brown Toadlet, Woodland Blind Snake, Growling Grass Frog and Eastern Bearded Dragon. The endangered Eltham Copper Butterfly is also recorded in the area.



Photos (top left to right): Tawny Frogmouth, Diamond Firetail, Mistletoe Bird
(bottom left to right): Fat-tailed Dunnart, Woodland Blind Snake, Common Toadlet

Geology and geomorphology

Landscapes continually evolve over time – the countryside surrounding the Castlemaine township is no exception. These unique forests have been formed by natural processes over the past 500 million years in a variety of environments, from the deep sea to explosive volcanics.

Deep seas covered much of central Australia when the Gondwana supercontinent existed (joining Australia with Antarctica, South America, Africa and India). Fast-flowing rivers carried sediment from this ancient continent west to the sea, where it was deposited and swept to the foot of the continental slope. The sediments built up and formed the thick sandstone, mudstone and shale rock beds found today. Periods of volcanics, granitic intrusion, glaciation and erosion have continued shaping the landscape.

Today, the landscape surrounding Castlemaine consists of:

- low sedimentary hills and rises, largely covered by Box-Ironbark forests (generally poor soils unsuitable for agriculture)
- granitic basement rocks form undulating to rocky hills to the north east and north west (suitable land for sheep and cattle grazing, fruit and wine grape growing)
- volcanic plains covering a large area to the east form small flat-topped hills in other parts where the plains are dissected by erosion; the volcanic landforms have been extensively cleared for grazing.

Attractions



Red White and Blue Picnic Area and Walk. The red white and blue picnic area is located in the Muckleford State Forest at the site of the historic red white and blue mine, also known as the 'Golden Age' mine or 'Moloney's Reef'. Remnants from the mining days remain at the picnic area as well as throughout the surrounding forest. The red white and blue

walking track is an easy five kilometre walk through the Box-Ironbark forest to Dunn's Reef.

The Pipeline Walk – an easy 4.6 km walk through the Walmer State Forest, this starts and finishes at the junction of Sales Track and Franklin Track. It takes you through forest populated with various box species along with Wattles, Daphne Heath, Tall Sundews, Waxlip Orchids, Fairy Wax Flower, Pink Bells, Twining Fringe Lily, Blue Pin Cushions and Red Stringybarks. A feature on the walk is Pipeline Track, the location of an old wooden pipeline which supplied Maldon with water from Harcourt.

The Junction Walk – the Junction in Fryers Range State Forest was once along a busy route used by Aborigines and later by European settlers traveling to Castlemaine from Melbourne via Fryerstown. The Junction Hotel opened in 1854 and was a popular resting point for travellers. Even busier times were ahead with the coming of the railway and the temporary town established for the large construction crews necessary to build the tunnel, cuttings, bridges, embankments, and later the dam constructed to service steam trains.

Evidence of this past remains throughout the forest today. The intricate stone sump on the bottom of the dam and the cobbled stone roads were made by the 200



Remnants of buildings

German stone masons who worked in the area. You may

find old fireplaces and see the footings of the old bridge on the original road to Fryerstown and mullock from the tunnel (which buried the Junction Hotel) covers the surface.

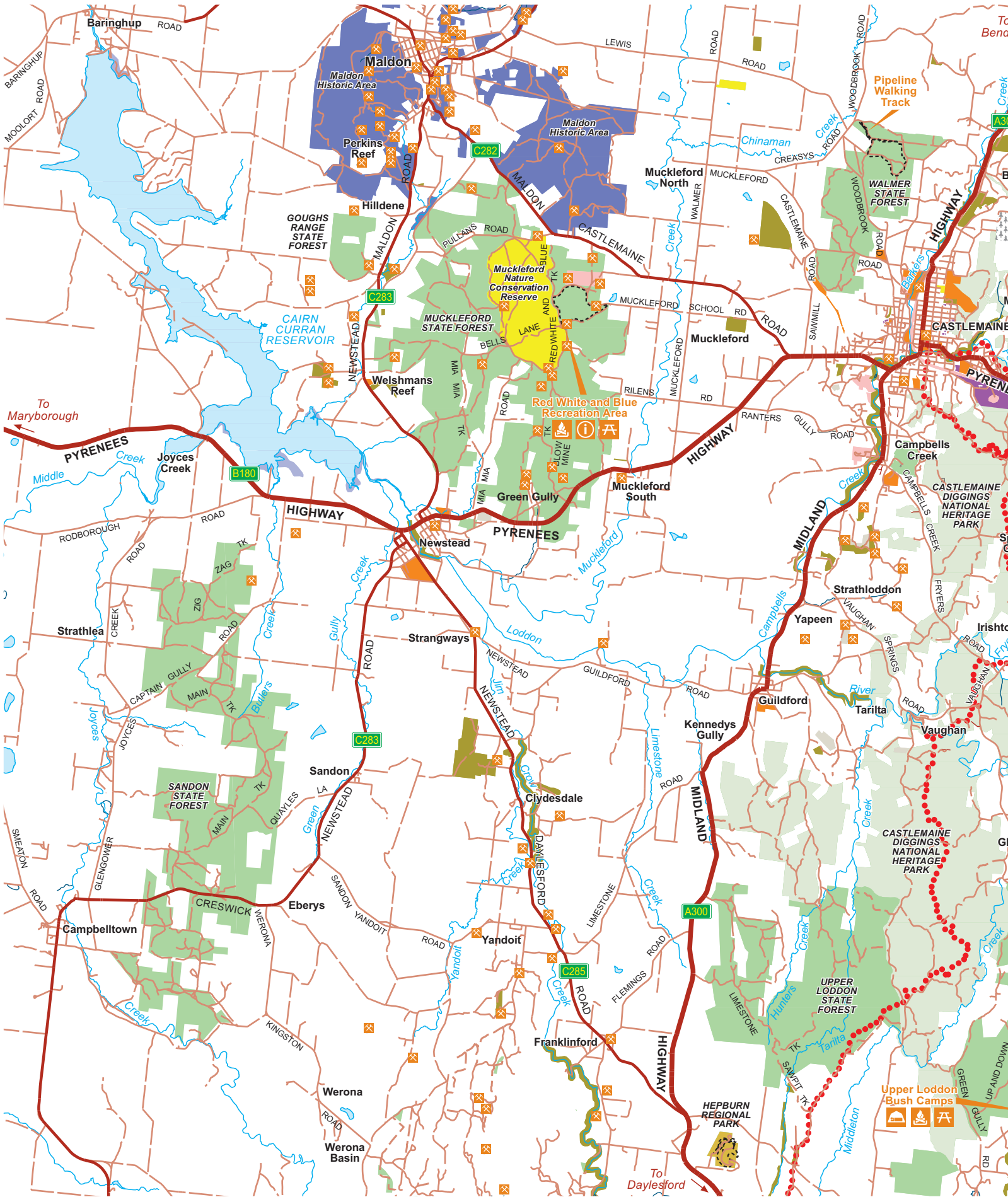
The Junction Walk starts at the Railway Dam and is about a 4km easy walk taking you around this historic site.

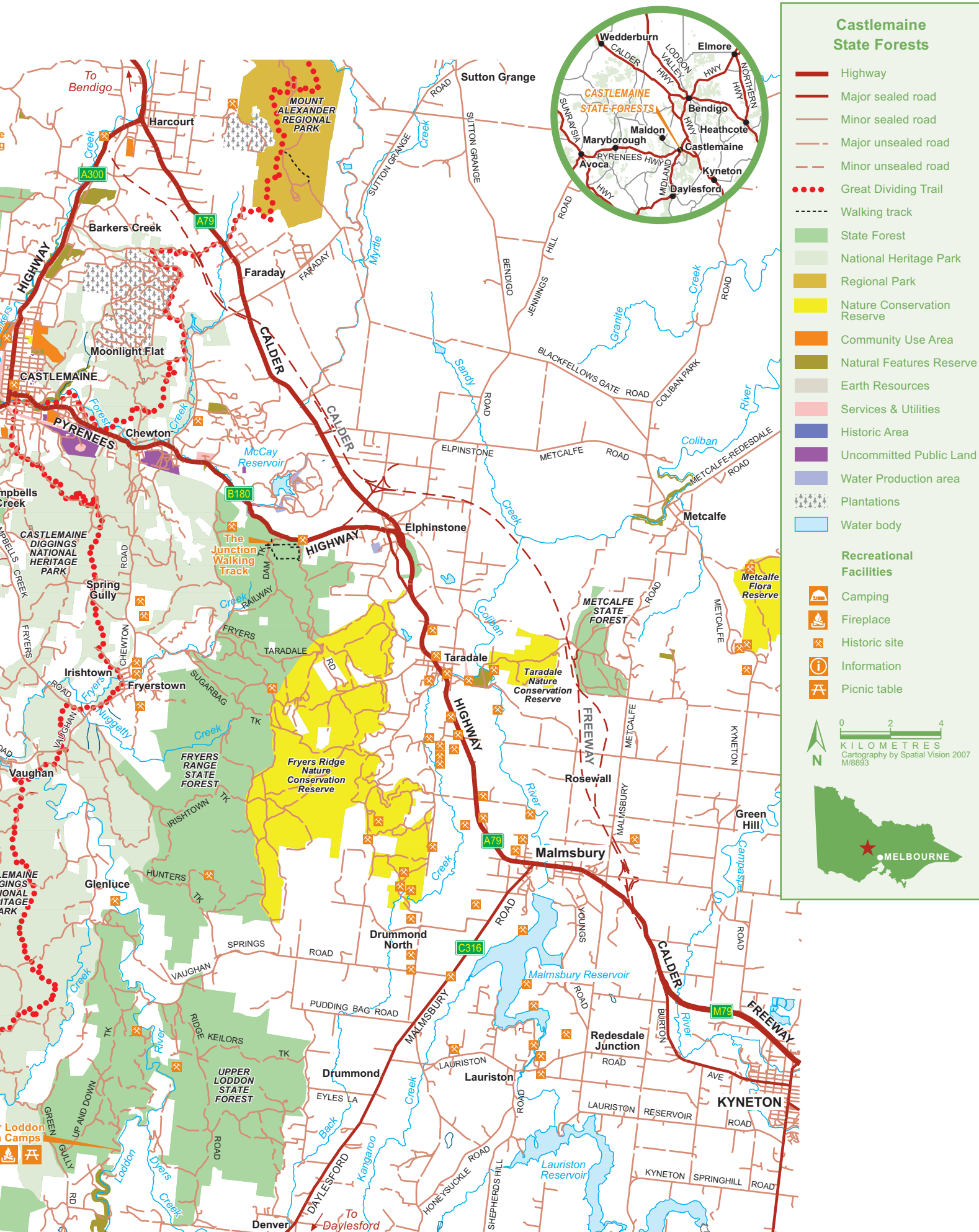
Upper Loddon Bush Camps – located on the Loddon River in the Upper Loddon State Forest, these basic bush camps are a great place to relax and get away from it all. Access the camps from Up and Down Track in the Upper Loddon State Forest.

The Great Dividing Trail – this track represents one section of Victoria's Great Dividing Trail, a series of co-ordinated walks across the ranges and Central Highlands. Dry Diggings Track winds 55 km around the old goldfields between Castlemaine and Daylesford, including Fryerstown, Vaughan, Mt Franklin and Hepburn Springs. It takes in many of the area's goldmining relics as well as its plants and animals. A comprehensive guide map is available from the Castlemaine Visitors' Centre (☎ 5470 6200).

Activities to enjoy in State forest

- Get active! Walk along one of the many tracks around the forest, 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.
- Camping and picnicking is a great way to relax and enjoy the Box-Ironbark surroundings. Most camping spots are informal bush camps suitable for the self-sufficient camper. Remember to take your rubbish home.
- Take your dog for a walk, ensuring it remains under control and you don't disturb wildlife or visitors.
- Try your luck fossicking or prospecting with a current Miner's Right. You can purchase a Miner's Right online from the Department of Primary Industries website at www.depi.vic.gov.au. Remember to re-fill any holes you dig.
- 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. You must hold a shooter's licence.
- Explore and search the forest for clues that give us evidence from the past. Remember to leave everything as you find it.





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Let's look after our living museum!

- All native plants, animals, historic sites are protected by law.
- While campfires are part of the outdoor experience, sparks can easily ignite the bush. Observe all fire regulations and Total Fire Ban days. Always use existing fireplaces or dig 30 cm deep trenches. Ensure your fire is less than one metre square and at least three metres clear of burnable material. Collect only dead wood from the ground. Never leave fires unattended and ensure they are completely extinguished before you leave.

FOR YOUR OWN SAFETY

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

More information

The Department of Environment and Primary Industries (DEPI) is responsible for managing Victoria's State forest.

Visit the DEPI website at www.depi.vic.gov.au

For more information contact:

- DEPI Bendigo office: ☎ (03) 5430 4444
- DEPI Customer Service Centre: ☎ 136 186.

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[Midland Spider Orchid] (Photo: DEPI/Black)

[Spiny Rice flower] (Photo: DEPI/Stimson)

[Rosemary Grevillia] (Photo: DEPI/Stimson)

[Leek Orchid] (Photo: DEPI/Stimson)

[Eastern Grey Kangaroo Joey] (Photo: DEPI/Camilleri)

[Tawny Frogmouth] (Photo: DEPI/McCann)

[Diamond Firetail] (Photo: DEPI/McCann)

[Mistletoe Bird] (Photo: DEPI/McCann)

[Fat-tailed Dunnart] (Photo: DEPI/McCann)

[Woodland Blind Snake] (Photo: DEPI/McCann)

[Common Toadlet] (Photo: DEPI/McCann)

[Red, White and Blue Mine] (Photo: DEPI)

[Remnants of Buildings] (Photo: DEPI/Groch)