

The 73km, half day Bendoc Historic Loop Drive starts at The Gap Scenic Reserve and takes in the scenic and historic sites of the Bendoc and Cottonwood State Forests managed by the Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE).

The major human influences that have contributed to the long and rich history of this area of forest have been gold mining, farming and grazing, and timber harvesting. Signs remain today of Bendoc's early settlers and gold rush days. A pleasurable day can be spent visiting a number of sites within the vicinity of the Bendoc township.

Gold mining history

Reverend W. B. Clarke was one of the first to discover gold in the district in 1852. Alluvial deposits were worked from the late 1850s. Reefs were discovered from 1866. The township of Bendoc soon formed around the reefs and battery on the lower Bendoc. Over two-thirds of the town's population was miners. Their homes were made from roughly hewn slabs or wattle and daub, with bark or shingle roofs. Miners faced hardships including isolation, inaccessibility, and cost of living.

1873 saw nearly all of the original quartz mines abandoned, just as new reefs were opened on the Bonang River. Large companies formed but by 1876 quartz mining came to a virtual standstill. It revived in the mid 1880s and this time the mines attracted more capital. In 1889 rich reefs were discovered at what became Clarkeville.

From 1910 until the end of WW1 the Victoria Mine, south of Bendoc, was taken up and worked successfully, as was the neighbouring Welcoming Stranger. Prospectors were again active in East Gippsland during the 1930s. During the depression, a hydraulic sluicing works was established at Back Creek, Bendoc, which operated until the 1950s.

Small time prospectors and miners have continued to show an interest in the Bendoc goldfields up to the present time.



Photo: "Mining days at Clarkeville beyond Bendoc", kindly donated to DSE by Alma Angus nee Hutchison.

Naming Bendoc

The township of Bendoc was originally known as "Wagra", an aboriginal word meaning black-eyed crow.

Local legend has it that the cattle from Ben Boyd's runs, which stretched from Eden to the Monaro, strayed further and further afield until they arrived at Gippsland. Arriving at Wagra, there was a portion of clear country. Ben's cattle used it as a stamping ground and there Ben would dock them. Hence the area became known as "Ben's Dock", later to be shortened to "Bendoc".

Getting started

From Melbourne travel 375km east to Orbost via the Princes Highway. From Orbost take the Bonang Road and travel approximately 84km to the Bonang Road – Gap Road intersection. Turn right onto Gap Road.

Bendoc Historic Loop Drive

Grade: Moderate, 73km, half day.

Vehicle: 4WD only.

Warnings: Log truck traffic; Seasonal Road Closure (Goonmirk Rd); open mine shafts.

Start: Gap Scenic Reserve

Intersection of Bonang Rd and Bonang-Bendoc Rd.

Stop 1: Delegate River Diversion Tunnel Picnic Area

Follow Gap Rd travel 6.2km → turn left onto Playgrounds Rd travel 6.5kms → turn right onto Bonang-Bendoc Rd travel 4.4kms → turn left onto Pretty Gully Tk travel 0.9km → turn right (following signs to tunnel) travel 400m.

The Delegate River Diversion Tunnel was formed when an 80m tunnel was cut through hard rock. Approximately 1,000 tonnes of rock was removed and used to construct a bank across the river. This caused water to be diverted into the tunnel which allowed working of the riverbed.

Stop 2: Bendoc Historic Park

Return onto Bonang-Bendoc Rd turn left travel 9km → turn right onto Haydens Bog / Lower Bendoc Rd travel 0.7km.

This park contains numerous relics from early European settlement along with interpretive information about Aboriginal cultural heritage. Bendoc is the only community in Australia to own one of the few surviving Union (non-denominational) Churches as trustees.

Stop 3: Wilson's Hut

Continue traveling on the Haydens Bog / Lower Bendoc Rd 100m → turn right onto Jamieson St / Clarkeville Rd travel 4km → turn left onto Marriot Tk travel 1.4km (veering left).

Made from local forest materials, Wilson's Hut was built in 1916 and is a rare example of a surviving slab hut.

Stop 4: Victoria Star Historic Mine Area

Returning to Clarkeville Rd turn left travel 0.9km.

This mine was reputedly the highest yielding mine in East Gippsland. Originally worked in 1869, to a depth of more than 90m, this mine produced a total yield of 5,337oz of gold. The features of the Victoria Star Mine site include a mullock heap, mine workings, machinery foundations, remains of a battery, and portable steam engine.

Stop 5: Jungle King Mine

Continue traveling south on Clarkeville Rd travel 4.8km → turn right onto Aspens Battery tk travel 1.8km.

This is a fine example of a quartz mining shaft which commenced operation in 1889. The site allows viewing of a vertical shaft descending into the earth, with a stoned entrance. This site has been fenced off to allow safe observation.

Stop 6: Goonmirk Rocks

Returning onto Clarkeville Rd travel 4.8km → turn right onto Goonmirk Rocks Rd travel 4.9km.

A short walk to an interesting granite rocky outcrop featuring the ancient Mountain Plum Pine (*Podocarpus lawrencei*). This site is within the Errinundra National Park, managed by Parks Victoria.

Stop 7: Tea Tree Flat Picnic Area

Continue traveling on Goonmirk Rocks Rd 1.2km → turn right onto Gunmark Rd travel 6.4km.

This picnic area is situated on the Delegate River and features sphagnum moss and heath plants. This site is within the Errinundra National Park, managed by Parks Victoria.

Tour End: Gap Scenic Reserve

Continue traveling on Gunmark Rd 4.3km → turn left onto Gap Rd travel 5.5km to return to the Bonang Rd. Turn left and travel approximately 84km to Orbost.

Flora and Fauna

Vegetation along the Loop Drive will vary depending on the local environment, and in some instances may be influenced by disturbance from past mining activities. Drier environments support open woodlands of Broad-leaf Peppermint above a diverse and open shrublayer. A rich groundlayer of grasses and herbs will often be found under an overstorey of Snow Gum. In damper environments, the Errinundra Shining Gum can occur above a dense shrub layer that may include the Gippsland Waratah. The groundlayer is rich in ferns, and is dominated by Mother Shield-fern, Gristle Fern and a scattering of Tree-ferns.

The variety of vegetation along the Loop Drive provides an array of habitat for fauna species including the rarely sighted Powerful Owl. Other birds are the most likely fauna to be observed along the Drive, and include White-throated Tree-creepers, Superb Lyrebirds, Brown Thornbills, Eastern Yellow Robins and Golden Whistlers.

Many of the mammal species are nocturnal and may not be encountered but include the Yellow-bellied Glider, Greater Glider, Red-necked Wallaby and the Mountain-Brushtail Possum. In the warmer months, reptiles such as the Lace

Monitor, White-lipped Snake and Eastern Blue-tongued Lizard may be seen.

Picnic sites

Delegate River Diversion Tunnel – undesignated car parking for approximately 8 cars, interpretive material, 2 picnic tables, barbecue.

Protecting historic sites

All historic sites and their components are protected, under Victorian legislation. It must be remembered that it is an offence to remove historic objects from State forest.

Looking after our forests

- Don't disturb native plants and animals.
- There is no rubbish collection service, so please take your rubbish home.
- Dogs must be under direct control at all times and are expected to be kept on a leash in picnic and camping areas or when near other visitors.
- Take care with fire – observe all fire regulations and Total Fire Ban days. Preferably use existing fireplaces; never leave fires unattended; ensure fires are completely extinguished when you leave.
- A number of roads in the area are subject to forest road warnings, having either blind bends, are slippery particularly when wet, and are frequented by log trucks. Please take care on these roads.
- Motor vehicles including motorcycles must not be driven off formed roads.

For more information

The Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE) is responsible for managing Victoria's State forest. For further information contact DSE's Bendoc office ☎ 02 6459 0500 or DSE's Customer Service Centre ☎ 136 186.

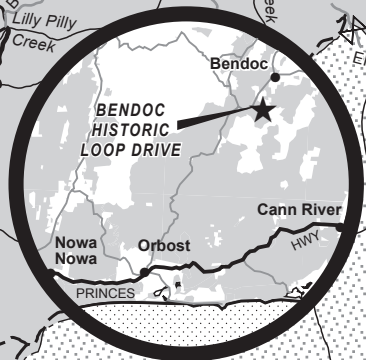
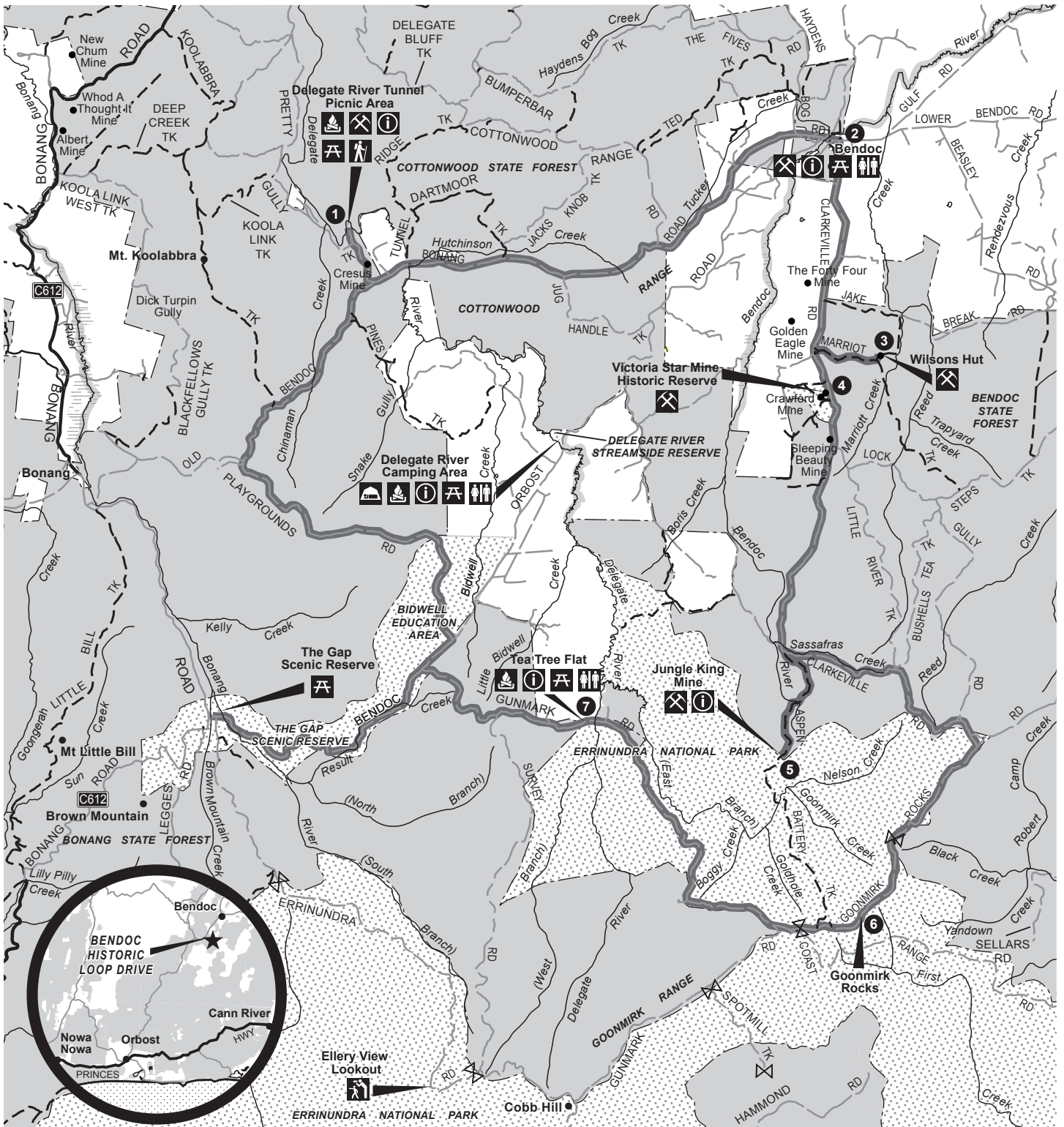
The Bendoc Historic Goldfields Drive is one of the ten recently developed East Gippsland drives included in the Back Road Tours brochure developed by DSE. It is available from the DSE's website and Gippsland offices, and from local Visitor Information Centres.

The Errinundra National Park Park Note is also available from Parks Victoria's website: www.parkweb.vic.gov.au.

Visit DSE's website

Bendoc and Cottonwood State Forests are managed for a wide range of uses including catchment protection, timber production, recreation, conservation, and heritage values. If you are interested in how State forests are managed, the current East Gippsland Forest Management Plan can be viewed on the Department's website on the Internet at: <http://www.dse.vic.gov.au/forests> selecting "Publications".

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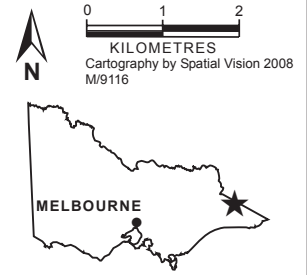


Bendoc Historic Loop Drive

- Sealed road
- Unsealed road
- Vehicle track (4WD)
- Forest Drive
- Walking track
- Seasonal Closure Gate
- State Forest
- Parks and Reserves
- Water body
- Stop Number

Recreational Facilities

- Camping
- Fireplace
- Historic site
- Information
- Lookout
- Picnic table
- Toilets
- Walk - Bushwalking



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