Melba Gully
Great Otway National Park

Visitor Guide

Known as the Jewel of the Otways, this is one of the wettest places in Victoria with an annual rainfall of over 2000mm. The gully has prolific plant growth and is a dense rainforest of Myrtle Beech, Blackwood and Tree-ferns, with an understorey of low ferns and mosses.

Rainforests
Melba Gully introduces you to Victoria’s cool temperate rainforest which has evolved over millions of years.

The Myrtle Beech are survivors from an ancient wetter climate and were once common in the gullies of the Otway Ranges. They are closely related to beech trees in Tasmania’s rainforests, reminding us of the original landlink with the island.

Rainforests all over the world are home to more than half of all species.

Enjoying the park

Madsen’s Track Nature Walk
This 35 minute loop walk is an adventure into a world of ancient, mossy trees and cool fern gullies.

Start at the picnic area and follow the information signs along the track and listen for the soothing sound of Anne’s cascades.

Rest at the site of the Big Tree; a huge old Otway Messmate, which has fallen and started recycling back into the forest floor sustaining new life and growth.

Please stay on the walking track to prevent damage to the sensitive environment.

Good walking shoes are recommended as the track is steep in places.

Birds and animals
Melba Gully is home to a range of shy and nocturnal animals including possums, Swamp wallabies, Spot-tailed quolls and native bush rats.

Many birds thrive in the rainforest including the Australian Ground Thrush, Suberb Fairy - wrens, Yellow Robins, Grey Shrike-thrushes and Rufous Fantails.

Perhaps the most unusual inhabitants are the glow worms, which can be seen at night along the walking tracks. Please do not touch them.

The carnivorous Otway Black Snail (Vinctaphanta compacta) is endemic to the region and can be seen along the track during wet weather.

Picnic tables, a gas barbecue and toilets are provided. Camping is not permitted.

Steam, sawdust and sightseers
Settlers began clearing the forest in the 1880s. Transport was a major problem and a narrow gauge railway was built from Colac to Beech Forest in 1902 and then to Crowes in 1911.

Sawmills were established in the forest and timber tramways were built to carry logs and timber to the railway line. There were two sawmills and a tramway in Melba Gully.

Mrs Jessie Fry named the area “Melba Gully” (after Australia’s famous singer Dame Nellie Melba) in 1921. The picnic area is on the site of Mrs Fry’s tearooms.

Through the 1930s and 1940s Melba Gully was a popular picnic and lunch spot for bus tourists. Business came to an end in 1948 when a bus length limit was imposed on Otway roads.

The property was sold in 1958 to Mr and Mrs Axel Madsen, who generously offered it to the Victorian Conservation Trust in 1975. The Trust later transferred it to the Crown to be managed by Parks Victoria and donated further parcels of land in 2003.

Caring for Country
Through their rich and diverse culture, Indigenous Australians have been intrinsically connected to Country for tens of thousands of years.

The spiritual and physical connections of the Gadubanud people are still celebrated today.

Parks Victoria recognises this connection and acknowledges the Traditional Owners and Aboriginal communities of these areas.

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For more information call the Parks Victoria Information Centre on 13 1963
or visit our website at www.parks.vic.gov.au

Healthy Parks
Healthy People
Be fire ready and stay safe
Many parks and forests are located in high fire risk areas. On days of forecast Code Red Fire Danger this park will be closed for public safety. If you are already in the park you should leave the night before or early in the morning for your own safety. Closure signs will be erected and rangers will patrol when possible, however you may not receive a personal warning that the park is closed so check the latest conditions by calling 13 1963 or visit www.parks.vic.gov.au. For up to date information on fires in Victoria or general fire safety advice call the Victorian Bushfire Information Line on 1800 240 667

Glow worms
A visual spectacular
The light will “go out” if the glow worm is disturbed, for example by noise or direct torchlight, so please tread quietly and don’t touch!

Life cycle
The adult fungus gnats lay up to eighty eggs which hatch after 2-3 weeks. The larvae (glow worms) grow for up to nine months, after which they pupate. The pupa lasts nine days before the adult stage is reached. The adult fungus gnats are about 1.5cm long, nocturnal (active at night), sluggish and harmless. It lives for a short period (48 to 72 hours) and makes a buzzing noise when in flight.

The fly also has an uncontrollable light, the female being brighter than the male until after mating - when she becomes terribly dull and boring.

Please do not touch or shine torches at the glow worms.

Silken retreats
The larvae build retreats in soil banks by producing threads of silk. They attach sticky beads or droplets to the threads, giving them a necklace appearance.

Some 5cm long, the threads trap tiny insects which are attracted by the glowing larvae.

The glow worm “reels” in the threads to devour its prey, hence the common reference to these silk traps as fishing lines.

Drinking Water
Be self-sufficient and carry water in, and/or know how to make untreated water safe for drinking.

How to get there
Melba Gully is 1.5km off the Great Ocean Road, 3km west of Lavers Hill. The access road is suitable for conventional vehicles.

Melways Ref. 526 H10P

Guided tours
Don’t just visit a park .. EXPERIENCE IT!!
Check parkweb or contact the Great Ocean Road VIC for more information on tours and activities offered by Licensed Tour Operators.

Touring the area
- Otway Ranges
- Port Campbell National Park
- Great Otway National Park
- Otway Forest Park
- Triplet Falls, Beauchamp Falls and Hopetoun Falls

Melba Gully
- Sealed road
- Walking track
- National Park
- Recreational Facilities
- Barbeque - Gas
- Carpark
- Facilities for Disabled
- Picnic table
- Toilets

Caring for the environment
Help us look after your park by following these guidelines:
- Please take rubbish away with you for recycling and disposal
- All native plants and animals are protected by law. Please do not disturb them in any way.
- Dogs and other pets are not permitted in the park.
- No fires, (including gas or fuel stoves) may be lit in Melba Gully
- Melba Gully is in the South West Total Fire Ban District. Please do not touch or shine torches at the glow worms
- Keep to tracks, for your own safety & to protect soils & vegetation

Mobile Phones
You may not be in network range in some areas of the park. To be connected to Police, Ambulance or CFA, key in 112 then press the YES key

Park closures
Be prepared to leave early as extreme weather may cause the closure of some park areas for public safety.