Aberfeldy Track
Time travel and adventure. Naturally.

Back Road Tours Guide

Acknowledgement of Country
We respectfully acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land, the Gunakurnai and Wurundjeri people. We also pay respect to all Aboriginal community elders both past and present who have resided in the Gippsland region and who have been an integral part of the history of Gippsland and their respective clans.

Acknowledgement to our Pioneers
The Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning proudly acknowledges and pays its respects to our early pioneers. Without our forebears and their pioneering skills and endeavour to discover further gold fields, this area would not have been developed.

Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning regional locations:

Erica
3264 Thomson Valley Road, Erica 3825
Phone (03) 5165 2200

Noojee
McCarthy’s Spur Road, Noojee 3833
Phone (03) 5624 8100

Heyfield
Licolac Road, Heyfield 3858
Phone (03) 5139 7777

Traralgon
71 Hotsham Street, Traralgon 3844
Phone (03) 5172 2111

This brochure describes two main Back Road Tours (and three side trips) to help you discover the history and heritage of the Walhalla to Woods Point gold belt through a series of interpretative material, whilst traversing some of the most beautiful, scenic, four wheel drive routes in Gippsland.

Each tour is described with detailed directions and distances. Tour descriptions are colour coded with the tour route map on the reverse side. Key points of interest along the routes are highlighted with additional publications referenced for further information.

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The 4WD track ratings for these tours are advisory only and have been estimated for travel in dry conditions. Even after very light rain, many tracks can become extremely slippery and more difficult to negotiate. The rated conditions may not be accurate after rain or heavy snow and greater care needs to be exercised.

Fieldwork has revealed that odometer readings can vary from +/− 200 metres per 10 km depending upon the vehicle used. The tour description distance does not include optional side trips.

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Front Cover Photo: Cast Iron Point
Donnelly’s Creek Loop (commencing from Walhalla)

Classification: Easy, Medium
Distance: 7.4 km
Duration: Full day of driving, two full days if undertaking walks
Warnings: Log trucks, narrow and steep forest roads
Recommended UHF Channel: McEvoys Track: Channel 40, Donnelly’s Creek Road: Channel 3 (with duplex on).

Note: Donnelly’s Creek Road may also be referred to on other mapping material as ‘Donnelly Creek Track’.

Starting in Walhalla (distances measured from Walhalla Post Office), head north on the Walhalla Road. At approximately 6.3 km, you will pass the Cricket Ground Track on your right, which will take you up to the historic Walhalla Cricket Ground.

As you continue north along Walhalla Road, you will see lush vegetation and spectacular tree ferns that have returned following the 2013 Aberfeldy-Donnelly’s Creek fire event.

Read about the history of Kelly’s Flat – an area converted from trees to tramways.

At the 10 km mark, veer right onto Binns Road. Pass the historic sites of Holmedale (on your right) which was predominately used as a mail pick up depot for the nearby gold mines, and steep views through the trees to your left of the Thomson Reservoir in the distance.

At the end of Binns Road and site of the Binns Hotel (1871 – 1873), turn left onto McEvoys Track (approx 12.6 km from Walhalla Post Office). McEvoys Track was the location for many hotel sites in the late 1800s, whereby travellers from the coast to the goldfields travelled in search of their fortune.

Continuing north towards Mt Useful, learn of the colourful history of the pioneering through interpretation material at Dawes and the Bark Hut site.

At the 10.2 km mark from Binns Road/McEvoys Track intersection, turn left into Donnelly’s Creek Road. Donnelly’s Creek once comprised many smaller townships including Store Point, Edwards Reef, Toombor, and Code’s Flat (previously known as Clarke’s Flat) to name a few, and played host to many immigrants and early pioneers.

Switch to UHF Channel 3 for Donnelly’s Creek Road and depress the duplex button on your unit.

At the 1.8 km mark along Donnelly’s Creek Road, you will find the Edwards Reef Burial Ground at the top of a short track to your left - established around 1863.

A bit further along Donnelly’s Creek Road, you will find the township site of Edwards Reef (1863 – 1880) including the lone grave of Eliza Alderson. Take a few minutes to read about the colourful history of this township on the interpretation material in situ.

As you leave Edwards Hill, a series of hairpin bends wind down to the township of Store Point. The Store Point Hut, recently restored with assistance from the Victorian High Country Huts Association is available to shelter from the elements, with its warm indoor and outdoor fireplaces. A short walk to the Store Point Burial Ground and School House is available for those wishing to stretch their legs, or enjoy a picnic morning tea/lunch at the hut site.

Continue along Donnelly’s Creek Road. The Morning Star and Crinoline Walking Tracks commence off Middle Star Track (also known as Willoughby Spur Track) to your right at approximately the 8.2 km mark. Allow two hours return to complete both tracks, where you will view the Water Wheel nestled in a steep valley and erected in 1905, which was used for the Morning Star Mine. The walk onwards to the Crinoline will allow you to view other old mining relics such as a boiler and stamper. Beware of snakes.
Side Trip: White Star Township

Classification: Easy
Distance: 10.7 km from Donnelly’s Creek Road / McEvoyas Road (otherwise known as Springs Road) intersection
Duration: 30 mins (including short walk into Smith’s Hotel Site and William Watts’ lone grave.)
Warnings: Log trucks on Springs Road / McEvoyas Track
Recommended UHF Channel: Channel 40.

A short alternative route exists to the township site of White Star, which sprang up after the discovery of quartz by good natured Welshman, Jack Middleton, known for his generosity within the area.

En route to White Star is The Germans, Mt Pleasant Hotel Site as well as Smith’s Hotel site with a short walk into the lone grave of William Watts.

The Mt Pleasant Hotel site (1864 – 1869) was run by the Crooks family. Mr Crooks was not favourable within the community, having a reputation for his kleptomaniac tendencies – i.e., Mr Crooks was a crook!

As Donnelly’s Creek Road continues, you will pass the camping grounds of O’Tooles Flats and Little O’Tooles, both have fire pits, toilets and plenty of grassy areas and shady trees to pitch your tent or throw your swag.

Donnelly’s Creek Road then winds its way up to Toomboon with spectacular views over the mountain ranges. The Toomoon Walking Track (at approx 22 km mark from McEvoyas Track Intersection) will take approx 45 minutes to complete. Toomboon was a booming mining town in the late 1800s to early 1900s with a population of around 700 people. There are plenty of old mining relics to view at this site. Not far from here is the Toomboon Cemetery which was gazetted in 1886 and functioned until the turn of the century.

Passing by ‘Smoko Point’ at the 24.5 km mark, named after Australia’s new soldier recruits arrived at Aberfeldy for a gruelling three day training march through the challenging terrain prior to their deployment overseas. The first stop was ‘Smoko Point’ for a rest, where most soldiers would fashionably light up a cigarette whilst recovering from the climb.

Donnelly’s Creek Road now winds its way down to the Aberfeldy River and Code’s Flat. There is a small but comfortable camping site just prior to the Aberfeldy River Bridge, previously the old home site of the gold mining family ‘Andersons’. At Code’s Flat, you can view the original telegraph office made of stone on your left.
Three km further and the road adjoins the Wainalba Road. Turn right onto Wainalba Road heading north once more, where you will shortly arrive in the quaint township of Aberfeldy. Be sure to undertake the short Aberfeldy Heritage Walk and view the historic Aberfeldy Cemetery which was established in the 1860s and is still a working cemetery to this date. Learn about the Fair Haven Guest House which also served as the Post Office and Telephone Exchange, and take a moment to absorb the amazing views of the surrounding landscape.

Return to Erica/Rawson via the Wainalba Road, view the spectacular Great Divide mountain range to your left, and learn about the colourful characters of the past including Kitty Cane and ‘Holy Joe’ Knapping. Stop and absorb the stunning views at Cast Iron Point looking across the Thomson Reservoir to the Baw Baw plateau, whilst learning the history of the naming of this area.

17 km from Aberfeldy township, turn right onto the Thomson Reservoir Access Road which takes you to the dam wall itself. This ends the Donnelly’s Creek loop.

This loop can be completed in either direction.
Jordan Valley Loop
(commencing from Woods Point)

Note: This loop is subject to seasonal road closures from 1st May to 30th November each year. No vehicle-based camping is permitted in the catchment area. Please obey all signs.

Classification: Easy, Medium
Duration: One full day, 1½ days with walks included
Warnings: Narrow and steep forest roads
Recommended UHF Channel: Channel 3

Commence your journey at the unique tourist and gold mining township of Woods Point – once part of the Jordan Goldfields and situated at the extreme headwaters of the Goulburn River. Woods Point lies 120 kilometres east-north-east of Melbourne and is a three hour drive by road.

Once a thriving township that had 36 hotels, stores, business offices, police station, churches, medical clinics, banks, post office, factories etc, Woods Point quickly declined with the decrease in mining activity; from a population of approximately 2000 in the 1870’s to only one or two hundred in the 1890’s. The township had another influx of activity in the 1940’s with the rebuilding post the 1939 Black Friday fires which destroyed the township and caused the death of one person at Woods Point, one person at Abertailey and 17 in nearby Matlock. Local residents took shelter in the surrounding mine tunnels, whilst others plunged into the nearby Goulburn River. Travel approximately 7 km south-westerly along the Warrurton – Woods Point Road to the tiny township of Matlock. Turn left onto Warrallia Road.

At the 3.2 km mark, turn right onto Jericho Track, a scenic and relatively easy 4WD track. You are now entering the Thomson Water Supply Catchment and heading towards the historic township of Jericho where you can read about the history of the Jordan Valley Goldfields through the interpretation material in situ.

Be sure to visit the magnificent Jericho Oak Tree which was planted in 1902 from an acorn taken from the family home of Elizabeth and Robert Clarke at Code’s Flat. A little further along the road, turn right onto BB Jordan Divide Track to view the historic Jericho Cemetery gazetted in 1870. The first burials there however, preceded this date.

Viewing the Jericho diversion tunnel is also worthwhile, blasted from solid rock in the 1870’s possibly to obtain gold from the river bed or alternatively to keep the township safe from floodwaters.

Return to Jericho Track and continue on until you reach the Red Jacket Track. 700m down the Red Jacket Track (from Jericho Track intersection) lies Chinaman’s Point, which was the largest settlement of Chinese miners in the district. The Chinese had an uncanny ability to mine gold where others had failed and assisted with providing the local mining community with fresh produce thus reducing the incidence of scurvy.

Red Jacket Track runs alongside the Jordan River. The track “BB. B. Jordan Divide Track” intersects with Red Jacket and Jericho Tracks, B.B. track was once known as “Bare Bottom Track” as it was so steep that miners sat down to slow their descent – the result was that it wore out the seat of their trousers! When the female population arrived at the goldfields, the words ‘Bare Bottom’ were not appropriate, and the track then became known as B.B. Jordan Divide Track.
Continue heading south-easterly along Red Jacket Track before arriving at the township site of Red Jacket, as well as the historic Red Jacket Cemetery, high on the hillside to your right. It is well worth a walk around to view the graves of miners buried almost 150 years ago.

Continue along Red Jacket Track passing the old Red Jacket School site, through to Blue Jacket township and onto Violet Town, also known as Jolly’s as it was founded by George and Mary Jolly in 1862. Mr and Mrs Jolly grew fruit trees and vegetables, and Mrs Jolly filled the valley with fields of violets – their colour and perfume vivid when in flower.

After visiting Blue Jacket and Violet town, return to Red Jacket and turn right onto Victor Spur Track. Cross the bridge (over the Jordan River) and head up the track in a north-easterly direction. Be sure to fill your water bottle up at the natural spring on your right. Before reaching the Victor’s Quartz township site, you will view another interpretation board on the man who discovered a reef in this area and who was later known to be one of Australia’s greatest prospectors – Mr Thomas Rudolph Victor.

Upon reaching the Walhalla Road, turn left to return to Matlock and Woods Point, or turn right to travel towards the Aberfeldy Township where you can undertake the short Aberfeldy Heritage Walk and view the historic Aberfeldy Cemetery which was established in the 1860s and is still a working cemetery to this date. Learn about the Aberfeldy Shopping Precinct and the old school site, and take a moment to absorb the amazing views of the surrounding landscape.

Along the Walhalla Road to Aberfeldy, watch for wildlife including goannas, wallabies, dingoes, Sambar Deer, wombats, owls and wedge-tailed eagles flying over the mountain tops. Travel on the main ridge between the Thomson, Jordan, Aberfeldy and Goulburn Rivers with views of the Great Dividing Range.

To further your knowledge about the Walhalla – Woods Point gold belt, traverse the Donnelly’s Creek Loop through to Walhalla, Rawson and Erica.

**Side Trip: Hanging Rock Walking Track**

**Classification:** Difficult, Very Difficult

Travelling from the Matlock direction (north), turn left into Cullen’s Track. At the 2 km mark, veer right onto Comet Spur Track, which is a steeply, rutted track – traverse in dry weather only. Travel a further 1.8 km before turning left onto Eaton Track. Travel 800 metres to the start of the Hanging Rock Walking Track.

Located on the banks of the Aberfeldy River, ‘Hanging Rock’ was a particularly popular picnic spot in the late 1800’s / early 1900’s and was previously situated along a pack track which travelled from Code’s Flat to Cullen’s Farm and then up to the township of Aberfeldy.

**Distance / driving time from Walhalla Road to Hanging Rock Walking Track:** 4.6 km / 20 mins one way

**Walking track time / distance:** 30 minutes return / 1.2 km
Side Trip: Aberfeldy Crossing

**Classification:** Difficult

Travelling from the Matlock direction (north), turn left into O'Keefes Track. O'Keefes Track is approximately 5 minutes drive (1.9 km) from the Aberfeldy Township. Travel 2.7 km down O'Keefes Track to the start of the Walking Track which takes you into Aberfeldy Crossing where interpretation material tells of the history of this area and the previous residents who lived there, including Thomas Fawkner, Thomas Theobold, Sarah Matthews and William ‘Billy the cook’ Bryant.

**Distance / driving time from Walhalla Road to Aberfeldy Crossing Walking Track:** 2.7 km / 14 mins one way

**Walking track time / distance:** 15 minutes return / 300 metres

Link to Donnelly’s Creek Loop (commencing from Seaton)

**Classification:** Easy

**Distance:** 21.5 km

**Duration:** 50 mins

**Warnings:** Log trucks

**Recommended UHF Channel:** McEvoy’s Track : Channel 40.

Commencing at the Seaton-Glenmaggie Road intersection with McEvoy’s Track, heading north-west.

McEvoy’s Track (otherwise known as Springs Road) has a long and rich history, dating back to before 1862, when a public meeting was held in Sale, and a reward of £50 offered for the discovery of the best track to the Jordan River diggings.

Tom McEvoy and Portugee Joe’s Track was deemed to be the best route, commencing at Seaton, climbing the ridge with the Thomson Watershed on the left and the Glenmaggie Creek on the right, going over the top of Mount Useful. Because of the efforts of Tom McEvoy and Portugee Joe, Sale, which was then the commercial centre of Gippsland, was linked with the thriving goldfields of Woods Point and the Jordan. McEvoy and Portugee Joe rightly claimed the reward for discovering the track and soon bullock drovers thronged with their wares including tea, flour, sugar, salt, mining picks and long-handed shovels in the hope of finding their fortune.

Shortly after, John Donnelly, travelling along McEvoys Track, left its safety and followed a spur down to an unknown creek. Here he found good gold and the Donnelly’s Creek goldfield was born. McEvoy’s Track had clearly opened the way from Sale to the major goldfields.

One year later, Ned Stringer with three others, left Donnelly’s Creek and in 1862 discovered Walhalla.

Take the time to explore the sites of Porters Halfway House (1862 – 1869), Bridget Romas Hotel (1863 – 1865), the Bark Hut Boarding House (1862 – 1863) and the controversy of Murderer’s Hill.

This link from Seaton, now joins the Donnelly’s Creek Loop.
Caring for the Environment

Help us look after your forests and parks by remembering these guidelines:

- A person must not knowingly or negligently deface or damage or otherwise interfere with an archaeological relic or carry out an act likely to endanger an archaeological relic except in accordance with a consent issued under section 129 of the Heritage Act 1995.
- All native plants, animals, cultural and historic features are protected.
- Take your rubbish with you.
- Pets and firearms are not permitted in National Parks.
- Please do not use soaps, detergents and toothpaste in the streams and waterways as they are a source of drinking water for others.
- Dispose of any dirty water away from watercourses.
- Please do not feed or handle wildlife as it fosters dependence and may cause disease.
- Road closures apply to all vehicles.
- To help protect our roads and tracks from damage, always engage four wheel drive when on 4WD tracks.
- You can find out other ways of caring for tracks by enrolling in a 4WD training course with Four Wheel Drive Victoria.

Road Conditions

The condition of forest tracks can be variable due to environmental factors. Be aware of weather forecasts and take heed of recommended four wheel drive track classifications.

Seasonal Road Closures

Some roads and tracks in parks and forests throughout Victoria are seasonally closed during the year, especially in winter to help protect track surfaces, water quality and the environment and to ensure driver safety. Most closures take effect from the Thursday after Queen’s Birthday long weekend in June and remain in force until Melbourne Cup Day long weekend.

Temporary Road Closures

Roads may need to be temporarily closed because of fire, landslips, major roadworks or unseasonable wet weather. Check road conditions before leaving on your trip. For up to date information contact regional Department of Environment and Primary Industries offices, Parks Victoria, or visit www.depi.vic.gov.au.

Bushfires

On average, campfires cause approximately 10% of the bushfires that start on public land. Restrictions apply to ensure that fires do not escape and bushland is protected.

Code Red Days

Parks and State forest are closed to the public on Code Red Days. Do not enter parks or forests on Code Red Days. If you are already there when a Code Red day is announced, you should leave the night before or early in the morning. For more information contact Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning on 136 186 or visit www.depi.vic.gov.au.

Total Fire Ban Days

These are declared when conditions are hot, windy and the bush is dry. There are nine fire ban districts in Victoria - it is up to you to find out when a fire ban is on. Listen to the radio, contact your local Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning, Parks Victoria or CFA office before lighting up. If in doubt, keep your campfire out.

For information on burns and fires in Victoria and general fire safety advice, please contact the Victorian Bushfire Information Line on freecall 1800 240 667. Callers who are deaf, hearing impaired or speech impaired may call the National Relay Service on 133 677.

Campfires

State Forests

Use a constructed fireplace where provided or use a fuel stove. Otherwise light your campfire in a trench 50 cm deep, to prevent embers flying out. Take care as some tree roots can burn. A properly constructed fireplace is one that contains the perimeter of the fire. Clear the ground and air space of any flammable material (e.g. leaves, twigs, tree stumps) within 3 metres of your campfire.

National Parks and other reserves

Campfires are only allowed in permitted areas in properly constructed fireplaces to reduce damage to the environment. Try using fuel stoves as they are cleaner, cook faster and don’t scar the landscape.

Remember, do not leave your campfire unattended.
4WD Track Classification

The Four Wheel Drive Recreational Track Classification System provides a standard four level colour coded system to indicate the degree of difficulty of 4WD tracks and routes. The classification enables visitors to understand the nature of a track before beginning their journey and allows them to plan their trip for enjoyment, safety and comfort.

A number of areas have been classified in Victoria’s State Forest and National Parks along with Victoria’s iconic 4WD Adventures.

For further details on Victoria’s iconic 4WD Adventures visit www.iconic4wd.com.au.

Please note - All tracks are classified in dry conditions and will be difficult in wet conditions.

Four Wheel Drive Track Classifications for this Back Road Tours Guide were carried out in association with Four Wheel Drive Victoria and the Pajero Four Wheel Drive Club of Victoria.

Four Wheel Drive Victoria
www.fwdvictoria.org.au

Pajero Four Wheel Drive Club of Victoria
www.pajeroclub.com.au

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Expected terrain and track conditions

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Four Wheel Drive Victoria
www.fwdvictoria.org.au

Pajero Four Wheel Drive Club of Victoria
www.pajeroclub.com.au

Two Wheel Drive Victoria
www.twdvictoria.org.au

Weather

May be more difficult in wet

Will be more difficult in wet

Will be more difficult in wet

Will be more difficult in wet