



welcome



TO THE SERPENTINE CREEK CANOE TRAIL

Advice for safe exploration

Before you paddle

- Let someone know of your plan to paddle the trail and what time you expect to finish.
- Ensure you take suitable food, water, sunscreen and protective clothing to sustain you for up to 6 hours.
- GPS coordinates for key points of interest along the trail are available as a GPX file download from the Serpentine Canoe Trail website. Set up your GPS device for the GDA datum.
- In summer months, check Fire Danger Ratings for the Northern Country Fire District www.cfa.vic.gov.au/warnings-restrictions/northern-country-fire-district/

- Check weather conditions and warnings for the Northern Country Weather District www.bom.gov.au/vic/forecasts/northerncountry.shtml
- Check for any known Blue Green Algae Alerts at www.g-mwater.com.au/bluegreenalgae-alert/
- Be aware that to fish in Victorian waters, unless you have an exemption, you will need a Recreational Fishing Licence agriculture.vic.gov.au/fisheries/recreational-fishing/fishing-licence

On the creek

- Avoid paddling alone.
- There are many submerged hazards such as stumps and river debris – never jump, dive, or purposefully capsize your craft into murky water.
- If you do capsize, hold onto your canoe/kayak and swim for the bank.
- During the summer months, air temperatures can be very high – avoid overheating by paddling during the cooler hours of the day.
- In warmer seasons, snakes can often be seen basking in direct sunlight on logs or the creek edge and are sometimes seen swimming in the creek – this is their natural habitat and they should be left alone for their welfare and your safety.

Safety gear

- Wear a life-jacket or personal flotation device with a whistle attached.
- Wear hat and sunscreen.
- Take a trail map.
- Have one spare paddle between your group.
- Carry a first aid kit.
- Wear appropriate fixed footwear for water, steep banks and exploring the land.
- All craft should have fixed buoyancy.

In an emergency

There is mobile phone access along the trail – waterproof your device.

In the event of an emergency, dial **000** or **112**.

When asked for your location, state that you are on the Serpentine Creek adjacent to Whytecross Road in Durham Ox, Victoria. The nearest road junction is the Boort-Pyramid Road [C267]. This is where you launched onto the trail. Provide an estimate of how far you have paddled north from that junction and which side of the creek you are on to estimate your location.

Minimum impact

One of the advantages of paddle exploration is the ability to have minimum or no impact on the environment and cultural heritage.

To achieve this:

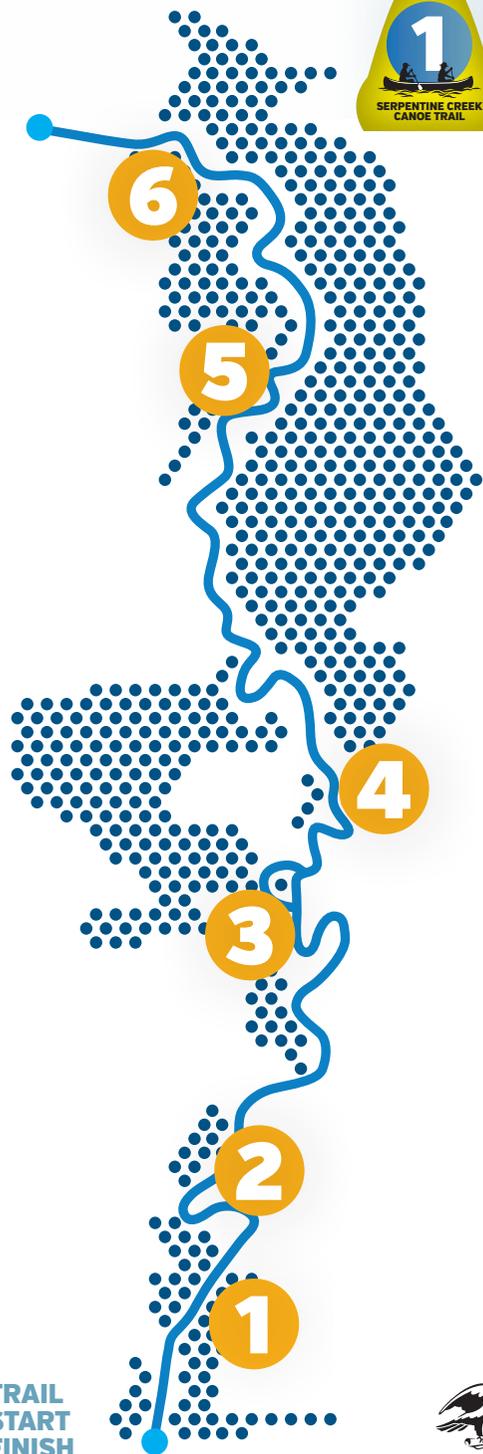
- Take out whatever you take in.
- Use designated launch facilities where available.
- Do not disturb any flora or fauna.
- Avoid any physical contact with cultural heritage sites such as scar trees.
- Do not interfere with any gates, fences or stock on the surrounding land.
- Do not light fires.





Trail Markers

Follow the floating trail markers to points of interest.



TRAIL
START
FINISH

1 The Inn

The Inn was first built long ago in 1848, and looked very different compared to what you see today. Originally the Inn was small and humble, and was used as the post office and a store as well! Over time, rooms and other improvements were added, until one hot summer's day in 1857, a roaring raging fire came burning across the land engulfing the Inn with fast fiery flames. A man named Gabriel re-built the Inn using 100,000 bricks! There were twelve rooms with a second storey that could be opened up into a beautiful ballroom. Life was great again at the Inn for a while until the establishment of the Serpentine township. When Hardy's Hotel was built along the Cobb & Co coaching track, the Inn's ballroom became the local council chamber. Later, the Inn became a private residence, as it remains today.

2 Scarred trees and ring

40,000 years before non-Aboriginal people arrived, Dja Dja Wurrung Clans were the primary caretakers of this part of country. The ancestors of Dja Dja Wurrung People lived a semi-nomadic lifestyle, with the creek being an important asset that was respected and heavily relied upon for resources. Life by the water involved harvesting and using the vegetation to procure food and to manufacture wooden objects for storage and resource gathering including bowls, caskets, fishing nets and woven baskets. Long lengths of bark from mature trees were used for making shelters or canoes for transport and fishing, and sometimes young tree limbs were modified to form rings that represented boundary markers or places of cultural importance to the Dja Dja Wurrung and other Clan groups.

3 Large canoe scars

Dja Dja Wurrung canoes were crafted from long lengths of bark and were constructed for fishing and transportation. Large scars are still evident on the scarred trees where the bark was removed, and in many circumstances the tree bark has overgrown the scars. The design of the canoe was long and stable, capable of carrying two or more people, often with a small fire onboard for cooking and to provide light for night fishing. Dja Dja Wurrung people have a great understanding of the resources around the creek. Traditional practices were cultivated and ensured a diverse, resource-rich and abundant environment. Cultural practices ensured minimal environmental impact on the natural processes in the area.

4 Rakali (native water rat), feeding platform

Plenty of water all year round allows two unique water animals to survive in the Creek – the platypus and the rakali, the only two amphibious mammals [able to live on both land and water] in Australia. Evidence of where rakali have fed can be seen as deposits of small shell material or mini rakali middens. These small middens can be found in the hollows of trees or located on exposed roots or on semi-submerged tree limbs or trunks. Rakali are a highly resourceful and intelligent animal. Their presence is an indicator of a healthy waterway.

5 Double ring tree

Many of the trees along the creek are of a great age and date from before non-Aboriginal occupation of the area. Natural hollows have formed in the trunks and branches of some of the trees.

Before you is a River Red Gum that has a range of hollows of varying shapes and sizes, making it an ideal habitat for both small and large animals. Smaller hollows may be used by parrots, bats and reptiles, whilst the larger hollows may be occupied by the brush-tail possum. These animals occupying the hollows provided Dja Dja Wurrung ancestors with access to food and resources. Beautiful cloaks were made out of multiple possum skins stitched together and beautifully crafted with motifs significant to the culture of the Dja Dja Wurrung. Special modification of a young tree's limbs and branches was also undertaken to represent an area of cultural significance to Dja Dja Wurrung people and to their neighbouring Clans. A large tree nearby contains one of these modifications, a double ring or braided formation.

6 Current use

The first non-Aboriginal people to cross the creek was a party led by Major Mitchell, who wrote an admiring description of '... open grassy plains, beautifully variegated with serpentine lines of wood'. Early settlers relied on the fresh natural springs of the area and the water from the perennial creek. Beautiful old River Red Gums, Black Box and natural riparian vegetation follow the creek as it meanders through the rich, black self-mulching floodplains. Today, flood irrigation supplement channels are used to provide support for adaptable mixed farming practices in livestock and cropping. Soon you will turn around before the Pennyroyal outfall regulator wall, a mechanism that regulates the level of water flow all year round, providing a habitat for many species of birds, fish and aquatic life. On your return journey keep an eye out for different creatures that might be hiding in the treetops or in the grassy banks, and...
...thank you for coming to experience and learn about the life and history of the Creek. Hope you visit again soon!



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Dja Dja Wurrung Clans
Aboriginal Corporation



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Thank you to Laurie Maxted and Paul Haw who volunteered their time to assist with the development of the canoe trail and providing relevant information for the signage and the brochure.
All photos by Andrew Bird and Sydney Fry.