

Melba Gully

Great Otway National Park



Visitor Guide

"Known as the Jewel of the Otways, this is one of the wettest places in the State 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."

- Ranger In Charge, Will Cox.

Welcome to Country.

Through their rich culture Indigenous Australians have been intrinsically connected to Country - including the area now known as Melba Gully - for tens of thousands of years.

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



Parks for the future

Great Otway National Park is a new and distinctive National Park of around 102,500 hectares. It links what was the Otway National Park, Angahook - Lorne State Park, Carlisle State Park, State Forest areas and Melba Gully State Park.

A rich human history

The forests and coast of the Otways host a diversity of plant and animal species. Shell middens, oven mounds and artefact scatters testify to a healthy diet and lifestyle sustained by the Katabanut (Gadabanud) people. Their spiritual and physical connections are still celebrated through descendants today.

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 narrow - gauge 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 Frys' 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. Trust for Nature donated further parcels of land in 2003.

Things to do



Madsen's Track Nature Walk

This delightful 35 minute walk is an adventure into a world of ancient, mossy trees and cool fern gullies (see overleaf for details). Start at the picnic area and follow the information signs along the track. 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. There is a steep climb to view the Big Tree and some walkers prefer to return to the picnic area from there. *Bring a raincoat - the rain brings the rich colours of the gully to life.*



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



Birds and animals

Although not often seen, shy or nocturnal animals include possums, swamp wallabies, Spot - tailed quolls, Platypus and native bush - rats.

Many birds thrive in the protected rainforest including the shy 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 (*Victaphanta compacta*) endemic to the region, may be seen along the track during wet weather.

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For further information

Parks Victoria
Information Centre
Call **13 1963**
or visit the
Parks Victoria website
www.parkweb.vic.gov.au

Parks Victoria Office
PO Box 63
Apollo Bay Vic 3233

Great Ocean Road Visitor
Information Centre
Great Ocean Rd
Apollo Bay 3233
Tel (03) 5237 6529

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 Western 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

Glow worms

A visual spectacular

Despite their name, glow worms aren't worms. They are the larvae of fly-like insects called fungus gnats.

Glow worms are common in damp, dark places, and in Melba Gully are often found on soil banks with overhanging ledges.

In the wetter parts of the Otway Ranges like Melba Gully, colonies of these glowing larvae put on a light show, a visual spectacular best appreciated at night.

Lighting Up

The end of the abdomen is luminous. The light is emitted from tiny tubes (malpighian tubules) which open into the gut of the larvae and are visible through transparent skin at the end of the body (the last segment of the abdomen).

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 gnat lays 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 gnat is 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

