

# Mt Samaria State Park

There are 30 state parks in Victoria and all have the same level of protection as our national parks, although they rarely receive the same public recognition.

One of these is the 7600ha Mt Samaria State Park, a little-known spot that lies between Mansfield and Benalla in north-eastern Victoria.

### Park history

This rural district was named after the former capital of northern Israel and is dotted with various biblical references to Samaria (pronounced 'Sam-air-re-ah') and the Samaritans

There are no known Aboriginal sites in the park but we do know that the first Europeans to pass by the area were Hume and Hovell in 1824.

They reported seeing smoke and hearing voices but did not see any Aborigines, although they believed they must have been numerous in the area.

Pastoral settlement commenced in 1839 and Samaria Station was created in 1856. The valleys surrounding Mt Samaria were cleared, but the plateau remained forested. It was extensively logged in the 1920s, with forestry ceasing in 1969. Large decaying tree stumps are a reminder of those days.

Mt Samaria State Park was created in 1978.

### Visiting the park

Interesting walks within the park include the Wileman Track, a section of the Mt Samaria Track, and two waterfalls, the Rocky Point Lookout and the summit of Mt Samaria (953 m).

During spring and early summer the forest comes alive with brilliant displays of wildflowers and if you're very lucky you might find tiny native orchids on the ground.

Another highlight of the park is its



### Access

Mt Samaria State Park is 130km north-east of Melbourne and accessible by sealed road. It offers good camping and walking.

### More information

For a detailed map and current visitor information please visit [parkweb.vic.gov.au](http://parkweb.vic.gov.au) or phone Parks Victoria on 13 1963.

wonderful birdlife, with screeching Sulphur-crested Cockatoos, King Parrots and Crimson Rosellas.

You should also keep an eye out for signs of wombat and Lyrebird scratchings.

### Facilities

Camp spots include Spring Creek Mill, which is set among Silver Wattles and is adjacent to old sawmill ruins, including the remains of impressive concrete timber-seasoning kilns.

It's an excellent place to camp, being very quiet, surrounded by bush, and central to most of the walks within the park.

Another drive-in camping area is at Samaria Well, and there are two walk-in camping spots at Camphora (named from *Eucalyptus camphora*, Mountain Swamp Gum, found in the vicinity), and one near Wild Dog Creek Falls.

A north-south gravel road through the park is suitable for 2WD vehicles, although it can become impassable in wet weather north of the Spring Creek Mill, so it pays to check road conditions with Parks Victoria before heading off to the park.

### Geology and vegetation

Most of the plateau is Devonian granite. The steep south-east escarpment is due largely to the Blue Range Fault.

Mt Samaria is the highest point on a strip of Devonian volcanic rock, with a fault producing the steep drop to the Silurian-Lower Devonian sedimentary rock to the west – very obviously different in soil colour and vegetation.

The view from the top of Mt Samaria includes the Strathbogie granitic plateau to the west of the Barjarg Gap.

There are two impressive gorges with modest waterfalls: Back Creek Falls to the south, and Wild Dog Creek Falls in the centre of the park, although the view here is of the abyss below the falls and the Broken River valley, not the falls themselves.

The park has three broad vegetation types: Dry Foothill Forest, Moist Foothill Forest and Valley Grassy Forest. Blue Gum, Messmate and Red Stringybark, Long-leaved Box and Candlebark cover most of the plateau, with many large old Narrow-leaved Peppermints left by the loggers.

The park is home to at least five threatened plant species, and two mossland-herbfield Special Protection Areas.

**This is an edited version of an article written by Geoff Durham and published in the VNPA's Park Watch journal in December 2007.**

