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Mount Bogong

# Introduction

This book includes detailed descriptions of 40 walks ranging from one hour to three days, plus a number side trip options and alternate routes.

The High Country ticks all the boxes in so many ways. It features stunning national parks, Victoria's highest mountains, lakes, rivers and picturesque valleys. There are historic villages, vineyards and vibrant snow resorts. It has a rich history of Aboriginal culture, gold discovery, cattlemen and bushrangers. And best of all it features some amazing food, wine, craft breweries and friendly country pubs. Combine all this with a variety of trails and tracks and what you have is the ultimate walking destination.

Out of all the wonderful places I've explored overseas and within Australia I can honestly say that the High Country is my all-time favourite. It's my 'happy place', my paradise and the best backyard anyone could dream of!

Situated in Victoria's north-east, The High Country region includes six shires: Alpine, Benalla, Indigo, Mansfield, Towong and Wangaratta, plus the three major alpine resorts of Falls Creek, Mt Buller and Mt Hotham.

## Brief history

Evidence shows that Aboriginal people have been living and moving around the High Country for at least 20,000 years. During the summer months, tribal groups would travel from far away to meet the mountain clans for intertribal ceremonies and to feast on the protein-rich Bogong Moth. During these interactions they would exchange cultural items, resources and tools.



Rollasons Falls



Murray River

The early exploration of the High Country region by Europeans began in 1824, when Hamilton Hume and William Hovell set off on their momentous expedition to discover new grazing land in the south of the colony, and to also determine where New South Wales's western rivers flowed. In 1836 legislation was passed to permit squatting, with grazing rights available for ten pounds per year. This new law officially opened the door for pioneer families to push south and commence farming activities.

The discovery of gold in Victoria in the early 1850s propelled the isolated colony onto the world stage. The gold rush sparked an influx of immigrants from all over the world hoping to strike it rich on the goldfields. Prospectors arrived in their thousands, with villages established overnight and the wealth contributing to the bright future of Victoria.

The miners and graziers continued to push far up the valleys and onto the mountain plains. As a means of survival, these resilient pioneers built huts for shelter and storage. Dotted throughout the countryside, these timeworn, rustic and iconic mountain huts form part of the region's rich heritage.

The Bright Alpine Club was established in 1887 and their mountain excursions kick-started tourism in the area. The club ran guided walks and tours into the alps with Mt Buffalo and Mt Feathertop amongst the most popular trips. Bit by bit, new roads and walking trails delved further into the valleys and over the mountains, providing easier access for tourists and bushwalkers to the higher expanses.

Bushwalking as a pastime flourished in the 1920s and gathered more momentum in the Great Depression of the 1930s when many small bushwalking clubs were formed across the state. However, during the two world wars bushwalking participation dropped off due to many young walkers joining the armed forces. After World War II, a new network of roads originally cut to serve the timber industry helped provide further remote access to visitors.

Today, the region attracts millions of visitors every year making it one of the most popular rural destinations in Australia.



### Grading

This book is suitable for every type of walker no matter what your experience level is. Beginners can start with the easy options and work their way through the grades to the more challenging mountain trails. Experienced hikers may focus on the more moderate / difficult routes but will also enjoy exploring the easier village and food and wine trails to better appreciate and understand the region.

Many of the easy walks are suitable for children and they will love getting back to nature, discovering the historic villages and learning about bush characters such as Ned Kelly and the Man from Snowy River.

**Easy** – Mostly flat terrain, occasional small hills, well-defined trails and footpaths, suitable for children and for those with average fitness, no experience required.

**Easy / Moderate** – Some short steep sections, longer gradual inclines, well-defined trails, occasional rough or uneven surfaces.

**Moderate** – More challenging landscapes including longer distances and steeper climbs. Sometimes rough and uneven underfoot. A good level of fitness and experience required.

**Difficult** – Long distances, extremely steep climbs, challenging terrain, constant rough and uneven surfaces, higher altitude, extreme weather. A high level of fitness and experience required.

### Getting there and getting around

**By car:** the High Country is the ultimate road trip destination. Driving will provide flexibility and enable you to take your time and soak up the sights along the way. Many of the bush and alpine walks in this book do not have public transport and therefore it's easier to access the trail heads with your own car. Many towns and villages are accessible via the Hume Highway or the scenic Great Alpine Road. There are also plenty of opportunities to get off-road in the national parks and reserves. Hire cars are available from Albury, Wodonga and Wangaratta.

**By train:** daily rail services run between Melbourne, Benalla, Wangaratta, Chiltern, Wodonga and Albury. Check timetables at [www.vline.com.au](http://www.vline.com.au), phone 1800 800 007. Daily rail services run between Sydney and Albury. Check timetables at [www.transportnsw.info](http://www.transportnsw.info), phone 131 500.

**By bus:** V-Line operates daily bus services between Melbourne, Benalla, Glenrowan, Wangaratta, Chiltern, Wodonga and Albury. A separate bus run from Wangaratta stops at Beechworth, Myrtleford, Porepunkah, Bright and Mt Beauty. Check timetables at [www.vline.com.au](http://www.vline.com.au), phone 1800 800 007. Wangaratta Coachlines run bus services Monday to Friday

# 21 High Country Rail Trail

Hugging the shoreline of Lake Hume, the historic High Country Rail Trail extends from the outskirts of Wodonga to Old Tallangatta. This section traverses scenic farmland and numerous recreation reserves and takes walkers over the impressive Sandy Creek Bridge. The walk finishes at Tallangatta township which was relocated in the 1950s when Lake Hume was flooded. Experience magnificent mountain and waterfront views plus a variety of historical sites.

## At a glance

**Grade:** Easy / Moderate

**Time:** 6-7 hours

**Distance:** 21 km one way  
- shuttle required.

**Conditions:** Rail trail  
(shared pathway)

**Getting there:** Ebden Reserve is 15 km east of Wodonga via the Murray Valley Hwy.



Huon Reserve

## 21 High Country Rail Trail



## Walk directions

**1** Ebden Reserve is the site of the former Ebden Train Station. It has good facilities including toilets, BBQs, picnic areas and drinking water. There's also plenty of space along the foreshore. The signposted trail is located at the eastern end of the reserve.

**2** It won't be long before you are captivated by the surrounding rolling hills and waterfront views. The trail leads past a significant crossing point for the Hume & Hovell expedition where Hovell wanted to turn around as they had previously crossed four major rivers on their journey from Sydney.

However, Hume was determined to reach the coast so they continued.

**3** Ludlows is the next Reserve that provides good amenities and the chance to take a break. On a hot summer day you'll find plenty of locals swimming, fishing and waterskiing.

**4** Shortly after, a small wooden bridge crosses over a creek which provides a good spot to observe a variety of water birds. The trail then gradually climbs up a small hill, providing more scenic views. In spring an assortment of wildflowers grow beside the trail and around the surrounding farmland.





Sandy Creek Bridge



**History**

Construction of the old railway line commenced in 1887. It provided rail services from Wodonga to Cudgewa and was used extensively for transporting building materials for the Snowy Mountain Scheme in the 1960s. The last regular goods train ran in 1978 and the line was officially closed in 1981.

**5** The trail descends to Huon where the old platform, goods shed and weighbridge remain. Rusty rail tracks and an abandoned old train are further remnants of the railway's history. If water levels are very low the remains of the original station site are evident further down the hill. Huon Reserve is also another popular leisure area.

**6** Officially opened in 2012 the Sandy Creek Bridge was rebuilt on the footings of the former railway bridge. The crossing features a sequence of rippling red poles along its 600 metre length which have been created to imitate the trail of smoke produced by the old steam trains. The bridge offers a viewing platform and information boards at the Tallangatta end where there are panoramic vistas over Lake Hume and encompassing countryside.

**7** Heading towards Tallangatta from the bridge you will experience a picturesque walk through patches of box woodlands. This section presents an easy, undulating stroll that leads through a mountain cut made for the old railway.

**8** Continue over another small bridge and soon after pass the Tallangatta showgrounds on the edge of town. Proceed beneath the Towong Street underpass. Just after the Rowan Park Recreation Reserve (football ground) turn left at Womaatong Street which leads north to the town centre.

**9** The original town is under water, but modern Tallangatta embraces its claim to fame as the 'town that moved'. In 1956, 2 hotels, 4 petrol

**Lake Hume**

Construction of the dam began in November 1919 and was completed in 1936. Work started using horse power, steam engines and manual labour. When full, the dam holds a maximum of 3,005,000 mega litres, about six times the capacity of Sydney Harbour. It's a spectacular sight to see water gushing through the spillway gates when the lake is at full volume. The dam is named after explorer Hamilton Hume.

stations, multiple shops and businesses, 4 churches, more than 1000 residents and all the normal community services were transferred 8 kilometres west of the former location. The previous site was

subsequently flooded under 2 metres of water after the Hume Dam was expanded. At the town centre, pick up a meal or a drink at the pub or a local café before driving back to Ebden.



**Extension**

The Rail Trail currently stretches for about 65 kilometres. However, work on the trail continues – it will be improved and expanded it to extend for more than 100 kilometres. When the trail is fully developed you will be able to experience higher altitudes, rugged wooden trestle bridges, magnificent forests, pine plantations and visit more historical sites and towns.