

“Walk through cool fern gullies and alpine plateaus then rest to take in the views across the spreading plains to Langi Ghiran and the Grampians. Experience a night at the charming Beeripmo campground, then descend through spectacular tall forests.”

Located one hour drive west of Ballarat, just off the Western Highway, Mt Cole State Forest is 25 kilometres from the township of Beaufort and marks the gateway to the Pyrenees Wine District and the Grampians.

History

The mountain was created 390 million years ago when hot magma pushing up from deep beneath the earth, but failing to break through, crystallised to form granite rock. Over millions of years nature sculpted the area, eroding the softer sediment and leaving the hard rock protruding from the plains below.

Mt Cole or ‘Bereep-bereep’ was home to the Beeripmo balug tribe that form part of the larger Djab Wurrung language-speaking people. Through translation of the local language we can get a feel for these people and what they saw, ‘Bereep-bereep’ meaning wild, and Beeripmo translating to “wild mount”.

Following Major Mitchell's 1836 expedition, settlers quickly moved into the area. Timber harvesting with axe and cross cut saw began during the mid 1840's. In 1856 the use of steam powered mills commenced. By 1889, demand from the goldfield towns for building materials, firewood and railway sleepers led to thirty mills operating within the region until 1904. The Forests Commission was established in 1918 and soon after Mt Cole State Forest was closed for timber harvesting. Timber harvesting was reopened in a managed structure from 1947, by the Forests Commission. In the 2000's timber harvesting was significantly scaled back and is largely a by-product of land management activities.

Plants, birds and wildlife

Large native trees including Messmate, Manna Gum, and Blue Gums can be seen on the wetter southern half, while woodland species such as Yellow box and Red Stringybark grow to the north. Plants such as the rare Mt Cole Grevillea can be found in a few locations, as can native orchids and a plethora of wild flowers. Bird watching can be very rewarding with more than 130 species of birds sighted in the forest. Kangaroos, wallabies, echidna, koalas and possums are also often seen.

Things to see and do

Enticed by the tranquility and views of the area, visitors can enjoy a variety of recreational activities including camping, horse riding, four-wheel driving, walking and picnicking.

Walking

Mt Cole is a walker's paradise. Whether you have a day or a week to spend, there is a walk for you.

1. Beeripmo Walk

Distance 21 km 11 hours 2 day return (moderate)

Starting at Richards campground, the most recent walk at Mt Cole is a journey of discovery for the novice and experienced hiker. Walkers can experience a variety of different forest environments from lush forests with ferns, falls with a gentle sound of running water, the brilliant green of the moss covered rocks, weather beaten rocky outcrops and magnificent vistas of the tablelands below and surrounding mountain ranges.

2. Grevillea Walk

Distance 1.8 km 45 min one way to Richards (moderate)

The Glut picnic area is the starting point for this walk that takes you on a short journey through Mt Cole to Richards and return. Other walking tracks in the area include:

3. Woods Gully Walk

Distance 1.4 km 40 min return (moderate)

4. Paradise Walk

Distance 9.2 km 4 hours one way (difficult)

5. Borella Walk

Distance 5 km, 3 hours one way (moderate)

This walk from Chinamans to Ben Nevis is a bird watchers delight. It was named in memory of noted local bird observer Max Borella and offers great lookouts. As the walk can be quite steep in places, it is recommended that you take your time and enjoy the views.

On the right track

Choose appropriate footwear for the terrain. Solid but lightweight walking boots are best. Avoid sensitive vegetation by staying on the walking tracks. Stay on tracks even if they are rough or muddy. Walking on the track edges and cutting corners on steep ‘zigzag’ tracks will increase the risk of damage to the environment and the risk to personal safety.

Four-wheel driving

Popular for both private and organised 4WD club activities, a range of different forest types and topographies mean there is something for everyone. Remember that seasonal road closures apply in a number of areas from mid June to early November.

Horse riding

Riders are welcome to use most areas of the State Forest, the majority of riding opportunities are along existing State Forest roads. Smith's Bridge picnic area provides the best base for horse riding in the Mt Cole area. Horse riding on walking tracks is not permitted.

Camping - Picnicking

Attractive and quiet camping and picnicking spots are scattered throughout Mt Cole State Forest catering for both large and small groups.

Visitors have a choice of six different sites, these being Chinamans, Ditchfields, Mugwamp, Richards, Smith's Bridge and Beeripmo. The sites provide an ideal base, from which people can go walking or horse riding. The Beeripmo campground is purely for the hiker and forms part of the Beeripmo Walk.

Most visitor sites at Mt Cole provide toilets, picnic facilities, fireplaces/pits and shelters. There is no charge for camping in the area and availability is on a first come basis.

The Beeripmo Walk has one designated campground, and is accessible by walkers only. Facilities at the site include cleared tent sites, fireplaces, water and toilets. The Beeripmo campground, high on the plateau is nestled in a natural bushland setting and is one of the many rewards, those who tackle the walk, can experience.

Plan your trip

- Let someone know before you go. Tell them about your party, your route, when you plan to return and the equipment your party is carrying. Remember to contact them when you get back.
- Keep your party small (4-8 people). Large parties have more of an environmental impact and may affect the experience of others.

Looking after the environment

- All wildlife and native plants are protected by law. Please do not disturb them in any way.
- Don't feed animals, especially around campsites.
- Dogs must be under direct control within State Forests and are not permitted within State Parks.
- Vehicles including motorcycles must not be driven off formed roads. All vehicles must be registered and drivers licensed.
- Don't take potential rubbish such as bottles or cans. You must carry out all your rubbish, including those easy to forget items like paper, plastic wrappers and orange peel, which won't easily decompose.

Campfires

Wood fires may be lit in fireplaces for cooking and warmth in most forests, parks and public land. A number of restrictions apply to ensure that fires do not escape and fireplaces are safely constructed. Where possible, use the fireplaces that are provided.

Use only dead fallen wood. Standing trees, even dead ones are a home for wildlife and are part of the scenery. Do not cut down any standing trees or vegetation. Observe the relevant fire lighting regulations.

- Fires must be lit in a properly constructed fireplace. Use the fireplaces that have been constructed for you.
- The fire must be no bigger than 1 metre square.
- 3 metres around the fire must be clear.
- The fire must not be left unattended at any time.
- Be absolutely sure that the fire is out before you leave. If you can feel any warmth from the coals, use water to put it out.

On days of **TOTAL FIRE BAN** the following are **PROHIBITED**.

- All fires in the open air (including campfires and portable gas or liquid fuelled stoves).
- All gas or liquid fuelled appliances in tents, tent type trailers and vehicles.

It is your responsibility to know if a day of Total Fire Ban has been declared. Contact your local DSE or CFA office. If in doubt, don't light it.

On **Code Red Fire Danger Rating days**, the Department of Sustainability and Environment and Parks Victoria will be closing parks and state forests to the public.

For your own safety, do not enter parks or forests – and if you are already there, you should leave the night before or early in the morning on a Code Red Fire Danger Rating day. You may not receive a personal warning or see signs telling you that the park or forest is closed.

For more information

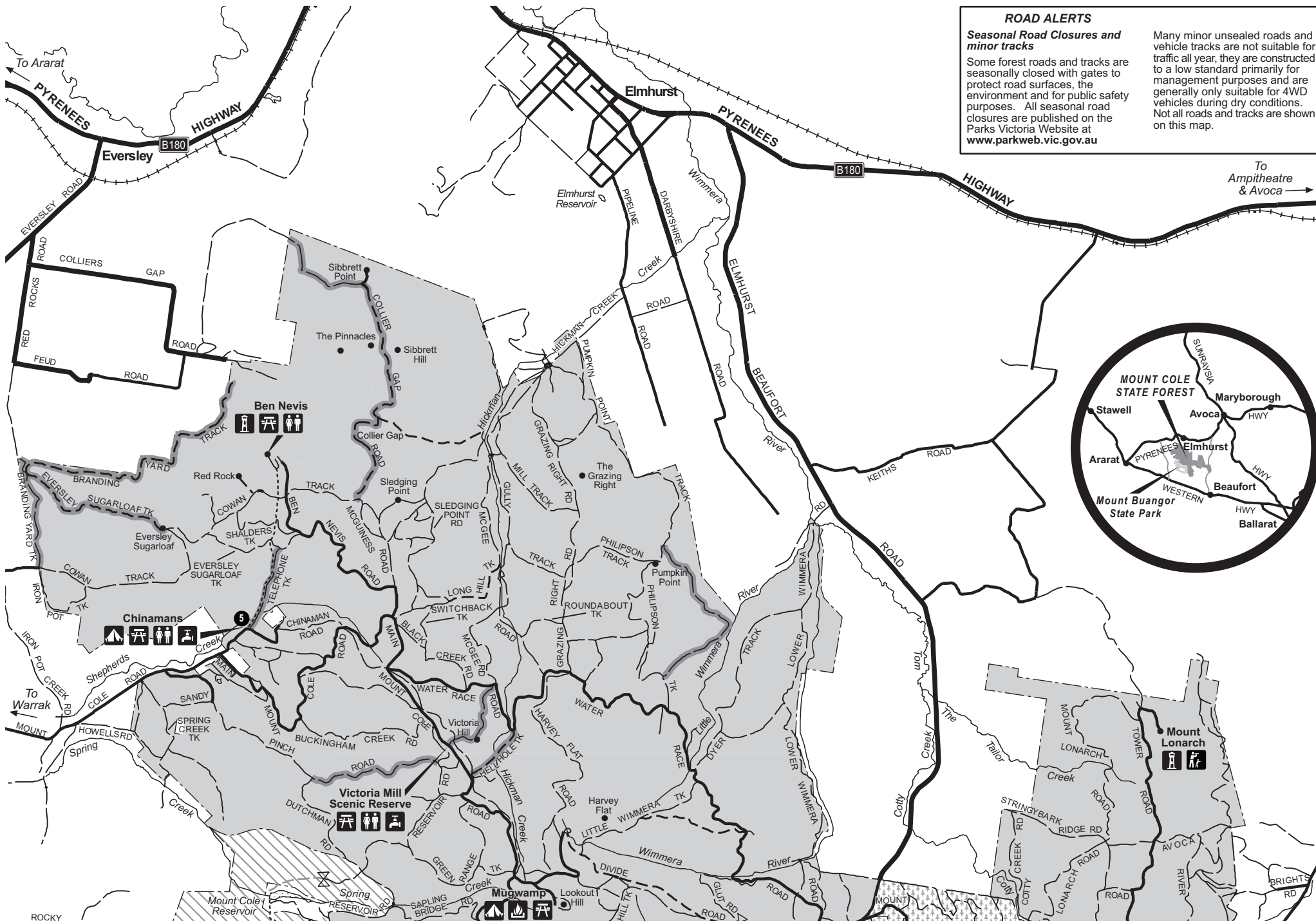
The Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE) is responsible for managing Victoria's State Forest. For further information on the Beeripmo Walk or the Mt Cole region contact DSE's Customer Service Centre on ☎ 136 186.

Visit DSE's website

<http://www.dse.vic.gov.au>
then select < Forests.

The Mt. Cole State Forest is managed for a wide range of uses including catchment protection, timber production, recreation and conservation. If you are interested in how State Forests are managed, the current Midlands Forest Management Plan can be viewed on the Department's website on the Internet at <http://www.dse.vic.gov.au> then select < Forests < Regional Information < Midlands , Midlands Forest Management Plan.

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ROAD ALERTS
Seasonal Road Closures and minor tracks
Some forest roads and tracks are seasonally closed with gates to protect road surfaces, the environment and for public safety purposes. All seasonal road closures are published on the Parks Victoria Website at www.parkweb.vic.gov.au

Many minor unsealed roads and vehicle tracks are not suitable for traffic all year, they are constructed to a low standard primarily for management purposes and are generally only suitable for 4WD vehicles during dry conditions. Not all roads and tracks are shown on this map.

