

Naas Valley to Horse Gully Hut

*Ngunnawal people welcome you to
namadgi national park*



Self-guided walk

The Naas Valley to Horse Gully Hut walk, 16 kilometres, 7 hours return (moderate), on a management trail, meanders through the remote Naas Valley ending at Horse Gully Hut. It provides an insight into the natural, geological, Aboriginal and pastoral history of the area. Numbers on this brochure correspond to numbered posts along the track. The trail starts at the locked gate near the Mount Clear campground. Please fill in the bushwalking register.

The Naas Valley to Horse Gully Hut walk is also part of the Bicentennial National Trail, a 5,330 kilometre long, marked route from Cooktown to Healesville, used by walkers, horse riders and mountain bike riders. The Bicentennial National Trail passes through Canberra, skirting the outer suburbs before heading through Namadgi National Park and crossing into Kosciuszko National Park.

The Naas Valley could have been used as a pathway for Aboriginal groups to the east of here making their way to the Gudgenby Valley for ceremonies.

Bookings (through the Namadgi Visitor Centre) are required to camp at the Mount Clear Campground and Mount Clear Pound. Phone: 6207 2900.

1. Change

This walk is about change—different rock types reveal the changing geological landscape over millions of years. There is also the constantly changing vegetation that reflects the different physical conditions along the way.

People have also created change. There is evidence that the Ngunnawal Aboriginal people have lived in the region for at least 25,000 years. From the 1830s to the 1970s, pastoralism was the main landuse. Today the area is part of Namadgi National Park.

2. An ancient floor

It's a long way from the sea today but 450–500 million years ago, sediments of sand and clay were being laid down at the bottom of an ocean floor right here. Later, heat and pressure transformed them into sedimentary sandstones and shales. The sediments were raised above sea level and in some cases, such as here, were turned to become near vertical.

3. Mount Clear horse yards/pound

Near these yards is the site for the old Mount Clear property which was built in 1870. Later structures including a house, shearers' quarters, woolshed and yards were removed in the late 1970s. Horse riders on overnight rides now use modern yards here. Horse riding is permitted on formed roads and management trails east of and including Old Boboyan Road.

To the north lies Shanahans Mountain, named after Thomas Shanahan, the first squatter to run cattle in this area from the 1830s.

4. Clearing the land

The early pastoralists grazed their stock in natural clearings on the valley floors and they also cleared the woodlands on the valley sides to make more grassland. One way of doing this was to ringbark the trees. This involved cutting a circle of bark around the entire trunk and waiting for the tree to die. Many trees and fallen logs in this area have been ringbarked including the log five metres uphill and to the right of the post.

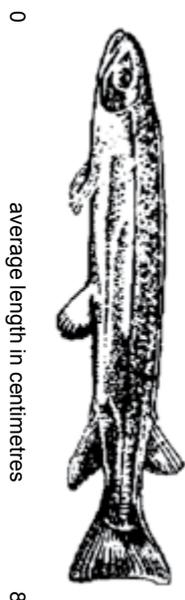
5. A fifty million year geological time warp

For the first two kilometres, you have been walking through 450–500 million year old sandstones and shales. Here at the 'contact zone', time has jumped forward by 50 million years to when these granite boulders or tors were formed. 400–450 million years ago a huge, molten mass of granite forced its way into the sedimentary rocks. Over millions of years the older rocks eroded away revealing the granite beneath. This granite can be found all the way to Horse Gully Hut. Can you spot the three main minerals of quartz (clear and glassy), feldspar (white or pinkish) and mica (black) in the granite boulders?

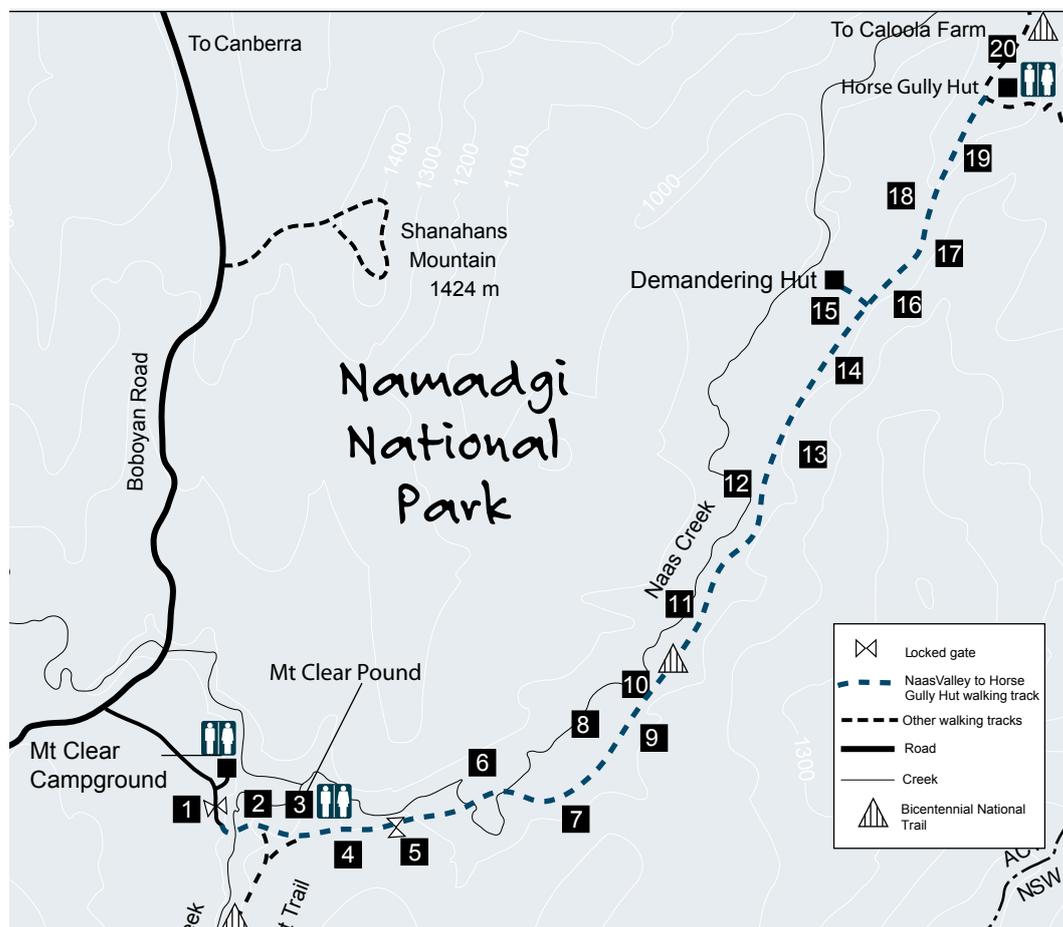
6. The mighty mountain fish

When you cross the Naas Creek, stop to look for the Mountain Galaxias, a small, but hardy native fish that inhabits creeks and rivers at all altitudes in the region. It is the only native fish to inhabit the alpine zone of the Murray-Darling Basin. Spawning occurs mainly in spring and early summer and eggs are laid on the undersides of stones. If the creek is in flood, detour to the south around the river by following the flood plain.

Map of Naas Valley to Horse Gully Hut Walking Track



The Mountain Galaxias, which is endemic to Australia, inhabits the freshwater streams of eastern Australia (NSW, Victoria and the ACT) from the coast up to 1,800 metres elevation and is common in Namadgi National Park. It eats insects, molluscs, spiders and worms.



7. Map and survey

The yellow cement post marked with R778 is a survey post that is used as a reference for mapping. There are many others dotted along the track.

8. Frosty hollows

The eucalypt trees fringing this frost hollow are sturdy Black Sallees. They are able to withstand boggy ground as well as frosts and cold air that drains into this valley from surrounding hillsides in winter. The trunk has attractive, bronze to olive-green colours that become even more intense when wet. The Black Sallee woodland forms a narrow band on the edge of the alluvial plain.

9. Snow Gum woodland

Snow Gum woodland occurs on the valley sides between the grassland and Black Sallees below and the Mountain Gum open forest above. Their thick, leathery leaves are adapted to cold and often dry conditions. The fruits or gum nuts actually need to be frozen before the seeds inside will germinate.

The grub of the tiny Scribbly Gum Moth makes scribbles on the bark as it eats its way around. Try tracing one of the tunnels from start to finish. The tunnel widens as the larva grows.

10. Kangaroos and wallabies

Early settlers expanded the naturally occurring grassland for their stock. This extra grassland also caused Eastern Grey Kangaroo numbers to increase. Look for them in grassy areas. Also living in this valley is the Swamp Wallaby and the smaller, Red-necked Wallaby. Both are solitary animals, resting amongst dense forest shrubs during the day. The Swamp Wallaby is very dark with a

long, dark tail that is held straight out behind when it hops. The Red-necked Wallaby is recognisable by its dark muzzle, paws and largest toe and its reddish brown fur on the back of its neck.

11. Birds of prey

Look for birds of prey such as the majestic Wedge-tailed Eagle soaring on rising air currents, or the smaller Australian Kestrel hovering over grassy areas looking for a meal of rabbit, small native mammals, lizards and other small animals.

12. Ribbons of bark

Tall trees such as this Ribbon Gum or Manna Gum (five metres further along the track) are part of the canopy of open forests that occur on the higher, steeper slopes and sheltered valleys in this area. It has ribbons of bark dangling from its branches and at its base. This species and certain other eucalypts produce an edible gum that oozes from holes in the young branches.

13. Mound-building termites

The brown, dirt mound about ten metres away is the nest of the termite *Coptotermes lacteus*. Most termites build underground nests and tunnels but this and a few other species of *Coptotermes* are unique in that they build conspicuous, above ground nests. Termites help to break down wood and recycle nutrients.

14. Ghost of a tree

Fallen dead timber is extremely important in providing shelter for echidnas, reptiles, insects and spiders, food for termites and fungi and perching sites for birds.



15. Demanding Hut

Demanding Hut, 200 metres off the main track, was part of Demanding Run that was leased by James Booth and later Garret Cotter. The hut was built by Bill Cotter in the mid 1940s and is now recognised for its cultural value.

16. Nature's boarding house

Think of this tree as high-rise apartments as well as a supermarket for dozens of native animals. Nearly 400 species of Australian birds, bats and mammals use tree hollows as dens, roosts and nests. Hollows aren't replaced easily either, as they can take from 70 to 100 years to form and more than 200 years to be large enough for a cockatoo, owl or possum.

17. Peppermint and candlebark

Candlebark trees are common in Snow Gum woodland after the track leaves the creek. The trunk is creamy white often tinged with red in summer. In contrast, the trees ten metres to the south with the fine, stringy bark covering the trunk are Broad-leaved Peppermints. This species, along with the Narrow-leaved Peppermint, was harvested and processed in the Tidbinbilla Valley for the oil.

18. Cattle yards

A relatively recent addition to the European history of the area, the yards here were built by the Curtis family in 1966. Two brothers, Colin and Norman Curtis purchased 2,237 acres between Naas Creek and Russell's Gap in 1957. The yards were partly destroyed in the 1983 and again in the January 2003 bushfires so very little remains today.

19. Apple Box butchers' blocks

The trees here with their spreading crowns and dark, flaky bark are Apple Box. The wood from Apple Box trees was once in demand for butchers' chopping blocks as the wood is difficult to split.

20. Horse Gully Hut

This hut was built by Tom Roseby in the 1940s and was part of the Bumbalong run. Tom's father, Sydney, purchased Bumbalong in 1918. The original hut, 20 metres to the east of the existing hut had a stone chimney and was valued at six pounds in 1897. Quince trees nearby were probably planted by the early settlers. Subsequent owners, Colin and Norman Curtis stayed at the hut when mustering cattle, fencing and rabbiting.

Horse Gully Hut marks the end of this walking trail. Enjoy your stay. Please leave the hut clean and tidy and close the door. Camping at the hut is not permitted and no fires are permitted outside. Return the way you walked in.

Contrary to its name, the elusive Swamp Wallaby inhabits a range of habitats in Namadgi including moist thickets, rocky outcrops and dry forests. It browses on a wide range of plants including shrubs, grasses, herbs and even poisonous plants such as Bracken Fern.



The Wedge-tailed Eagle is Australia's largest bird of prey. It is easily recognised by its long wings (wingspan of 2.3 metres), characteristic wedge-shaped tail and feathered legs. They can be seen singly, in pairs or larger groups riding the thermals of Namadgi looking for food. Wedge-tailed Eagles eat carrion and live prey including lizards, birds and mammals such as rabbits.



Food resources such as Cherry Ballart and Yam Daisy used by the traditional Ngunnawal Aboriginal people, changed as they went higher up into the mountains. What was in season down low would not be in season higher up.



In Namadgi, Ribbon Gums occur along with Mountain Gums on moist alluvial soils near watercourses and also with Snow Gums, Candlebarks and Black Salleees around frost hollows. As its common name suggests, the bark hangs in long strands on the lower trunk while in contrast, the upper trunk and branches are smooth and white. The narrow, 'weeping' leaves (right) are eaten by koalas.



The origin of the Naas is thought to be after the 'Naas Barracks' in Cork County, Ireland. The name was first used in 1834.

Scientific names used in this brochure

Apple Box *Eucalyptus bridgesiana*

Black Sallee *Eucalyptus stellulata*

Broad-leaved Peppermint *Eucalyptus dives*

Candlebark *Eucalyptus rubida*

Mountain Gum *Eucalyptus dalrympleana*

Ribbon Gum *Eucalyptus viminalis*

Snow Gum *Eucalyptus pauciflora*

'Namadgi' is the Aboriginal name for the mountains to the south-west of Canberra. This mountainous country was first declared a nature reserve (Gudgenby Nature Reserve) in 1979. In 1984, the area was expanded and renamed the Namadgi National Park protecting all animals, plants, habitats and cultural sites.

Suggestions

- Plan ahead. Think about weather, clothing, equipment and safety. Advise someone of your whereabouts and expected return time.
- Wear comfortable sturdy walking shoes.
- Bring food, water, binoculars and camera.

Further information

Stop at the Namadgi Visitor Centre, two kilometres south of Tharwa on Naas Road to find out more about Namadgi National Park and to purchase your copy of the *Namadgi Map and Guide*.

Namadgi National Park Visitor Centre,
Naas Road, Tharwa ACT 2620

Email: namadginationalpark@act.gov.au

Phone: (02) 6207 2900

Canberra Connect: 13 22 81

Website: www.tams.act.gov.au

Leave no trace



Leave your pets at home. Domestic pets are prohibited as they disturb native animals and other park visitors.



Carry it in, carry it out. There are no bins so please take all your rubbish home for disposal or recycling.



Leave animals, plants, rocks and wood where you find them. Each has its place in the delicate balance of nature.



Use a fuel stove. They are quicker, cleaner and better for the bush. Fires are permitted only in fireplaces provided at campgrounds and picnic areas. Constructed fireplaces are provided at Mount Clear Campground. A permit (no charge), available from Namadgi Visitor Centre, is required for all other fires. Ensure fires are completely extinguished.



Got to go? Use a toilet or take a walk at least 100 paces from water and campsites. Dig 15 centimetres with a trowel, then cover waste. Toilets are located at Mount Clear Campground, Mount Clear Pound and Horse Gully Hut.

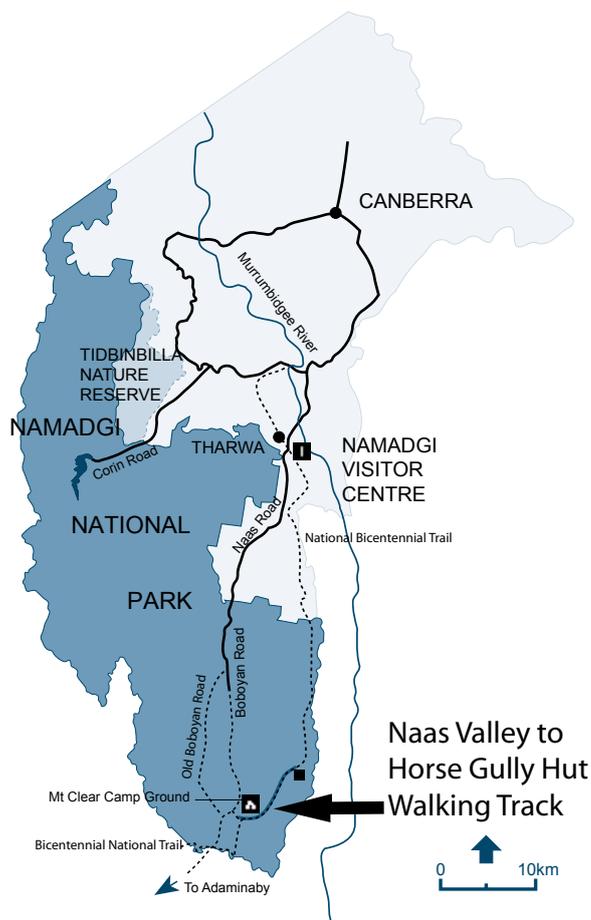


Respect heritage. Please do not collect, deface or damage Aboriginal or European cultural heritage artefacts or sites.



Stay on track. Even if it's muddy or dusty, don't widen tracks. Motorised vehicles are not permitted beyond public roads, car parks or locked gates.

General map of the ACT, Namadgi National Park and the Naas Valley to Horse Gully Hut walking track



ACT
Government

