

Top-7 off-road destinations: Victorian High Country



Total photo(s): 11

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If you're serious about off-roading in Australia, these are the regions to put on your 'bucket list'. All require a 4WD with high ground clearance and the right accessories and preparation

There are literally hundreds of tracks through Australia's tallest mountain ranges and they're ideal spring and summer destinations, so we'll only cover a few of them here.

By far the best maps of the High Country are produced by Rooftop Maps.

A Mansfield State Forest one-day mountain track drive takes in some spectacular mountain scenery along the edge of the Alpine National Park. The first section of this trek is easy, along the Howqua Track, over the Timbertop Saddle to Sheeppark Flat, but the track from Fry's Hut to Wren's Flat is extremely steep, with loose surfaces.

The track crosses a shallow creek and then climbs steeply out of Ware's Flat, on its way to an old slate mine on Mitchells Track. The track runs through the old mine site, with a dizzying drop off to the west.

Not far from the mine site the track plunges very steeply down to a bush camping area at Mitchell's Hut. This section of the track is pure clay and becomes treacherous after only light rain.

Wren's Flat bush camping area is on the bank of the Jamieson River, and it's a pleasant walk along the bank to the ruins of a hut and a large swimming hole. From Wren's Flat it's a graded road drive south east to Licola, or north west to Jamieson.

The Corryong to Jindabyne High Country trek starts at the pretty town of Corryong, in the foothills of the Australian Alps, and finishes in the mountain tourism centre of Jindabyne. In between is some of the best mountain scenery and steep track driving in Australia.

Wheeler's Creek Hut track runs off the main road and winds through heavily wooded, hilly country, climbing to Wild Boar Track. This two-rut path runs the ridge line through Mt Gibbo Scenic Reserve, offering panoramic views of the high peaks of the Australian Alps.

Kosciusko is usually clearly visible, with a mantle of snow that endures into summer.

Wild Boar Track intersects the Mt Pinnibar Track above the green paddocks of Tom Groggin Station and the descent is among the steepest in the High Country. The scenery as you emerge from the steep, forested slopes to the gently undulating grazing land beside the Murray River is special.

Dogman Hut camping area is just beside the Tom Groggin Station paddocks and on the banks of the fledgling Murray.

After fording the River the drive to Jindabyne is all-bitumen, but interesting, because it runs via Thredbo Alpine Village.

The Deddick Trail features some of the steepest tracks in the Victorian High Country. The only formed campsites on the Trail are a couple of grassed areas on New Country Creek that can accommodate at most four vehicles. However, there's good camping at the start and the end of the Trail.

The Deddick Trail climbs steadily from its beginning on the McKillops Bridge to Bonang road. About six kilometres along the Trail is a very steep, shaly climb, cut into the edge of the hillside. This section is certain to keep your mind on the driving job!

From a plateau the Trail runs slowly downhill at first, but then the slope increases as the track plunges 700 vertical metres, down to the New Country Creek Valley.

From the shade and cool of the Creek the Deddick Trail climbs very steeply once more, up what is known as 'The Staircase' – a series of very steep climbs, punctuated by drainage humps – that takes you back up to the 900-metre mark.

After the steep climb the Deddick Trail undulates through heavily wooded plateau country to its southern intersection with Yalmy Road. From there, the roads are graded gravel for the 45km finishing leg to the camping area at Raymond Falls.

This grassy site has a drop toilet and water. The short walk from the Raymond Falls camping area to the Falls is a must-do.

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