

# THE HIGH COUNTRY

Let's go where the air is clear, the scenery spectacular and there's a thousand different ways to enjoy yourself. The High Country's greatest asset is its unspoilt, natural beauty, but an action-packed trip awaits, if you dare. Go downhill or cross-country skiing and snowboarding; horse ride or walk the mountain trails; paraglide over and kayak down pristine, icy streams; idle along a bike trail, or puff up an alpine trail. It's all happening in a diverse, fragile and beautiful environment at the southern end of the Great Dividing Range. Mt Bogong, the highest point at 1986m, squats in the Alpine National Park. Mt Buffalo does its buffalo look-alike sprawl in Mt Buffalo National Park. Mt Baw Baw sits prettily in Mt Baw Baw National Park. And for winter playgrounds, there's the magic three: Mt Hotham, Mt Buller and Falls Creek.

Just driving along the High Country roads is as thrilling as their names suggest. The Great Alpine Rd takes a stately run beside creeks, wooded areas, farm lands and mountains till it reaches the sea. The Snow Rd tempts you to vineyards and gourmet food spots. The Omeo Hwy speeds through valleys a range or two away from Kiewa Valley Hwy, both offering glorious scenery and picnic spots, while down south, the Goulburn Valley Hwy tracks the tinkling Goulburn River.

Former gold-mining towns such as Beechworth and Yackandandah are well-preserved historical encounters, while towns at the foothills of the mountain resorts such as Mansfield, Bright and Mt Beauty are all-season holiday spots, with stacks of activities, exciting restaurants and fab accommodation. The thriving Milawa gourmet region has acclaimed wineries and impressive local produce.

Away from the mountains, Lake Eildon National Park is a water sports paradise. Spend a few days on a houseboat, do some fly-fishing or just take in the gorgeous surroundings from the veranda of one of the many attractive B&Bs.

## SNOWSHOE SHUFFLE

This is winter playground territory: skiers, snowboarders and snow-kiters are all out there, breaking bits of the old bod. If that's not your scene, embrace the air and the scenery on a [snowshoe walk](#) where your guide takes you through snow drifts, along snow-capped ridges, through snow-dusted snowgum forests and along icy, crackly little creeks. You'll find snowshoe walks at [Mt Buffalo](#) (p313) and [Mt Buller](#) (p300), [Falls Creek](#) (p304) and [Mt Hotham](#) (p302). Love it? Take a three-day adventure on snowshoes up on the [Bogong High Plains](#) (p319).

## TRAILS

Winter is for snow sports, but summer also makes the most of the cross-country ski trails. Every mountain has a network of short, long and in-between trails which delight nature-lovers and completely win-over doubters who hadn't realised how magnificent this region is when the blanket of white has melted away. For seriously dedicated hikers, the [Australian Alps Walking Track](#) (p310) is well-marked and supported.

For cyclists, the [Murray to the Mountains Rail Trail](#) (p308) is a blast, or hire a mountain bike and take to the trails above [Bright](#) (p307). Take your bike

up the chairlift to the top of Mt Buller and blast your way back down, or go with a group along the trails of [Dinner Plain](#) (p302) and [Mt Hotham](#) (p302), walking, biking or on a horse. Breeze along the rich-green trails around [Marysville](#) (p314).

Biking not for you? Take to the trails in a 4WD or on a tag-along tour. No? Then the [Brewery Trail](#) (p308) must be a goer. Whatever you enjoy, the High Country has a trail waiting.

## GOURMET INDULGENCE

It's the air. Everything here grows better, tastes better, looks better. Local produce includes meats, game, cheese, fruits, berries, nuts, honey, jams, sauces and preserves. Freshwater fish and crustaceans bred in the King, Ovens and Murray rivers include trout, Chinook salmon, Murray cod, yellow perch and yabbies. Indulge every taste bud.

Start with the [Gourmet Food Trail](#) (p317) around Milawa. Head up to [Beechworth](#) (p315), down to [Marysville](#) (p314) or out to [Mt Beauty](#) (p309), stopping at the vineyards along every way, or at roadside stalls selling apples, chestnuts, mushrooms, asparagus and berries when in season.

For the ultimate wickedness, go on a [gourmet hike](#) (p319) where there's a reward for every step taken.

## THE BEAST WITHIN

Mountains and horses belong together, and the High Country is renowned for its horsemen. Start by exploring the real *Man From Snowy River* scenery up in [Corryong](#) (p315). Staying out back, go by horse down the road to [Omeo](#) (p319) and check out the wildest goldfield of Victoria. Or head east to [Beechworth](#) (p315) and check out our Ned's horse-thieving ways. Time your visit to see the Golden Horseshoe Festival; the gold was so plentiful in Beechworth that a local politician's horse wore golden horseshoes.

Have the total countryside experience and get in touch with your inner beast on a trail-ride up at [Dinner Plain](#) (p302), or down around beautiful [Mt Beauty](#) (p309). If you head to [Mansfield](#) (p305) you can join a horse-riding group and tackle the cliff-face where *The Man From*

*Snowy River* was filmed in 1981. Continuing the film theme, you can also take a horse ride through the [Rubicon Valley](#) (p312) just south of Bonnie Doon ('How's the serenity?').

## BEING THERE

In this alpine environment, weather conditions can change dramatically and without warning any time of year. In winter, most of the higher mountains are snow-capped and frosts are frequent. A fine, sunny day can deteriorate into blizzard conditions, so make sure you have access to protective clothing on the slopes.

In the height of summer, you can walk or bike all day in the heat without finding water, then face temperatures below freezing at night. Bushwalkers should have a tent, fuel stove, warm clothes, a sleeping bag and plenty of water.

