



The High Country

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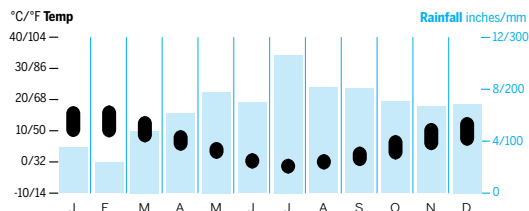
Why Go?

With its enticing mix of history, adventure and culinary temptations, Victoria's High Country is a wonderful place to spend some time. The Great Dividing Range – Australia's eastern mountain spine – curls around eastern Victoria from the Snowy Mountains to the Grampians, peaking in the spectacular High Country. These are Victoria's Alps – a mountain playground attracting skiers and snowboarders in winter and bushwalkers and mountain bikers in summer. Here, the mountain air is clear and invigorating, winter snowfalls at the resorts of Mt Buller, Mt Hotham and Falls Creek are fairly reliable, and the scenery is stunning.

Away from the mountain tops, there are activities aplenty and Bright is one of the loveliest gateway towns in the state. Throw in historic towns such as Beechworth, the wineries of King Valley and the gourmet food offerings of Milawa and you'll find plenty of reasons to linger.

When to Go

Mt Hotham



Apr–May Best time for glorious autumn colours around Bright and Omeo.

Winter Hit the snowy mountain slopes; July/August is peak season.

Dec–Feb The green season for mountain biking, horse riding and wine touring.

Baw Baw National Park

Baw Baw National Park, an offshoot of the Great Dividing Range, is the southernmost region of Victoria's High Country. The Baw Baw Plateau and the forested valleys of the Thomson and Aberfeldy Rivers are wonderful places for bushwalking, with marked tracks through subalpine vegetation, ranging from open eucalypt stands to wet gullies and tall forests on the plateau.

The 3km **Mushroom Rocks Walk** from Mt Erica car park leads to huge granite tors (blocks of granite broken off from the massif). The highest points are **Mt St Phil-lack** (1566m) and **Mt Baw Baw** (1564m). The higher sections of the park are snow-covered in winter, when everyone heads for Baw Baw Village ski resort and the **Mt St Gwinear** cross-country skiing area. A section of the **Australian Alps Walking Track**, which starts its 655km journey in the historic township of Walhalla in Gippsland, passes by a few kilometres from Baw Baw Village. Quiet back roads connect this region with Walhalla.

There is a camping area in the northeastern section of the park, with picnic tables, fireplaces and pit toilets. Dispersed free bush camping is also allowed on the Baw Baw Plateau (fuel stove only).

Baw Baw Village

POP 25

Baw Baw is Victoria's smallest (and also cheapest) downhill-skiing resort and is a relaxed option for both beginners and families. The downhill-skiing area is set over 35 hectares with a vertical drop of 140m and seven ski lifts. Baw Baw is also a base for cross-country skiing, with plenty of trails, including one that connects to the Mt St Gwinear trails on the southern edge of the plateau. In winter the day car park costs \$35/40 (week-day/weekend) per car; during green season it's \$8 per day. Lifts per adult/child cost from \$65/45 per day midweek and \$72/50 on weekends; cross-country passes cost \$12/7 and toboggan passes are \$8 per person. **Mt Baw Baw Ski Hire** (☎ 03-5165 1120; www.baw-bawskihire.com.au) rents out equipment. For freestyle riders, **Cactus Rail Park** has rails and kick boxes, and there's the **Big Air Bag**, where you can practise your snowboarding stunts with a guaranteed soft landing!

Sleeping & Eating

Most lodges and eateries are open year-round. For full listings, check out www.mountbawbaw.com.au.

Alpine Hotel

HOTEL \$

(☎ 03-5165 1136; Currawong Rd; dm from \$30, d/tr from \$70/85) Superb value, year-round backpacker and motel-style accommodation. In winter the sports bar-cafe and attached lounge is *the* place to hang while local bands belt out rock covers until 2am.

Kelly's Lodge

B&B \$\$

(☎ 03-5165 1129; www.kellyslodge.com.au; 11 Frosti Lane; 4-bed r summer/winter from \$120/370, budget r per person \$45-70) This long-running, superfriendly place, with comfortable rooms and a cosy lounge, is in the centre of everything on the mountain. The ski-in cafe (mains \$15 to \$32) is a Baw Baw favourite, with pizzas and lamb shanks.

Village Central

MODERN AUSTRALIAN \$\$

(☎ 03-5165 1123; Alpine Resort, Currawong Rd; mains \$8-28; ☉ 10.30am-late daily winter, 11am-late Mon-Fri, 10.30am-late Sat & Sun summer) This cafe-restaurant at Village Central specialises in local produce and has good valley views.

Information

Mt Baw Baw Alpine Resort Management

Board (☎ 03-5165 1136; www.mountbawbaw.com.au; ☉ 8.30am-8.30pm ski season, 9am-5pm rest of year) In the centre of the village, this office provides general tourist information and an accommodation service.

Getting There & Away

Located about 120km east of Melbourne, the main access road to Baw Baw Village is the windy Baw Baw Tourist Rd via Noojee, reached off the Princes Hwy at Drouin. An alternative back route from the Latrobe Valley is the unsealed, but all-season, South Face Rd from Rawson, north of Moe. Either way, the last 5km up to Baw Baw Village is probably the steepest road in the country – low gear all the way.

Lake Eildon National Park & Around

Getting There & Away

Lake Eildon, 215km northeast of Melbourne, can be reached via the Hume Fwy (take the turn-off at Seymour) or via the far prettier route through Healesville.