

Where can I go horse riding?

Horse riding is a popular recreational activity in forest and there are many areas of public land where horse riders can enjoy Victoria's great outdoors.

Horse activities regularly undertaken in State forest include trail riding, endurance riding, driving and pleasure riding. Many activities are on a casual use basis, but a number of organised or club type events also occur.

Horse riders are welcome to use most areas of State forest in Victoria (see map), with many thousands of kilometres of roads and tracks suitable for horse riding. The Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE) is responsible for managing State forest.

Whilst in some areas of State forest, specific trails for horses have been built; generally the majority of horse riding opportunities are along existing State forest roads. Many of these roads wind through picturesque forest and receive little traffic. Specific information on tracks and trails in State forest can be obtained from the DSE office nearest to your riding destination.

Horse riding is also allowed in some national parks and other reserves, where it does not pose a significant conflict with conservation and the use of these areas by other visitors. Due to some differences in regulations between these national, state, coastal and other parks, to avoid disappointment it is best to check with Parks Victoria.

Where can't I ride?

In State forest, horses are generally not permitted on walking tracks or off formed vehicular tracks. Use of certain areas such as reference areas, operational logging coupes, and operational firewood coupes are also not encouraged.

These limitations are in place to protect significant and environmentally sensitive areas, for your safety, to minimise potential conflict with other users, and to prevent soil erosion and the introduction and spread of noxious and exotic plants. It is very important that riders cooperate with DSE staff to ensure compliance in these matters.

For restrictions on horses in national parks and reserves, contact Parks Victoria for further information.

When are permits required?

In State forest, permits are required for:

- events that are of a competitive nature or that may pose a risk to public safety
- commercial events (ie. entry fees apply, prizemoney involved)
- club or group activities involving more than 20 horses
- any activity involving constructions or the marking of a course
- any activity requiring the total or near total exclusive use of DSE picnic or campgrounds

To apply for a permit, please contact the DSE Customer Service Centre on ☎ 136 186 at least four weeks prior to the event.

Permits are not generally required for club only type events such as trail rides; however a courtesy call to the DSE office nearest the ride is requested so that relevant information on track and fire conditions may be exchanged.

The horse riding code

To ensure safe riding with minimal environmental impact, please observe the following:

- If in doubt about availability of access or permit requirements, check with the responsible land manager
- Respect the rights of other visitors. You will meet some walkers and others who are unfamiliar with horses and unsure about passing them on the track or camping near them. Ensure that all horses in your party are walking quietly when passing other users on a track.
- Stay on the road or on designated horse trials. Do not ride "off-road" or on tracks closed to horses as you may damage the environment you have come to enjoy.
- When riding, be prepared for the unexpected. Timber trucks, 4WD's, hikers, cyclists and native animals may also be using your chosen track.
- Before leaving on a trip, check road conditions. Do not use roads and tracks when they are wet or likely to be damaged.

- Be safety conscious – plan your trip carefully, carry a first aid kit, maintain your saddlery equipment and be fully equipped. Leave details of your proposed trip with a responsible person.
- Hold horses at least 30 metres from streams, huts and camping areas unless otherwise directed by DSE staff. Use hitching rails or other holding facilities where provided. Avoid damage to vegetation when tethering. Do not tie horses to small limbs and shrubs. Tethering directly to trees overnight is prohibited as it causes unacceptable ground damage – use hobbles or a ground tether instead.
- Horses retain weed seeds in their gut for up to 14 days and these can then germinate in manure in the forest. Help us reduce weed infestations by using clean feed (ie. commercial cracked grain, proprietary and processed feeds) at least 48 hours before entering a forest. Feed your horse with a nose bag – do not spread feed on the ground.
- If camping, avoid camping in areas commonly used by other recreationalists unless they are designated horse camps. Camp in an existing campsite rather than a new one and keep at least 30 metres away from watercourses. Look for low impact campsites and spend only one or two nights at each campsite. Break up and scatter manure before vacating campsites
- Avoid crossing areas easily damaged by horses such as swamps and steep or boggy creek crossings
- Horses should be watered downstream from camping areas. To avoid stream bank erosion, bucket water to horses.
- Do not wash yourself or your horse in streams. Carry water to your camp for all washing purposes, including washing horses and scatter washwater well away from streams.
- Report fallen trees or limbs across roads to the nearest DSE office (for State forest) or Parks Victoria office (for parks and reserves).
- Leave no trace. Take all rubbish home.
- Take care with fire – observe all fire regulations and Total Fire Ban days.

Track Classification

To assist riders in choosing a track to suit their ability, the trails have been classified according to the difficulty in completing the trail and the fitness level required of the rider and horse.

- **Basic.** Well defined track with easy navigation, width 2m or more. The majority of the terrain is flat to low steepness

with minimal number of road crossings. Suitable for novice riders.

- **Moderate.** Majority of track is defined, width generally 1.5m. Some steep terrain likely. Expect road and/or bridge crossings. Suitable for riders and horses with general experience.
- **Intermediate.** The track is generally defined, width mostly 1m. Some navigation skills required and sections of steep terrain on various surfaces. Recommended to be done in groups with riders and horses having good experience and fitness.
- **Advanced.** Challenging riding with several steep sections in remote areas, track surface often varied and uneven. Track not well defined and width less than 1m wide. May involve stream crossings and the need to dismount in some sections. Recommended to be done in groups of four or more experienced riders with navigation skills. Horse and rider require a high level of fitness.

For more information

The Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE) is responsible for managing Victoria's State Forest. For further information and maps about where to go in State forest, contact the DSE Customer Service Centre on ☎ 136 186.

Parks Victoria Contacts

For further information about where to go in national parks and reserves, contact the Parks Victoria hotline on ☎ 131963

Visit DSE's website

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

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