

OFFICIAL



Granite Pools Walk – 4km, 2 hours return **Grade 4**

One of the steeper walks in the reserve, it makes its way through some tall timber and moss covered gullies. Look out for lyrebirds on your way and enjoy the wonderful views of the Buchan Valley.



FJ Wilson interpreted walk – 2km, 1 hour return **Grade 2**

This walk is named after Frederick Wilson, who came to Buchan in 1907 from Jenolan Caves in the Blue Mountains (NSW) and contributed significantly to the development of the reserve.

This walk starts about 100m east of the Visitor Centre following the Royal Cave exit track and ends near the Fairy Cave entrance. From here you can return along the main road through the reserve. Numbered posts along the walk refer to points below.

1. Discovering stream passages

Behind this entrance a short tunnel leads to the Federal Cave. It is more than 400m long and contains very white and strikingly beautiful formations.

Discovered by Frederick Wilson and William Bonwick in 1915, the cave was opened to visitors in 1917.

Wilson and Bonwick discovered the Federal Cave by following a stream passage leading from the Royal Cave. This stream passage passes through Fairy, Royal, Federal and Dukes Caves, ending its journey at the swimming pool.

Until 1970 Federal Cave was lit by power generated here at the reserve. When electricity was connected to Fairy and Royal Caves, Federal Cave was closed and sealed off.

In 2007 a low voltage lighting system powered by solar energy was introduced into the Federal Cave by the Friends of Buchan Caves.

2. Limestone at Buchan

The limestone at Buchan formed about 380 million years ago under very shallow seas covering much of East Gippsland. A later period of movement of the earth's crust raised this area above sea level. Limestone is a rock that contains more than 50% calcium carbonate, which is usually present as the mineral calcite.

The skeletons of most marine animals that lack backbones, such as corals, starfish, sea urchins and shells are made up of calcium carbonate. Some algae can also produce calcium carbonate. The limestone here is composed of dark grey lime mud with numerous fossils scattered throughout.

Look at the small grooves in this rock, called 'Rillenkarren' or 'Solution Flutes'. They are formed by rainwater draining across the rock, gently dissolving the limestone. As time goes by, the grooves become deeper.

3. Hidden fossils

The Royal Caves tour ends here. Although Royal Cave was discovered in 1910, this artificial exit tunnel wasn't completed until 1929. Look for fossils in the limestone wall built around the exit.

4. Natural steps

Notice here how the steps have been made from the layers of limestone. These layers are known as 'bedding planes'. Vertical joint lines across the bedding planes allow water to seep through the rock from the surface, and over time this water action slowly dissolves the limestone.

This is how cave development begins. Good examples of fossilised coral and brachiopods can be found here in the rock.

5. Shh...what can you hear?

From here, take a moment to stop and listen for Lyrebirds and Bell Miners. Did you know that the Lyrebird can perfectly imitate just about any sound it hears?

From here, head towards the Fairy Cave entrance and down the steps back to the main road. On your way back to the Visitor Centre take your time to look at the many ornamental trees planted in the reserve since the 1930s.

Flora and fauna

The Buchan Caves Reserve plays host to two significant flora species, Buchan Blue Wattle (*Acacia caerulescens*) and the Leafy Greenhood (*Pterostylis cucullata*).

The reserve is a refuge for wildlife with over 100 species of birds recorded, including King Parrots, White Winged Choughs and Currawongs which can be seen around the camp area. Listen for the Bellbirds and Lyrebirds near the Fairy Cave entrance. Did you know Buchan Caves is home to an underground breeding habitat for the endangered platypus? The platypus are monitored by Parks Victoria and Gunaikurnai Rangers.

Kangaroos are plentiful throughout the reserve. At night the campground comes alive with Brush-tailed Possums and the calls of Boobook Owls.

Please do not feed the wildlife. They find their food in the wild. Feeding them can result in diseases, aggressive behaviour and an unnatural reliance on humans for food.

Dogs and other pets are not permitted in the park.

Picnicking

Buchan Caves is a great place for a family picnic. There are electric and woodfired barbecues to cook on and plenty of tables and shelters around the reserve. There is also a playground and a swimming pool which is fed from an underground stream. The Visitor Centre boasts an interpretive display of the cave systems.

Camping and accommodation

There is a range of accommodation options at Buchan Caves Reserve. Shared facilities include hot showers, toilets, a laundry, a camper's kitchen and electric and wood fired barbecues.

To book, go to www.parks.vic.gov.au/stay or call 13 1963.

Campground

The campground has 40 sites with power and an additional 21 sites without power.

Caves House – Country style accommodation

Historic Caves House offers a truly relaxing experience while staying at the Buchan Caves Reserve.

- Sleeps up to eight people with three bedrooms featuring queen size beds and one anteroom with two single beds.
- All linen supplied
- Fully furnished throughout with a wood heater and split system air conditioning
- Beautiful covered front deck with river views
- Outdoor BBQ and fire

Be prepared and stay safe

This park is in the East Gippsland fire district. Bushfire safety is a personal responsibility. Anyone entering parks and forests during the bushfire season needs to stay aware of forecast weather conditions. Check the Fire Danger Rating and for days of Total Fire Ban at www.emergency.vic.gov.au, on the VicEmergency smartphone app or call the VicEmergency Hotline on 1800 226 226. No fires may be lit on Total Fire Ban days. On Code Red Fire Danger Rating days this park will be closed for public safety. Closure signs will be erected but do not expect an official warning. Check the latest conditions at www.parks.vic.gov.au or by calling 13 1963. For emergency assistance call Triple Zero (000). **September 2021**