Kosciuszko National Park

Pilot Wilderness and Lower Snowy River area

The remote Pilot Wilderness and Lower Snowy River areas embrace the wild south of Kosciuszko National Park. Camp or picnic by the Snowy River, and explore the scenic trails on a walk, as you follow the drive from Jindabyne to the Victorian border. See another side of the Snowy Mountains.

Before you start exploring, stop at Jindabyne’s Snowy Region Visitor Information Centre for maps, information, and advice. The nearest supplies and fuel are located at Jindabyne in NSW, or at Seldom Seen in Victoria, around an hour’s drive from Willis (120km from Jindabyne).

For most of its length, Lower Snowy Drive (Barry Way) is unsealed and is not suitable for caravans. A 12.5m vehicle length limit applies. It’s steep, narrow and winding. Watch out for minor rock falls and potholes—especially after rain. Keep an eye out for wildlife.

PILOT WILDERNESS AREA

Well-prepared, experienced adventurers can tackle long-distance mountain bike rides or hikes, taking in historic huts and the remote Pilot Wilderness.

This area is accessed from the Alpine Way, near Thredbo, via Cascade trail.

Topographic maps

- Chimneys Ridge 1:25 000
- Charcoal Range 1:25 000
- Suggan Buggan 1:50 000

01 Pilot Wilderness mountain bike ride

53km one-way, 9–11hrs

Alpine Way to:
Bob’s Ridge: 4.8km one-way
Cascade Hut: 10km one-way
Ingeegoodbee trail turnoff: 27km one-way
Nine Mile trail turnoff: 44km one-way
Pinch River campground: 53km one-way

Pilot Wilderness ride begins from Alpine Way, at the Cascade trail head, and travels through the remote Pilot Wilderness Area, to Pinch River campground, on Barry Way.

Along the way, it follows several trails, including Cascade trail, Ingeegoodbee trail and Nine Mile trail. Adrenaline junkies take note – there are sustained steep climbing sections on Bob’s Ridge that will test your cardio fitness, while the very steep descent on Nine Mile trail will test your riding skills.

For a moderately difficult route with incredible views, turn around once you reach the crest of Bob’s Ridge, or Cascade Hut — a short detour off the main trail. If you plan to tackle the long, challenging ride through to Barry Way, you’ll need to be experienced in long distance riding and pack riding. Bring a map, Personal Locator Beacon (PLB), food and water supplies.

From Cascade Hut, experienced riders can continue past the Tin Mine Huts turn off. Turn on to Ingeegoodbee trail then on to Nine Mile trail, which will take you to Pinch River campground,
on the Barry Way. This steep section, along Nine Mile trail, drops 1000m in 5km.

The ride travels from the sub-alpine areas of Thredbo Valley through the montane forests of snow gum, mountain gum and alpine ash at the heart of Pilot Wilderness Area. Finally, you drop down to the native cypress pine and white box woodlands in Lower Snowy River Valley.

Most people tackle the full ride as a one-way trip north to south with a supporting car shuffle, due to the drop in elevation. If you don’t organise a car shuffle from Barry Way, it’s around 61km north (uphill) to Jindabyne or 30km south to Suggan Buggan, from Pinch River campground.

**02 Australian Alps walking track**

- Grade 5 walk

The Australian Alps walking track (AAWT) is a 655km long-distance walk from Walhalla, in Victoria, to Tharwa, near Canberra. Recommended for experienced, self-sufficient hikers only.

There are several points in Kosciuszko National Park where you can access the Australian Alps walking track, to walk a shorter section. Cascade trail forms part of the AAWT, between Dead Horse Gap and Cowombat Flat in Victoria.

Contact Snowy Region Visitor Centre for more information, including maps and guide books.

**DID YOU KNOW**

In recognition of Kosciuszko’s unique value as a conservation area, it’s been named a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve. More than half of the park, over 350,000ha (almost 865,000 acres), has been declared wilderness. This includes the Pilot Wilderness and Byadbo Wilderness in the Lower Snowy River area. Pilot Wilderness, which rises from over 200m in the Lower Snowy River valley to 1830m at The Pilot mountain, makes up over 20 per cent of this protected area.
LOWER SNOWY RIVER AREA

Lower Snowy drive is a sprawling, open-ended road trip that takes travellers past picnic spots and lookouts in the Snowy River valley. It follows the Barry Way south for 74km from Jindabyne to Willis, on the Victorian border.

Along the way, find a secluded site at a campground by the banks of the fabled Snowy River, and enjoy the sense of solitude. Easy access to the river and its sandy beaches, plus a mild and dry climate, make this area perfect for fishing, paddling and swimming.

Topographic maps
- Chimneys Ridge 1:25 000
- Charcoal Range 1:25 000
- Suggan Buggan 1:50 000

03 Lower Snowy scenic drive

74km one-way

With so many views and attractions to catch along the way, Lower Snowy drive offers a superb day-trip from Jindabyne or scenic drive on your way to Victoria. Suitable for 2WD vehicles.

DID YOU KNOW?

The route that now forms Barry Way was an important route for Aboriginal people travelling to the high country. In the 1800s, it became a stock route for sheep and cattle travelling from summer grazing, in the high alpine country, to Bairnsdale markets. The eagle-eyed can spot tree markers and the remains of old stockyards near Jacobs River campground. Before federation, a customs house stood at Willis picnic area, for the Victorian Government to collect taxes on cattle crossing the border.

From the park entry at Ingebyra, the road twists down toward the Snowy River valley, where an ideal first stop comes at Wallace Craigie lookout, offering scenic views of the surrounding area, as well as great birdwatching.

From here, you’ll pass Jacobs River campground – the first of many beautiful picnic areas that dot the road all the way through the Snowy River valley. Bring a picnic lunch, pack your camping gear and find your own private retreat beneath some eucalypts. You might even like to bring along your swimsuit and a fishing rod to make a lazy afternoon of it.

After reaching Pinch River campground, the road climbs up and away from the river, leading to Jacks lookout, which lets you peer back at the scenic way you’ve come. The road then winds down and passes more campgrounds and picnic areas, before crossing the border into Victoria’s Alpine National Park. This road will take you to Buchan Caves, a drive of about 2 hrs.

04 Wallace Craigie lookout

41km from Jindabyne

Located just off the road, this is a terrific place to break up the drive with superb vistas of rugged ranges that are constantly changing throughout the shifting light of day. In winter, you may even see snow on the summits.

Bring a packed lunch and find a picnic table beneath the trees. This spot is popular with photographers, so don’t forget to bring your camera for some spectacular shots. Some on-site interpretative material will help you understand what you’re seeing.
Jacobs (Tongaroo) River campground

54km from Jindabyne

Jacobs River campground is a special spot, right by the riverbank and surrounded by gum trees. A 1–1.5hr drive from Jindabyne, the campground might be easy to reach from town, but once you arrive, the sense of solitude makes it feel miles away from civilisation. Outside of school holidays and long weekends, you can often have the entire area to yourself.

Bring a tent and pass a long weekend fishing and swimming in the river. Or, bring a mountain bike and hiking boots and use it as a base for exploring further afield. The campground caters to the very active, day-trippers looking for a picnic spot, and visitors who are simply scouting for somewhere to kick back in serene nature. As the sun sets wombats and platypus emerge. If you’re lucky you might even catch a glimpse of the elusive spotted-tail quoll.

During winter, the campground also offers a great, warmer alternative to Jindabyne and the ski resorts. In spring, the area blooms with stunning wildflowers.

Halfway Flat campground

55km from Jindabyne

Right on the banks of the Snowy River sits Halfway Flat campground, one of Kosciuszko National Park’s best-kept secrets. Pitch your tent, then go swimming, fishing, or take a relaxing walk through the bush.

With just a few unmarked sites, this riverfront campground, just off Barry Way, is surrounded by eucalyptus, cypress pines and wattle, making it a quiet and peaceful spot. By day, kangaroos, wallabies and emus can be seen. As the sun sets wombats and quolls make their appearance.

Late summer into autumn is a particularly good time for families or small groups to visit, as the days aren’t too hot, but the water is warm. You may even have the entire campground to yourself.

The stretch of the Snowy River between here and Willis is a popular spot for canoeing and kayaking, when water levels are high (and safe). It’s a great place for introductory to intermediate white water paddling, with appropriate experience, skills and safety equipment.
If you’re not an experienced kayaker why not try a day tour with expert guides and gear. For more information about guided tours visit the Snowy Region Visitor Information Centre in Jindabyne.

**07 Pinch (Moyangul) River campground**

60km from Jindabyne

This is an important Aboriginal site and was also used as a stock reserve on the Bairnsdale route. Today it’s the largest camping and picnic area on Barry Way, and end point to the epic Pilot Wilderness mountain bike adventure ride.

Located at the junction of the Pinch and Snowy rivers, you’ll find a large, peaceful campground nestled by the river, surrounded by tall eucalypts, cypress pines and flowering wattles in spring and summer.

Enjoy swimming, fishing, liloing and paddling from dawn to dusk, or set out on a bushwalk on some of the trails in this area of Kosciuszko National Park.

**08 Jack’s lookout**

62km from Jindabyne

This lookout above the Snowy River was named after Jack Shannon, a local park worker and stonemason.

Jack’s lookout offers superb views across the pine-clad ridges, Snowy River valley and its famous river. It’s a gorgeous spot at any time of year, but is particularly striking on clear winter days when a bright blue sky makes the perfect backdrop to the surrounding peaks.

Enjoy the panorama fringed with towering eucalypts and cypress pines. In spring, the coloured wattles that bloom here are a delight to see.

There’s plenty of interesting wildlife to spot around this area too, so keep your eyes open for kangaroos, wallabies and emus. If you’re keen to pitch your tent, it’s a short drive to Running Waters campground.
Running Waters campground

63km from Jindabyne

Nestled between the river and the roadside, Running Waters campground is an ideal escape from the crowds of Jindabyne during winter – and even better in the warmer months. Surrounded by gum trees and pine forest, it offers plenty of space for small and large groups alike. Bring the extended family and settle down for a long weekend of picnics and relaxation in this stunning Kosciuszko National Park setting.

With plenty of resident kangaroos, wallabies and emus, photography opportunities are everywhere. Bird watchers can add to their twitch list, including the spectacular rainbow bee-eater and rare, brown tree creeper. It’s a short drive to Jack’s lookout for stunning views and more chances to see the birdlife up close.

But where this campground particularly shines is in its offering of water sports. Easy access to the river means this is a fantastic spot for fishing, paddling, and liloing. Pack a tent and wood for the barbecue, and be sure to bring swimmers (and maybe a kayak) to make the most of your natural escape.

Willis picnic area

74km from Jindabyne

Willis picnic area, at the tail-end of Lower Snowy drive, offers one last place to settle down and rest on this side of the Black-Allen line (NSW-Victorian border).

The Snowy River roars past on the other side of Barry Way, and shady trees make this a pleasant option for morning or afternoon tea. Pack a thermos and find a perfect picnic spot – there are even fire rings if you want to stoke up a barbecue.

The resident wattles bloom in late winter and spring, the best time to visit Willis picnic area. As the lowest altitude picnic area in Kosciuszko National Park, it can get quite warm in the height of summer – a perfect excuse to bring a pair of swimmers to cool down in the river.

Before federation, a customs house stood here, as the Victorian Government levied tax on cattle being taken south. In the 1890s the duty was 30 shillings per head of cattle.
STAYING SAFE

Many parts of Kosciuszko National Park are remote and rugged places, weather can change quickly and conditions may be unpredictable.

Be aware of the risks when swimming, paddling, fishing or camping around rivers. Water levels in the Snowy River and its tributaries can rise suddenly due to water releases from dams, and after heavy rainfall. There may be swift currents, rapids, deep pools, hidden and submerged hazards.

Take responsibility for your own safety and the safety of any children in your care. Remember to plan ahead, choose your walks and activities to match your stamina and fitness level, and tell someone where you’re going and when you’ll be back.

Always check the weather before leaving and change your plans if bad weather is approaching.


CYCLING

• Slow down. Give walkers right of way.
• Stay on formed trails. Avoid skidding and don’t cut corners.
• Stay away from wet, muddy areas, as riding can destroy trails.
• Wear your helmet.

General enquiries:
Snowy Region Visitor Information Centre, Jindabyne.
Ph: (02) 6450 5600
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