A forest walk is a great way to get back to nature. Taking in the sunshine, enjoying the sounds of the wildlife and feeling at one with the environment – there’s nothing quite like it to clear the head and soothe the soul.

And what better place to take a stroll than within the stunning river red gum forests of southern NSW?

ABOUT THE AREA

River red gums are a type of eucalypt and a true-blue Aussie native. Lining the banks of rivers and wetlands, sometimes growing up to 45 metres, they provide welcome shade to a myriad of plant and animal life, help stabilise river banks, and provide the perfect backdrop for a scenic nature walk.

The river red gum reserves of NSW include a range of national parks, regional parks and nature reserves. They’re a great place to enjoy a nature walk under the canopy of these impressive gumtrees.

GETTING THERE

The Yanga, Murrumbidgee Valley and Murray Valley Regional and National Parks are ideal places for strolling in the river red gums.

All three can be found in the Western Riverina district of southern NSW. So if you’re within coo-ee distance of towns such as Deniliquin, Balranald, Moama, Mathoura, Narrandera, Leeton or Hay, then you’re in the right place. And if you’re not, then it’s worth the trip.

TOP NATURE WALKS

There are so many great nature walks in the river red gum reserves, far too many to list here! Whether you’re a serious trampler or out for a leisurely stroll, there’s a walk to suit you.

BALRANALD Take a walk along the Yanga Lake Walking Trail. An easy 1km walk from the homestead, stroll at a leisurely pace beside the lake and look for the bird hide nestled amongst the river red gums.

LEETON Discover the rich diversity of plant and animal life at the Turkey Flat Wetland. Call into the bird hide, then walk or cycle across the regulator and along the forest track to Middle Beach.

NARRANDERA Whether it’s the wetlands track or Lake Talbot and spotting koalas in the Nature Reserve, the outskirts of Narrandera provide a range of opportunities to enjoy the river red gums by foot.

MATHOURA Starting at Crane’s Bridge off the Cobb Highway, the Gulpa Creek Walking Track in the Murray Valley Regional Park is a great stroll with your dog. You’re sure to see plenty of wildlife walking through Murray Valley National Park at Swifts Creek towards Moira Lake.

MOAMA The Dhungala Cultural Plant Trail, within Horseshoe Lagoon near the bridge, is a great way to learn about the plants in the area that are important to local Aboriginal communities. Ask for a brochure at the Echuca Moama Visitor Centre.

DENILIQUIN Another must-do walk is the recently completed Beach to Beach walking track, a striking and dog-friendly walk through the regional park which forms part of a shared pathway from McLean Beach in west Deniliquin to Willoughby’s Beach in the Murray Valley National Park.

HAY The tranquil Hay Nature Walk runs along the northern side of the Murrumbidgee River. You’re welcome to bring your dog along as well.

BAROOGA Meander along the Murray River from Swing Bridge, and wind through a loop of nearly 6km. Dog friendly, this walk can also branch off for a break at Barooga Day Use area (known to the locals as Ski Beach).

For more nature walks visit www.nationalparks.nsw.gov.au.
**SAFETY INFORMATION**

As beautiful as they are, river red gums are also habitat trees. They provide important tree hollows for a range of animals. As a result of the tree hollows, sometimes branches do fall, so it's important to be aware of what's happening above you.

Many NSW parks are rugged places, weather can change quickly and conditions in the bush or on the water may be unpredictable. When visiting a national park, be aware of the risks and 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, ensure you take enough fresh drinking water and food for your trip, and tell someone where you're going and when you'll be back. Road conditions can also be hazardous when wet.

**PARK RULES**

Camping is free in the river red gum reserves, and there's no need to book. Just pull up your caravan or car and pick a spot in the designated campground.

Cooking outdoors is part and parcel of the camping experience, and it’s a good idea to pack a gas or liquid fuel stove for your trip. Unlike many other bush camping spots, small campfires are allowed in the river red gum reserves outside of the solid fuel ban period.

A solid fuel fire ban applies between 31 October and 31 March each year. Park management may vary this if local conditions change.

If you do have a small campfire, make sure you completely extinguish all fires before leaving an area or going to bed. A small amount of glowing embers can start a bushfire. Please don’t feed native animals - it can damage their health and make them dependent on campers for food. To avoid attracting scavengers, store food and garbage in a secure container.

**TO FIND OUT MORE**

For further information, including detailed maps and directions, visit: