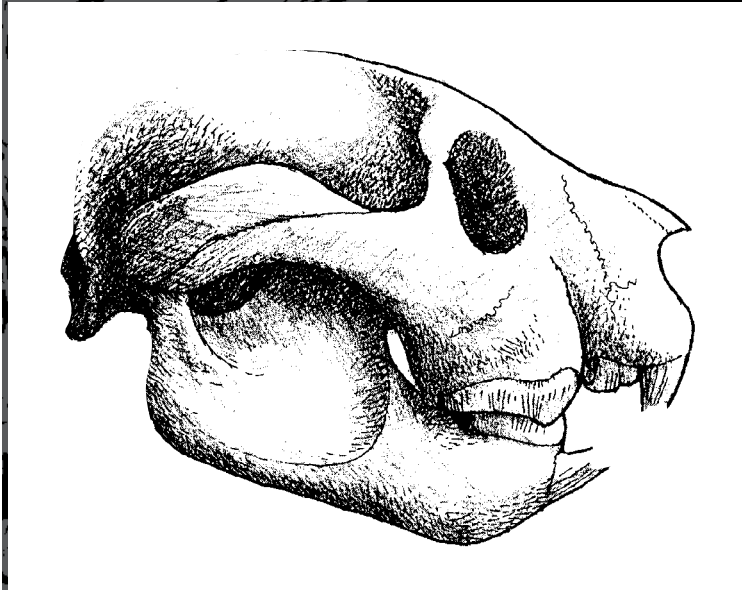


Department for Environment and Heritage

Naracoorte Caves National Park



Australian Fossil Mammal Site
World Heritage Area

*Healthy Parks
Healthy People*

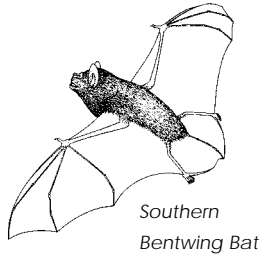


Naracoorte Caves National Park

Australian Fossil Mammal Site World Heritage Area

Naracoorte Caves National Park covers approximately 600 hectares of limestone ranges and is situated in the south-east of South Australia, 10 km south of Naracoorte.

The area was first dedicated a forestry reserve in 1882, with the first caretaker employed to look after the caves in 1885. The caves reserve came under the control of the Tourist Bureau in 1917 succeeded by the formation of the National Parks and Wildlife Service in 1972. The Naracoorte Caves National Park was inscribed onto the World Heritage List in 1994 as a serial nomination with the Riversleigh Section of Lawn Hill National Park, Queensland, to form the 'Australian Fossil Mammal Sites, (Riversleigh/ Naracoorte) World Heritage Area'.



World Heritage

Inscription on the World Heritage List recognises the value of the vertebrate fossil material, dating back perhaps 500 000 years. These deposits provide an opportunity to study the impact of climate change on biodiversity before and after the continent was populated.

The bones of extinct megafauna such as *Thylacoleo*, *Diprotodon*, *Zygomaturus* and sthenurine kangaroos have been found within the caves and represent the most complete fossil record we have of this period. Research has provided many insights into the appearance and behaviour of these extinct animals, but the answer to one question remains elusive, 'why did these large animals disappear?' Perhaps the Naracoorte Caves hold the answer.

Vegetation

The vegetation is predominantly Brown Stringybark on the limestone ridge, with River Red Gum lining the banks of the Mosquito Creek. The understorey on the ridge is bracken fern over a diverse array of orchids that flower during spring.

Some of the park was cleared for pine forests in the mid 1800s, with other exotic species planted around the caves. Many of the pines have now been cleared and areas revegetated with endemic species. The gardens now consist of native plants although a few of the historic trees remain.

Fauna

The most common marsupial seen at Naracoorte is the Western Grey Kangaroo. At night, Common Brushtail Possums emerge from the caves and trees, and Sugar Gliders can also be found if you are lucky. Echidnas are commonly seen and if you catch a glimpse of a small rodent-like animal, it may be a Yellow-Footed Antechinus. The antechinus is an insect eating marsupial.

Bird life is abundant, especially around the gardens of the Wonambi Fossil Centre where they regularly feed. Some of the more frequently seen birds include New Holland Honeyeaters, Little Wattlebirds and several species of thornbills.



Wonambi Fossil Centre

Step through the doors of the Wonambi Fossil Centre into an ancient world where megafauna once roamed. The display in the Wonambi Fossil Centre 'brings to life' the megafauna fossils found in the Naracoorte Caves. The self-guided walk through the simulated forest and swampland is wheelchair accessible and suitable for all ages.

The Flinders University Gallery has information panels depicting the various sciences studied at Naracoorte, and touch screen computers to answer questions you may have relating to the Wonambi Fossil Centre and the fossils of Naracoorte Caves.

The National Parks Code

Help protect your national parks by following these guidelines:

- leave your pets at home
- take your rubbish with you
- observe fire restrictions (check CFS hotline 1300 362 361)
- conserve native habitat by using liquid fuel or gas stoves
- camp only in designated areas
- respect geological and heritage sites
- keep our wildlife wild – do not feed or disturb animals, or remove native plants
- keep to defined vehicle tracks and walking trails
- be considerate of other park users
- firearms and hunting are not permitted.

Thank you for leaving the bush in its natural state for the enjoyment of others.

Greening Policy

The Department for Environment and Heritage is concerned with wise use of resources. Please assist us with our waste management by placing your rubbish and recyclables in the correct bins.

Walking Trails

You can enjoy an amazing array of wildlife along the park's walking trails that wind their way through remnant bushland. A short walk from the exit of the Wonambi Fossil Centre takes you to Wet Cave through a small patch of stringybark scrub. In spring, many varieties of orchids flourish with birdlife in abundance.

The *World Heritage Walk* takes you to Victoria Fossil Cave from the Wet Cave entrance, identifying several sites of World Heritage significance along the way. This trail is 1.2 km long and takes about 30 minutes to complete.

From the Victoria Fossil Cave car park, take the trail to Stoney Point picnic ground and enjoy the ancient limestone cliffs, stringybark scrub on the range and River Red Gum flats along the way.

Camping

Wirreanda Campground offers modern camping facilities, powered sites for caravans and a large lawn area for tents. Camping permits can be obtained from the self-registration station at the campground.

Wirreanda Bunkhouse is ideal for schools or special interest groups, offering dormitory-style accommodation for up to 50 people. It has shower facilities and a fully equipped kitchen and laundry.

Picnicking

Picnic tables are situated throughout the park with coin operated barbecues located on the large lawn area adjacent to the car park.

A shelter and barbecue are located at the Stoney Point picnic ground, 1.5 km from the Victoria Fossil Cave car park. A key for access may be obtained from the Wonambi Fossil Centre.

For snacks, refreshments or a sit down meal with fine wine, relax in the comfort of the Caves Cafe, located just 30 metres from the Wonambi Fossil Centre.

Cave tours

Victoria Fossil Cave

The one hour tour departs from the Victoria Fossil Cave car park, a short 1.5 km drive south-east from the Wonambi Fossil Centre. The tour descends 30 steps into a beautifully decorated chamber and then winds through 250 metres of passages and chambers to a large fossil deposit. About half of your tour is spent at the fossil bed display area before making your way out of the cave up a 150 metre passage, some of which is steeply sloping. This tour best displays Naracoorte Caves World Heritage values.

Alexandra Cave

The half hour guided tour departs from the front of the Wonambi Fossil Centre and takes you through three chambers of Alexandra Cave. There are 25 steps into the cave and 35 steps to exit. The cave has natural earth floors and exceptional cave decorations. The tour is ideal for families with small children and provides many photographic opportunities.

Bat Tour

The five infra-red cameras installed in the Bat Cave relay images of the Southern Bentwing Bat to the Bat Observation Centre. Here you can sit in comfort and view the daily activities of the bats without disturbing them.

The one hour tour incorporates a stroll through Blanche Cave. Night tours, to witness the exodus of bats from the cave, are conducted during summer holiday periods.

Wet Cave

The self-guided walk of Wet Cave, with an automated lighting system provides an opportunity to do it all at your own pace. An easy walk through a large, robust and interesting cave. Entry for this cave comes with the purchase of tickets for the Alexandra Cave tour or the Wonambi Fossil Centre.

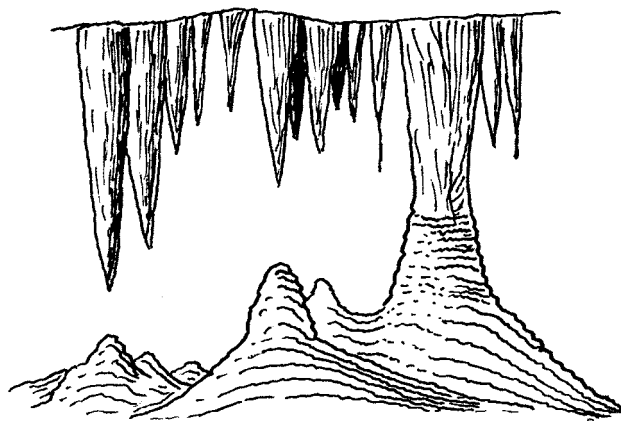
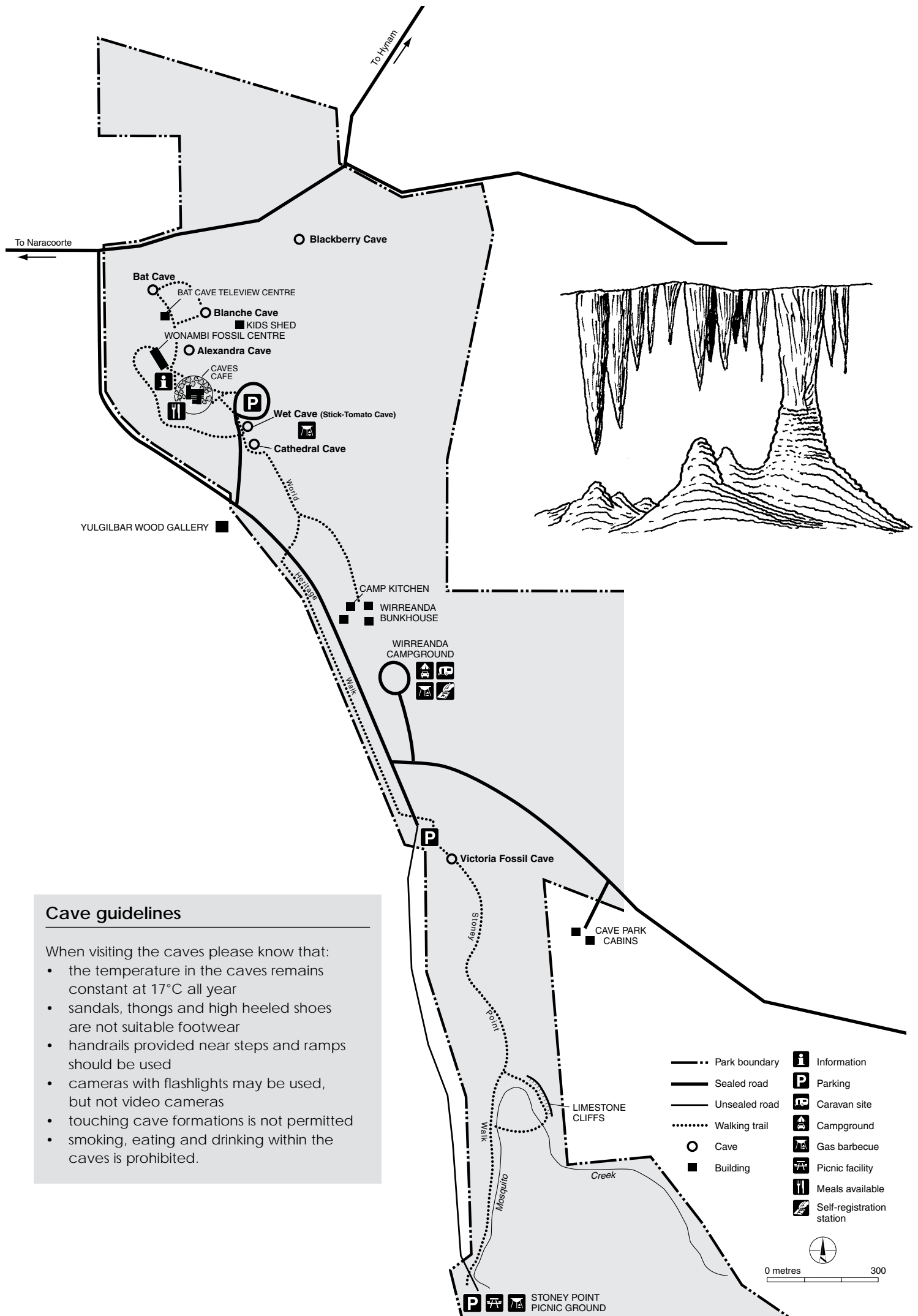
Adventure Caving

Adventure caving tours are designed for beginners who have a sense of fun and adventure. For family groups, Stick-Tomato Cave is the most suitable, as the tunnels are larger and the squeezes optional. Blackberry Cave involves smaller passages, rocky squeezes as well as several optional exercises. Overalls, helmets and kneepads are supplied, and safe caving techniques and cave protection issues are discussed prior to the start of each tour. Tours are conducted by experienced staff and are available during holiday periods and by prior bookings. A minimum age limit of 8 applies.

Extended adventure tours explore the depths of Fox Cave, Cathedral Cave or Starburst Chamber in Victoria Fossil Cave. Your guide will show you exceptional cave decorations and fossils, and reinforce caving etiquette and safe caving practices. A novice tour must be completed prior to joining one of the extended tours and a minimum age of 12 applies.



Short-beaked Echidna



Cave guidelines

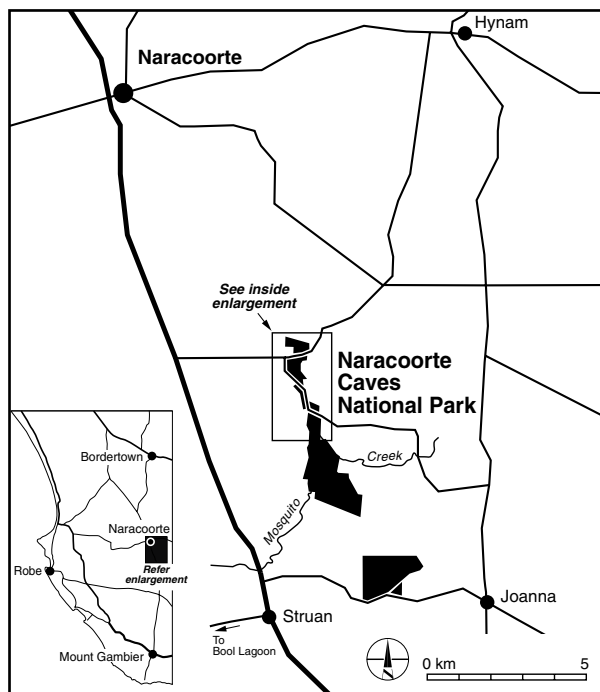
When visiting the caves please know that:

- the temperature in the caves remains constant at 17°C all year
- sandals, thongs and high heeled shoes are not suitable footwear
- handrails provided near steps and ramps should be used
- cameras with flashlights may be used, but not video cameras
- touching cave formations is not permitted
- smoking, eating and drinking within the caves is prohibited.

	Times	Comments
Wonambi Fossil Centre	9.00 am – 5.00 pm self-guided, no time limit	Tickets available from Wonambi Fossil Centre
Alexandra Cave	9.30 am and 1.30 pm 30 minute tour	Tickets available from Wonambi Fossil Centre
Victoria Fossil Cave	10.15 am and 2.15 pm 60 minute tour	Tickets available from Wonambi Fossil Centre
Bat Tour	11.30 am and 3.30 pm 60 minute tour	Tickets available from Wonambi Fossil Centre
Wet Cave	9.00 am – 5.00 pm self-guided, no time limit	Entry with purchase of tickets for the Alexandra Cave tour or the Wonambi Fossil Cave
Adventure Tour	Available by prior booking 90 minute tour	Minimum age 8 years Minimum group 4 persons
Extended Adventure Tour	Available by prior booking 3 hour tour	Minimum age 12 years Party size 4-6 persons

Eco accreditation

Naracoorte Caves has received eco accreditation from Ecotourism Australia for several of the tours. Maximum group sizes are strictly adhered to and extra tours are conducted during holiday periods and on weekends. Bookings are not necessary for regular show caves tours and are only taken for large groups and adventure caving.



For further information:

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Front cover illustration:

Jaw and skull of the marsupial lion, *Thylacoleo carnifex*

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