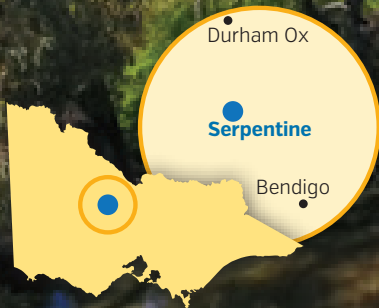


welcome

TO THE LODDON RIVER CANOE TRAIL AT SERPENTINE



The Loddon River - a trail for all ages

The Loddon River Canoe Trail at Serpentine follows a slow, meandering 4 km section of the Loddon River. Departing from the boat ramp, this self-guided journey of discovery is suitable for most ages and paddling abilities.

Discover the nourishing waters of the Loddon as you meander through the domain of the River Redgum. These waters are the lifeblood of this enduring Eucalyptus, fuelling its prosperity and the prosperity of the people who have lived beside it for thousands of years. As you move through this changing environment, use the brochure to unearth the stories of this riverscape, both past and present. Keep your senses open to these stories that tell the tale of culture and its transformation.

Please read the safety information below and use the boat ramp to launch your craft and avoid damage to the riverbank.

Before you paddle

- Let someone know of your plan to paddle the trail and what time you expect to finish
- Do not paddle the trail if the river is in flood
- In summer months, check Fire Danger Ratings for the Northern Country Fire District on the CFA website <https://www.cfa.vic.gov.au/warnings-restrictions/northern-country-fire-district>
- Check weather conditions and warnings for the Northern Country Weather District on the Bureau of Meteorology website <http://www.bom.gov.au/vic/forecasts/northerncountry.shtml>
- Check for any known Blue Green Algal Alerts on the Goulburn Murray Water website <https://www.g-mwater.com.au/news/bga>
- Be aware that to fish in Victorian waters, unless you have an exemption, you will need a Recreational Fishing Licence <https://vfa.vic.gov.au>

On the river

- Avoid paddling alone
- There are many submerged hazards such as stumps and river debris – never jump, dive, or purposefully capsize your craft into murky water

- If you do capsize, hold onto your canoe/kayak and swim for the bank
- During the summer months, air temperatures can be very high – avoid overheating by paddling during the cooler hours of the day
- In warmer seasons, snakes can often be seen basking in direct sunlight on logs or the river edge and can sometimes be seen swimming in the river – this is their natural habitat and they should be left alone for their welfare and your safety. Be cautious when walking near the river's edge
- Weirs and paddlers don't mix – stay clear of the weir downstream. Proximity to the weir is marked by a yellow buoy

Safety gear

- Wear a life-jacket or personal flotation device
- In summer, protect yourself from the harsh sun with a hat and sunscreen
- Download a trail map – available on the Loddon Shire website: www.loddon.vic.gov.au
- Have one spare paddle between your group
- Carry a first aid kit
- Wear appropriate fixed footwear for water, steep banks and exploring the land
- All craft should have fixed buoyancy

In an emergency

There is mobile phone access along the trail – waterproof your device.

In the event of an emergency dial 000 or 112.

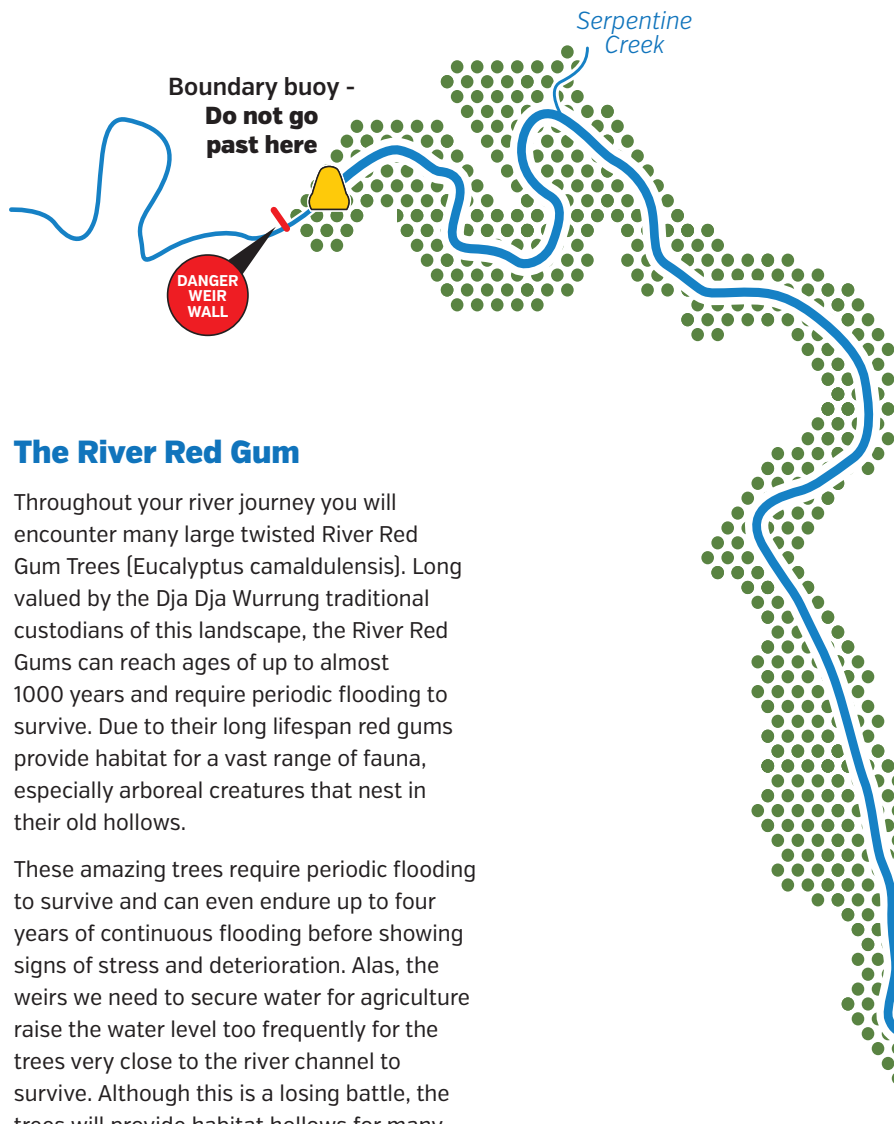
When asked for your location, state that you are on the Loddon River at Serpentine and advise how far you are downstream [toward the weir] of the Bridgewater-Serpentine Rd [C274] Bridge. The nearest junction is Foley's Rd.

Minimum impact

One of the advantages of paddle exploration is the ability to have minimum or no impact on the environment and cultural heritage.

To achieve this, please:

- take out whatever you take in
- use designated launch facilities where available
- do not disturb any flora or fauna
- avoid physical contact with cultural heritage sites such as scar trees
- do not interfere with any gates, fences or stock on the surrounding land
- do not light fires.



The River Red Gum

Throughout your river journey you will encounter many large twisted River Red Gum Trees (*Eucalyptus camaldulensis*). Long valued by the Dja Dja Wurrung traditional custodians of this landscape, the River Red Gums can reach ages of up to almost 1000 years and require periodic flooding to survive. Due to their long lifespan red gums provide habitat for a vast range of fauna, especially arboreal creatures that nest in their old hollows.

These amazing trees require periodic flooding to survive and can even endure up to four years of continuous flooding before showing signs of stress and deterioration. Alas, the weirs we need to secure water for agriculture raise the water level too frequently for the trees very close to the river channel to survive. Although this is a losing battle, the trees will provide habitat hollows for many years.

River Red Gums are tough and hardy but will shed their limbs if the soil they live in remains too dry – they literally give up a part of themselves to survive - so do not rest under them. Red Gum is too dense to float, so limbs or whole trees that fall in the river remain in place for a very long time, providing wonderful aquatic habitat.

Look for other signs of survival on these eucalypt trees. Can you see young bright shoots growing from the trunk of the trees on or above the river bank? This is called epicormic growth and these shoots are tasked with keeping the tree alive after they have been stressed by fire, flooding or drought.

Rakali (native water rat)

As you're paddling, keep an eye out for the native Water Rat, which may be swimming and diving for food. But be very quiet – otherwise if startled it will quickly seek shelter in the banks or snags. Shell evidence of the Water Rat's food can also be found in exposed roots, semi-submerged tree limbs and hollows close to water. If you find a feeding platform, see if you can figure out what they have been eating. Water Rats are often associated with a healthy river system.



Total trail distance downstream is approximately 8 km return (allow 2 hours)

A single yellow buoy marks the turnaround point of the trail



Rich bird life

A number of birds can be seen resting in the treetops or flying along the bankside. However, one you will most likely hear before you see it is the loud and raucous Sulphur Crested Cockatoo. They are a large white bird, with a distinctive sulphur-yellow crest. Using the large River Red Gum as habitat, Sulphur Crested Cockatoos rest and lay their eggs in hollows. How many hollows can you see along the trail? You may see some other birds along your way. These could include Galahs, Willie Wagtails, Little Pied Cormorants, Little black cormorants, Pacific Black Ducks and Red Rumped Parrots.

Farmland

Major Mitchell was one of the first Europeans to come to the Loddon River plains in 1836. From his exploration, Serpentine Creek, which begins at the weir near the end of the canoe trail, was named after its snake-like bends and later the name was used again for the Serpentine run [90 000 acres], taken up in 1843. Most of that area was used for sheep grazing in four large holdings, of which 'Serpentine' was the largest.

You can paddle the wonderful Serpentine Creek Canoe trail further downstream on the creek at Durham Ox where you will find launch facilities at the beginning of that trail.