



Guidebook 11 - Yaouk to Tom Groggin

Places of historic or cultural interest

The snowy mountains area is rich in its history and cultural heritage. This is made stronger by the enormous changes it has witnessed over the years, and the fact that it is now preserved within a National Park. A trip along the National Trail takes you through country that has seen all these changes and more.

Aboriginal Occupation

Aboriginal people visited the mountains in summer, mainly to feast on the Bogong moths that aestivate in the cool rock crevices.

Summer grazing leases

Since squatters first started pushing inland looking for grazing lands to claim in the 1830s, the mountain pastures of the snowy mountains have been used for summer grazing. Squats became grazing leases and for over 100 years pastoralists would move their stock into the high country to take advantage of the green pastures which lasted all summer. This seasonal practice was deeply embedded into many pastoralist's way of life and when the decision was made to protect the mountains in a National Park, there was considerable angst. Grazing was removed from the highest parts of the mountains in 1944, from above 1350m in 1958 and from the entire Park in 1969. Evidence suggested the grazing was causing considerable damage to the high alpine pastures and soils. Many of the huts and homesteads in the mountains were built to accommodate the summer grazing practices.

Mt Kosciuszko

At 2228m, Mount Kosciuszko is the highest mountain on mainland Australia. It may not be the highest mountain in the world but it is one of the oldest. The Aboriginals called the mountain Tar-Gan-Gil. They visited the area for ceremony, socialising, sharing and trading. The mountain received its present name in 1840 when Polish geologist and explorer Count Paul de Strzelecki named it in honour of General Tadeusz Kosciuszko, a Polish patriot and freedom fighter. Strzelecki said the name occurred to him because he was "amongst a free people who appreciate freedom". The fact that our highest peak is named after a person who never came to, or had anything to do with Australia is a little strange. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zehqv0kfWZk>

The Kiandra gold rush and other mineral deposits

Gold fever hit the Kiandra area in 1860, and within 12 months a township of 10-15,000 miners developed. The easy won gold was short lived however, and the miners soon moved on seeking other gold deposits or locating or prospecting for other minerals. There remains significant evidence of the mining boom today at Kiandra in the form of water races, dams and other structures.

The Snowy Mountains Hydro-electric Scheme (SMHES)

In the expansionary period after World War 2, the SMHES was one of the enormous infrastructure projects undertaken by the Australian federal government to help develop our emerging country. Hydro-

electric power was to be generated from 7 power stations, and vast quantities of water stored in 16 dams and diverted inland through 145kms of tunnel for irrigation. It was a huge undertaking which made a significant impact on the snowy mountains area. To house workers whole townships were created although nothing remains of some of these today eg Happy Jacks Township, Sue City and Geehi Village.

The scheme is now over 50 years old, and it continues to supply electricity and water to inland Australia where a vast food basket based on irrigation water has developed.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TZ9ZKi7ibfU>

Many of the roads of the snowy mountains scheme provide today's access into this remote area, and the numerous dams are popular for recreational boating and fishing.

Eucumbene Dam

This is the largest of 16 dams in the Snowy Mountains Hydro-electric Scheme. Covering some 14,500 ha it holds 9 times Sydney Harbour when full. Its earth filled dam wall is 116m high and it is linked to other parts of the scheme by 70kms of 6m diameter tunnel. Today's township of Adaminaby was relocated, from its original location to where it stands today as waters rose in the newly completed dam.

National Park and Tourism

The Kosciuszko National Park was first formed in 1944 on the highest parts of the range, but significant areas were added to the Park in 1967 when vast tracts of Crown land were added. The villages of Thredbo and Perisher Valley attract significant tourism in both winter and summer months and are major bases for recreational use of the Park. Tourism has always been a major attraction of this park.

Huts of the Snowy Mountains

First grazing, then mining and now recreation in the mountains have over time created a network of huts in the mountains. Many have significant cultural heritage value and are preserved and maintained by both NPWS and volunteers to preserve the heritage and provide emergency shelter.

The National Trail passes a number of these huts, and some of them are recommended campsites. The following historic huts are encountered:

Oldfields Hut (C), Pedens Hut, Circuits Hut (C), Schofields Hut, Bradleys Hut, Major Clews Hut, Old Geehi Hut, Doctors Hut, Keebles Hut (C), and The Dogmans Hut. Every hut has its own story.

Major Clews Hut (Geehi Walls Trail)



Major HPG Clews was born in 1890 and came to Australia as a surveyor at the age of 21. He fought in two world wars for Australia and gained a fierce reputation for feats of endurance and hardship while carrying out survey work. He first retired at age sixty only to be asked by the SMHES to lead the survey work required for the immense network of dams and tunnels that was to be built. The Major retired on 11th February 1958, aged 67 years old to a forty-acre (16.2 ha) tree covered lease at Khancoban under the shadow of Kosciuszko. Clews built a small cottage -

two rooms of rammed earth pise; planted ornamental trees; cultivated prize geraniums, pelargonium's, dahlias and roses and encouraged tame birds and kangaroos to share his retreat. Eccentric but not reclusive, he knew Kipling almost by heart, loved Sibelius, read his "Illustrated London News" and quietly drank his Lowndes Rum and Schweppes Dry. He died in 1980.

Geehi Hut (Geehi Flats)

Geehi Flats were owned by the Nankervis family between the years 1929 and 1960. The 650 ha area of flat was a holding area for summer grazing of cattle in the higher altitudes. The Geehi Hut was built by Ken and Jim Nankervis in 1950 as a place to stay when checking on their cattle. In 1958 cattle were excluded from leases above 1350m and the movement of cattle into the high country in summer stopped. The value of Geehi Flats as a property was lost and it was transferred to Kosciuszko National park in 1960. The hut was destroyed by the 2003 fires and has been faithfully rebuilt by NPWS.



Tom Groggin

As is plainly obvious when you pass it on the Alpine Way Tom Groggin is a freehold cattle property on the Murray River surrounded by national park on all sides. This unique in-holding has been part of the snowy mountains culture for many years. Back in the 1890s an Irishman by the name of Jack Riley managed Tom Groggin Station. He had gained notoriety as a mountain rider, horse-breaker, bushman and tracker of wild horses and it is known that Banjo Patterson spent the night with him in his hut listening to stories of adventures in some of the roughest mountain country in Australia. Although Banjo's 'Man from Snowy River' was probably a fictional character it is likely he was inspired by the likes of Jack Riley. Many people like to think Jack was the Man from Snowy River, and the man has been given legend status by many. When Jack became gravely ill, he had to be taken on horseback at night from Tom Groggin to Corryong. This ride is undertaken every year in memory of Jack, during Corryong's Man from Snowy River Bush Festival.

