



It's a case of "brawn vs. beauty" with these two Victorian mountains. Mt Bogong is the state's highest peak while Mt Feathertop is one of the prettiest, and quite unlike the others in its sharp, rugged formation.

You could conquer both in separate, long day-hikes. Or you could spend a little more time and enjoy staying overnight in the presence of these two Victorian giants.

Getting there and away

Bogong and Feathertop are located in the Victorian *Alpine National Park*. This area is easily accessible and well-serviced by the towns of Bright and Mt Beauty. Bright is a 4-hour drive from Melbourne via Wangaratta or 10-hour drive from Adelaide via Swan Hill and Echuca. This presents opportunities to break up the trip from Adelaide with overnight rest stops along the Murray River.



This entire ridgeline is traversed on the Feathertop Summit walk.

Supplies & shops

Bright is best to stock up on groceries and fuel, or Mt Beauty (a couple of supermarkets and fuel stations). Top up supplies as required at Hotham (*The General* pub & store open year-round – (03) 5759 3523).

A good place to fill up water drums is at Hotham Village Central in the public service area. Myrtleford Shell service station has a good selection of maps.



Hikers walking up Razorback ridge.

Mt Feathertop

Map: Rooftop's *Mt Feathertop Forest Activities* 1:50,000 or Victorian *Mapsheet 8324-S* 1:50,000

Many people choose to visit Feathertop as a long day hike. Approximately 21km return, an undulating trail begins at Diamantina Hut west of Hotham Village and follows the aptly-named Razorback to the summit of Feathertop at 1,922m.

Park your car on the incredibly steep road alongside Diamantina Hut, fill out the visitor book at the trailhead shelter and off you go. If you had any doubts about whether you applied your vehicle's handbrake it's probably too late now anyway. Just enjoy the hike and deal with the carnage upon your return.

From the beginning of the trail, the entire length of the Razorback and summit of Feathertop can be observed before you walk it – an impressive and daunting sight. The ridgeline is quite exposed, with little shade or shelter, especially the last section past the Federation hut turnoff.

Weather can change quickly in the Alps, so be prepared with clothing (raincoat & sunhat) and sufficient water.



The view of the final saddle and summit of Mt Feathertop.



Overnighters near Feathertop

There are multiple options for overnight hikes incorporating an ascent of Feathertop. Bungalow Spur is a 10km climb from Harrierville to Federation Hut (~1,100m altitude). Another quality loop is as described along the Razorback to Feathertop, then a hard slog down Diamantina Spur (slippery if brush cutting has occurred recently) and through the valley of the West Kiewa River, camping overnight at Blair's Hut. The next morning, return to Hotham via Machinery Spur, or alternatively Swindlers Spur and picturesque Dibbins Hut.



There are plenty of wildflowers to discover in the Victorian high country.

Hut etiquette

As with all huts in the High Country, minimise impact and respect tradition by camping outside the huts. Keep them available for ill-weather and emergency accommodation. Some water is available at Federation and MUMC huts (not to be relied upon in summer), West Kiewa River, and several hard-to-find springs near Feathertop.



Sign near the base of Diamantina Spur, ahead is a painful ascent or joyous celebration if you're on the way down.

Mt Bogong

Bogong – Rooftop's *Bright Dartmouth Adventure Map* 1:100,000 or Victorian *Mapsheet* 8324-S 1:50,000

What Mt Bogong lacks in prettiness (its more of a giant mound than rugged peak like Feathertop), it makes up with incredible panoramic views and inspiring heritage. Access is via Mt Beauty, or drive up to Falls Creek and hike in from the southern side.



The final leg into Hotham via Swindlers spur.

The Bogong day hike is a not-to-be-sniffed-at 16-20km return trip, gaining ~1,300m of altitude along Staircase Spur from Mountain Creek Road, east of Mt Beauty. The trail ascends with switchbacks through forest and heath to Bivouac Hut. However, after passing the hut the route begins on a thigh-burningly direct path toward the 1,986m summit.

I've only ever come down this way, and unless pressed for time, I probably wouldn't bother with just the day hike when there are so many beautiful places to camp overnight on the southern side of Bogong. Eskdale or Granite Flat Spurs are alternatives for day hiking.



Alpine woods south of Bogong – the trees are still recovering from the 2003 bushfires.

Multi-day hiking around Mt Bogong

It's possible to explore many of the spurs and peaks to the southwest of Mt Bogong. Or you can link up with the *Australian Alps Walking Track* via Maddison's Hut ruins. A recommended two-night itinerary is a short (3hr) first day from Falls Creek to Ropers Hut. This has a

beautiful flat camping area underneath huge snow gums.

The following day, cross the valley of Big River to Cleve Cole Hut, visiting Howman Falls along the way. And on the final day, summit Bogong and walk out via Staircase Spur. This itinerary does require two cars and a 4-hour shuffle, so consider returning to Falls Creek via Quartz Ridge and Mt Arthur.



Freeze your giblets off swimming in Howman Falls, a half-hour trip from Cleve Cole Hut south of Bogong.

Preparation

Carry the usual gear as required for day walks or overnight hiking. A 60L rucksack should provide plenty of space if you're hiking with a partner/group and sharing a tent or stove. Water is *usually* available from soaks/streams in the mountains, even in the height of summer – treat it or don't bother at your discretion.

A couple of 1L drink bottles is enough for daily drinking if you camp overnight with access to a water source for cooking. Prepare for chilly nights and for changes in the weather as well.



The Green Tent brigade strikes again – Companion Pro Hiker 2 and my trusty Oztrail purchased from Snowys eight years ago – used on many hikes.

What to Eat

Hiking food is a divisive subject. Most hikers fall into two categories: gourmet MasterChef-style gastronomical pleasure, or just food = fuel! My rucksack is usually full of those five-minute pasta & sauce sachets, a 1kg box of Favourites, a few peanuts, muesli/milk powder and tuna tins. And, not forgetting plenty of tea and coffee.

Each to their own I suppose. But, I reckon as long as you don't always live on such an unbalanced diet, it helps create heaps of energy and sustenance for an enjoyable walk. Camping at Roper Hut one trip, I saw brie and crackers followed by a half leg of ham and bottle of wine emerge from one of the fellow's packs in our group. So, anything is possible if you don't mind carrying it in! For more on planning meals for your hiking adventures, check out this article here.



Descending Bogong via Staircase Spur – 1,300m of knee-tingling altitude.

Why it's worth doing

The Alpine National Park area around Mt Bogong and Mt Feathertop offers a myriad of options for exploring and bushwalking.

From well-beaten paths to cross-country bushwhacking, there is something for everyone if you want to experience the beauty and tranquillity of the Victoria High Country.

Is Victoria's highest peak an adventure you want to undertake?