

Dundas Tableland Precinct: Wannon Falls



The Wannon Falls were created by lava flows that surged upstream to the Wannon River. The water, which cascades over a 30-metre vertical precipice into a deep plunge pool below, is actually flowing over hardened basalt lava. Further downstream, rapids wind their way around large blocks of basalt, dislodged over time down the embankments of the narrow valley.

The history surrounding the Wannon and Nigretta Falls dates back to the 1850's when the small town of Redruth, renamed Wannon in 1908, was first settled. Planned around the Wannon Inn and a ferry for crossing the river, the community consisted of two schools, two hotels, a store and four sawmills located nearby. Over time, the Falls became a popular tourist attraction, attracting many visitors in the 1890s when excursion trains travelled from Hamilton.

The beauty of the falls has also attracted many influential artists over the years, with reasonable winter rainfall ensuring a torrent of water cascades down the volcanic rocky gorge. During the 1860s, the Western District had become a well established area and many artists came to capture images of the surrounding landscape on paper and canvas. Some of the more notable artists included Nicolas Chevalier, Eugene von Guerard, Thomas Clark and Swiss oil painter, Louis Buvelot. Renowned as 'the father of Australian Painting', Louis Buvelot pioneered 'plen air' (open air, or on location) impressionist painting and painted many scenes around Coleraine and the Wannon and Nigretta Falls during the 1880's.

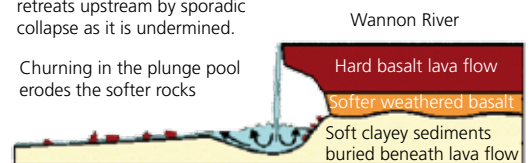
Geological Setting: The Wannon and Nigretta Falls occur within 10km of each other at the edge of the late Cainozoic Western Districts Volcanic Province. However, they are developed in quite different styles on rocks of different age and character. The oldest rocks are Devonian volcanics (rhyolitic ignimbrites) seen at the Nigretta Falls and the valley of the Wannon River thereabouts. Further south, in the valley bottoms we find poorly exposed, soft, Cretaceous stream and lake sediments and Tertiary marine sediments. The plateau surface along the highway east and west of the Wannon Falls is a late Tertiary lateritic soil developed on the Tertiary sediments. In the Grange Burn valley, west of Hamilton, there is a local area of Pliocene sediments which contains vertebrate fossils. These lie immediately below the basaltic lavas of the Pliocene to Pleistocene Western District Volcanic Province.



Wannon Falls

Vertical cliff of waterfall retreats upstream by sporadic collapse as it is undermined.

Churning in the plunge pool erodes the softer rocks



Original waterfall started several kilometres downstream, at edge of lava flow, a million or so years ago

How to get there?

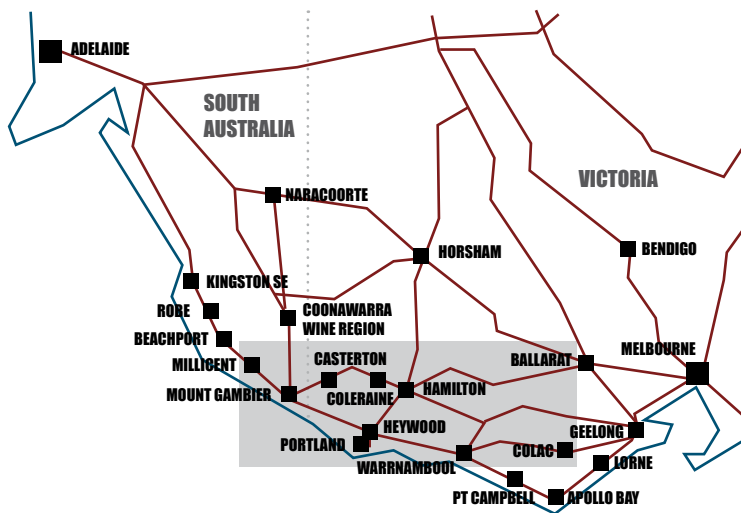
The turn-off to the falls is 19 kilometres west of Hamilton on the Glenelg Highway.

Nigretta and Wannon Falls are linked by a scenic road and best viewed between June and October.

Things to do:

- A cantilevered viewing platform at the Wannon Falls offers spectacular views. A nearby rotunda features interpretative signage for visitors, covering geology, flora and fauna, Aboriginal history and details of colonial artists who painted in the area.
- Camping facilities are available at the Wannon River.





Australia may be referred to as a relatively young nation, but the well-preserved ancient landscape provides many precious windows into the past. The Kanawinka Global Geopark can take you on an amazing journey through this landscape, enabling visitors to travel back in time over thousands and thousands of years.

The surface geology of South Western Victoria and South Eastern South Australia is a striking contrast of sweeping plains and spectacular mountains which are largely the product of volcanic activity. In fact, with six sites of international significance and 14 of national significance, this area is Australia's most extensive volcanic province.

The history of these geological masterpieces stretches back to the Tertiary and Quaternary eras, when great outpourings of volcanic material through vents took place. Lava flows spread evenly across the existing plains, followed valleys, flowed under water, and in some cases forced upwards into rough, stony hills called tumuli, or steeper scoria cones.

In total, the flows cover an area of some 23,000 square km, extending north to the hills beyond Ballarat, and reappearing in a small section of south-eastern South Australia. This area is known as the Newer Volcanics Province, and features nearly 400 individual eruption points, most of which occurred between 4.5 and 2 million years ago.

Many of the eruptions were witnessed by the indigenous peoples of the area who have inhabited this region for up to 45,000 years, and feature prominently in stories of the Dreamtime.

Aboriginal people also made use of the stones from the lava flow to construct channels linking the wetlands, weirs, fish-traps, wind breaks and stone huts, and excellent examples created by the Gunditjmarra people can be found around Western Victoria's Lake Condah region in particular.

Later, during the 1870s and 80s, European settlers utilised the volcanic stone cleared from the land to construct dry stone walls in order to grow crops and introduce stock. Many examples can be found surrounding Corangamite on the Dry Stone Walls Heritage Trail.

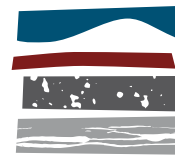
The region's spectacular and intriguing volcanic landscape also offers a range of other visitor experiences, from a 45-minute tour to the surface of Mount Gambier's Blue Lake, to the gruelling trek up Mount Schank and down to the crater floor.

In western Victoria, you can go on a chartered boat tour to Lady Julia Percy Island, which has the largest colony of Australian fur seals in the southern hemisphere. Or, take The Alan Marshall Walking Tour of Mount Noorat and the nearby township, or swim in the turquoise-coloured waters of Lake Surprise.

There are also plenty of picturesque picnic and camping spots just waiting to be discovered. Alternatively, you can take your time and spend the night in one of the numerous towns in the Kanawinka Global Geopark.

The Geopark is known as KANAWINKA GEOPARK, meaning Land of Tomorrow from the Buandik people. It is also the name of a geological fault line from Naracoorte Caves to Bass Strait at Portland and a Parish name west of Casterton about 1911 so all levels of the history, Geological, Indigenous and European are brought together in one name.

The Kanawinka Geopark was declared the 57th Member of the Global Network of National Geoparks assisted by UNESCO on June 22, 2008.



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Nelson

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Port Fairy

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South Australia

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Millicent Road
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Millicent

Mt Gambier Road
08 8733 0904

Mount Gambier

The Lady Nelson
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