

# The Lakes National Park



## Visitor Guide

The Lakes National Park is a peaceful bushland retreat in the Gippsland Lakes, fringed by Lake Victoria and Lake Reeve. Occupying 2,390 hectares of low lying woodland and coastal heath, it consists of Sperm Whale Head peninsula, Rotamah and Little Rotamah Islands

### Location and access

The Lakes National Park is in East Gippsland about 300 km east of Melbourne. The park is at the eastern end of Loch Sport, 63 km east of Sale. There is boat access from Paynesville.

### Welcome to Country

On Friday 22 October 2010 both the Federal and State Governments formally recognised the Gunaikurnai people as the Traditional Owners of over 20 per cent of public land within Gippsland and Eastern Victoria. The Victorian Government and the Gunaikurnai people formally signed Victoria's first settlement agreement under the new Traditional Owner Settlement Act 2010. This agreement involved the transfer of ten parks and reserves to the Gunaikurnai as "Aboriginal Title" which will be jointly managed in conjunction with Parks Victoria.

The Lakes National Park is one of the jointly managed parks within Gippsland. This agreement recognises the fact that the Gunaikurnai people have always been connected to their land and are the rightful people who speak for that Country. These parks and reserves are cultural landscapes which are part of our living culture.

### Things to see and do

#### Picnicking

The most popular of several picnic areas is at Point Wilson, the site of the original settler's homestead. There are gas barbeques at Point Wilson as well as wood fired barbeques (BYO wood), a day shelter, toilets, water and a jetty. Fires are prohibited at Dolomite Swamp, Netting Boundary, Trouser Point and Cherry Tree, however gas barbeques are permitted.

#### Camping

Camping is only permitted at Emu Bight, close to the shore of Lake Victoria. A communal shelter and toilets are provided. Campers are required to bring their own firewood and water supplies. Fires may only be lit in the fireplaces provided and are not permitted on individual campsites. Bookings are required.

### Plants and wildlife

Eucalypt and Banksia woodland are widespread in the sandy soils of the park. Areas of coastal heath are interspersed with swampy, salt marsh vegetation. During spring the park is at its best, with a spectacular show of wildflowers. Several rare plant species occur including Ribbed Thryptomene which, apart from this area, is found only in Tasmania and the York and Eyre Peninsulas in South Australia. More than 190 species of birds have been recorded in the park including the rare White Bellied Sea Eagle and the endangered Little Tern. You'll also see Eastern Grey Kangaroos, Black Wallabies, Echidnas and Wombats.

### From past to present

The Gippsland Lakes were once part of a large bay. Over thousands of years, sands deposited by the sea formed a number of barriers, including Sperm Whale Head, Little Rotamah Island, The Ninety Mile Beach and Rotamah Island. These barriers, now up to 38m high, enclose the waters that make the Gippsland Lakes.

Aborigines of the Kurnai nation were numerous at the time of European arrival. The abundant wildlife and mild climate provided an ideal area to inhabit. In 1840, explorer Angus McMillan reached the shores of Lake Victoria, and soon after, cattle runs were taken up and much of the area now covered by park was cleared for grazing.

In 1927, 1451 hectares on the Sperm Whale Head peninsula was reserved for the purposes of a national park, and proclaimed The Lakes National Park in 1956. Rotamah Island had a number of occupants until 1975 when it was bought by the Victorian Government. Rotamah Island and Little Rotamah Island were added to the park in 1978.



## For further information:

Parks Victoria  
Information Centre  
**Call 13 1963**  
or visit our website  
**www.parks.vic.gov.au**

Parks Victoria  
1 Lacey St (PO Box 1315)  
Sale VIC 3850

Wellington Visitor  
Information Centre  
8 Foster St (Princes Hwy)  
Sale VIC 3850  
Free call 1800 677 520

## Caring for the environment

Help look after this park by following these regulations:

Camping is restricted to educational groups on Rotamah Island

The Homestead & surrounding buildings on Rotamah Island are not open to the public. Visitors are asked to keep clear of the site. Please take rubbish away with you for recycling and disposal

Fires are not permitted on the Ninety Mile Beach

Fires are permitted only in fireplaces provided

Fires must be completely extinguished with water before leaving

Fires are not permitted on days of Total Fire Ban

This park spreads across 2 Total Fire Ban Districts- Sperm Whale Head peninsula is located in the West Gippsland Total Fire Ban District

Rotamah Island is located in the East Gippsland Total Fire Ban District

Please stay aware of fire and weather forecasts by listening to local radio including ABC

All native plants, animals & natural features are protected by law  
Dogs, cats and other pets are prohibited within the park

Firearms and generators are not permitted within the park

### Healthy Parks Healthy People

*Visiting a park can improve your health, mind, body and soul. So, with over four million hectares of parkland available to Victorians, why not escape to a park today!*



## Lake Reeve Nature Trail & Lookout Tower- 30mins return

Lake Reeve provides important feeding and roosting habitat for a number of waterfowl species, and is one of Victoria's most important areas for wading birds. The lake is a significant feature of the Gippsland Lakes system and is listed under the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance (RAMSAR). A short walk will lead you from the Lookout Tower car park down through a range of habitats to the shores of Lake Reeve. The numbers below denote the features along the nature trail.

### Early beginnings

Start your walk at the Lookout Tower providing views of the Ninety Mile Beach and Lake Reeve. If you were here a few million years ago you would have been at sea. Over five million years ago the land to the north was pushed up to form the Great Dividing Range. It was only during the last million years that the Gippsland Lakes came into being. The lakes were formed when the sea deposited sand, creating a barrier which enclosed the bay that once existed here.

### 1. Open woodland

Much of the vegetation in the Park is woodland of Shining Peppermints and Saw Banksia. The main shrub here is the rare Ribbed Thryptomene, found here and in South Australia's York and Eyre Peninsulas and in Tasmania.

### 2. Forests

This eucalypt is a Manna Gum featuring dark rough bark. This tree grows in more moist areas than the Shining Peppermint. The run-off water from the slope provides them with additional moisture. Manna Gum is one of the eucalypts which form the diet of koalas.

### 3. Wild Cherry tree

The Wild Cherry tree's fruit begins to form from December to May. From July through to November the stem above the fruit swells to become fleshy red berries.

### 4. A change of habitat

This paperbark scrub is different from the other habitats you have walked through. Less light is able to get through the Swamp Paperbarks' dense leaf canopy. Birds such as yellow robins, grey fantails and thornbills build their nests in the protection of the dense foliage.

### 5. The shoreline

Wander quietly to the edge of Lake Reeve and keep a look out for waterbirds. Black Swans, pelicans, grebes, ducks and cormorants are often seen feeding in these brackish waters. If you are lucky you may spot the rare White-bellied Sea-eagle as it hunts for prey. The vegetation along the shoreline is salt marsh, bordered by plants such as the succulent glasswort. Its cactus-like shape helps it store water and salts. The lake shore vegetation has adapted to regular flooding and saline conditions.

### 6. Grass tree

These are the remnants of an old Grass Tree that was very special. Grass trees are common throughout coastal areas, however this particular tree was the only evidence that grass trees once existed in this section of the park. Please do not touch.

### 7. Mystery tree

Look above you. This dead tree – otherwise known as a 'stag' – is covered in wounds. Each of the gnarled swellings in the branches is an attempt by the tree to block off a wound caused by either an insect or fungus. Even though the tree is dead, it still has an important role to play in this habitat. It provides home for many different animals – from possums through to insects.

### 8. Forest Red Gum

This tree is not only magnificent but is estimated to be over 300 years old. See how the tree has formed a thick bark over an old wound. This is done to prevent any fungus or insects from attacking the tree. One can only imagine what the park looked like when this tree was a seedling.

### 9. Banksias

There are two types of banksia trees here. In front of you is the tall Coast Banksia which has a plain leaf edge with a white underside. Next to it is the Saw Banksia. As its name suggests, its leaves have a saw tooth, or serrated edge. Banksia flowers are an important source of food for Honeyeaters and Pygmy Possums.

### 10. Sheoaks

This tree is the Drooping Sheoak. These unusual trees have extremely small green drooping leaves which are really stems. This is thought to be an adaptation to cope with dry coastal conditions. The stems have a thick outer coating (cuticle) which helps lessen the water loss through evaporation.

## Rotamah Island

Rotamah Island is a naturalist's bushland delight. Accessible only by boat, the island is surrounded by Lake Victoria and Lake Reeve to the north and the dunes of Ninety Mile Beach to the south. A number of walking tracks leave from the picnic area and jetty. Camping is available to educational groups, but must be booked in advance through the park office.

### Walking Tracks

**90 Mile Beach Walk (3.8km – 1.5 hours return)**  
From the jetty walk along the Causeway Track to the beach. Return via Fenceline Track and Lake Reeve Track.

**West End Walk (4.8km – 2 hours return)**

Starting at the jetty, follow the Causeway Track and West Track to the end of the island. Return via Melaleuca Track and Lake Reeve Track.

**Rotamah Loop (7.6km – 3 hours return)**

From the jetty and picnic area, follow East Track over the footbridge onto Little Rotamah Island. Return via Ocean Grange Track or the 90 Mile Beach to Causeway rack. Alternatively visit Ocean Grange by following the track down and back (additional 4.5km – 1.5 hour return)

**East End Walk (4.6km – 2 hours return)**

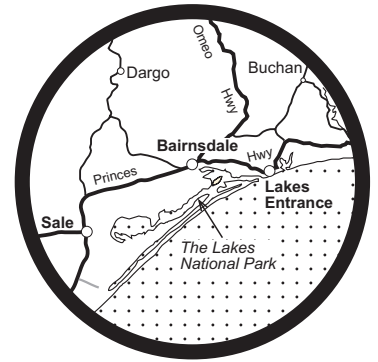
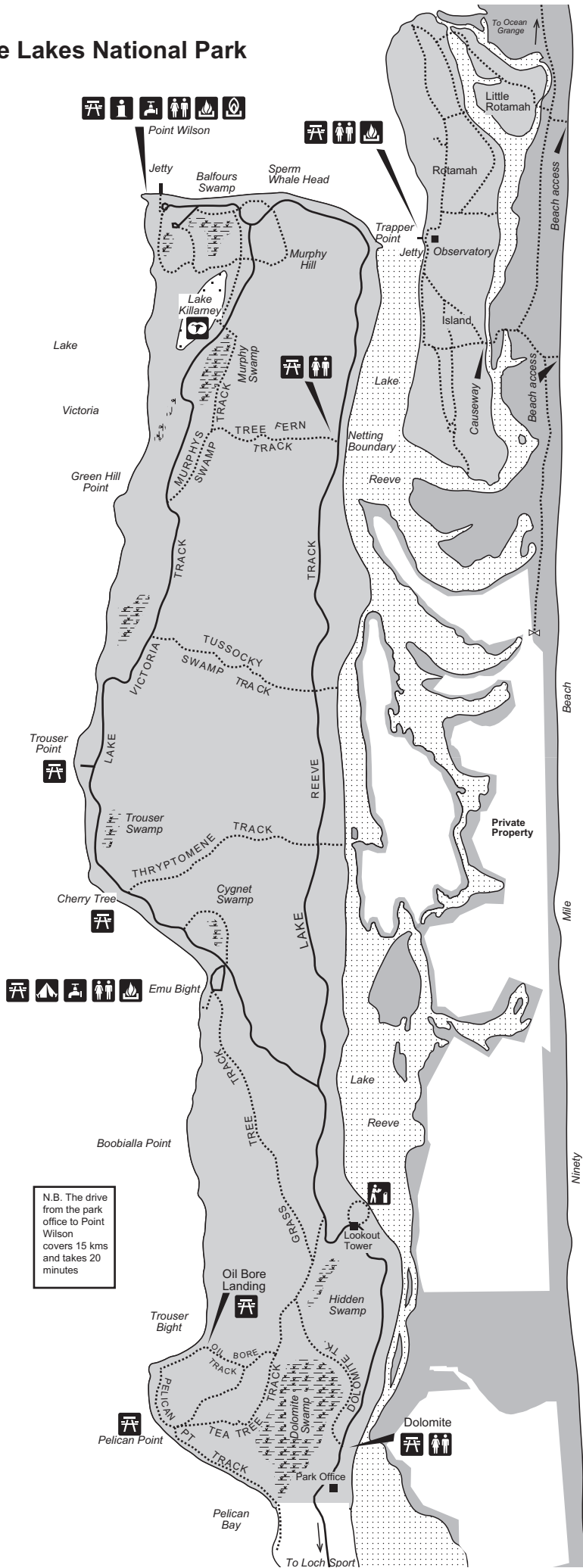
Follow East Track from the jetty and picnic area. This track offers some fantastic views before heading back along Forest Track

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# The Lakes National Park



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- Vehicle track
- ..... Walking track
- The Lakes National Park
- Gippsland Lakes Coastal Park
- ▨ Waters of Gippsland Lakes Coastal Park
- ..... Waterbody

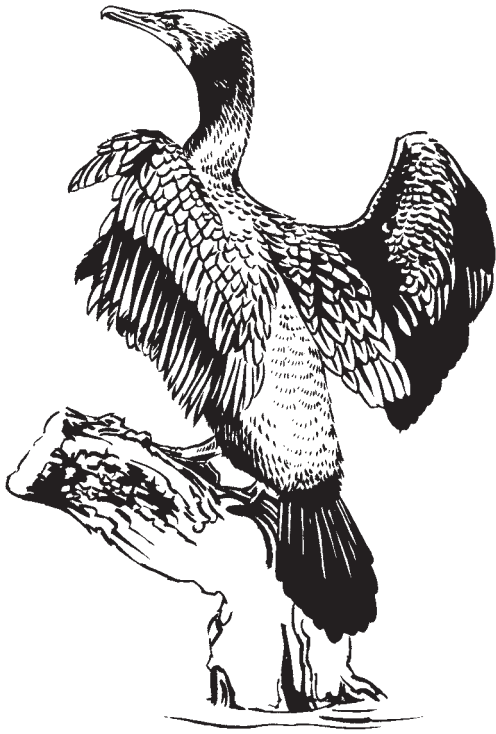
#### Recreational Facilities

- Information
- Water
- Camping
- Picnic area
- Toilets
- Self-guided walks
- Fireplace
- Gas barbecue
- Bird hide

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KILOMETRES

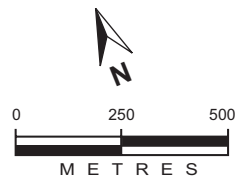
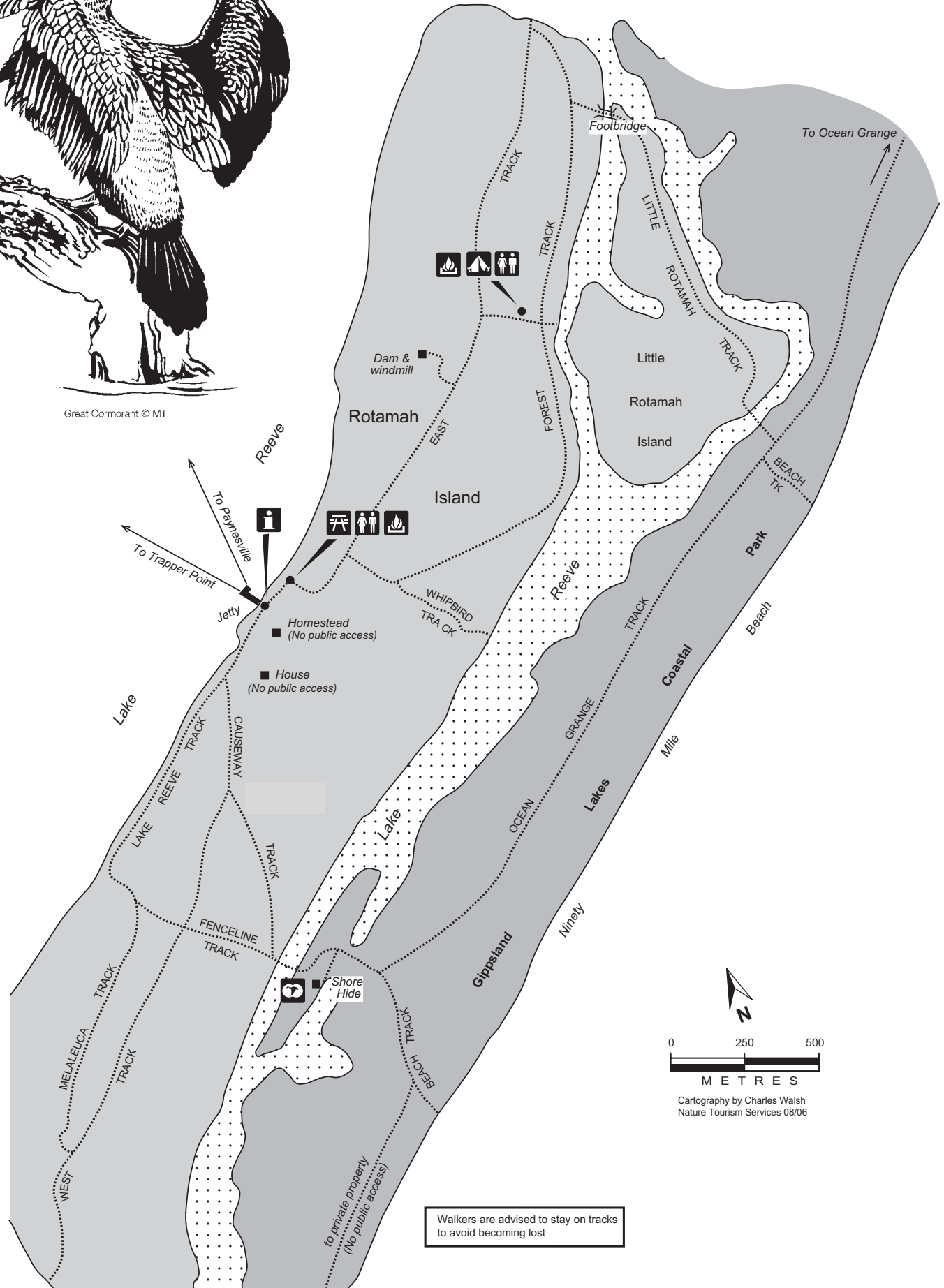
Cartography by Charles Walsh  
Nature Tourism Services 08/04

MELBOURNE



Great Cormorant © MT

### Rotamah Island Detail Inset



Cartography by Charles Walsh  
Nature Tourism Services 08/06

Walkers are advised to stay on tracks to avoid becoming lost