

Trip overview

Wangaratta 4x4 Club weekender: Wangaratta to the Bridle Track and Hill End, Saturday 6 to Monday 8 March 2027 (Victorian Labour Day long weekend).

- **Route:** Wangaratta → Wagga Wagga → Cowra → Bathurst → Bridle Track south end (via Duramana) → camp on the Macquarie River → Hill End → home via Sofala and Bathurst
- **Distance:** approx. 1,200 km round trip, about 50 km of it on the Bridle Track
- **Grading:** Easy to moderate in the dry — gravel touring with narrow shelf sections, minor water crossings and the Monaghans Bluff bypass. Stock high-clearance 4WD with all-terrains is fine; low range handy on the bypass and the Hill End climb
- **Camping:** One night bush camping riverside on the track (no facilities at most reserves)
- **Heads-up:** The track reopened through to Hill End in 2023 after the long Monaghans Bluff closure, and it is popular on long weekends — plan to claim camp early Saturday afternoon

Route and distances

All distances and times are approximate highway/gravel figures for a loaded convoy — confirm against your mapping before the pre-trip briefing.

Leg	Road	Distance (km)	Time (approx.)
Wangaratta → Wagga Wagga	Hume Fwy / Olympic Hwy	195	2 h 15 m
Wagga Wagga → Cootamundra → Young	Olympic Hwy	140	1 h 40 m
Young → Cowra	Olympic Hwy	70	50 m
Cowra → Bathurst	Mid-Western Hwy	105	1 h 15 m
Bathurst → Bridle Track start (via Duramana)	Duramana Rd / Bridle Track	30	40 m
Bridle Track → camp → Hill End	Bridle Track (gravel, slow)	50	2.5–3 h touring
Hill End → Sofala → Bathurst	Hill End Rd (sealed)	80	1 h 15 m
Bathurst → Wangaratta (return, reverse of above)	Mid-Western / Olympic / Hume	510	6 h

Roughly 6.5 hours Wangaratta to the track start on Saturday, so a 7:00 am departure puts the convoy on the gravel early-mid afternoon with time to settle into camp.

Fuel plan

Top up at **Wagga Wagga** (last cheap fuel before the hills) and fill to full at **Bathurst** before heading out to the track.

- There is **no fuel on the Bridle Track**, and fuel at Hill End is limited/unreliable — treat Bathurst as the last certain fill until you're back in Bathurst on Monday
- Budget for Bathurst → track → Hill End → Sofala → Bathurst: about 160 km, but allow extra for low-gear gravel work and side trips — vehicles should have at least half a tank leaving the track
- Diesel and 91/95 available at Wagga, Young, Cowra and Bathurst; anyone running long-range tanks or jerry cans should still fill at Bathurst so the convoy isn't waiting on a splash-and-dash

Day-by-day itinerary

Saturday 6 March — Wangaratta to camp on the Bridle Track

- 6:45 am muster, 7:00 am departure from Wangaratta
- Morning tea stop Wagga Wagga (fuel), lunch stop Cowra or Bathurst
- Fill tanks Bathurst, air down at the start of the gravel, radio check
- Onto the track via Duramana mid-afternoon; claim camp and set up by 4–5 pm
- **Camp options (in order along the track from the Bathurst end):** Bruinbun Reserve (large, grassy, good river access — best for a club-sized group), then Amy Anderson, Tattersalls Hole, Black Gate and Johnson Hole reserves further north. **Plan A: Bruinbun. Plan B (if full): push on to Black Gate or Johnson Hole.** No toilets, water or bins at most sites — fully self-sufficient, carry all rubbish out

Sunday 7 March — Bridle Track to Hill End

- Relaxed start, morning swim/fish on the Macquarie
- Tour the remainder of the track: river country, mining relics, Monaghans Bluff bypass, then the steep narrow climb up Hawkins Hill into Hill End
- Afternoon exploring Hill End historic village (museum, old workings, History Hill)
- Overnight Hill End: Village Campground or Glendora Campground (NPWS, toilets/showers — **book ahead**, long weekend)

Monday 8 March — Hill End to Wangaratta

- Depart 8:00 am via the sealed road through Sofala (worth a short stop) to Bathurst
- Air up and fuel Bathurst, lunch Cowra or Young, home to Wangaratta approx. 5–6 pm

Convoy procedure and UHF

Vehicle prep, recovery and track notes

Per vehicle (minimum):

- Rated front and rear recovery points, snatch strap + rated shackles (or soft shackles), gloves
- Tyre deflator and gauge; compressor (at least one per two vehicles), full-size spare, plug kit
- Basic tools, spare fluids, first-aid kit, fire extinguisher
- Water: 4–5 L per person per day minimum (river water is not drinking water), plus all food and rubbish bags

Convoy kit (spread across vehicles): recovery boards, winch on at least one vehicle, comprehensive first-aid kit, sat phone or PLB, chainsaw/handsaw for fallen timber

Track notes:

- Air down to ~26–28 psi at the start of the gravel; air up before the sealed run home
- Water crossings are normally shallow — walk anything questionable after rain, and if the Macquarie is up, don't push it; the sealed Sofala road is the wet-weather alternative to Hill End
- Narrow shelf sections north of the river flats: headlights on, call your position, no overtaking
- **Total fire ban rules apply** — early March can still be fire season; check NSW RFS ratings before departure and carry gas cookers as backup to campfires
- Check track status with **Bathurst Regional Council** the week before departure — the track can close after heavy rain

Pre-trip checklist

- Confirm trip leader, tail-end Charlie, first-aid officer and comms carrier
- Collect participant list: names, vehicles, rego, next-of-kin contacts, dietary/medical notes
- Book Hill End campground (Village or Glendora) for Sunday night — long weekend, book early
- Check Bridle Track status with Bathurst Regional Council in the week before departure
- Check NSW RFS fire danger ratings and any total fire bans for the Central Tablelands
- Check weather and river levels — wet-weather Plan B is Bathurst → Sofala → Hill End on the sealed road
- Circulate this trip sheet and confirm the 6:45 am Saturday muster point
- Vehicle checks completed by all participants (tyres, fluids, recovery points, spares)

Useful contacts: Bathurst Regional Council (track status) 02 6333 6111 · Hill End NPWS office 02 6337 8206 · NSW RFS fire info 1800 679 737