



Healthy Parks
Healthy People



The Original Custodians of the Land

There is evidence that Aboriginal people have lived in the Canberra region for at least 21,000 years.

In past times the ACT was a meeting place for people of different language groups including the Ngunnawal, Ngarigo and Wolgalu. Here they gathered to hunt and feast on Bogong Moths as well as other native plants and animals.

Aboriginal Sites of the ACT

The ACT has numerous Aboriginal heritage places called 'sites' which are of high regional significance. Together they indicate the extensive occupation of this area by Aboriginal people. Many sites are located in Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve and Namadgi National Park.

Aboriginal Rock Shelters

Some sites occur within naturally formed hollows or overhangs in cliffs and outcrops of boulders, providing sheltered environments that were sometimes used for habitation or other activities by Aboriginal people. Evidence of their use by people is often provided through the presence of art on the shelter walls, and occupation debris such as stone artefacts, grinding material, charcoal, bone and other refuse on the shelter floor. In the ACT, they often occur in granite outcrops in Namadgi National Park and Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve. Two rock shelters are described below.

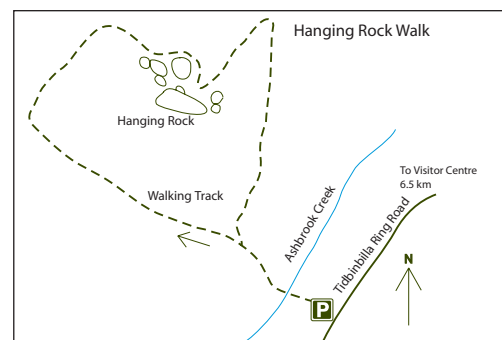
Hanging Rock at Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve

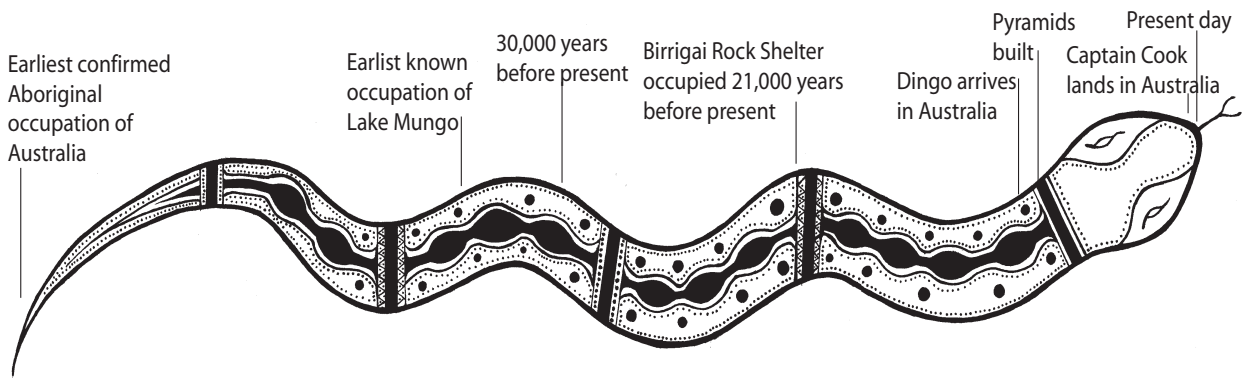
On the forested slopes of the Tidbinbilla Valley, lies a large impressive undercut boulder known as Hanging Rock. Over 400 years ago, small family groups and male hunting parties of Aboriginal people regularly camped beneath Hanging Rock. They were on their way to the mountain tops to gather Bogong Moths which flocked to the area in summer. Hanging Rock provides shelter from three directions, thus providing protection from wind, rain and heat all year round.

The surrounding forest also yielded food such as Yam Daisy roots, wallabies and possums. Hanging Rock also has the advantage of being close to fresh running water. With ample food and water nearby, the Ngunnawal/Ngambri, Ngarigo and Wolgalu people were able to congregate in large numbers over the warmer months, allowing celebrations, trade and intermarriage to occur.

Hanging Rock Walk 500 m 20 mins Easy

A short walk along the creek then up through eucalypt forest brings you to magnificent granite tors.





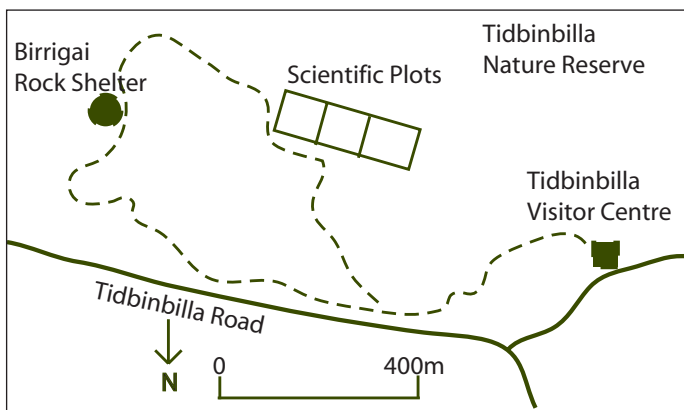
Birrigai Rock Shelter at Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve

Birrigai Rock Shelter provides strong evidence, both scientifically and culturally, for continuous human occupation of the Southern Highlands areas of Australia from the Late Pleistocene age. This evidence was provided through radiocarbon dating of charcoal recovered from archaeological excavations at Birrigai Rock shelter. It also demonstrates that the people successfully adapted their cultural practices in accordance with the changing climate and environment. Occupied over 21,000 years ago, Birrigai Rock shelter is the oldest known Aboriginal site in the ACT. It is therefore an extremely important site for the study of archaeology in Australia. The ACT Aboriginal Community has identified Birrigai as a physical link that demonstrates the long associations Aboriginal people have had with the land and the highland environments of the ACT region.

These and other shelters in the ACT and region provide evidence of an Aboriginal lifestyle no longer practiced in south-eastern Australia. They are an irreplaceable part of our cultural heritage.

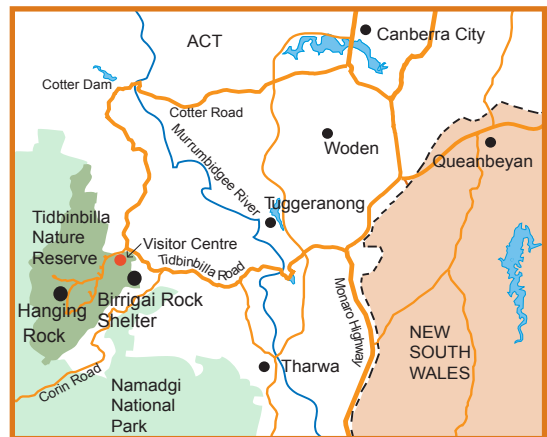
Birrigai Walk 3 km 1 Hour Easy

Birrigai Rock Shelter can be accessed via the Birrigai Time Trail self guide walk which starts from the Tidbinbilla Visitor Centre. The walk is approx 3 km and takes one hour. Interpretive signs along the track tell of Indigenous connections to this area and also early pioneer life in the Tidbinbilla valley.



Guided activity at Birrigai Rock Shelter

Rock Shelters in the ACT



Canberra Tracks

For more insights into Aboriginal and European cultural history in the ACT, take the self drive *Ngunnawal Track*, the *Limestone Plains Track* or *Looking at Canberra Track* starting at Mt Ainslie. Information is available from the Canberra Visitor Centre and the TAMS website.



Further Information

Canberra Connect: 13 22 81
 Website: www.tams.act.gov.au
 Produced by Parks, Conservation and Lands (PCL), Department of Territory and Municipal Services.
 PCL Vision Statement: *Integrated land management conserves biodiversity and supports an enjoyable, healthy and sustainable lifestyle.*