

Panning & Prospecting Quick-Start Guide

Your first day in the Victorian goldfields

This short guide walks you from an empty pan to your first flakes of colour in the vial. It's written for the goldfields of central Victoria, so the rules and the ground are the ones you'll actually be standing on. Read it once before you go, and keep it on your phone for the creek bank.

What's in your kit

Depending on which kit you bought, you'll have one or two **gold pans**, a **classifier / sieve**, a **snuffer bottle** and **sample vials**, and in some kits a **10x jeweller's loupe**. Every one of these has a job below.

1. Before you go: your Miner's Right and where you can dig

In Victoria you must hold a current **Miner's Right** and carry it whenever you prospect. It's issued by Resources Victoria (Earth Resources), you buy it online in a few minutes, it's inexpensive, and it's valid for either 2 or 10 years. Children under 18 are covered by an accompanying adult who holds one, so a family only needs one between them.

Where a Miner's Right lets you prospect:

- Most State forests and unreserved Crown land.
- The **designated prospecting areas** inside certain parks — near Kilmore that includes Heathcote-Graytown National Park, with Castlemaine Diggings, Greater Bendigo, Kooyoorra and Paddys Ranges further out.
- Private land — but only with the landholder's permission first.

Where you must not:

- Parks outside their designated areas, Reference Areas, and any Aboriginal cultural heritage or historic sites.
- Anywhere you'd damage the ground: use hand tools and a detector only, and backfill every hole before you leave.

Designated areas do change — always confirm the current rules and boundaries on the official Resources Victoria and Parks Victoria maps before you head out. When in doubt, don't dig.

2. How to pan for gold

Gold is heavy — far heavier than the sand and gravel around it. Panning is simply washing away everything lighter until only the heavy material, and any gold, is left in the bottom of the pan. Work in the creek or a tub of water.

- 1 Classify first.** Sit your classifier/sieve on the pan and scoop dirt into it. Shake so the fine material falls through and toss the big stones (check them for nuggets first).
- 2 Fill and submerge.** Fill the pan about two-thirds, lower it under water and knead any clay apart with your fingers until the mud clouds away.
- 3 Shake to settle.** Hold the pan level and shake side to side. This lets the gold, the heaviest thing in the pan, work its way down to the bottom.
- 4 Tilt and wash.** Tilt the pan slightly away from you and dip it so a little water washes the top, lighter layer over the lip. Level, shake, and repeat.
- 5 Down to the black sand.** Keep going and you'll reach a heavy dark concentrate of black sand. Gold sits with it or just under it.
- 6 Read the tail.** With a little water left, swirl gently — the black sand fans out in a 'tail' and bright gold shows at its head.

Go slow and lose a little dirt at a time. Fine gold is easy to wash straight over the lip if you rush.

3. Securing your gold

- **Snuffer bottle:** squeeze the air out, touch the tip to a flake and release — it sucks the gold and a little water straight up. The safest way to lift fine colour.
- **Sample vials:** squirt what the snuffer collects into a vial to carry home. A drop of water keeps fine gold from floating out when you open it.
- **Jeweller's loupe (if your kit has one):** a 10x look tells real gold (soft, bright, stays golden in shade) from mica or 'fool's gold' (glittery, brittle, dark when turned).

4. A good day out: safety & leaving no trace

- Check fire restrictions. On Total Fire Ban and Code Red days the goldfields parks close — summer is the season to stay home and plan.
- Tell someone where you're going, take water and sun cover, and watch for snakes — gaiters are cheap insurance in long grass.
- Fill every hole, take your rubbish, and leave the creek the way you found it. Good detectorists are why these areas stay open to us.

General guidance only, and not legal advice — always follow the current Victorian regulations and the official park maps. Questions about your kit? Get in touch with the Deep Lead Supply Co. team.