

Bushwalk Australia

A full-page landscape photograph showing a mountain peak with a sea of clouds. In the foreground, there are jagged, vertical rock formations. The sky is a mix of blue and orange, suggesting dawn or dusk. The overall scene is serene and majestic.

Going the Distance

Volume 34, April 2019

Bushwalk Australia Magazine
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Volume 34, April 2019

**We acknowledge the
Traditional Owners of this
vast land which we explore.
We pay our respects to their
Elders, past and present,
and thank them for their
stewardship of this great
south land.**

Cover picture



Sunrise from the
top of Ossa
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We would love you to be part
of the magazine, here is how to
contribute - [Writer's Guide](#).

The copy deadline for the
December 2017 edition is
31 October 2017.

Warning

Like all outdoor pursuits, the
activities described in this
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Undertaking them may result in
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Please consider joining a walking
club or undertaking formal training
in other ways to ensure you are
well prepared for any activities you
are planning. Please report any
errors or omissions to the editor or
in the forum at BWA eMag.

6

Mount Wills to
Mount Bogong
[AAWT Completed](#)

12

Torres del Paine, Chile
[An inspiration to visit Patagonia](#)

18

Tassie Winter Trip, Part 2
[The Needles and Mount Sprent](#)

24

Hume & Hovell Walking Track
[It's worth the effort](#)

32

Photo Gallery

[Amazing nature captured](#)

50

Walk of Wonders

[Hiking the Bibbulmun Track with a cause](#)

54

Wollemi National Park: Day Walks from Newnes - Part 1

[Book review](#)

56

Invasive Species Fuelling Bushfires

[Buffel grass at its worst](#)

60

Energy Needs

[How to climb that hill](#)

From the Editor

Hi

I hope this edition of Bushwalk Australia finds you well.

There is something about long distance walks. My first bushwalk was three days, my second was four days. As a teenager, I was chunked into the deep end and I loved it.

I find it takes my brain a few days to get into the zone, so by day two or three, I am into a good rhythm. Longer trips give you a chance to really get to know the area, start getting a feel for the rhythm of the weather, get to know other walkers on the track and feel at home in your pack. Long trips require more preparation, more organisation and more food but that is part of the adventure.

In this edition we explore a bunch of longer journeys looking at different environments and walking contexts. I have found it a great joy and have learned a lot by seeing inside the lives of these authors as they set out and undertake on their big adventures. I trust you will find this edition helpful and inspiring.

Happy walking
Matt :)

Matt McClelland (aka Wildwalks)
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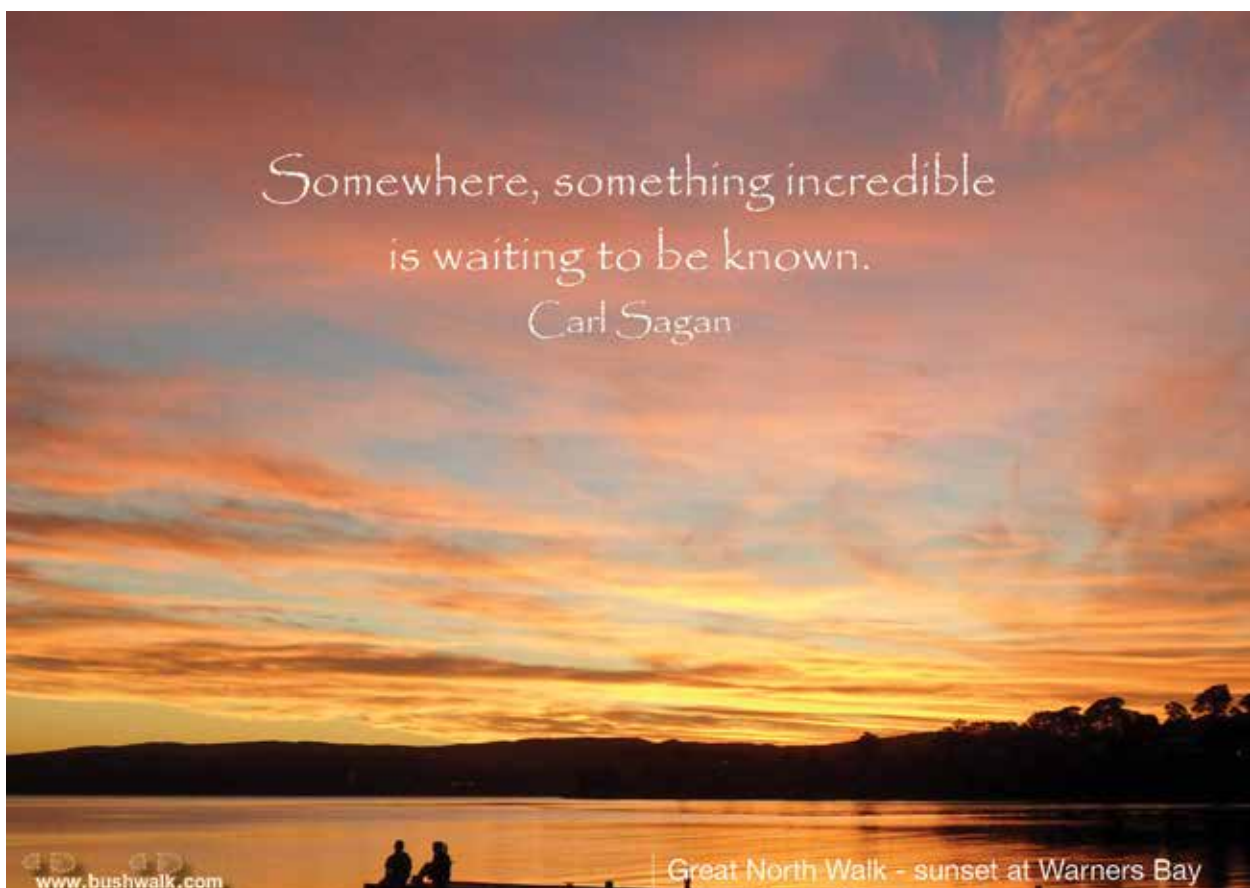
Declaration

The bushwalking community is a small world and paths often cross. To improve transparency I thought it would be helpful to list my associations within the outdoor community. In many cases I approached the authors of the articles included in this edition and suggested the topics. The opinions stated in articles are those of the authors and not of those involved in the production of this edition. The authors are mostly people I know through Bushwalk.com. I operate Bushwalk.com and Wildwalks.com and have written several walking guide books, published by Woodslane, I have also written for Great Walks. I contract part time to National Parks Association NSW on an ongoing basis to coordinate their activities program. I have had a partnership with NPWS NSW and have hosted advertising for *Wild* magazine. I have also partnered with a large number of other organisations in environmental campaigns and have a regular bushwalking segment on ABC regional radio. There is some commercial advertising through the magazine. I have probably forgotten something - if you are worried about transparency please either write to me or raise the issue on Bushwalk.com.

Video

Leave No Trace skills series: Stop the spread of invasive species

Cleaning your gear after each activity is an important step in preventing the spread of invasive species. Check out [this video](#) on easy common practices used to manage invasive species.



Mount Wills to Mount Bogong

AAWT Completed

Stephen Lake



The year before this trip I'd walked from Tharwa to Thredbo, finishing in cold disarray as quite bad weather hit the Main Range for three days. This year was Thredbo to Mount Bogong and Mountain Creek. The following describes the two days before the last day, when I descended Staircase. The report starts at Mount Wills.

Bogong camp with Mount Wills on the left skyline
All pictures by Stephen Lake

Mount Wills to Cleve Cole Hut

Overnight the weather had deteriorated slightly. Foggy, no view, windy, light rain a bit stronger, cool. The joy of putting on wet socks!



Mount Wills Hut drying

In January 1974 I led the first walk on the Alpine Walking Track. The 1974 AWT started at in Victoria at Tom Groggin, west of Thredbo, and then went to Mount Wills. When the Dartmouth Dam was built a portion of the AWT was flooded, so a new route was found, the one I had just walked, from Cowombat Flat. The AWT was later extended north to Canberra to become the Australian Alps Walking Track. The 1974 AWT approached Mount Wills from the north, turning west a short way before the summit of Mount Wills to go to Big River Saddle and then climb Mount Bogong. I was on Mount Wills going north to meet the 1974 AWT route.

“ At this point I had now walked all the AAWT ...

It wasn't much, just a marker on the 4WD track showing a foot track west to Big River Saddle. But I had been here before, just once, on or about 8 January 1974. At this point I had now walked all the AAWT, albeit some parts when the AAWT was called the AWT. I thought of the people who were with me on the AWT, Frank, Ray, Terry and Tim. This was nearly 43 years ago, a lifetime of bushwalking.

Onward and downward. The bushwalking Olympic motto was very true: Slower, Lower, Wetter. The foot track was steep and

slippery, unsuited for racing, and it took an hour to squelch 2.5 kilometres down to Big River Saddle. Water and fuel were ingested then I slogged up Big River Road.

Up, up, up. Try to set a good pace, thwarted by too many logs. Rest every now and again. This Long Spur is well named! More logs.

The end of the 4WD track was reached at 11.45am, and the fun began. For about five slow energy-sapping kilometres from the sign the foot track varied between acceptable and horrible. The latter was chest-high scrub, unable to see the track, which I had to feel with my boots. Trees across the track required time to cast around for where it went. Much energy was spent pushing scrub, and more time was needed as I went slower. This is the bottom line in funding cuts to Parks Victoria, with what should be the best long-distance alpine walk in Australia barricaded with logs and scrub. NSW and ACT maintain the AAWT brilliantly.

Then the weather really broke. In 50 years of bushwalking I could not recall such a heavy continual burst of rain while I was walking. The track had 30-100 mm depth of water rushing down. There was no shelter, no Mount Wills rocks to hide under. So I pushed on and on. The guide book said good views. I had none. There are no photos for this section - too wet. Like yesterday walking to the Mount Wills Hut I was in clouds, a cotton wool cocoon that softly shrouded me, denying me the hard-earned views that I was looking forward to but never saw. Ah well, I can return in 43 years. I'll be 106.

While it was up like a stairway to heaven, the continual climbing was closer to hell, a wet, cold, cloudy hell. I thought of *No Name City* from *Paint your wagon*.

Will you go to heaven?
Will you go to hell?
Go to hell!
Either repent, or fare thee well.
Fare the well!
God will take care of No Name City.
Comes the end, and it won't be pretty.
Here it is!
I mean, here it is!

And it was, too.

Finally, after many soul-destroying false summits, I reached the top of Bossiaea Hill and my heart rejoiced. I know this place! Down to the main pole line, flatness to Camp Creek, then up for 1.5 kilometres to Cleve Cole Hut. Can do! The rain stopped, as if to say we have not killed you, nearly there, we'll let you go - this time. As envisaged, Camp Creek was in spate, and I had to carefully negotiate a crossing.

Then the last stretch, a rocky if aquatic track up to Cleve Cole Hut. By this stage I was very low on energy. For more than an hour the jacket pocket with all my nibbles for today had a snagged zip, and it was too wet to take the pack off and delve for food. So now, close to the hut, I pushed on, regardless of the draining energy caused by climbing, distance, scrub, time, cold, lack of food and age-related decrepitude. Plod on, stopping at every snow pole or less. I reached the hut at 3.45pm, wrecked beyond belief. Too many hours of cold wet scrub and torrential rain. One walker at Mount Wills Hut described it as being in a car wash with no car.

I went in, took off my pack and knelt on the pack, unable to stand for a minute or two. This was very close! Too close. I later found out that the day before, Melbourne had wild weather, a one in 100 year storm, and the weather had moved east to make me suffer. A mate from near Glen Wills Retreat said that the rain gauges had about 100 mm of rain. Most of this went down my neck. This was one of the hardest days I've ever walked, a fair step and climb in often appalling conditions on a track that was hard to follow at times, no food for the last 90 minutes.

By the time that the weather cleared that evening I was too settled in the hut to move. It was a fine windy night, my tent was dry, and I could have camped. However, inertia ruled. Dinner, a cup of tea with the much-delayed choccy cake, and hide in the sleeping bag. Out like a light.

Half rest day at Cleve Cole Hut, Mount Bogong summit

After the drenching going up Mount Wills and the pounding I took yesterday it was good to have a fine day. Gear was hung out to dry in the warm breeze and sun that graced



Camp Creek in flood

the hut. The morning passed in a slow sloth of doing not much. A few people came by. I finished eating the cake I made the night before. Yum!

There was a log book entry, two people I knew 40 years earlier, Gordon and Terry, who had climbed Mount Cook the day before me. They left Cleve Cole Hut yesterday and descended Long Spur. We missed each other near Big Saddle in the murk. Bother. I would have loved to meet them again. We've since exchanged pictures and we have all got older. I doubt very much if we would have recognised each other at Big Saddle.

“There was a log book entry, two people I knew 40 years earlier ...

The log book had a number of interesting entries, like “Team smelly”. “Janice I'm 10 years old and this is the first time in this hut.” In November 2016 a party went from the Bogong High Plains then up and over the west ridges of Bogong. “Lots of dead fall on lower slopes of Quartz Ridge after crossing Big River. Although not a significant obstacle, the repeated over-and-unders are an embugarance.” This is my new favourite word.

After lunch I left for the summit, a short stroll, three kilometres and 200 metres of easy climbing on the highest ridge in Victoria, with wide open slopes, gentle and steep, descending to the depths of the valleys over a kilometre below. The views were spectacular. To the north-east was Jagungal, about 120 kilometres distant, quite distinctive, even in the haze. The bumps to the right of the big jagged one must be the Main Range, above Thredbo, with Kosciuszko just another bump, indistinguishable. Pilot and Cobberas were a tad hard to spot, but I knew where they were. The Bogong High Plains were due south, with the Nelses closest, bare tops very obvious at 1880 metres. Feathertop was 25 kilometres south-west, standing tall and aloof, 1922 metres. West was Mount Buffalo, a very prominent mountain. Jagungal can be seen from about 200 kilometres of the AAWT, a much better bushwalking and ski touring mountain than many.

The signs used to have character, but have now been reduced to a common form. See the two Hells Gap signs from May 1980 and the current trip.



At the summit the sun was shining, the air was warm, the wind was pleasant, my proposed campsite was vacant, and I had a heap of water. I met a few walkers from Cleve Cole Hut, including volunteer rangers Michael and David who were keeping a tally of visitors and noting parts of tracks that needed attention. A large bird was riding the thermal surf, nearly motionless, soaring on invisible swirls of cascading air with ease, an enviable freedom to swoop deeply and rise into the clear blue sky. A song came to mind, *Wings of an eagle*.

“The signs used to have character ...

On the wings of an eagle I find myself lifted
through the skies,
Lifted up above the world to sing.
On the wings of an eagle I find myself lifted
through the skies,
Lifted up above the world to see,
Can you see me? Can you see me?

About 30 metres distant and 18 metres altitude from the summit, hopefully sheltered tonight, a series of hollows reside, just flat enough for camping. Sort out the kit, eat dinner, lie back and think about the last year, the last few weeks since Thredbo. A year ago on this evening I was on Gungartan. I thought of the people that had helped me, like NSW Trainlink, Michelle and Gordy. This was one of my toughest trips. Pilot scrub, heat and low water. Sundry portions of tracks that were not at all obvious. Long hard days, much distance and climbing. Hailed on twice, dreadful weather in a number of places, especially Long Spur. Relaxing at Glen Wills Retreat with Gordy for two nights, bliss. Mount Wills and Cleve Cole Huts that provided much-needed shelter after adverse weather. Happiness at being able to manage hard days at an age when many do far less. Any assertion that I'm barking mad is false. It's more of a growl.

As the light faded on the last day of the year I walked to the summit. Two people I met there earlier, Dean and Justin, were camped nearby and joined me as the year ended. We watched the Bogong Moths fly to their home in the summit cairn. Like them we were getting high on mountains. The setting sun threw a large shadow of Bogong to the east.

Two lights twinkled, probably the top of ski lifts at Falls Creek. Apart from that the hills were dark, not a glimmer to be seen. There were people at Cleve Cole and on the Bogong High Plains, but there was no sign of them. The Kiewa Valley lights were hidden by the whale back of Bogong's ridges. We were alone on the top of Victoria as the sun farewelled 2016. Millions saw fireworks this

night at thousands of places; I did not envy them. Three people saw the sun set from Mount Bogong. It was a privilege to be here. I first overnighted on the summit 44 years ago, within a week of tonight.

The Carpenters' [Top of the world](#) was apt.

I'm on the top of the world lookin' down on
creation
And the only explanation I can find,
Is the love that I've found ever since you've
been around.
Your love's put me at the top of the world.

This is not about a person and me. It's about the mountains and me. So much happiness, so many wonderful people sharing these times, people I walked, skied and climbed with or just met on the track or in camp, people to trust with your life, occasional hard or bad times. Some who died in the mountains, or just died: TH, VG, CJ, MC, FM, WM, others. Some I will never forget.

I thought of Cilla Black's [You're my world](#) that describes the mountains and me:

You're my world, you are my night and day.
You're my world, you're every prayer I pray.
If our love ceases to be,
Then it's the end of my world, end of my
world,
End of my world for me.

After all the trials getting here, it was good to see the year out on top of the world in Victoria in fine weather, cool fresh air softly blowing, stars shining increasingly brighter as darkness gently embraced the mountains and my small insignificant home.





Mount Bogong in snow
Chopper

Torres del Paine, Chile

Alexander Willows



I think that seeing a picture of Parque Nacional Torres del Paine must be the inspiration for at least half of the visits to Patagonia. Well, at least it seems like it must be when you're walking the W anyway!

Las Torres del Paine
All pictures by the author

Overall our Torres del Paine experience was great. It's deservedly popular, and a beautiful place. Once again, we were pretty lucky with the weather. Sure, we had to put up with crowds of people who had never walked before, had no idea what they were doing and were sometimes rude, but hey, that's just part of the fun! You can definitely do some great people watching here. It can be a bit of a pain to organise, needing to be booked well in advance (or pleading in the offices once arrived in Puerto Natales, as we did), but worth it in the end.

Instead of the W, which walks along what is called the "front" (or southern) side of the park, either from east to west or vice versa and forms a wobbly W when including visits to side valleys, we elected to do the Q, which is a wobbly circle with a little tail.

“... 17 kilometres ... with some fantastic views of the entire Torres del Paine massif, and passing some exquisite turquoise lakes.

Unfortunately for us, the little tail (the walk from Administracion to Paine Grande, and our first day of walking) is actually one way only during season, and not the way we wanted. Unfortunately for the national park,



Keeping out of the wind at Paine Grande

this was not really very well advertised, and we only realised five minutes before we got off the bus at Administracion ... So we ended up walking it anyway! This is probably not the most responsible thing to do, but I don't think it's a big deal. And it really was a very beautiful walk – 17 kilometres or so of mostly flat walking with some fantastic views of the entire Torres del Paine massif, and passing some exquisite turquoise lakes. It took us just on the recommended five hours, but I was quite unwell at the time. Apparently walking in South America doesn't agree with me, and I have had a few boils on my back while here. I promise I do shower sometimes! I also promise it hurts like hell when you're



Beautiful turquoise Lago Pehoe with the massif behind

wearing a pack with seven night's worth of stuff in it. Thankfully it would clear up quickly under the tender ministrations of my girlfriend (read: not tender at all).

Campamento Frances and Central

Our second day had us travelling from Paine Grande to Campamento Frances, with a planned sidetrip to Valle Frances (French Valley) to check out the glaciers and views. Unfortunately, the weather wasn't interested, and the valley was closed above the first mirador (lookout). We figured we might as well head up to the first mirador anyway, which from what we understood from the sign, was supposed to take us 1.5 hours. Through a combination of unfortunate events (personally, I mostly blame the annoying British girls who were literally sitting on the mirador sign) we managed to completely miss that we had arrived at the first mirador, and kept on wandering past it. In the driving wind and rain and cold. Until we had walked for 1.5 hours, checked the phone and realised we were a long way past the first mirador ... Oops! It all seemed pretty obvious

“... and kept on wandering past it. In the driving wind and rain and cold.

on the way back down, and we felt pretty dumb! Apart from the British girls, I think the other thing that put us off was that it only took us 45 minutes to get to the mirador - unsure whether we just misread the times or were feeling particularly vigorous that day. Oh well! There are no photos from this day, as the weather was crap. We had a wet night on the platforms at Frances, and a rodent of some form ate a hole in my raincoat. All in all, great day!



The sheer faces of Los Cuernos



Creek crossing above Lago Paine

The next day was Frances to Central via Los Cuernos. It was a bit of an uncomfortable start – camping at Frances is on a moderately steep hillside on platforms, with most people using rocks to help get their tents up. Unfortunately, the German couple camped above us apparently hadn't really thought about what might happen when they were kicking the rocks from their platform while taking down their tent. Like that they might roll straight down the hill and hit our tent (which they did). A Welsh acquaintance we had made in Puerto Natales was very impressed that my partner actually told them off. Apparently, that's not the British way. Not sure whether it really got through, but who knows, maybe they'll think a little harder next time.

As bad as yesterday's weather had been, today's was just as good. Occasional clouds, plenty of sun, significantly less wind and a much happier pair of walkers. It's hard with a walk like this where you have to plan everything so rigidly in advance, as well as feeling the pressure to see certain famous views, so it's easy to resent any impediments like the weather. Or all the god-damn people!

Seriously, so many people. We had lots of day walkers, which can make for some interesting track meetings, especially when most people don't seem to understand the idea of allowing faster walkers to pass. But, as easy as it is to resent these things, it's just as pointless. So in the end, we just got on with the business of enjoying ourselves, made immensely easier by huge granite walls and spires, all to the echoing crashes of repeated small icefalls in Valle Frances. We pitched up at the Central campsite and wandered around for a little while, then hit the hay pretty quickly, ready for an early start the following day.

An early start

A slow, reluctant emergence from the tent saw us heading off at around 5.15am, headtorches on and ready for some altitude gain! We motored on up, past Campamento Chileno and its overpriced offerings, through beautiful forests, across (and sometimes in) numerous creeks and arrived at Laguna Los Torres at around 7.45am, just as the alpenglow hit. Chuffed with our timing, it was time to get the camera out to make sure I didn't miss out on that same one photo that



Alpenglow on Las Torres del Paine

everyone else who has ever been there has! I sound cynical, but it really was beautiful. People come here for a reason.

Being as steep as it was, particularly in the last kilometre or so, and being as sweaty and hot as I am, I was wandering around in shorts and a T-shirt. Considering the prevailing uniform of pants, jumpers, down jackets, beanies and gloves all around, I ended up with a few strange looks! A South African couple even came over to see what was wrong with me. They were happy to see that I had layered up by then, as it was breakfast time. A quick breakfast it was, and we were back down the track, passing absolute hordes of day trippers fresh off the buses. And horses too. We were keen to get back down, as we had planned to make our way around to Campamento Seron the same day, which meant another 4-5 hours of walking. After lunch and a quick nap, we trundled around to Seron via some lovely beech forest and down into a beautiful broad valley, replete with plenty of horses running through golden grass in afternoon sunlight. Very poetic. A pleasant evening was to follow at Seron, making the acquaintance of a Canadian-British couple whom we kept up with for a couple of days. The campsite at Seron is probably the most open of them all, but we had no troubles with wind.

Refugio Dickson

From Seron, we headed on to the Refugio Dickson the following morning. We had been hearing all throughout our time in Puerto Natales and the rest of the park about the closure (or not) of Paso John Gardner, and consequently the closing of our opportunity to complete the circuit. Before we left for the park, we had been told the pass was closed, but figured we might as well just see how we went anyway. And so, it was a great relief to arrive at the Coiron ranger station to find out that the pass was open! Buoyed by that, we ignored the showers and made good time to Dickson. This is in a great spot, with views up to the back of all the peaks and a nearby beach on Lago Dickson giving views into Argentina of more peaks, glaciers and even a host of small icebergs floating around on the lake! We spent our meagre available funds buying a packet of butter biscuits in an effort to appease my apparently insatiable appetite. An earlier mishap with our pre-purchased park entrance tickets (we forgot to bring them) meant that we didn't have as much money as anticipated to catch a ferry back on our final day. Oops!

“A South African couple even came over to see what was wrong with me.”



Snowy ascent to Paso John Gardner

Campamento Los Perros and the pass

After some occasional rain overnight, we set out for the short walk to Campamento Los Perros, which takes you through a forested valley and past a glacial moraine to a small, sheltered camp set back amongst the trees. After arriving there in the early afternoon, we headed a short way back down the track to visit a small glacial lake and spent some time there reading our books, before heading back for dinner. Unfortunately, the side trip to nearby Glaciar El Puma has been recently relegated to “guide only” status, possibly for environmental protection reasons as apparently it was possible to walk right up to and all over the glacier. Back at camp, relatively cold temperatures and the promise of an early start made for an early night. This is a big part of the appeal of camping for me anyway ... I love bed!

The next morning, and the big day had arrived ... Would we make it over the pass? The previous night conjecture abounded regarding when the rangers would go up, what conditions would cause them to turn us around, what had happened to previous groups etc, but it all turned out to be a bit of a non-event. Oh there was snow aplenty on the route, and as usual I tended to find the

deepest patches (up to mid-thigh at some points), but the crossing was not particularly difficult. And the views from the other side? Pretty neat. We made good time down to Campamento Grey and the return of the W crowd.

Following a nice sunrise over Glacier Grey, we made good time on our return to Paine Grande, and caught the elevenish ferry to Pudeto, in time to get the early afternoon bus to Puerto Natales. Torres del Paine ticked!

Summary

In all, it was a great walk. There were some disappointing things (big crowds of non-walkers on the W, people kicking rocks at us at Frances, road-walking between Central and Seron), but they were far outweighed by the beauty and character of the place itself. It's easy to get upset when visiting somewhere as popular as Torres del Paine, but I think one has to take a step back and appreciate just exactly why these places are so popular. I'm very glad we had the chance to see all the sights of the circuit, people or no. Writing this as I am from Machu Picchu Pueblo, let's hope that tomorrow at Machu Picchu lives up to the same premise!

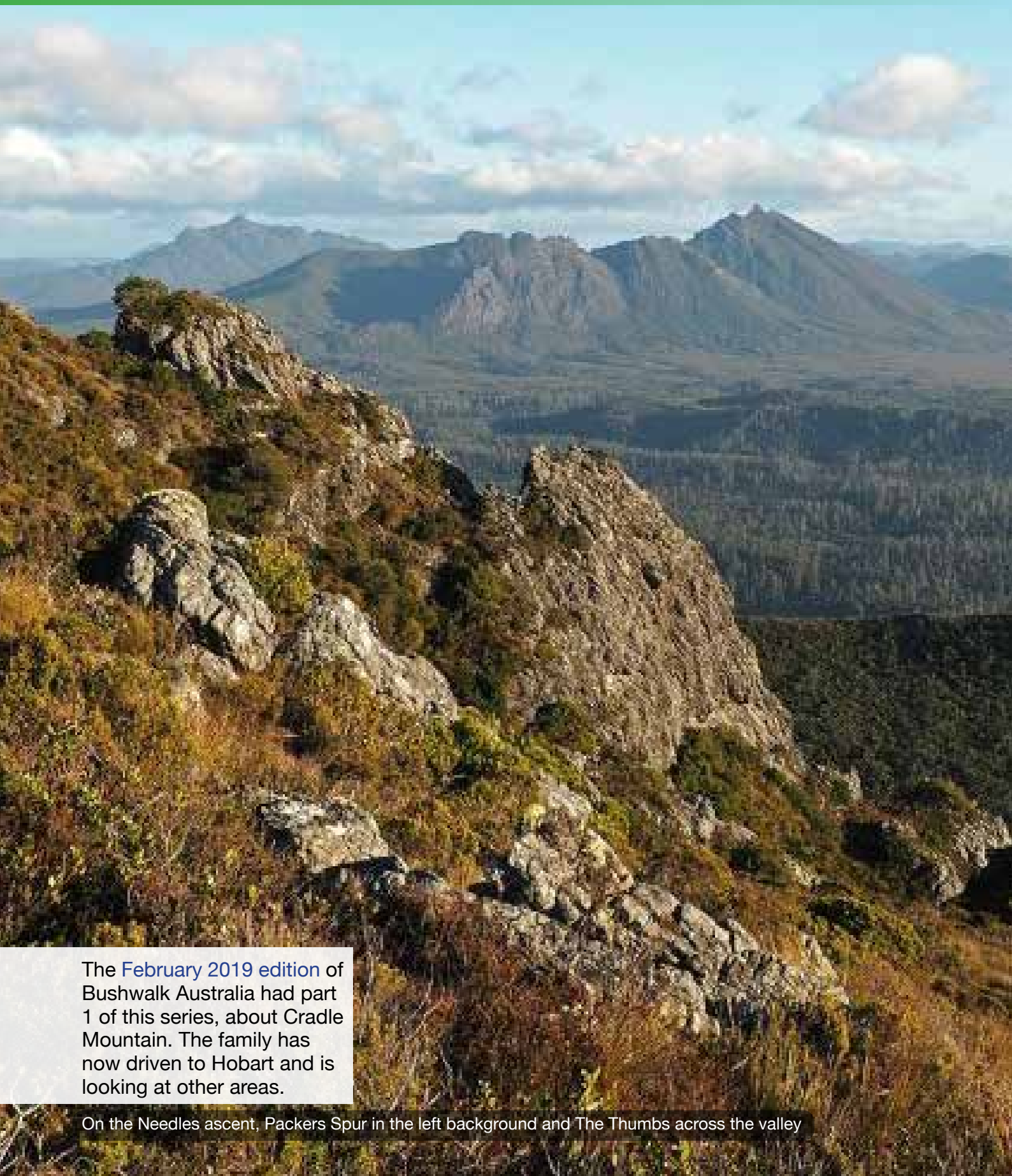


La Cordillera de Paine rising above the forest

Tassie Winter Trip, Part 2

The Needles and Mount Sprent

Peter Hodges



The [February 2019 edition](#) of Bushwalk Australia had part 1 of this series, about Cradle Mountain. The family has now driven to Hobart and is looking at other areas.

On the Needles ascent, Packers Spur in the left background and The Thumbs across the valley

Of all the things we planned to do before our trip to Tasmania there was one experience I was looking forward to the most, walking in Southwest National Park. Even though it's the largest national park in Tasmania it's also the most remote and the least visited. I was particularly attracted to this as many of the natural sights we have seen in Australia and overseas have been so overwhelmed by human visitation.

“ I can't thank the members of this forum enough ...

After a lot of research I decided that I would attempt to complete two walks, The Needles and Mount Sprent. I only found out about these walks after spending some time on the [Bushwalk.com forum](#). I can't thank the members of this forum enough for all of the helpful information they provided.

The walks are 1.5-2.5 hours away so I left our Hobart hotel early, aiming to start the first walk just after sunrise. It wasn't a particularly early start as sunrise in July in Tasmania is not until 7:45am.

There's another fantastic resource that I stumbled upon while researching this trip, [StepScape](#). The StepScape site is working towards showing every published Tasmanian day walk on a single map, with GPS coordinates of the beginning of each walk. It's very helpful to have GPS coordinates for all Tasmanian day walk in one place. So

I plugged in the coordinates for the start of The Needles walk and made the hour and half journey to the start of the track.

The Needles

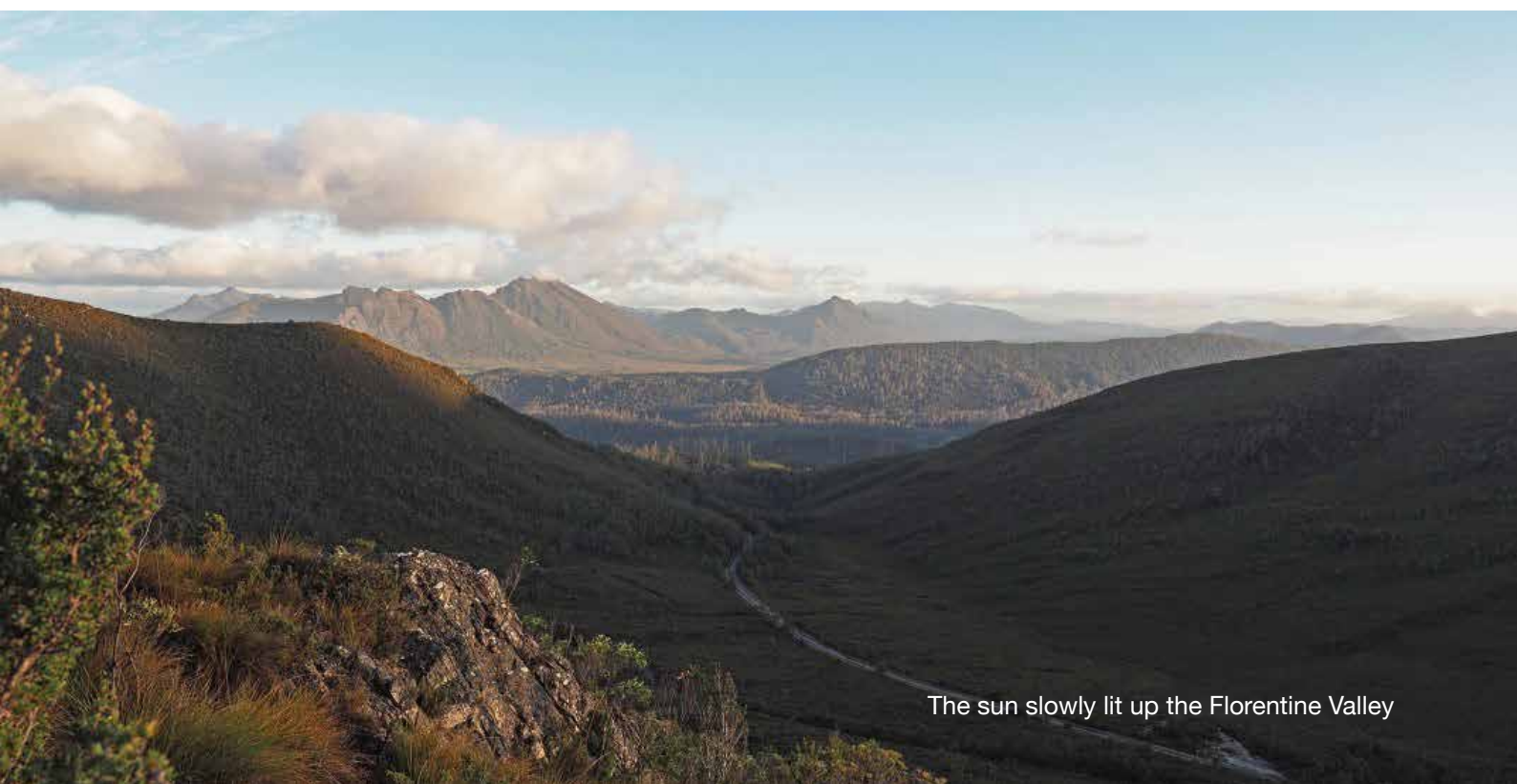
I really enjoyed the drive between Hobart and The Needles, particularly the area around Maydena. On this morning mist filled the valleys underneath Tyenna Peak.

The start of The Needles walk is at the highest point on the Gordon River Road. I arrived at 7:45am, just on sunrise and exactly an 90 minutes after leaving Hobart. It was a beautiful, sunny, blue sky day and the early morning light shining on the mountain ranges was magnificent.



The Thumbs from the highest point on the Gordon River Road

At first I didn't realise that the track started on the southern side of the road, opposite the car park. Thankfully I eventually found a rock cairn. Upon entering the bush I immediately noticed how wet and muddy the track was. I had read from other people's



The sun slowly lit up the Florentine Valley

experiences that it's not worth it to try and keep your feet dry, they're going to get wet and muddy anyway. So I took that advice and embraced the slosh. At first I thought it might be a problem because I was no longer wearing my waterproof boots due to the pain they caused me at Cradle Mountain. I need not have worried though: despite being soaking wet the thick merino wool socks that I was wearing did a stellar job keeping my feet warm.

Even though the walking was very slow going the rewards were almost immediate. Within minutes of starting I could see the sun rising over mountain ranges and the light filling the Florentine Valley.

Within 30 minutes I had reached the first Needle. The views from this point were already spectacular. In one direction the sun was still rising over Mount Tim Shea while in the other there were panoramic views of The Thumbs and Packers Spur.

As I walked through this section it reminded me of why I like walking to mountain summits so much, particularly in remote or hard to reach areas. I'm a school teacher and while I love my job and teaching students I

“... the payoff for your effort tends to increase as you climb higher and higher.”

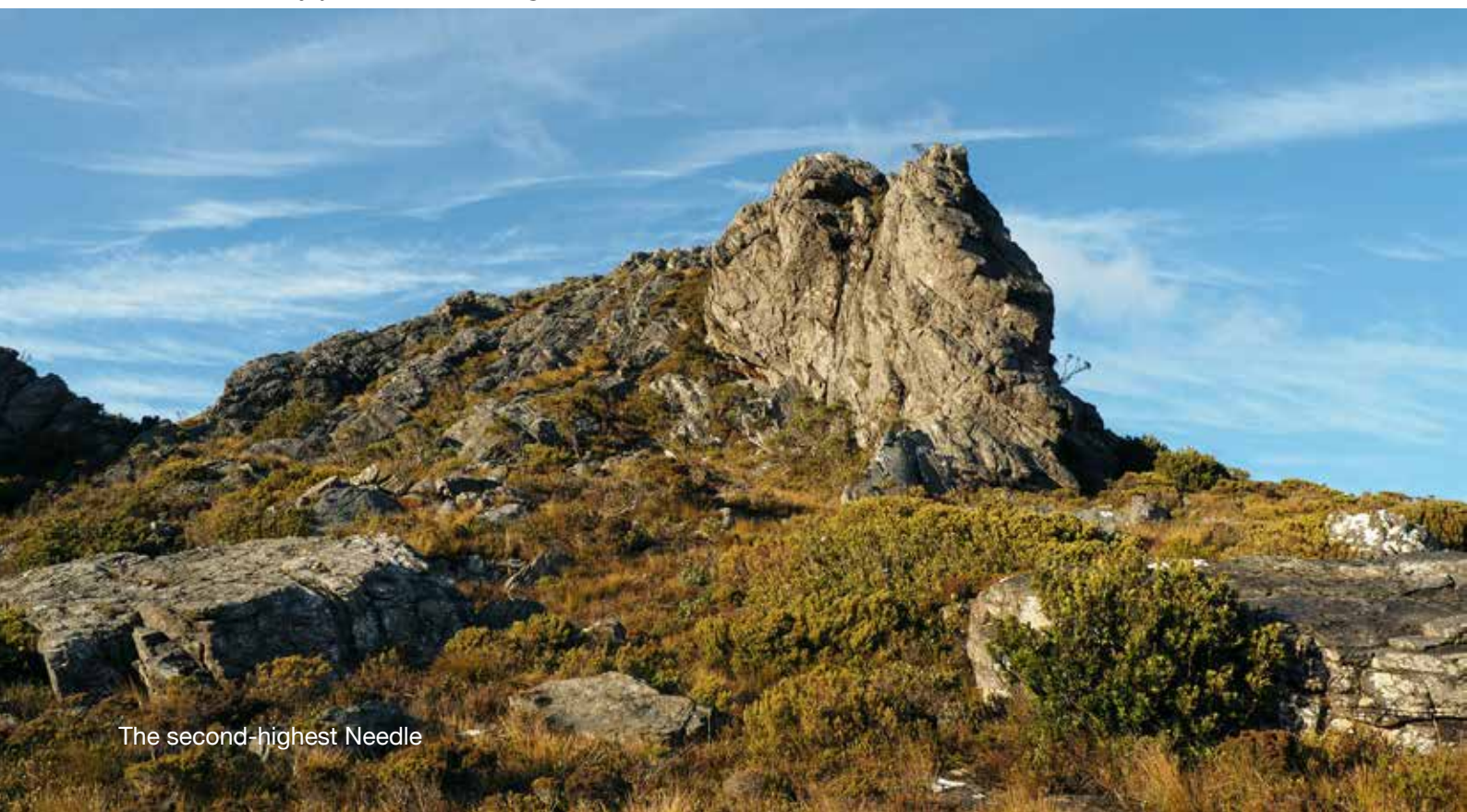
also relish the opportunity to be alone. The mountains and nature in general are perfect for this.

Another reason why I love mountains so much is due to the gradual way the landscape is revealed. As you slowly gain elevation the picture in front of you constantly changes and the payoff for your effort tends to increase as you climb higher and higher.



The muddy path to The Needles

This leads to the last reason for my love of mountains. I really enjoy the physical challenge and sense of accomplishment upon reaching the top. Many summit walks can have significant elevation gains or distances covered. As my job mainly consists of standing in front of classrooms speaking or at a desk planning, I absolutely love the physical aspect of walking to mountain summits.



The second-highest Needle

After an hour I had made it to the summit of the highest Needle and immediately added a small rock of my own to the cairn at the top. For such a short walk the views were incredible with mountain ranges and sweeping valleys in every direction. It was a fantastic introduction to Southwest National Park.

The weather was so much better than I expected so I decided to hurry back down and head to Mount Sprent. As I made my way down from the highest Needle I quickly realised that it's much harder going down than up when walking on muddy trails. Mud in steep sections can be very slippery but rocks and roots on the track were always safer to stand on. For the rest of the day whenever I was descending through a steep section I often muttered under my breath, "Rocks and roots are friends".

All up it took me approximately two hours to complete the Needles walk which was three kilometres with 300 metres of elevation gain. By now it was 10am and it was an absolutely stunning day. I knew the weather forecast was for rain in the afternoon so I at the car park I immediately headed to Mount Sprent, an hour along the Gordon River Road.

This is one of the most scenic roads in Australia as it winds its way through numerous mountain ranges to Lake Pedder's

north shore. The scenery is so unlike what you typically see in Australia and it reminded me more of what I have seen in places like Scotland.

Eventually the drive goes to the tiny town of Strathgordon, the location of Peppers Wilderness Lodge, one of the few hotel-like places where you can stay in Southwest National Park. So I decided to have a look at the area around the wilderness lodge. I also stopped at the nearby Lake Pedder lookout before heading directly to the Serpentine Dam wall where the walk to Mount Sprent starts.

“For such a short walk the views were incredible with mountain ranges and sweeping valleys in every direction.”



Lake Pedder from Strathgordon



Looking back across the Needles

Mount Sprent

I headed along the dam wall and up a series of concrete stairs to the start of the Mount Sprent track. At the start of the track there was a warning sign advising that the track was extremely steep, rugged and remote. After completing the first section of the walk I couldn't have agreed more: it was incredibly steep, incredibly muddy and very rough. The only way up in parts was to pull myself up with tree roots and a number of timber posts which had been hammered into the ground. The track was like a watercourse, narrow, steep and filled with water. Fortunately this first section was relatively short and the rest of the track was through buttongrass moorland. Even from very early on the views across the Sprent Basin and towards Lake Pedder were stunning.



First views over the Sprent Basin on the Mount Sprent track

At about a third of the way up I reached a small plateau where views of the surrounding area really opened up. From this point I could clearly see the ridge that led to the summit of Mount Sprent. The weather was also starting to change as clouds started rolling in from the north.

As I continued to climb the weather really started to deteriorate. Clouds blanketed the sky, it was much colder and the wind picked up. Looking to the north, I could see that it would be raining soon. Nevertheless the weather just made the landscape even more beautiful.

At about half-way up I still had clear views to the south-east while the clouds from the north continued to approach. It was an interesting contrast, blue skies in one direction and storm clouds in the other.

The final section of the walk had all sorts of interesting perspectives of the surrounding countryside. Everywhere I looked I could see layer upon layer of mountains, and the landscape was so rugged and remote. Speaking of remoteness, I hadn't seen another soul on either track for the entire day. Being able to enjoy some solitude in the mountains turned out to be a real highlight of these walks.



Lake Pedder from the Mount Sprent track

When I reached the summit of Mount Sprent it was incredibly windy and it started to rain. Ironically, the view to the south-east was now completely obscured by rain while the view to the north, while still cloudy, was clear for miles. The sunlight was constantly piercing through different sections of clouds and all sorts of interesting and dramatic bands of light shone across the landscape.

“... all sorts of interesting and dramatic bands of light shone across the landscape.”

After a short time the rain increased and the weather worsened, so I decided to return as quickly as I could. This was more difficult than I thought it would be, particularly due to the steepness and wetness of the track. Nevertheless I made steady progress and still stopped on the odd occasion to take some photos and appreciate the landscape.

After four hours of walking I had returned to the Serpentine Dam wall and travelled seven kilometres with an elevation gain and loss of 750 metres. The Needles and Mount Sprent had ten kilometres distance, 1050 metres of elevation gained and lost, and I walked for about six hours. What a fantastic day of exploring in Southwest National Park!



By the time I started driving home it was 3:30pm and I had a 2.5 hour drive to the hotel. I stopped a number of times on the way back, particularly to take in the views of the Sentinel Ranges from the Gordon River Road. It is such a rugged and beautiful landscape. As I reached the half-way point, the sun began to set and I drove the rest of the way in twilight. The last light fell as I drove into the hotel car park, marking the end of a fantastic day of exploring in Tasmania's remote Southwest National Park.



Peter is from sunny Bundy in Queensland. He loves nothing more than spending time with his family, walking in nature and taking lots of photos. When he is not teaching in front of a classroom he is almost certainly on a bushwalk or planning some other kind of adventure.

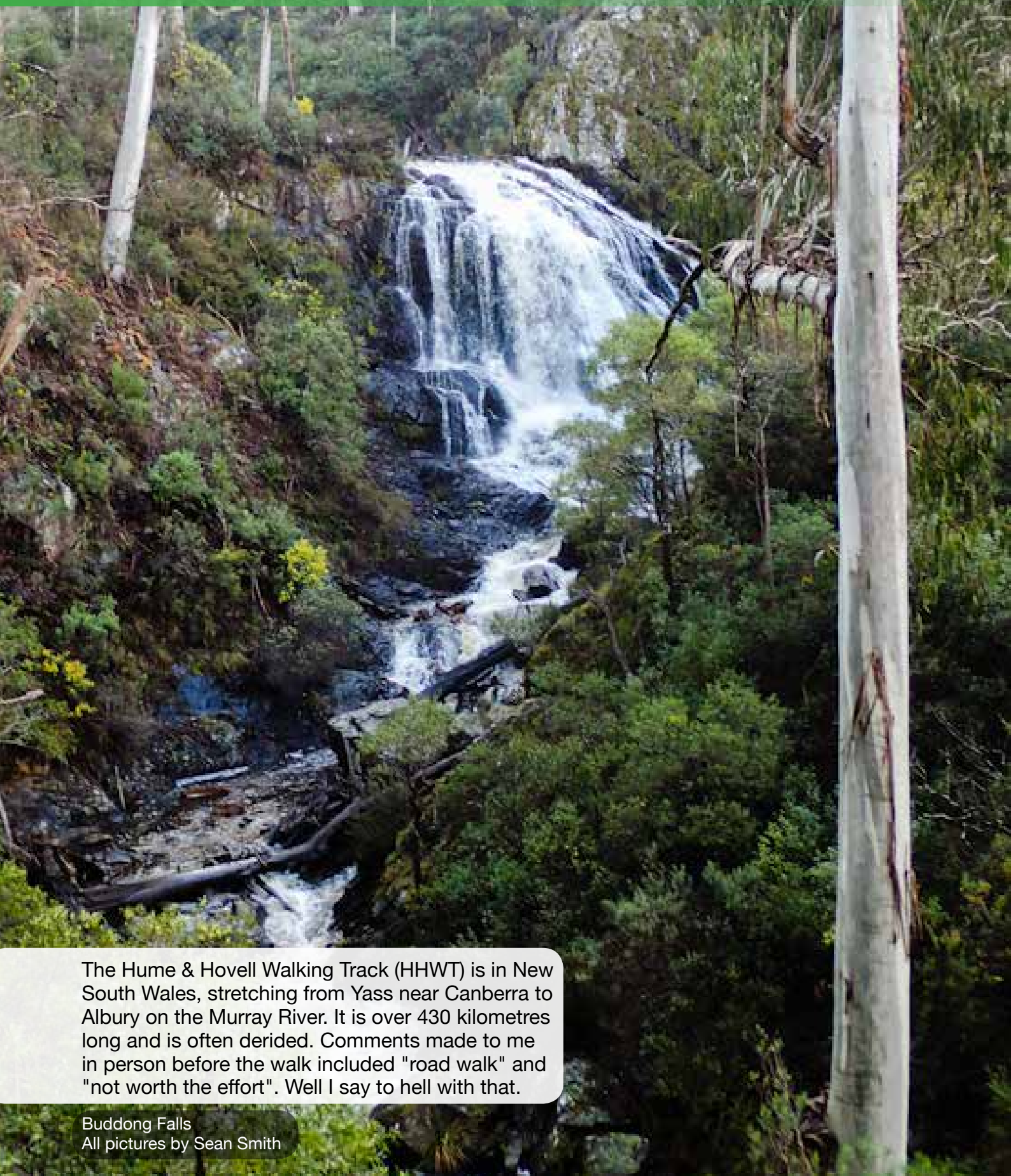
Blog travelwithpete.com
Instagram [instagram.com/plhodges](https://www.instagram.com/plhodges)



Spectacular summit views from Mount Sprent

Hume & Hovell Walking Track

Sean Smith



The Hume & Hovell Walking Track (HHWT) is in New South Wales, stretching from Yass near Canberra to Albury on the Murray River. It is over 430 kilometres long and is often derided. Comments made to me in person before the walk included "road walk" and "not worth the effort". Well I say to hell with that.

Buddong Falls
All pictures by Sean Smith

True, there is a fair amount of road walking and meandering through pine plantations. But I reckon it's absolutely worth the effort and remains one of Australia's least walked long trails, possibly because the soft resupply options and lack of swanky huts for hikers that are becoming prevalent elsewhere.

I saw more fauna, both native and feral, than I can remember ever encountering on an Australian trail, some spectacular eucalyptus forests and the resupply trail towns of Tumut and Tumbarumba were highlights with friendly helpful locals and good services. So there!

12-26 October 2018

The HHWT loosely follows the direction and some of the landmarks of the legendary 1824 expedition of nearly 200 years ago by a bunch of hardcore colonial explorers led by Hamilton Hume and William Hovell.

Their discoveries and encounters with Aboriginal peoples opened up the area to settlement and industry.

These days the landscape is mostly very different from the rich, verdant forests the early Europeans passed through but it's still a buzz mooching along a similar route over 430 kilometres and catching random reminders of that expedition and the era of uncertain frontiers.

Maps and information

I used the official map pack.

I purchased John and Lyn Daly's *Take A Walk in Southern NSW guidebook* which features an in-depth description of the trail found on their website.



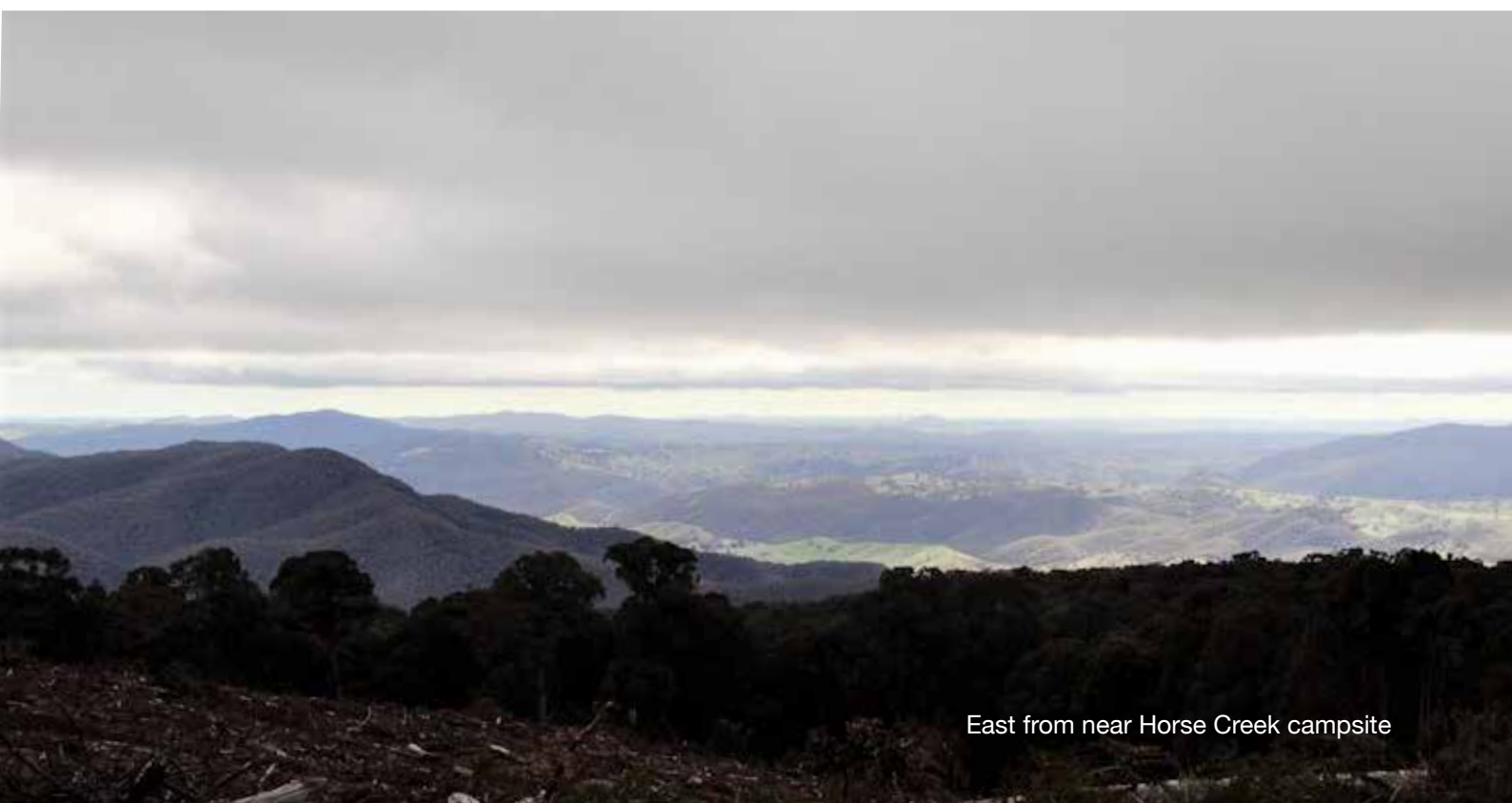
Safari track rating

Mostly easy. All over the show surface-wise but mostly undulating fire trails, lush open farmland and country roads with many good stretches of fun single track and the necessary sections of asphalt road to connect this path together.

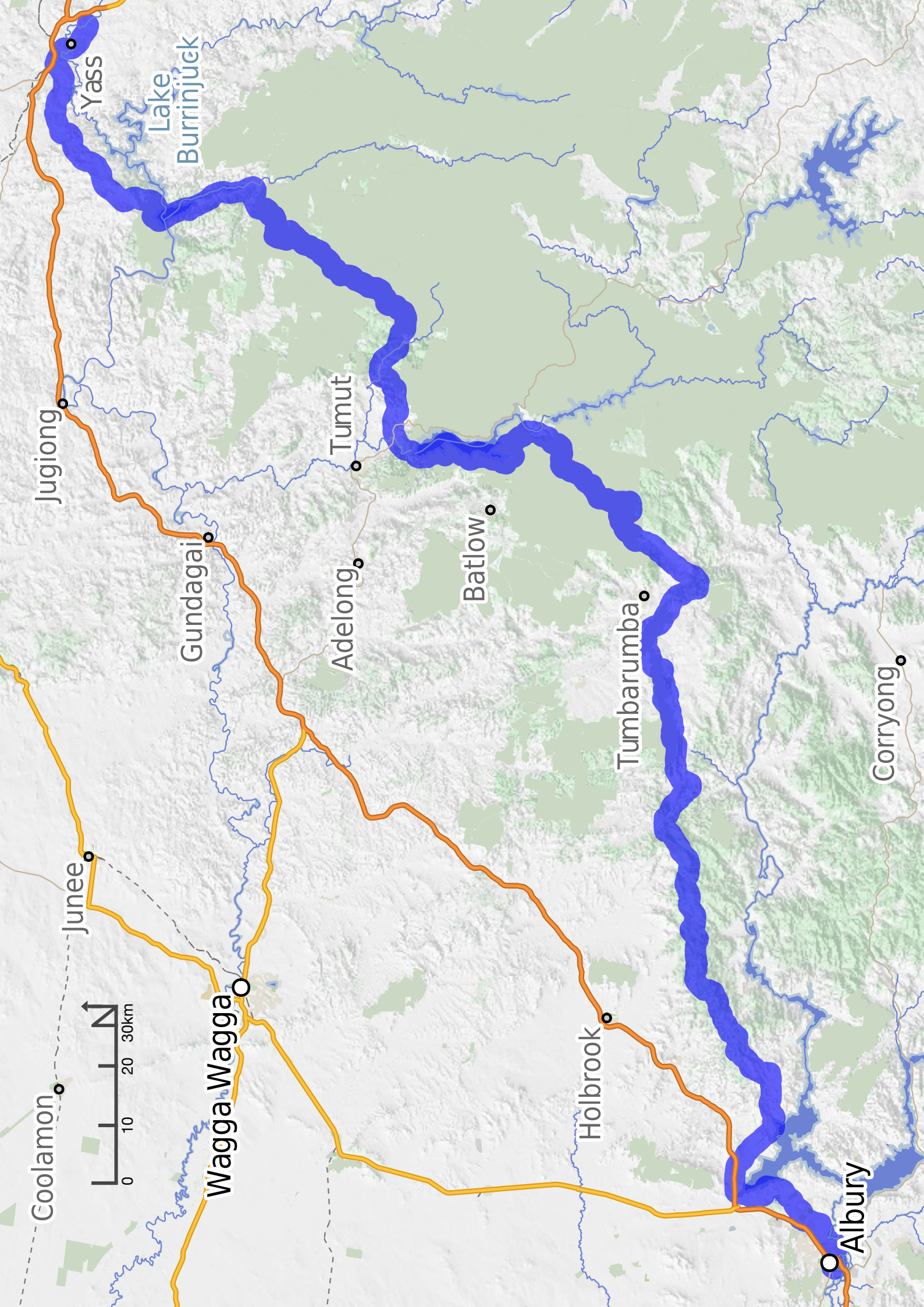
There are some sweaty steep climbs and boring clear cut pine plantations that kick one's morale in the guts. But for the most part the signs were great and the variety of landscape and terrain keeps things interesting.

“... the variety of landscape and terrain keeps things interesting.”

There is definitely a fair bit of effort going into maintaining the trail and by far the best kept section was the stretch between Buddong



East from near Horse Creek campsite



Falls and Henry Angel where the Hume & Hovell 100 mile Ultramarathon is held annually. My original intent was to go over and run the event but then I decided that for the effort required to travel there I should hike the whole kaboodle.

It's a shame about the chronic blackberry infestation constantly sighted in the valleys and creeks but that's the way it is.

Logistics and supplies

I flew from Tasmania to Sydney and took the early train to Yass Junction (around 3.5 hours) where I was dropped off in Yass four kilometres away by two lovely ladies. I located the [Yass Camping Store](#) and procured a gas canister for my cooker.



Burrinjuck Waters State Park ferry

I decided against starting the hike at the traditional eastern terminus; Cooma Cottage about five kilometres away. The notion of 10 kilometres return road bash on a busy highway for the sake of tagging a sign didn't rev my engine so I started in Yass. However, many end to end hikers start at Cooma Cottage where explorer Hamilton Hume lived from 1840. Your call, be a purist or start where you want.

“... start at Cooma Cottage where explorer Hamilton Hume lived from 1840.”

I carried five day's food on the plane from Launceston to get me to Tumut, I purchased four day's food in Tumut to get me to Tumbarumba. and I purchased six day's food in Tumbarumba to get me to Albury.

Tumut is a large country town with a number of hotels and major supermarkets and the [Riverglade Caravan Park](#) where I pitched my tent, \$20 a night, great facilities. I grabbed another gas canister at [Toms Outdoors](#) and chatted with Chris, one of the owners, cool shop, cool people. I also buy a bit of stuff online from their website.

I accessed Tumut by calling the Tumut Taxi Service 02 6947 1666 from the Snowy Mountains Highway. It's ten kilometres north



Crossing private farmland near Bowena

of where the HHWT pops out and costs around \$30. Alternately you could stick your thumb out or walk. A kind local who shall remain nameless shuttled me out of town the next morning back to the trailhead. Thanks mate!

I stayed at the [Tumbarumba Creek Caravan Park](#) in a Jagungal Cabin for \$93. It was a good stay and the laundry facilities were welcome. Supplies can be sourced from the large IGA supermarket on the main street. I had lunch at one of the pubs - \$10 for fish & chips, \$6 for a pint of tasty IPA. Old school prices circa 2008.

“A kind local ... shuttled me out of town the next morning back to the trailhead.”

I accessed Tumbarumba (or "Tumby" as the locals call it) by calling Ria at the caravan park for a pickup. I initially tried hitching but gave up due to lack of traffic.

Town was calling ...

Ria's husband Peter facilitated my return to the Henry Angel Trackhead the next morning, I paid them \$20 for two rides.

The [Great Aussie Holiday Park](#) at Albury is well set up with grassy tent sites. I paid \$25 for a campsite and bought some lamb rissoles from the basic shop.



Campsite at The Flats on Blowering Reservoir

Make sure you fill up your water bottle before heading off. I forgot and hiked 23 very warm kilometres to the [Ettamogah Pub](#).

The Great Aussie kindly held a package I sent containing non-hiking clothing, snacks and a book.

The Ettamogah Pub is a fantastic place to smash some beers, get a good feed and charge up the phone. Kitsch and touristy but very useful. Only a couple of kilometres from the Table Top Reserve.

Across the dam

The HHWT leaves dry land for a six kilometre section between [Burrinjuck Waters Holiday Park](#) and Cathedral Rock. The Holiday Park operates a boat transfer and Wendy and Dean are friendly, helpful folks.



Ben Smith Campsite

The boat ride cost me \$30 and I was scooted across immediately even though I rocked up a day early and was booked to travel the following day.

Daily distances

Date	Itinerary	Km
12	Yass to Captain Campsite	28
13	The ridge above Wee Jasper (campsite)	31
14	Micalong Swamp campsite	36.5
15	Tumut (Riverglade Caravan Park campsite)	42
16	The Flats campsite	30
17	Buddong Creek Picnic Area	35
18	Junction campsite	38
19	Henry Angel campsite (pick up and cabin in Tumbarumba Creek Caravan Park)	6.5
20	Henry Angel Trackhead to Mannus campsite	22
21	Horse Creek campsite	20
22	Woomargama National Park campsite	28
23	Samuel Bollard campsite	34
24	Great Aussie Resort campsite	25
25	Table Top Reserve campsite	25
26	Albury (Best Western Hotel)	26.5
	Total	427.5

*I estimated my daily distance from the maps. I'm not too fussed as what I actually did, these figures just give you an idea of my impromptu itinerary.

What I wore & carried

The weather was mid-20s at this time of year so I rolled along in shorts and shirt mostly. I wore Bedrock sandals on the flat easy firetrails and Topo MT2 trail runners on the bumpy parts. I used a three season quilt and merino leggings and long sleeve top during the night when things got cold but mostly it was fairly warm. My 60 litre Gossamer Gear Mariposa pack was more than ample.

“The crazy diversity of landscapes the trail meanders through.”

Best parts

- Finding no ticks on me the entire time.
- Buddong Falls. Quite sensational.
- The crazy diversity of landscapes the trail meanders through.
- Going for four days at a stretch without seeing and speaking to another human being.
- Sitting out a heavy thunderstorm on The Flats alongside Blowering Lake.
- Electric skies and that slightly rattled but invigorated feeling.

The campsites

Every 10 to 20 kilometres there are purpose-built covered picnic shelters with tables, sometimes a water tank (if not then there is a creek or lake nearby) and a flat area to camp.

There is always a nearby road, in fact some are right on sealed roads. One I stayed at, Mannus; was a tad rundown and painfully close to the road. However I slept 13 hours straight through and didn't hear a peep.



I mostly walked in sandals and used lightweight trekking poles.

No one ever disturbed me and I only encountered kangaroos, brumbies and fantastic birdlife.

Things I would do differently

Water filter

I took a rubbish little Sawyer Mini. This was woefully inadequate, I should have packed a Sawyer Squeeze instead. The bag ripped first, so I hooked it up to a large Platypus then the filter got very clogged and I hadn't chucked in the back wash syringe when I packed up my kit in Launceston because ... well it's bulky and I rarely use it. And I'm a nuff nuff sometimes and I neglect to bring things I probably should but hey, who's perfect?

“There is always a nearby road, in fact some are right on sealed roads.

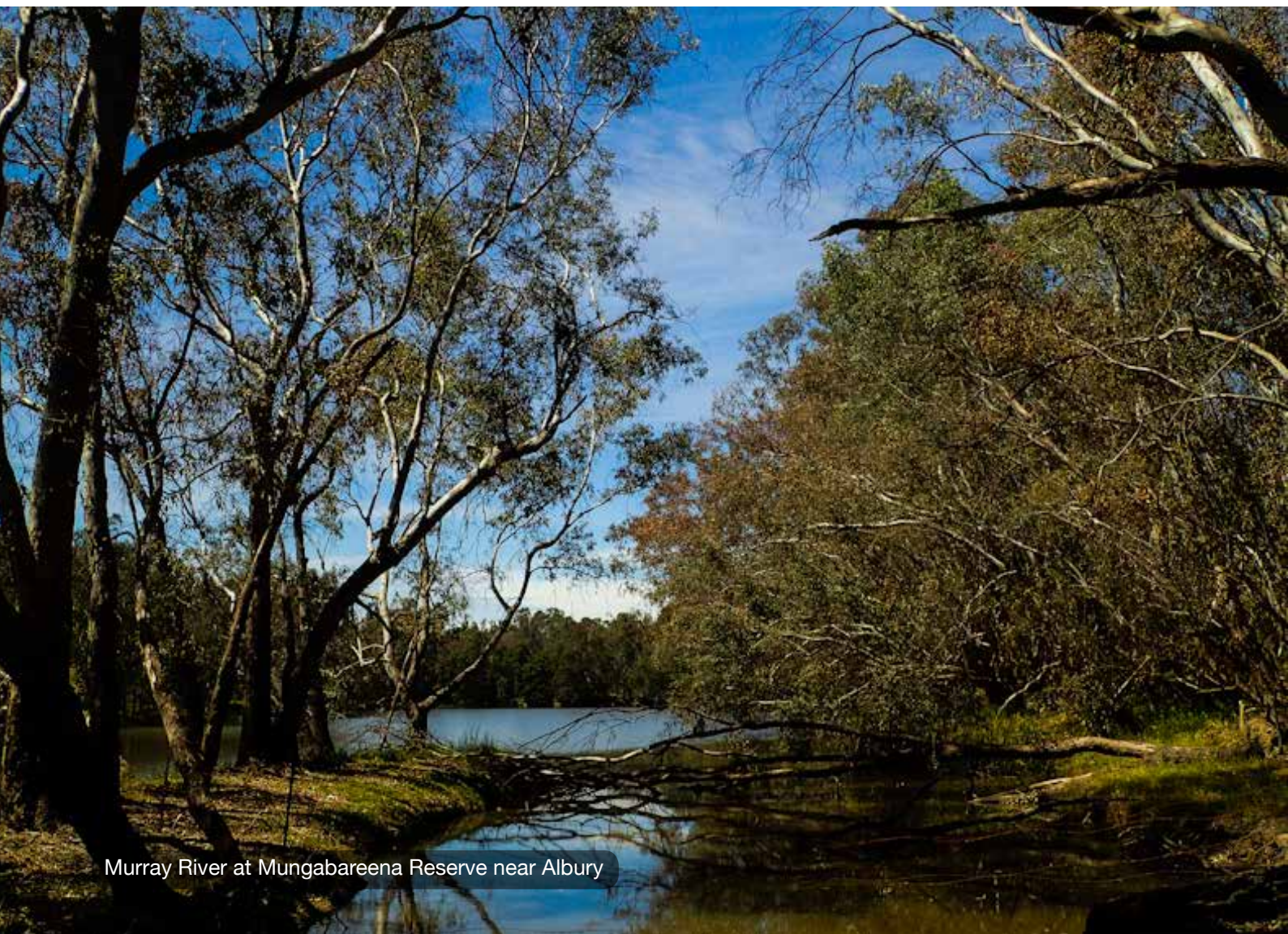
Good trick: I purchased an overpriced bottle of "sports water", whatever the heck that is, and utilised the sipper top to back-flush the Sawyer Mini when needed with clean filtered water.

This was painstaking as getting clean, filtered water initially from a blocked filter in order to then clean it, required patience and this back-flush method doesn't do a great job, just an adequate one.

The sipper cap on this brand of sports water slips snug over the top of the outlet pipe of the Sawyer Mini and allows water to be flushed back into the filter and push out the junk.

When the squeeze bag hopped the twig I screwed the Mini onto my water bottle and drank straight out of the piping outlet. I prefer to faff around and do things the hard way and stop and squeeze filtered water into the bottle and glug it down as required like a man rather than a child sipping from a straw but I purposely brought along a BPA free bottle with the cap screw thread that I knew would partner with the Mini in case the standard squeeze bag crapped out.

“... utilised the sipper top to back-flush the Sawyer Mini ...



Murray River at Mungabareena Reserve near Albury

Toilet paper

Hard to believe but I forgot to bring toilet paper. I had a few wet wipes but luckily I don't mind the "back country bidet" method and (fortuitously) all of the campsite outhouses had tissue roll in them.

Pen

Yup, a simple pen that worked would have made signing the sporadic trail registers a tad easier. Instead I had fun and games attempting to write with the flogged out pencil stubs and duct taped broken biros tucked inside the rolled up register forms. I grabbed a decent one in Tumut but probably should have bought a packet and left them in the plastic screw cylinders where the registers were located as well. Anyway.

Done after two weeks of solitude and ready for a shower at the Hovell Tree in Albury.

“Yup, a simple pen that worked would have made signing ... a tad easier.”



Information

The official [Hume and Hovell Walking Track website](#) is helpful. It's worth checking their [Facebook page](#) for current track condition reports and recent detours.

I found the [trail journal entries](#) by Dave Byrnes from his 2013 HHWT really useful.



Sean lives in Northern Tasmania and is a tourism professional by happenstance. He is obsessed with hiking the trails of North America and the parts of Australia no one is interested in. And running ultramarathons. And his two black Kelpies.

He writes of his adventures at [safarihiker](#).



Photo Gallery



Sunrise over the lake
Andrew Smith

Competition: Other states April 2012



BWA Photo Competition



Landscapes

April 2018

WINNER



The way of the whalers
Ian Smith

Whalers Way is a little visited stretch of coastline at the southern tip of the Eyre Peninsula. It costs \$30 to get in, but you are welcome to stay overnight (no facilities). There is some extraordinary scenery to be had and no hordes of tourists. The ocean rules and the extremes of the Indian Ocean can often be seen here. It's definitely a get-away-from-it-all place.



Perfect morning
Tortoise



Here comes the sun
North-north-west



A stroll up Ben Ohau
on the southern isle
Osik



Beaufort Bay
Bogholesbuckethats



Hulk's Fist Claustral
AJW Canyon2011



Scene of Shipwreck
Lorraine Parker



Non-landscapes

April 2018

WINNER



Melba Gully track
Ian Smith

Melba Gully Track is a once-popular but now overlooked bushwalk on the Great Ocean Road. It features ferny glades and beautiful forest and makes a wonderful diversion from the hustle and bustle of the rest of the Great Ocean Road. Just west of Lavers Hill you'll see the turnoff. My recommendation is to take it.



Currawonga sits in the
old gum tree ...
ILUVSWTAS



Standing tall
Brian Eglinton



Gateway to the abyss
John Walker



Peek-a-boo
North-north-west



Bad hair day?
Tortoise



Bull kelp
Bogholesbuckethats



Tasmania April 2018

WINNER



Cradle comes alive
in autumn
ILUVSWTAS

An early morning start up Marions Lookout was rewarded by avoiding the crowds and catching the day's early light on this perfect autumn day on the Cradle plateau.



Dawn blush
North-north-west



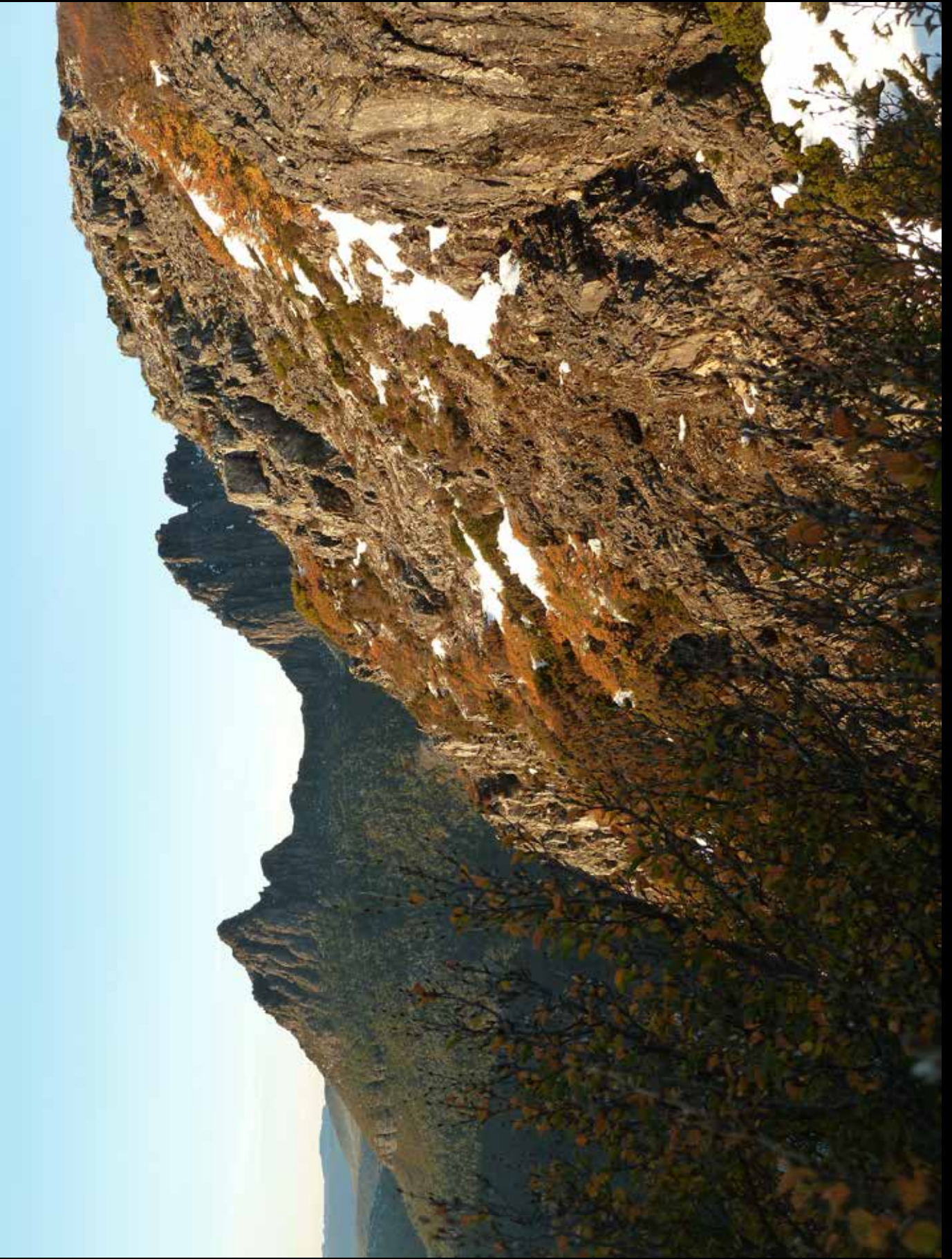
Up in the woods
Andrew Smyth



McCoy Falls
Bogholesbuckethats



Breaking through
Tortoise



Other States April 2018

WINNER



Onkaparinga Gorge
Brian Eglinton

The local training walks are distributed through the Adelaide Hills, but this was a first time at the Onkaparinga River adjacent Adelaide's southern suburbs. And what a surprise it was, with glorious waterholes and cliffs very reminiscent of Flinders Ranges gorges a long way to the north of Adelaide. The water levels were quite low when we went through and it was obvious that with higher winter flows the rough trails could go underwater in places.



An evening ramble up the
caves route on Tibro
Osik



Walking Whalers Way
Ian Smith



Spot the Walkers: Banks
Peninsula Track, NZ
Peter Grant



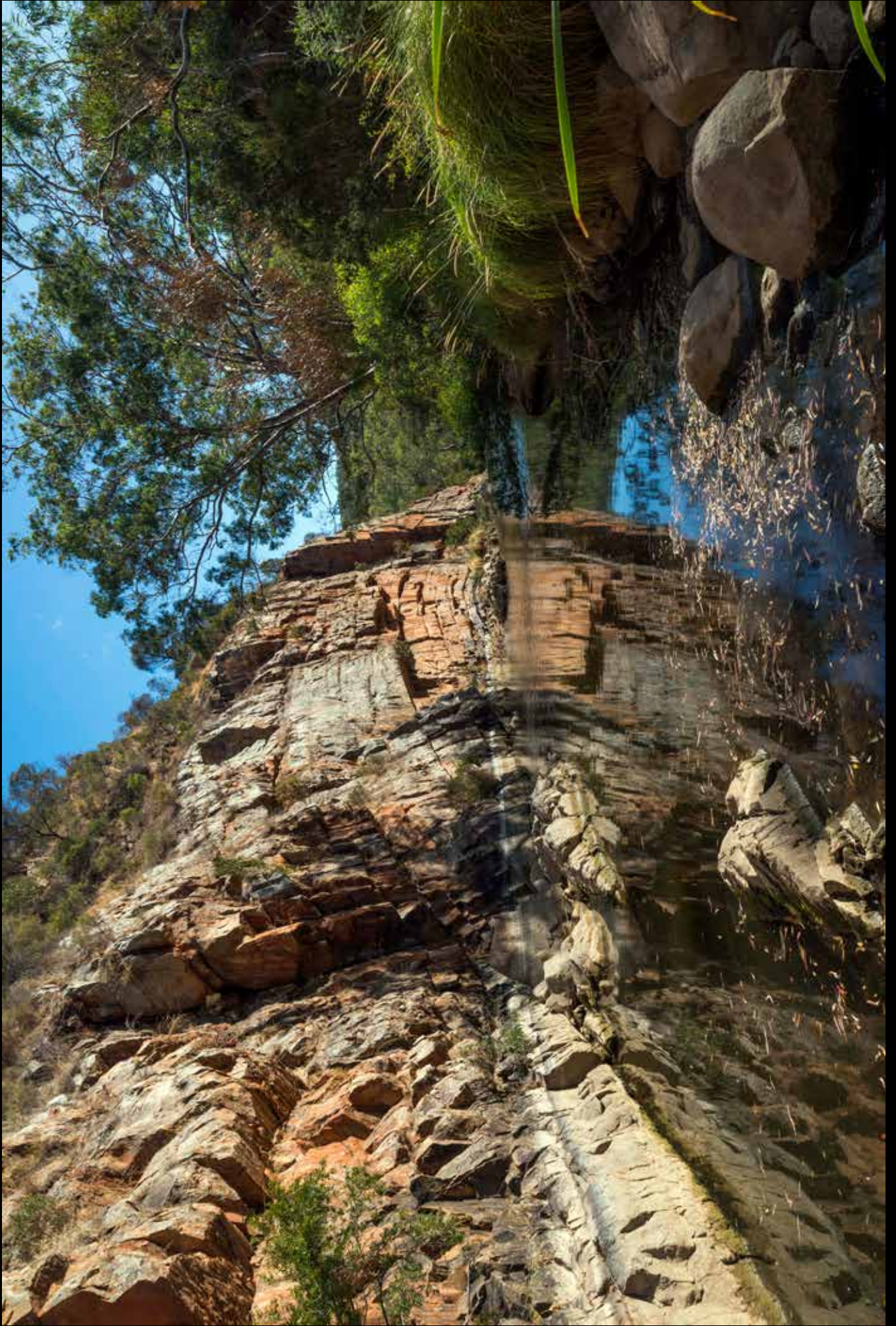
Gorge-ous sunset
John Walker



A light shower
Upper Macquarie
Rivulet Canyon
AJW Canyon2011



Razorback along the
Great Ocean Road
Lorraine Parker



Landscapes

May 2018

WINNER



Autumn in the gully
Brian Eglinton

The local Adelaide Hills are visited on most weekends for regular training walks to keep the body going.

In Autumn, a particularly attractive place to visit is the Mount Lofty Botanic Gardens.

Set on the steep eastern sides of Mount Lofty, one can enjoy the rich and varied colours more akin to Autumn in other parts of the world while pushing uphill.



A cool morning
Bogholesbuckethats



It's a Roo's Island
Tom Brennan



Exploring the coastal
route
John Walker



Non-landscapes

May 2018

WINNER



Curious Scarlet Robin
Tom Brennan

At the end of the Ravine des Casoars walk on Kangaroo Island, this curious Scarlet Robin came and sat on the side mirror of our car, watching us intently. When it flew to a nearby branch I grabbed a few quick shots.



Reflections
on a secret spot
John Walker



Patterns in the ice
Bogholesbuckethats



Ice patterns,
Blue Peaks, Tasmania
Teak



Relaxed lunch
Brian Eglinton



Fossil
Iaindtiller



Tasmania

May 2018

WINNER



Sunrise over frozen tarns
Bogholesbuckethats

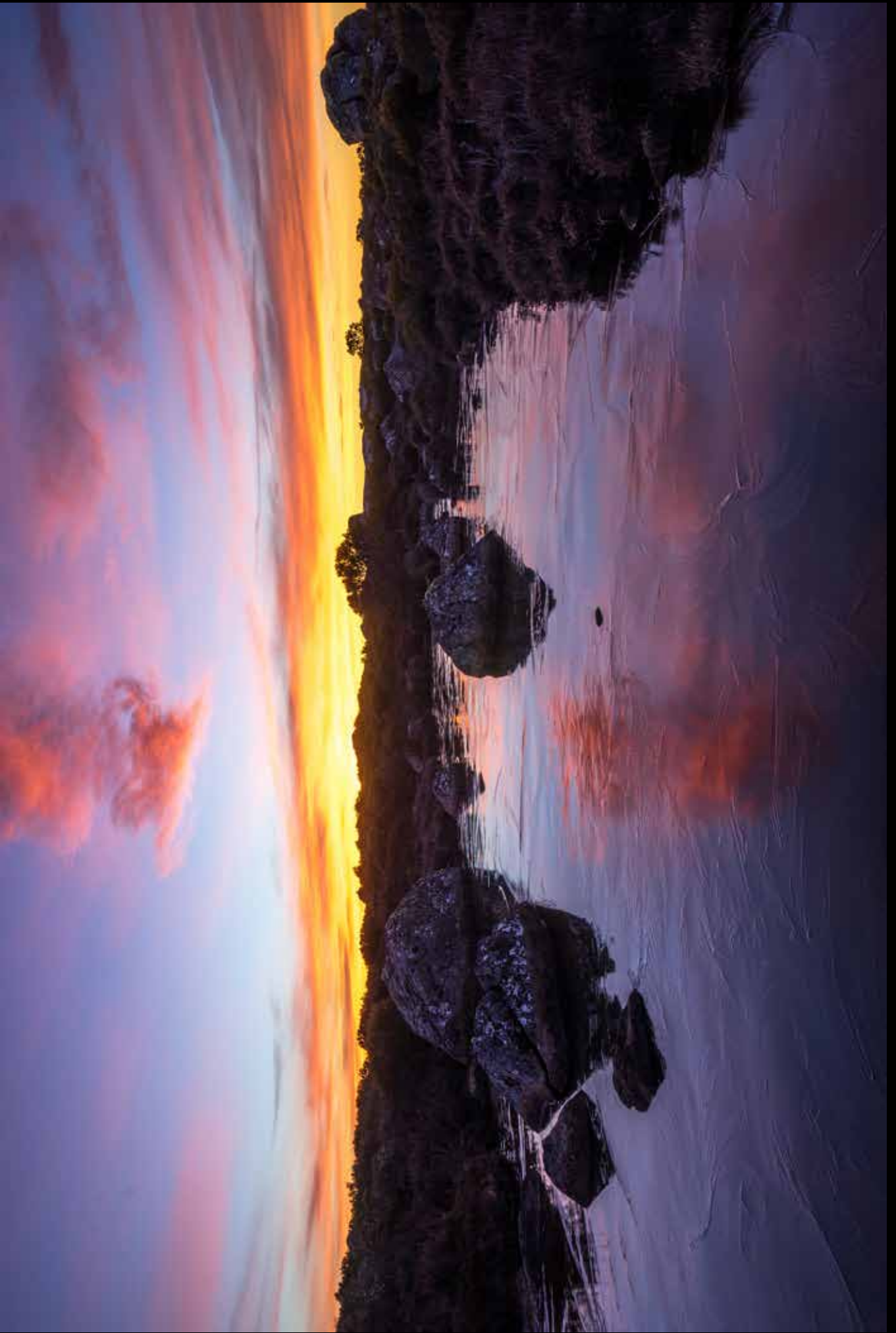
The sound of hoarfrost forming on the ground by the tent was a good reason to get up and see what was going on. A small tarn nearby had frozen over and provided a perfect spot to watch the sunrise.



Forest hideaway
North-north-west



Light
lighthouse



Other States May 2018

WINNER



Silvereye
Ian Smith

I'm lucky there's a lakeside park just down from where I live. There are always birds there, particularly in the area of a prolific grevillea. You just have to set up the tripod and wait. I've never had it so good!



Lake Mungo morn
Tom Brennan



Chambers Gully
Brian Eglinton



Coast to Bombora
John Walker



Walk of Wonders

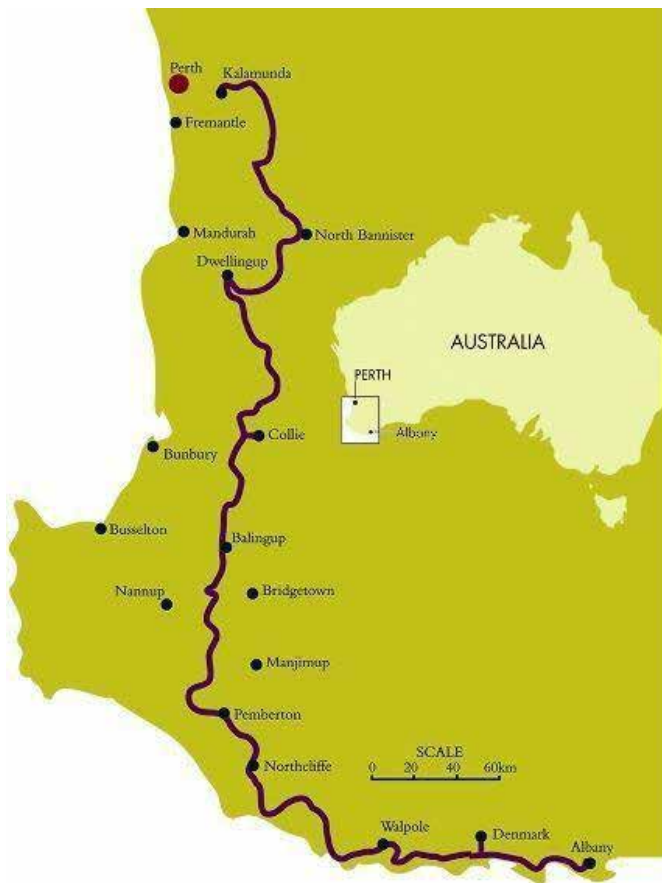
Sophie Aubry



It is 4.30am and my alarm rings. I am in my tent, like I have been for the past three weeks, but I just need a few seconds to recall where exactly, the name of the campsite, the people I chatted with last night, the huge trees I discovered yesterday, and the plans I have for today. I know it will be a long day, which I am excited about. I stretch, still wrapped into my cosy sleeping bag. No pain in my body today, how wonderful is that ... Apart from a bit of wind around the tent, there is no sound. I am first again today, waking up in the dark. By the time I have had my yummy breakfast and a few cups of tea and have packed up, the day light will arrive between the trees and the birds will start to sing joyfully. It is another day on the Walk Of Wonders, and I am in Western Australia, hiking the Bibbulmun Track. I passed the first 300 kilometres of the 1000 kilometres I committed to hike, raising funds and awareness for mental health.

Sophie at an information shelter leaving Denmark, Western Australia
All pictures by the author

Every day on this hike I take some time to reset my intentions, to think about my own journey and my goals on this adventure. And to think about the WOW, as some started to call it even before I had done it. I think about the people I met since I started this project, I think about the energies and kindness that have been shared and offered, about the touching words I received, about the trust other people gave me. I think about what it shows, what it means, what it proves to me. We need to talk about mental health, we all need and want it, and when it finally happens, before we can actually solve or deeply ease anything, we first feel a huge relief. We are not alone, we are rather together on mental health and it is the first discovery to make so we can open the next doors ...



Bibbulmun map
Dorater

I wake up. I am not on the Bibbulmun Track at all nor am I in my tent. I am in Fremantle, and once again I just had a dream about this upcoming adventure. By the time you read this article, I will hopefully be hiking, and hopefully be near where I was in that dream. Welcome to the Walk Of Wonders, and thank you for reading this article. I am Sophie,

and I am preparing for one of the biggest adventure, in many ways, of my life. It is a funny thing how this project is a solo hike but how I have never been less alone than since I started to talk about it. I will explain why.



Bibbulmun track marker,
West Cape Howe National Park

I am from France, the kind of traveller in her late twenties that you can meet quite regularly in Australia. I have been on your side of the world for the last three years, mainly between New Zealand and Australia. Since I started travelling three years ago, one of the things that changed for me is that I took up hiking. For real, with a backpack, sleeping in huts and tents, waking up in nature, talking silently to the birds and the trees. Guess what: I had never done it before, or never more than for a few hours, and I would always be quite upset when my parents wanted to take us for a walk in the mountains when I was a kid, when I could instead lie down by the swimming pool with a book or with some new holiday friends.



Sophie on Mutton Bird Beach near Torbay Inlet

Anyway. We all change, and I changed. I can positively say that hiking changed my life, my state of mind, my connection to the planet, to others and to myself. I started to discover things from inside, to breathe into the wind, to wake up with the sunrise, to take care of each day differently. I started to value my life as I had never done before. Everything feels different and if you are a hiker, I am sure that you know what I mean, even if we all have our own way to feel it and to express it. Overnight hike after overnight hike, the last hour of hiking always gets more painful to me. I just never want it to be the end already. I always feel like, yes, okay, I would like a shower and some laundry done, but then please, don't brutally make me go back to other kind of tasks ... I want to hike longer. This is simply how the Bibbulmun Track started to settle inside my mind, quietly, secretly, beautifully. It has been there for a year or so.

Okay, okay, but ... What is the Bibbulmun Track? It is simply a wonderful long hike of 1000 kilometres joining Albany in the south of Western Australia, to Kalamunda in the Perth hills. It is divided into nine sections of various lengths and types of environment, and it passes through eight towns where it is possible to have a rest and refill food and energy between each section.

The other thing I should probably tell you about, is that for personal reasons I have a high sensitivity on mental health. (If you

would like to know more about my personal story, feel free to read the introduction of my [fundraising page](#), and to have a look at the [Facebook page](#)). I guess it was pretty obvious already, but yes, this is how I decided to raise funds for the wonderful association Headspace while I am hiking the Bibb, starting on 15 March 2019.

Raising funds is an important thing, as it helps not-for-profit organisations to keep doing such a wonderful work for

thousands of people year after year. Opening conversations about mental health, windows of possibilities to help build a better well being for each of us and a safer and more peaceful life environment is another very important thing I decided to dedicate myself to. At least, I am fully committed to contribute to reduce and erase any shame, guilt and fear through these necessary conversations.

Of course, one person like me cannot change the world and suddenly make the suicide rate drop ... But the idea is to be one of those little grains of sand that are a part of a huge mountain and help it stand tall. The idea is to help others to become a grain of sand of the same mountain. So then people in need can find the strength to climb that mountain with all the support that

“ Everything feels different and if you are a hiker, I am sure that you know what I mean ... ”



Near Sandpatch campsite

they require. I suppose that each little action, each little intention, can change someone's life and mindset, as I have seen for myself through the beautiful people I have been fortunate to meet in my life.

So here I go. I started this challenge to hike 1000 kilometres, which is something I have never felt like I would be able to do. I dropped every other occupation to focus on my preparation and communicate about it. I have already received a support that blows my mind every single day. Lately, I heard someone saying this quote, "If you want to go fast, go alone, if you want to go far, go together." Yes, I will be by myself on the track, yes, I will be self-sufficient, carry my own gear, food and water, be responsible of my own safety and organisation. But I will not be alone, because I feel, more than ever, that we are all together on this same path, finding our way, finding our well being, our peace, and finally reconnecting with our environment, with our roots as well as our surroundings, and with ourselves as well as any other being on earth. What best than hiking to find this wonderful connection and feel alive? It is the path I chose to take for myself and to inspire others. We all have different paths in life, and we can find ours

“If you want to go fast, go alone, if you want to go far, go together.”

if we open our hearts and decide to start digging in what make us feel alive.

Thank you for reading and for coming along. If you want to follow the journey, please have a look at the [fundraising page](#). You can donate for Headspace there, an Australian association focusing on providing help to young people from 12 to 25 years old, and to fight the stigma that makes it so hard to seek for support when dealing with mental health challenges. This page also works like a blog, so I post updates regularly about this great adventure. And if you are more of a Facebook person, feel free to follow the [page](#). Everything is in there too.

Happy hikes!



Sophie is from Nancy, in the north-east of France, and has been travelling around New Zealand and Australia for three years. A few months ago she settled in Fremantle, a beautiful suburb of Perth, where she initiated her project the [Walk Of Wonders](#), and found local support. She has been working for years in many different tourism industry companies, in several countries. Until now her lifestyle made it possible to mix working experiences and long periods of wanders and discoveries, with hiking being an important part of it. She also loves writing and sharing experiences with people she meets on the way.



Sophie at Mazzeletti Beach

Wollemi National Park: Day Walks from Newnes - Part 1

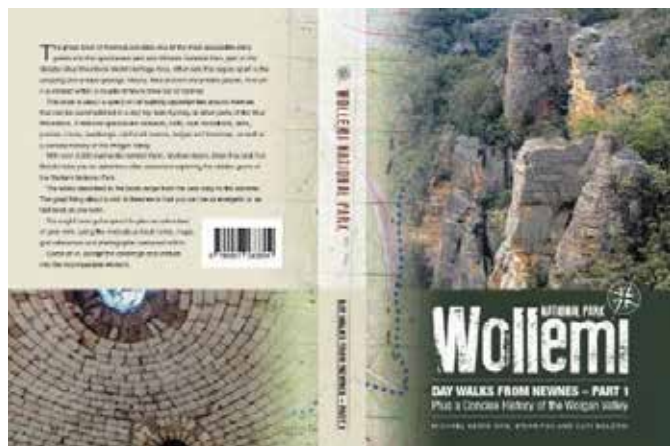
Book Review

Sonya Muhlsimmer



In March I had the pleasure of going to a book launch for the Bush Explorers, Yuri Bolotin, Michael Keats and Brian Fox and their [new book](#), *Wollemi National Parks Day Walks from Newnes – Part 1*. This is the first book of a series of three for day walks in the Newnes area.

The walks are set by main and prominent features, and not grade or length. Day walks from Newnes – Part 1 starts with the history of the area with 13 walks that feature historical sites, and the second half of the book containing 14 walks that feature lookouts.



Their next book, Part 2, will cover walks that include cliff and rock formations, slots and passes. Then later down the track, Part 3 will entail walks around caves and overhangs, rainforest ravines, ledge and traverses. Still so much to come. There are about 70 of these walks in this series.

The area covered in Part 1 is Wolgan River on the western half and Mount Morgan on the eastern half. The maps required are Department of Land Topographical Map 1:25,000, Ben Bullen and Mount Morgan.

By the way, day walks mean that you can travel from Sydney, up to the walk, complete the walk in a few hours and get back to Sydney for the night if you wanted to.

The book encapsulates the history of the Wolgan Valley with reference to the major Wolgan Valley landholders. A lot of research has been done for this book and reading about the old town when it was in its glory, along with the original pictures of the township is fascinating.



Beagle Head
John Fox



Moving onto the walks, take note, there may be some by track, which can be easily navigated such as Newnes Industrial complex, Pipeline Track, and the Glow Worm Tunnel track, and some of which are offered to guests staying at the cabins. Other walks have faint or minor tracks or off-track walking along the way. Navigation is required on a lot of these walks and it is recommended that you know how to navigate before exploring this vast area. There are over 500,000 hectares in the Wollemi National Park that you could get lost in. Also take note that some of the walks documented have been exploratory walks, which require prior arrangement through private property access.

Each walk describes what the weather was like on the day of the walk, background notes, maps required, walk description, gear taken, comments, track notes and a snippet of the topographical map with GPS tracking overlaid. They are not "Track notes" but an account of the walk, like a chronological events of the day such as what time they set off, reached a certain point and what time they reached the cars etc so it feels like you are part of the exploration. Especially when they make a historical discovery, the way they explain the flora or even when they find a slot to ascend, like a secret passage they have been waiting and wanting to find in the area. The way the walks are written makes you want to join them to be a part of the discoveries, oh and which you are all welcome to join by the way. At the end of the notes there is an explanation of the total distance covered and ascent. Also included is a table of times, location, grid reference and elevation of their walk. Thus, with a map, compass and GPS, you could follow in their footsteps.

I have enjoyed a few of their exploratory walks in and around the Wollemi National Park, so I have first-hand experience on some of the areas they have documented. I must say the area is magical. And the way the Bush Explorers have documented and described these walks is brilliant. Anyone, with navigational skills can go and explore these areas. Well done to the Bush Explorers for such a well-researched and documented book on day walks in Newnes. So where is my compass, see you later. I will be out exploring if you need to contact me.

Invasive Species Fuelling Bushfires

Christine Schlesinger and Barry Judd

In January 2019, fires burned across a 100-kilometre length of the iconic Tjoritja National Park in the West MacDonnell Ranges, from Ormiston Gorge nearly to the edge of Alice Springs.

Buffel grass
Mark Marathon

These fires affected an area comparable to the [recent Tasmanian fires](#), but attracted relatively little national attention. This is partly because the fires in Tasmania were so unusual – but we believe the fires in central Australia were just as unexpected.

In the past, fires of this magnitude have tended to come after heavy rain that powers the growth of native grasses, providing fuel for intense and widespread fires. But our research highlights the [new danger posed by buffel grass](#), a highly invasive foreigner sweeping across inland Australia and able to grow fast without much water.

“Buffel grass crowds out other plants, creating effective “monocultures” ...

Far from being pristine, Tjoritja and the Western MacDonnell Ranges are now an invaded landscape under serious threat. Our changing climate and this tenacious invader have transformed fire risk in central Australia, meaning once-rare fires may occur far more often.

Buffel grass in Australia

Buffel grass is tough and fast-growing. First introduced to Australia in the 1870s by Afghan cameleers, the grass was extensively planted in central Australia in the 1960s during a prolonged drought.

Introductions of the drought-resistant plant for cattle feed and dust suppression have continued, and in recent decades buffel grass has become a ubiquitous feature of central Australian landscapes, including Tjoritja.

Buffel grass has now invaded extensive areas in the Northern Territory, Queensland, Western Australia and South Australia and is spreading into New South Wales and Victoria. It was legally [recognised as a key threat](#) in 2014, but so far only South Australia has prohibited its sale and created statewide zoning to enforce control or destruction.

Buffel grass crowds out other plants, creating effective “monocultures” – landscapes dominated by a single species. In central

Australia, where Aboriginal groups retain direct, active and enduring links to Country, buffel grass makes it hard or impossible to carry out important cultural activities like hunt game species, harvest native plant materials or visit significant sites.

But buffel grass isn't only a threat to biodiversity and Indigenous cultural practices. In January the Tjoritja fires spread along dry river beds choked with buffel, incinerating many large old-growth trees. Much like the alpine forests of Tasmania, the flora of inland river systems has not adapted to frequent and intense fires.

“Much like the alpine forests of Tasmania, the flora of inland river systems has not adapted to frequent and intense fires.

We believe the ability of the fires to spread through these systems, and their increased intensity and size, can be [directly attributed](#) to buffel grass.

Fire and buffel grass

Because of the low average rainfall, widespread fires in central Australia have been rare in the recorded past, only following unusual and exceptionally high rainfall.

This extreme rain promoted significant growth of native grasses, which then provided fuel for large fires. There could be decades between these [flood and fire cycles](#). However, since the Tjoritja (previously West MacDonnell Ranges) National Park was established in the 1990s, there have been three large-scale fires in 2001, 2011 and 2019.



Buffel Grass Impacts on APY Communities
Primary Industries and Regions South Australia

What has changed? The 2001-02 and 2011-12 fires both came after heavy rainfall years. In fact, 2011 saw one of the [biggest La Niña events on record](#).

Climate change predictions suggest that central Australia will experience [longer and more frequent heatwaves](#). And although total annual rainfall may stay the same, it's predicted to fall in fewer days. In other words, we'll see heavy storms and rainfall followed by long heatwaves: perfect conditions for grass to grow and then dry, creating abundant fuel for intense fires.

If central Australia, and Tjoritja National Park in particular, were still dominated by a wide variety of native grasses and plants, this might not be such a problem. But buffel grass was introduced because it grows quickly, even without heavy rain.

The fires this year were extraordinary because there was no unusually high rainfall in the preceding months. They are a portent of the new future of fire in these ecosystems, as native desert plant communities are being transformed into dense near-monocultures of introduced grass.

The fuel that buffel grass creates is far more than native plant communities, and after the fire buffel grass can regenerate more quickly than many native species.

So we now have a situation in which fuel loads can accumulate over much shorter times. This makes the risk of fire in invaded areas so high that bushfire might now be considered a perpetual threat.

Changing fire threat

In spinifex grasslands, traditional Aboriginal burning regimes have been used for millennia to renew the landscape and promote growth while effectively breaking up the landscape so old growth areas are protected and large fires are prevented. Current [fire management](#) within Tjoritja "combines traditional and scientific practices".

However, these fire management regimes do not easily translate to river environments invaded by buffel grass. These environments have, to our knowledge, never been targeted

for burning by Aboriginal peoples. Since the arrival of buffel grass, there is now an extremely high risk that control burns can spread and become out-of-control bushfires.

Even when control burns are successful, the rapid regrowth of buffel grass means firebreaks may only be effective for a short time before risky follow-up burning is required. And there may no longer be a good time of year to burn.

“... buffel grass was introduced because it grows quickly, even without heavy rain.”

Our [research](#) suggests that in areas invaded by buffel grass, slow cool winter burns - typical for control burning - can be just as, or more, damaging for trees than fires in hot, windy conditions that often cause fires to spread.

Without more effective management plans and strategies to manage the changing fire threat in central Australia, we face the prospect of a future Tjoritja in which no old-growth trees will remain. This will have a devastating impact on the unique desert mountain ranges.

We need to acknowledge that invasive buffel grass and a changing climate have changed the face of fire risk in central Australia. We need a coordinated response from Australia's federal and state governments, or it will be too late to stop the ecological catastrophe unfolding before us.



Christine Schlesingers

Senior Lecturer in Environmental Science and Ecology, Charles Darwin University

Barry Judd

Professor, Indigenous Social Research, Charles Darwin University

The article was first published in [The conversation](#) (an independent source of news and views, sourced from the academic and research community and delivered direct to the public) on 12 March 2019.

In the News

National Arboretum in Canberra adding new trails

In addition to the trails built for walkers in 2015, National Arboretum will be adding [another 12 kilometres](#) of trails through the arboretum's central and southern sections.



National Arboretum Canberra
David.moreno72

Rescuer/first responder successfully sues patient

A former Queensland police officer left traumatised by a fatal car accident scene has [successfully sued](#) the dead driver's insurer for more than \$1 million.

Metal contamination in Tasmanian WildernessWorld Heritage Area lakes

Australian National University [research](#) finds Tasmanian lakes among the world's worst for metal contamination.

Doctors in Scotland issuing prescription to go hiking

To help patients Scottish doctors started issuing "[nature prescriptions](#)" as an excellent treatment for chronic health issues.

Great American Rail-Trail Gateway Trails

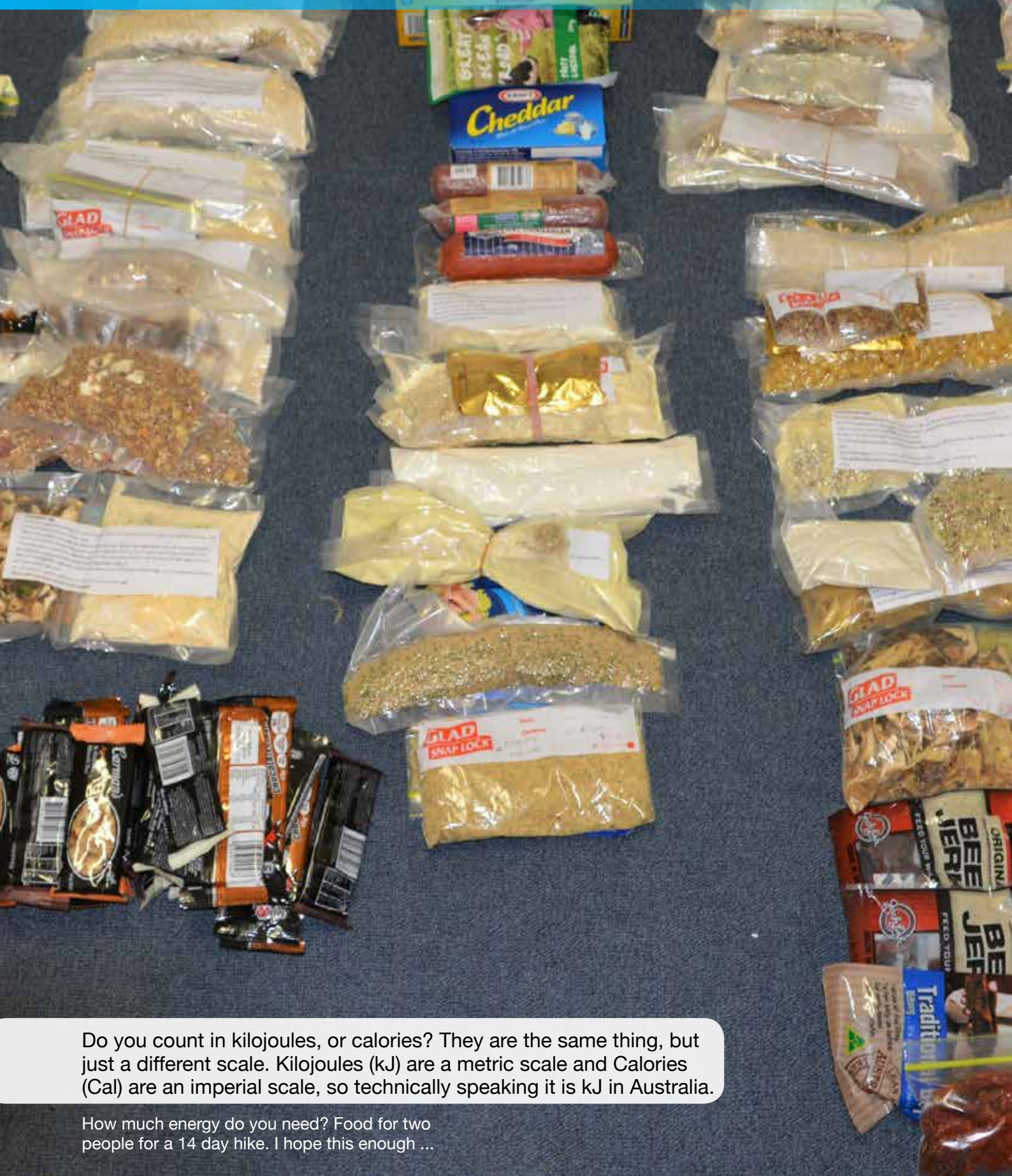
Comprising 12 states and the District of Columbia, [the route](#) includes 12 iconic "gateway" trails that make possible this grand vision of a nation connected by trails. Separated from vehicle traffic, travelers will be able to truly enjoy the landscape from Washington, D.C., to Washington State. At the moment the route is more than 50 percent complete.



Energy Needs

How to Climb That Hill

Sonya Muhlsimmer



Do you count in kilojoules, or calories? They are the same thing, but just a different scale. Kilojoules (kJ) are a metric scale and Calories (Cal) are an imperial scale, so technically speaking it is kJ in Australia.

How much energy do you need? Food for two people for a 14 day hike. I hope this enough ...

Kilojoules measure how much energy you intake out of your food or drink. Energy in is the food and drink consumed and energy out is the energy the body has used for basic functions like breathing, thinking, moving around and even sleeping. So remember this: Energy in equals Energy out. By the way, the brain uses up more energy than any other human organ, up to about 20% of the body's energy needs. Don't think too hard about this ... Have you ever been out on the trail and just had no energy at all, everything is an effort and that small hill feels like Mount Everest? That may be due to the food or kJs you have eaten, or more to the point, not eaten.

Your energy needs are determined by a number of things such as how old and how active you are and also your body composition among other things. So the energy out can change over time and it will be different to anyone else. The Australian Government recommends that the daily energy requirements are around 8700 kJ as a ballpark figure. It is a good starting point. But if you have a very active lifestyle, like all bushwalkers have, you need a lot more than that so it is easy to underestimate the amount of energy you are using and need. Thus not getting the right amount of kJs in our diet to allow us to climb that hill.

It is important to try to find the energy in equals energy out balance for a healthy lifestyle, otherwise your body weight can change and being underweight or overweight can lead to health issues either way. Check out [Eat for health](#) to find your ideal energy input.

This is quite technical, this energy thing for the body, but everything you need to know about how to get the right balance is in the labels of food, you just need a food science degree to understand it all, easy, right? Lucky though there is ample information on the web, just ask Dr Google a question and you will get an answer. Look at the [Australian Dietary Guidelines](#), [Eat for health](#) or [Nutrition Australia](#), among a plethora of information on the web.

Energy comes in three forms – carbohydrates, protein and fat. Oh, and alcohol can be counted as it is full of kJs, but alcohol is full of empty kJs. They are not a good form of energy as they do not contain minerals or vitamins at all, and alcohol gets converted straight into fatty acids and not into glycogen which is a stored carbohydrate the body can easily use and is the body's preferred energy source, not like fatty acids. So let's talk about carbs, fat and protein.

Carbohydrates

Carbohydrates provides 16 kJ/g, protein provides 17 kJ/g and fat provides 37 kJ/g, guess how much alcohol provides ... a whopping 27 kJ/g.

Carbohydrates are found in nearly everything – fruit, milk, vegetables and grains are just a few examples and they are the body's main source of energy, also very important for brain function. Your body breaks down the carbs to make glucose, which can be used straight away, or stored as glycogen for later, when you climb that hill. But the body has limited storage for glycogen so they need to be used up quickly. There are



simple and complex carbs, simple carbs are in energy drinks, fruit, honey and sugar for a few examples, complex carbs are in legumes, bread, potato and a number of different foods. The difference is how the body uses the energy the carbs provide, and complex carbs are the best for sustained energy. If the energy is not used up straight away, it is stored in the liver or muscles for later. Don't be a victim of a low carb diet fad, your brain need carbs. The Australian Dietary Guidelines recommend an intake in the diet of 45-65% from carbs.

Protein

Protein is found in fish, meat, egg, legumes nuts and seeds to say a few. Protein is made up of amino acids, the building blocks of life. Human body parts such as hair, skin, nails are also protein based. Once you eat protein-rich foods, the amino acids are released from the food and used to make adrenalin, enzymes, cell to cell communication, new protein like new skin cells, and also help the body to recover after our hike, also they provide some energy. Fad diets such as high

protein, low carb are not great. It is best to stick to a healthy, varied eating plan, and not a fad diet. The Australian Dietary Guidelines recommend an intake in the diet of 15-25% from protein.

Fat

There are three types of fat: saturated, monounsaturated and polyunsaturated. They differ in carbon chains. Saturated fats come from meat, dairy, coconut and palm oil and should be consumed in small amounts. Mono and polyunsaturated fats are found in nuts, fish and avocado to say a few and are the better fat to consume. Fats are stored really well in the body as fatty acids, and the energy fat provides is either used immediately or stored and used when needed, or just stored if you don't use it, if you know what I mean... The Australian Dietary Guidelines recommend an intake in the diet of 20-35% from fat.

Okay, so how much energy do I need again? This is the million dollar question, however this table can help.

Recreation	Kilojoules/30 minutes exercise 60 kilogram female	Kilojoules/30 minutes exercise 70 kilogram male
Mountain climbing	There are no accurate estimates available, but it may require 20-25,000 kJ per day.	
Running	1086 A	1200 A
Rock climbing	1380 B	1610 B
Hiking, with light pack	815 A	900 A
Cross country skiing, moderate	1982 A	2364 A
Canoeing	878 B	1025 B

NOTES Average female 40-years-old, 160 cm high; average male 42-years-old, 180 cm high. Figures obtained from (A) www.8700.com.au, and (B) <http://nutrition.bizcalcs.com/Calculator.asp?Calc=Calories-Burned-Today>.

Check out the calculators and plug in some figures for yourself. This will give you a guideline to see what your energy needs are for that certain adventure you have in mind. Also, once you work out your energy needs, you can work out a menu. Looking at the nutritional panel on the food you want to include in the menu you can do a rough calculation on what your energy inputs are and see if that equals your outputs, thus balancing the equation without even having a food science degree. Or if that is all too

complex and you just want a rough figure, make sure your food kJs for each meal is over 2000 kJ, plus snacks and drinks.

If you plan to do a multi-day hike, or are an athlete this is more important to get it right and work out a menu and do the maths to see if what you want to eat is suitable and ticks the percentage requirements in carbs, fat and protein. The energy in equals energy out in our diet can really make a difference in our health and well being, oh and climbing that hill. Mount Everest anyone?



Upcoming Events

Surf Coast Trek

6 April 2019 - Aireys Inlet to Torquay, Victoria

The Surf Coast Trek takes trekkers through a diverse range of landscapes including cliff scenery, scenic Ironbark bushland, and long sandy beaches. The event brings together fitness, fun and fundraising for the Kids Plus Foundation and the Give Where You Live Foundation. For more information and registration go to <http://www.surfcoasttrek.com.au/>

Hiking Expo 2019

14 April 2019 - Belair National Park, South Australia

An expo to celebrate the start of the South Australian bushwalking season. With the arrival of cooler autumn weather, hiking is an ideal outdoor activity. South Australia's bushwalking clubs and Walking SA are coming together to celebrate the occasion with a [unique day in Belair National Park](#).

The Bloody Long Walk

16 June 2019	Sunshine Coast
14 July 2019	Brisbane
28 July 2019	Newcastle
28 August 2019	Melbourne
8 September 2019	Sydney North
22 September 2019	Perth
13 October 2019	Canberra
3 November 2019	Adelaide
10 November 2019	Sydney East

35 kilometres of huffing, puffing and laughing out loud. It'll be a challenge, but it's a bloody great time! For more information and registration go to bloodylongwalk.com.au

Oxfam Trailwalker Australia

21-23 June 2019	Brisbane - Mount Glorious to Mount Coot-Tha
23-25 August 2019-	Sydney - The Hawkesbury to the Harbour

Oxfam Trailwalker is Australia's original charity team endurance event. Teams of four walk 100 kilometres or 50-55 kilometres of bush trail in under 24, 36 or 48 hours to tackle poverty. For more information and registration go to trailwalker.oxfam.org.au/

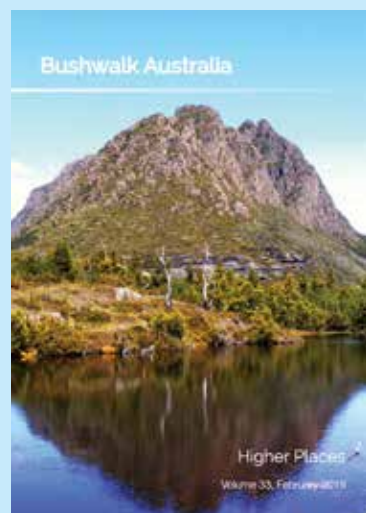
5 Lands Walk

22 June 2019, New South Wales

The 5 Lands Walk is a day-long festival along 10 kilometres of spectacular coastline. The 5 Lands Walk is a cultural, physical, spiritual and fun event brought to you as a gift from many of the communities of the NSW Central Coast. For more information and registration go to 5landswalk.com.au/



Bushwalk Australia



Higher Places

- > Australian Alps Walking Track
- > Tassie Winter Trip
- > Our High Country Lore
- > Vegan Food



Peak Promenade

- > Pindars Peak, Southern Ranges
- > Cordilleras in Peru
- > Brothers Point, Scotland
- > Staying hydrated on bushwalks



Ridges & Valleys

- > Buffalo, The Bluff and Mt McDonald
- > Skiing with the Bobs
- > Dehydrated meals for your trip



Ambling Adventures

- > An Abel challenge
- > Triglav Lakes, Slovenia
- > Pack hauling
- > Sleeping mats



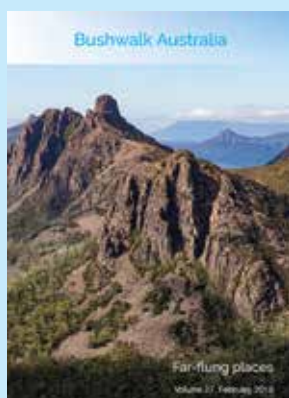
Act Now

- > Viking Circuit
- > A blogger's journey
- > Overland Track



Meandering Mountains

- > D'Alton Peaks, Grampians
- > Three mighty peaks
- > Sleeping bags



Wandering the World

- > 10 reasons to hike the PCT
- > The Spires via Holley Basin
- > From hiker to Globewalker



Bushwalking Heritage

- > Kidmans Hut Walk
- > Conquering the Giant
- > Dam madness



Discover & Explore

- > The Great River Walk
- > Mount Triglav, Slovenia
- > First aid kit



Wandering the World

- > 10 reasons to Hike The PCT
- > The Spires via Holley Basin



Longer and Wilder

- > The Western Arthurs
- > Bibbulmun Track



Summer Swelter

- > Desert Discovery Walk
- > Sun clothing



Walking Wisely

- > Six Foot Track
- > Choosing a GPS



Bushwalking Conservation

- > AAWT
- > High horses