

December 2024



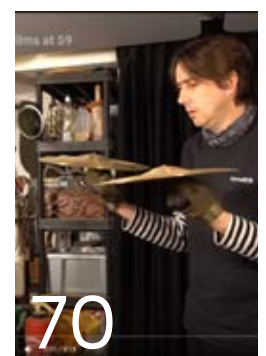
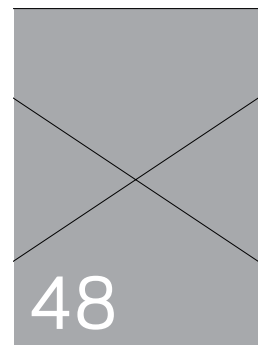
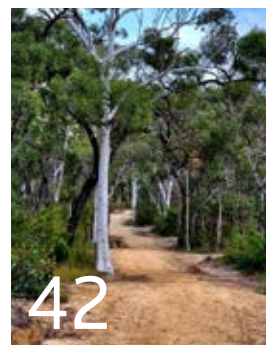
# Bushwalk

Nature's Nooks



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**Always Was  
Always Will Be  
Aboriginal Land**

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



# Editor's Letter



Hi all,

Wow, how is it December again!

In this edition, as in most, we celebrate the diversity of Australia's landscapes and the spirit of adventure. John takes us on a journey to rediscover the lost and overgrown Bruce's Walk in the Blue Mountains as he attempts to trace this historic route through time. Greg continues guiding us along the "Dreamtime to Eden" coastal walk, exploring the magnificent stretch from Coffs to Hastings. Mark scales the limestone and granite ridges of the Bald Head Walk Trail in WA, one of the best walks in the state, offering breathtaking views along the rugged coastline. Ian is back and reflects on the serene beauty of Rileys Mountain Trail, uncovering sandstone ridges and hidden treasures overlooking the Nepean River.

We also delve into photography in our stunning photo gallery and then get to look at the story behind Mark's fantastic blog, "The Life of Py", an awesome place to discover walks in WA, and his engaging "The Real Trail Talk" podcast. Terry is back with more gear tips, this time on shaving weight from your pack to make walking much more enjoyable. We also hear from Damien on how Foley's design of animal sounds in documentaries subtle effects storytelling and our relationship with the natural world.

Ohh, and a link to buy the 2025 calendar :)

As always, if you have a story, suggestion, or inquiry, please reach out to Eva. We'd love to feature your adventures in a future edition.

Happy walking and reading!

Matt :)

Matt McClelland (aka Wildwalks)

[matt@bushwalk.com](mailto:matt@bushwalk.com)

Cover image  
Day 4: Back Creek  
Bridge, Southwest  
Rocks after sunset  
Greg Keaney



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Editor  
Matt McClelland  
[matt@bushwalk.com](mailto:matt@bushwalk.com)



Design manager  
Eva Gomiscek  
[eva@wildwalks.com](mailto:eva@wildwalks.com)

Please send any articles, suggestions or advertising enquires to Eva. We would love you to be part of the magazine and we are here to help.

## Declaration

The opinions stated in articles are those of the authors and not of those involved in the production of this edition. If you are worried about transparency or any editorial aspect please either write to me or raise the issue on [Bushwalk.com](http://Bushwalk.com). The bushwalking community is a small world and paths often cross. To improve transparency I thought it would be helpful to list my main associations within the outdoor community.

I operate [Bushwalk.com](http://Bushwalk.com), [Wildwalks.com](http://Wildwalks.com) and [Overlandtrack.com](http://Overlandtrack.com), a number of other smaller websites (and related apps) and have written several walking guide books, published by Woodslane. I contract to National Parks Association NSW and I am a member of the Walking Volunteers. I have had contracts with state and local government departments regarding bushwalking and related matters. I have also partnered with a large number of other organisations in environmental campaigns. Any commercial advertising or sponsorship will be clear in the magazine.

## Warning

Like all outdoor pursuits, the activities described in this publication may be dangerous. Undertaking them may result in loss, serious injury or death. The information in this publication is without any warranty on accuracy or completeness. There may be significant omissions and errors. People who are interested in walking in the areas concerned should make their own enquiries, and not rely fully on the information in this publication.

The publisher, editor, authors or any other entity or person will not be held responsible for any loss, injury, claim or liability of any kind resulting from people using information in this publication.

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 [Bushwalk magazine](http://Bushwalk magazine).

# Bruce's Walk Rediscovered

Text and photos  
**John Walker**

---

A fragmented attempt to  
retrace the original Bruce's  
Walk.



Day 1: Wet forest in the vicinity of Lawson View Falls





Day 2: Looking back at some of my morning's handywork

**B**ruce's Walk originally began as a maintenance track in 1931. The Railway Department had agreed to supply electricity to the Blue Mountains Shire Council from the power station at Lithgow and a transmission line was put through from Blackheath to Lawson, with a track to provide maintenance access. The line went south from Blackheath, passed a little west of the Grand Canyon, through the bush east of Medlow Bath, across the ridges north of Katoomba, Leura and Wentworth Falls, across the gullies on the fringes of Bullaburra and into Lawson. The authorities then decided to promote the maintenance track as a walking trail, which was duly opened on 21 November 1931. The surveyor who planned the track was A. Bruce, as a result of which the track eventually became known as Bruce's Walk.

A pamphlet was published to publicise the walk, which passed through a variety of scenery, including glens and ridges. However, from World War II onwards, the track was forgotten and neglected. Parts of the track were also blocked off when the council constructed Lake Greaves in 1942 as a local water supply. Much later, however, a local

walker named Dick Rushton found a copy of the pamphlet published in 1931 and set out to clear and mark the track. In 1980 he led a party of walkers along the section of track between Bullaburra and Wentworth Falls, and in 1983 he created a written guide to the track.

By 1986, Bruce's Walk had come to the attention of two other walkers, Jim Smith and Wilf Hilder, who organised a group of volunteers to clear the track between Bullaburra and Wentworth Falls. In the process, they found many artefacts and features, including signs, shelter caves, seats and picnic tables. This part of the track was officially opened on 24 May 1986, by Alderman David Lawton. The opening was attended by 118 people, including Dick Rushton, who was by then eighty years old. (This opening was condemned by the National Parks and Wildlife Service and the Mayor of the Blue Mountains City Council.) Other stretches of the track, from Wentworth Falls to Medlow Bath, were also cleared by the volunteers and opened later in 1986. The track, however, is still patchy and largely without signposts.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Bruce's Walk, [https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Bruce%27s\\_Walk&oldid=973381474](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Bruce%27s_Walk&oldid=973381474)

## Overview

Focusing question – is it possible to follow the complete route of the original, as-built, Bruce's Walk today?

The short answer is no, but arriving at that conclusion took me on an interesting journey of discovery.

Over the years there has been occasional discussion on the bushwalk.com forums relating to Bruce's Walk in the NSW Blue Mountains, constructed in 1931. I had sometimes discussed it with others on volunteer remote bushcare trips. Now and then I had poked around bits of the old track, or crossed over it incidentally while heading somewhere else.

One weekend back in 2018 I had a light bulb moment - I decided that I wanted to explore the entire track, as originally built. I had read a bit of its history, written by people such as Blue Mountains bushwalker, author and proponent of historic walking tracks, Jim Smith, which piqued my curiosity. So I came up with a rough plan to complete the track when time permitted, as a series of solo day trips. At the start of this mini project, reminiscent of the reasons that the track came into being in 'the olden days', I left the car at home and caught the train to Wentworth Falls to start the first of three interesting walks. This became standard practice for each segment.



One weekend back in 2018  
I had a light bulb moment  
- I decided that I wanted to  
explore the entire track, as  
originally built.

The reason I broke the journey into three roughly equal sections was simply logistics and convenience. I needed a logical start and finish point for each section that was reasonably close to a railway station on the Blue Mountains line. I also wanted to take my

time getting to know the track better, and to allow for any navigation issues. In theory the whole thing could likely be done as an end-to-end trip by a fit and fast walker in one long day, or as an overnight walk, and probably has been done both ways many times, but neither of those was my objective.

I already owned some related documentation courtesy of a later edition of Jim Smith's (long out of print) guidebook, *'How to See The Blue Mountains'*. Eventually I noticed a reference on the [bushwalk.com](https://bushwalk.com) forums to a historic booklet titled *'The New Walk across the Blue Mountains'*, published by the NSW Railways Commissioner, price 1/-.



The reason I broke the journey  
into three roughly equal  
sections was simply logistics  
and convenience.

It was suggested that copies of this document were available from the National Library and perhaps other sources. I was pleased to find that this historic booklet is out of copyright and can be downloaded free from the [National Library](https://www.nsl.gov.au).

The booklet became the catalyst for my attempt to retrace the walk as documented, as closely as can be done today, given that development has destroyed it in many places.

I admired the lovely illustrations in the booklet and wondered how close to reality they were in 1931. There is wonderful scenery remaining today but definitely not the same views as those published. I assume continued growth, impacts from bushfires, subsequent regrowth and other events may well mean that those drawings could be historically accurate. They have a very open meadowy look though, with much less vegetation than I would have thought. I would really like to find some historic photos of those scenes taken around the period that the track was constructed.



**The Journey, a tale of opposing directions**  
**Day 1 - Bruce's Walk East**  
**Wentworth Falls to Lawson**  
**Distance: 9.90km**

OK, I acknowledge that I started in the middle of the track and finished at one of the end points. That was because I thought it would be more interesting, and I was already familiar with the initial gully. I arrived by train at the Blue Mountains village of Wentworth Falls and walked through local streets to access the bush start point at the end of Lawson View Parade. I then headed down the track towards Lawson, walking this first increment west to east, the opposite direction of travel to what appears to have been recommended in 1931. Subsequently I became compliant, and walked the other sections of the track east to west.

This first section covered possibly the most interesting remnant parts of the old track with various artefacts to be discovered. It was a nice mini adventure that I completed in a few hours, steep, loose descents and climbs notwithstanding. I had little trouble navigating despite the absence of any significant signage. I passed through several gullies (or 'glens'), occasionally negotiating a rickety old ladder or visiting a cave with rustic furniture. Some of these may be original features, I can't be certain, but they add to the ambience of the walk.

“

This first section covered possibly the most interesting remnant parts of the old track with various artefacts to be discovered.

I had lunch at the signposted 'Shelter Cave' with a rustic seat and bench overlooking a pretty view. I wondered how people enjoyed this place all those years ago before World War 2. After lunch I got going through some of the steepest and prettiest parts of Bruce's Walk. At one point, a loose, rickety metal ladder decided to part company with the small cliff it was attached to (or so I thought)



Rustic seat in the Shelter Cave

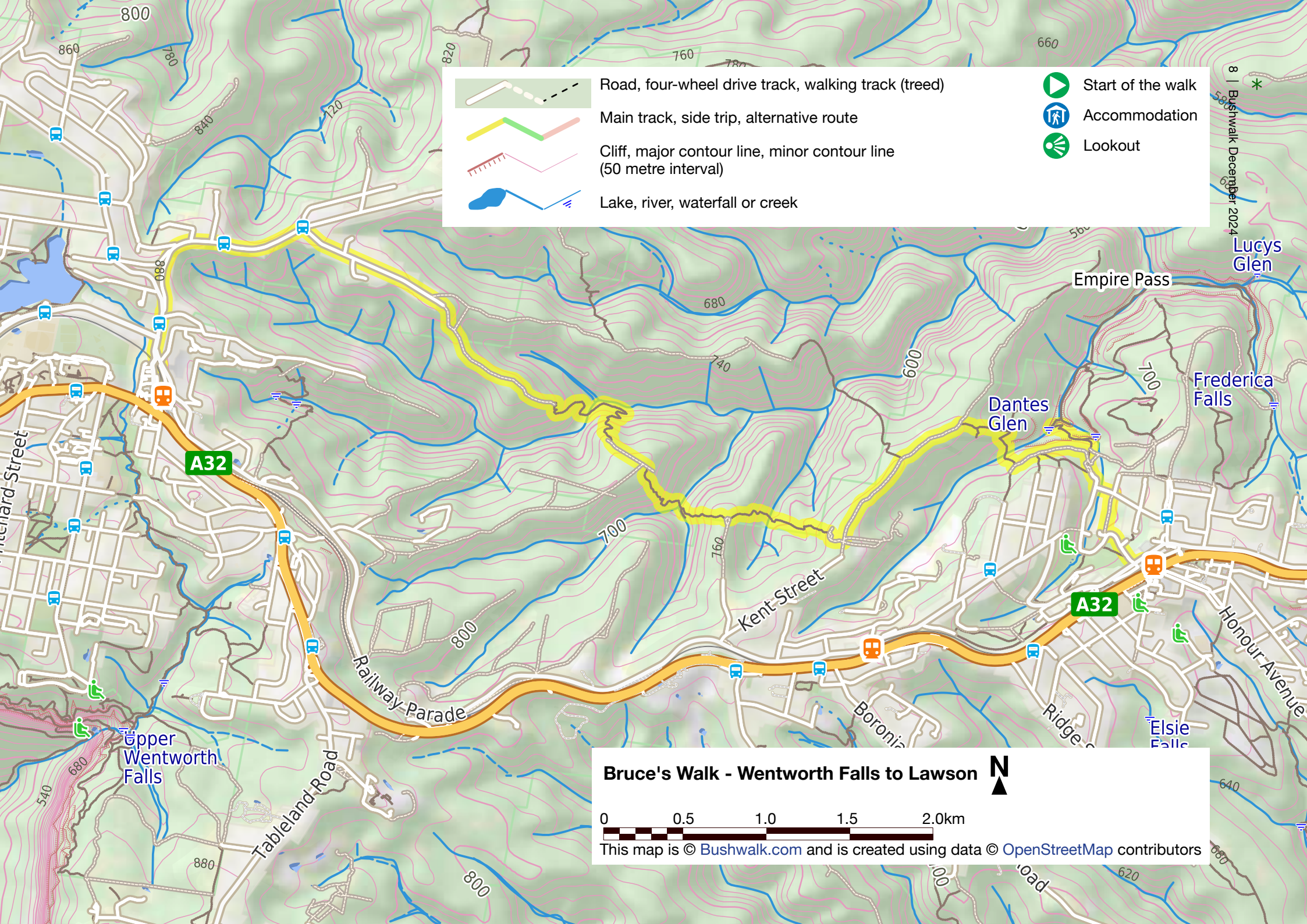


My lunch view at the Shelter Cave



The ladder of doom





	Road, four-wheel drive track, walking track (treed)		Start of the walk
	Main track, side trip, alternative route		Accommodation
	Cliff, major contour line, minor contour line (50 metre interval)		Lookout
	Lake, river, waterfall or creek		

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**Bruce's Walk - Wentworth Falls to Lawson**



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just as I was starting to descend it. That was somewhat exciting, as there was a big drop below the narrow ledge it occupied. Thankfully someone had installed some makeshift rigging to prevent the ladder from falling into the abyss. I gave thanks as I recovered my balance! Fortunately the next ladder that I encountered was more user friendly, despite its extremely weathered appearance.

I travelled through a number of landscape changes, from open forest to rocky descents with old cut stone steps, down to deep rainforest gullies and creek crossings. At one point I opted for a detour to find Lawson View Falls, but in hindsight I probably went the wrong way as a result of my non-compliant direction of travel. So I didn't find the falls but my unintentional walk through the wet forest environment was pleasant enough. And I have an excuse to return some other time.

Unfortunately the original line of the track has been altered in many places by development over the years. I carried maps, both paper and online, but used no other navigation aids. There are often small markers on trees, which help through sections of deadfall and so on. I had to hunt around the Kent Street/ Norfolk Street fire trail complex to locate the last (original) short section of Bruce's Walk into North Lawson. Eventually I found it, which then provided access for a brief side trip into, better known and more visited, Dantes Glen to finish before walking out to Lawson railway station for the trip home.



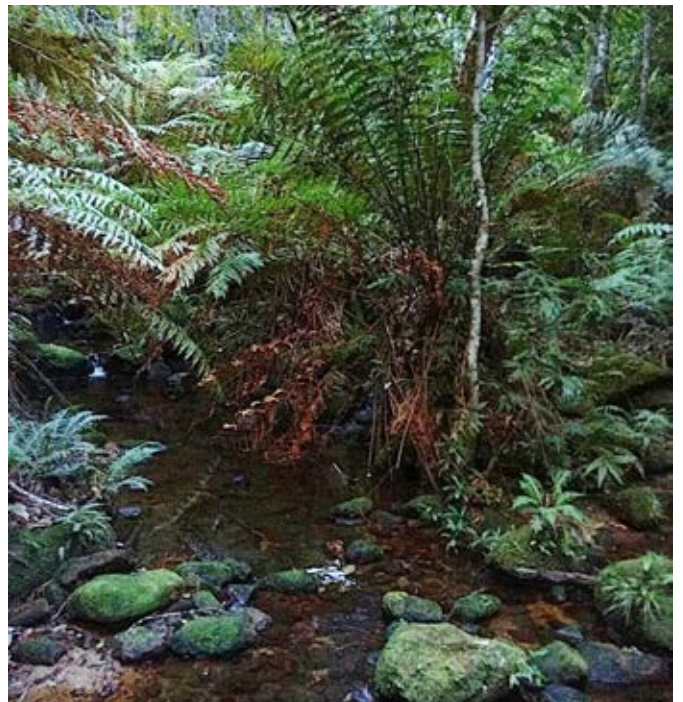
Historic timber ladder and seat – sturdier than it looks



Descending a steeper part of the track

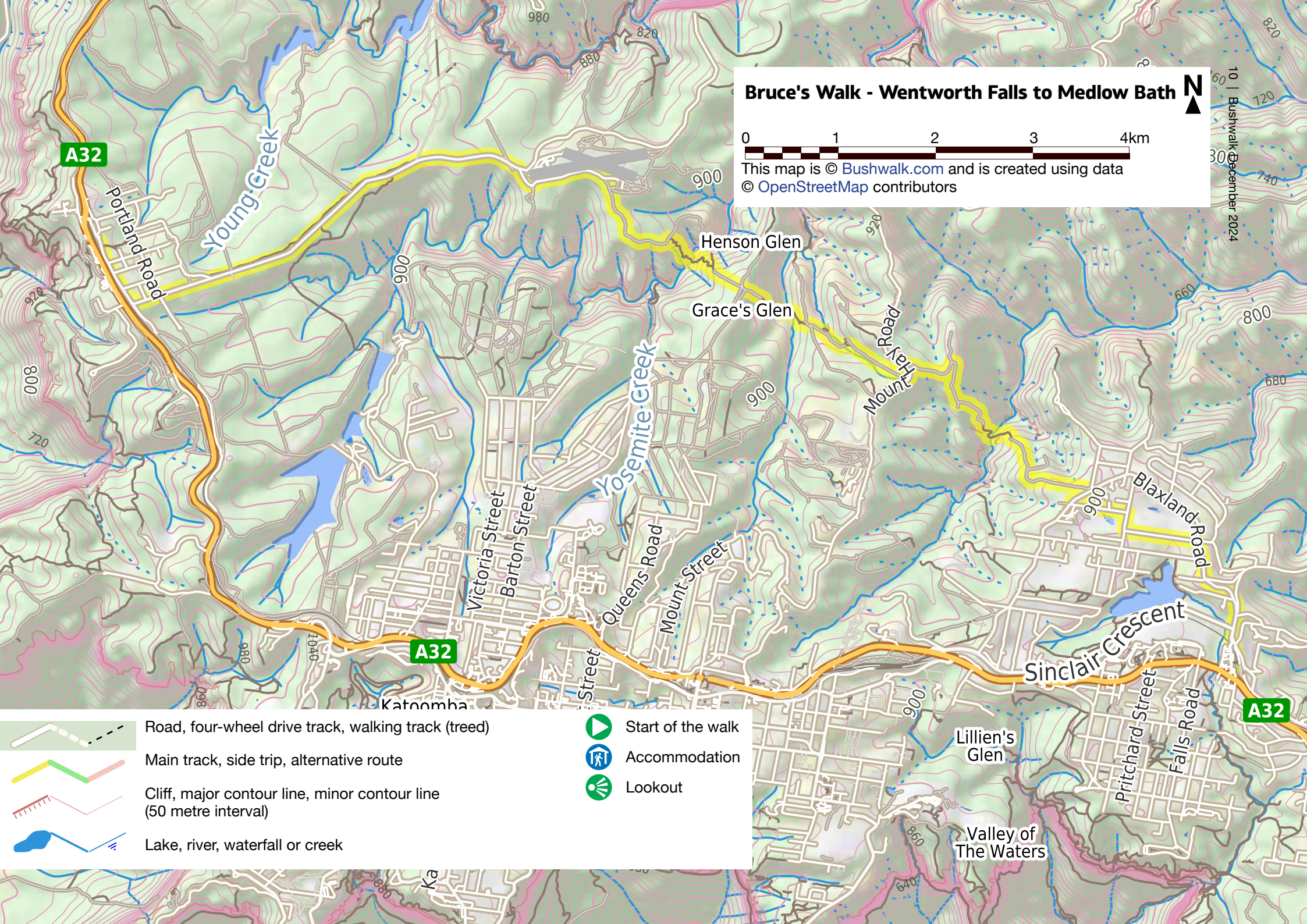


Traversing some nice open forest



Creek crossing






# Bruce's Walk - Wentworth Falls to Medlow Bath




0 1 2 3 4km

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Road, four-wheel drive track, walking track (treed)




Main track, side trip, alternative route




Cliff, major contour line, minor contour line (50 metre interval)




Lake, river, waterfall or creek



Start of the walk



Accommodation



Lookout



**Day 2 - Bruce's Walk Central**  
**Wentworth Falls to Medlow Bath**  
**Distance: 14.6km**

The weather forecast for the upper Blue Mountains looked brilliant, so I decided to jump on the train again and attempt the 'central' section of Bruce's Walk, as defined by me, from Wentworth Falls railway station to Medlow Bath railway station. After getting the usual road walking out of the way, all went well crossing the three upper gorges of Wentworth, Govetts and Katoomba creeks, with no significant navigation issues. I had been studying documentation and maps of Bruce's Walk on and off all the preceding week, which possibly helped my ease of progress.

“

I had to substitute hanging on to plants, tree roots, rocks and so on, with a bum slide or two.

There were a few mini adventures negotiating steep obstacles where things have become very eroded and historic infrastructure has fallen into disrepair. Descending into the valley of Katoomba Creek handrails, steps,



In Wentworth Creek gorge



Descending into upper Govetts Creek at Grace's Glen



The way ahead through the valleys of Govetts and Katoomba Creeks



foot rungs etc were now missing. I had to substitute hanging on to plants, tree roots, rocks and so on, with a bum slide or two. By the end of the day my knees were killing me from the steep ups and downs, and I developed a toe blister over the 14 or so kilometres, but it was definitely a fun day and worth doing. In some ways this was possibly the best day of the three, although each of them had a lot to offer, and it was significantly different from the others.

The only real downside of the day was the amount of road walking involved at each end, but that couldn't be avoided. I finished the actual Bruce's Walk section at the edge of the Katoomba airfield, and I then walked out to Medlow Bath station along Grand Canyon Rd/Rutland Rd. Sadly there were fences and signs everywhere to the west of the road that prohibit entry to the Blackheath special area, where the next part of the original track once traversed. I met a wallaby as I finished the trail section approaching the airfield, my only warm-blooded companion on the walk. I didn't see another soul all day.



The ascent from Govetts Creek looks clear ahead



A friendly reminder



The descent into Katoomba Creek has seen better days



**Day 3 (much later) - Bruce's Walk West  
Medlow Bath to Blackheath Cemetery  
Distance: 16.4km**

After a significant break I completed my last, westernmost, section of Bruce's Walk in July 2019, as best as I could approximate it. This was definitely the most difficult section to try and recreate. Part of the original track is now submerged under the dammed Lake Greaves, or is off limits within the surrounding water catchment special area, or has been obliterated by urban development around the township of Blackheath. I had researched the [WaterNSW website](#) about getting access permission for the Blackheath Special Area/ catchment zone enclosing Lake Greaves, but it became clear that they won't grant access for personal historical interest or research.

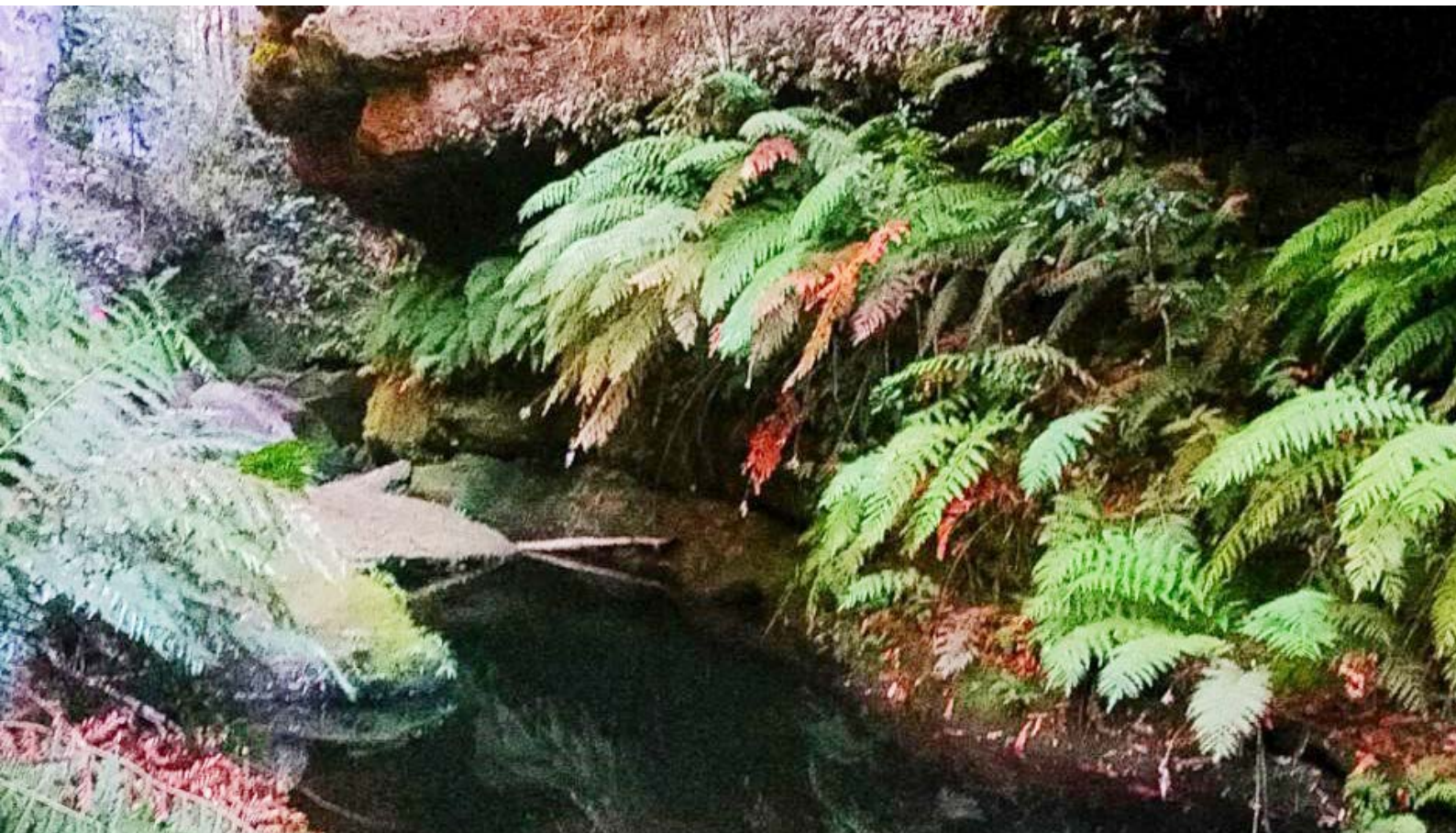
So I proceeded with the next best option – invent a nice walk, geographically as close as possible to the original route. I decided to access the Grand Canyon via the Old Point Pilcher track, exit at Neates Glen then aim to pick up the rest of the walk remnants via the power lines through Blackheath, as it



The track into the Grand Canyon is pretty good



Nice old stone steps descending to Grand Canyon track



In the famous Grand Canyon

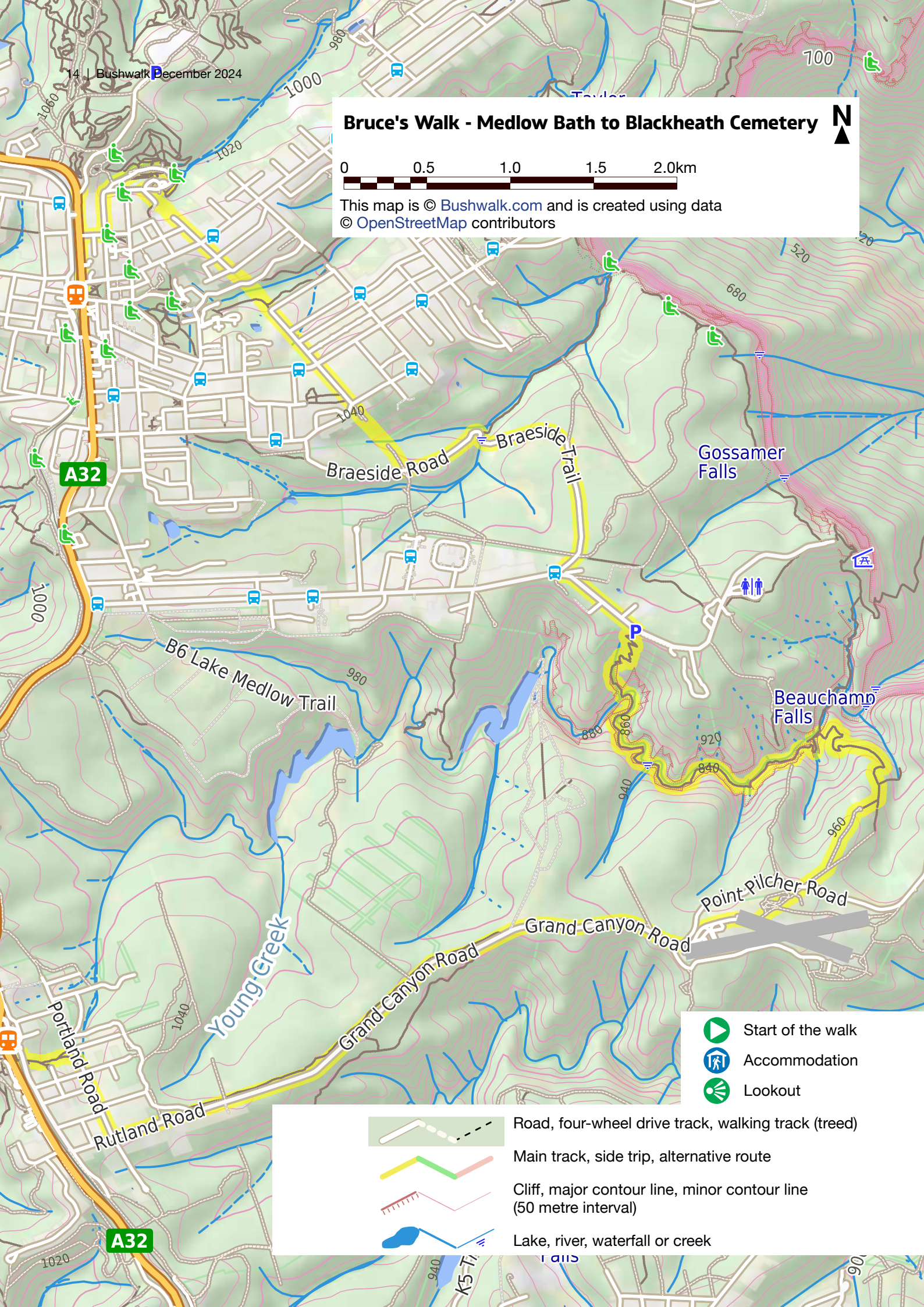


## Bruce's Walk - Medlow Bath to Blackheath Cemetery



0 0.5 1.0 1.5 2.0km

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- Start of the walk
- Accommodation
- Lookout



Road, four-wheel drive track, walking track (treed)



Main track, side trip, alternative route



Cliff, major contour line, minor contour line (50 metre interval)



Lake, river, waterfall or creek

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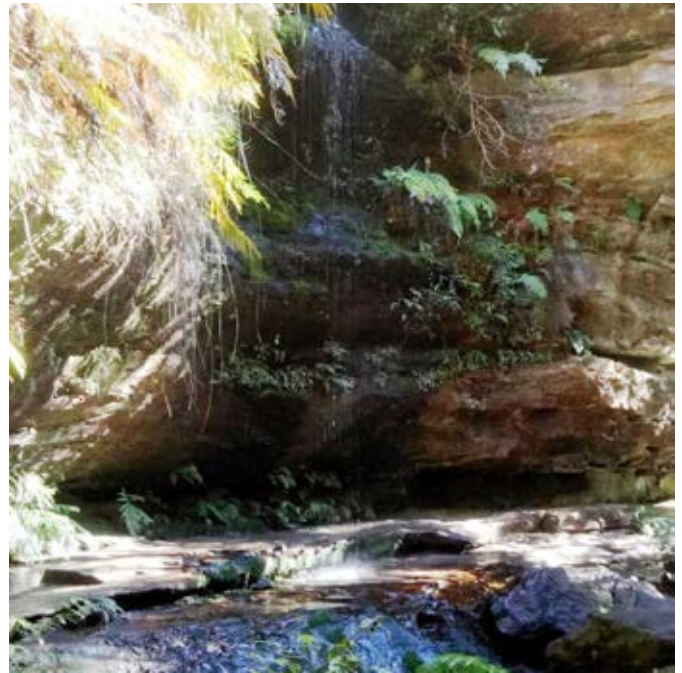


was mapped in 1931. I had previously been through some of those fragmented bush pads in the Braeside area, partly within and partly adjacent to the national park. I thought at least some of it would be doable, maybe all of it. I knew that I would have to deviate via the nearest fire trail or street where houses or other infrastructure now occupy the original route.

“

That track was in very good condition, having been given some TLC from a volunteer/ NPWS working party.

Again I arrived by train and walked from Medlow Bath railway station out past the Katoomba airfield via my previous end point, and picked up the old Point Pilcher track, descending into the Grand Canyon. That track was in very good condition, having been given some TLC from a volunteer/ NPWS working party. As someone who gets nervous changing a light globe I found one short narrow ledge over an exposed big drop quite hairy while descending to the Grand Canyon track. Many others probably wouldn't be worried by it but it took me some deliberation



Small waterfall in the upper Grand Canyon



Some nice bush and swamp in places



Hitting the Braeside Trail



and care to proceed. Anyway, I managed to get through in one piece and join the familiar, and always stunning, Grand Canyon route through to Neates Glen that I'd walked many times before. I again acknowledge that none of this was part of the original route of Bruce's Walk, just the nearest approximation I could lawfully dream up and still have an enjoyable walk in the bush (mostly).

“

I again acknowledge that none of this was part of the original route of Bruce's Walk, just the nearest approximation ...

From Neates Glen I joined the Braeside Trail network through to Cleopatra Street, those being the features that most closely aligned with the old maps that I'd researched. I followed some unmarked, informal pads through remnant bushland between the urban street sections, which made for more interesting walking than constantly looking at houses. These pads were a welcome distraction as they were often through fairly thick bush with no views of civilization. I could pretend to be at some remote location many kms away.

“

I found that it couldn't be done as I'd planned, but eventually I worked out an alternate way to the original finish near the cemetery.

Eventually I arrived near the Blackheath Rhododendron Gardens, and then became somewhat geographically confused while trying to stay as true as possible to the original route. I found that it couldn't be done as I'd planned, but eventually I worked out an alternate way to the original finish near the cemetery. A less inspiring end than the other sections but on the day it was a welcome sight, and significant because it marked the

successful completion of my objective. And I'm sure that the residents didn't mind my presence and quiet celebration!

### Navigation

The concept of the original track was that it followed the power lines installed for the railway at the time. Hard to believe these days but they actually used that as a selling point for the walk, the power lines being always in view, as a navigation handle. Where I could still follow the original track alignment they were useful as an indicator of whether I was where I should be. I didn't use any GPS tracking, but the overall route from the Blue Mountains town of Lawson to my western finishing point at the Blackheath cemetery can be 'discovered' by experienced walkers, although it definitely helps to have some local knowledge, especially for the western end. It helped that I was able to draw on past experience in the area.

In addition to historic maps and documentation, some remnant parts of Bruce's Walk are marked on the [NSW SIX](#)



I need to find a way up there





The final destination - in more ways than one

[maps online topographic mapping tool](#), and on some versions of corresponding paper topographic maps. Comparing those resources with the historic maps it was relatively easy to define an approximation of the 1931 walk, allowing for deviations around development and infrastructure that have obliterated the original route. [Open Street Maps \(OSM\)](#) also covers the walk, but not necessarily following my exact route. Most online resources, understandably, designate the western end as Medlow Bath and don't attempt to progress to the original finish, which is much further on at Blackheath.

I took paper topo maps as a reference, but on the ground I mainly used Tom Brennan's Ozultimate view of SIX maps, in offline mode on my phone. That worked well for me, in combination with just eyeballing features and so on. Really just seat of the pants navigation

in fine weather on each of the three separate days it took me to complete the whole distance.

### Final thoughts

The last few kilometres of my fragmented re-creation of the walk couldn't be classed as bushwalking. But they did contribute to an approximation of an end-to-end Bruce's Walk that can still be done today, if you're keen enough. Overall none of the walking was difficult and I found most of it enjoyable. If you decide to follow my route you probably won't have any company except for the Grand Canyon, which is very busy these days. Try to be in there early or late to avoid the hordes. What I don't know is how my whole route fared following the disastrous 2019/20 bushfires. It may not be affected but a challenge remains to go and have a look.



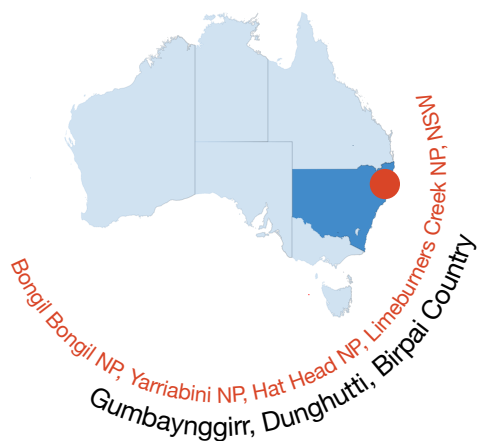
# Coffs to Hastings Coast Walk

Text and photos  
**Greg Keaney**

*Not all those who wander are  
lost*

*JRR Tolkien*

Greg is walking from  
'Dreamtime to Eden' along  
the length of the NSW coast.  
Recent articles in Bushwalk  
magazine have detailed the  
first three sections of his walk  
(see [June 2024](#), [August 2024](#)  
and [October 2024](#) editions).



Day 4: Take your time





Corambirra Point from Boambee Beach

In this article Greg recounts the 4th stage of the coast walk; 8 days and 167 km from Coffs Harbour to Port Macquarie.

## Introduction

### 8 days - 167 km

I'm doing a 'thousand mile, thousand beaches' NSW coastal 'Camino', aiming to walk every beach and every headland of this magnificent coast. I do the walk in stages and this article recounts Stage 4 from Coffs Harbour to Port Macquarie on the Hastings River. The stage took me 8 days of moderate walking with a few majestic water crossings, lots of spectacular headlands and, of course, a plethora of long, lonely, stunning, isolated beaches.

### Day 1: Coffs Harbour and Sawtell to Urunga 19km, 6 hours (with a kayak crossing of the mouth of the Bellinger and Kalang Rivers)

Sawtell was the jumping off point for the first full day of this stage after a short saunter the previous afternoon along Gallows and Boambee Beaches. Because of repairs to the pedestrian bridge at Boambee, I had to do this as an 'out and back', although by the time

of publication the Boambee Bridge crossing should be well and truly repaired, and this section could be done as a through walk.

This first day of walking (and kayaking) was a day to remember. Started with a perfect sunrise at Bonville Lookout at Sawtell after a 'first light' stroll along the beach. Then it was down to Bonville Creek to find a way across.

I've written before about the momentous 'first step' thing – but a cold-water, chest deep crossing in the middle of winter with an icy wind blowing became more of an enterprise than a step. I 'cased the joint' a lot more than was required for what was, ultimately, a fairly straightforward crossing near the stairs, creekside of the Caravan Park.

After the crossing of Bonville Creek was complete, I re-robed and stepped onto a perfect span of isolated beach. First was a lovely 7km stretch of sand along Bonville and Bongil Beaches. I arrived at beautiful Bundagen Headland, where Bundageree Creek enters the sea coastside of the 'intentional' community there. The Bundagen



cooperative/commune was established in 1981, and it seemed, from my quick walk through, to be a mighty fine group of folk living in a superb location and treating their profound blessings with deep respect.

I next made my way along beautifully isolated North Beach which extends for about 9km from Bundageree Creek to the northern entrance wall of the Bellinger River. I diverted to the Bongil track for a short distance to see Tuckers Cottage and the Bluff Lookout before returning to the sand and a view of Tuckers Rock. Mr Tucker has a cottage, a rock, a nob and an island named after him – not bad for a cedar getter working in the Bellinger valley in the 1860s! He must have been an enterprising chap along with a misguided, imperial belief in ‘terra nullius’.

After a café lunch in the pretty riverside town of Mylestom, I walked to the mouth of the Bellinger and Kalang Rivers, where my ‘legendary’ mate, Garry, had carefully towed a spare kayak across the river mouths to pick me up. It was a slightly challenging paddle across the rivers, with the combination of an



Day 1: Made it across chilly Bonville Creek

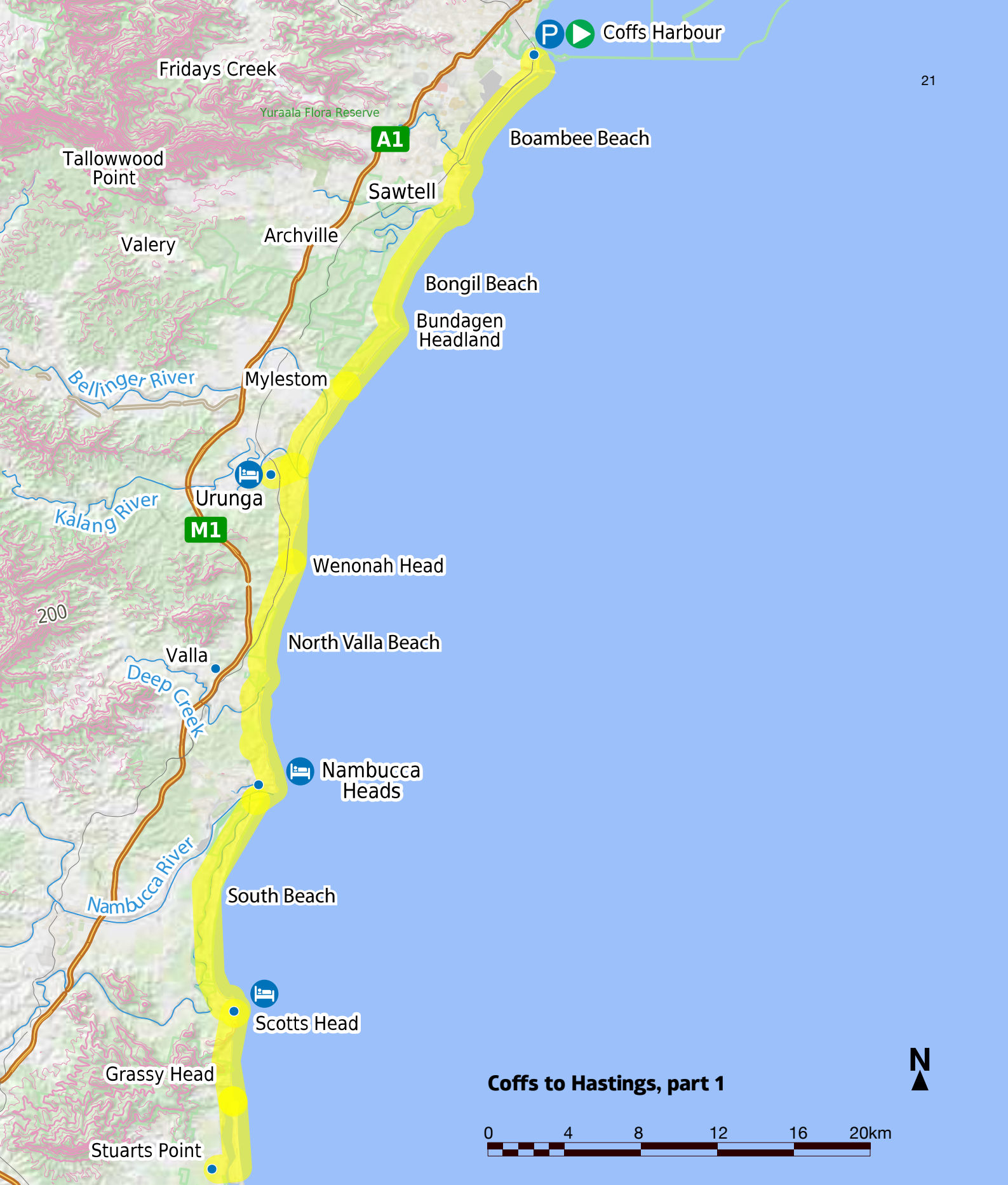


Day 1: North Beach (Bundageree)



Day 1: Sawtell Beach from Bonville Head Lookout





Road, four-wheel drive track, walking track (treed)



Main track, side trip, alternative route



Cliff, major contour line, minor contour line (50 metre interval)



Lake, river, waterfall or creek



Start of the walk



Accommodation



Lookout



incoming tide, a big swell and a very strong wind (as well as the two submerged rock walls that are supposed to 'train' the rivers but can be precarious for a novice kayaker like me). I was happy (and relieved) to get across without any real dramas and it was a wonderful way to complete the day's walk. Anyone planning to do this part of the walk without a mate with a spare kayak might note that it is also possible to catch a bus around the river mouths at 2.30 pm on weekdays from Mylestom to Urunga.

I stayed the night in Urunga at the historic Ocean View Hotel. It was a perfect pub for my needs. It has been tastefully renovated but it remains wonderfully 'old school' and must be one of the most reasonably priced accommodation options on the coast at only \$50 a room the night I stayed (telephone bookings only). A hot meal, a cold beer and an extremely satisfied coastal pilgrim.



Day 1: Mylestom

### **Day 2: Urunga to Nambucca Heads 22km, 6 hours**

I checked the weather app before setting out and was a little concerned about the predicted 40 knot (70 km/h) southerly winds. I left at first light and when I got to the magnificent 3km Urunga footbridge all was perfectly calm.



Day 2: Urunga Boardwalk





## Day 2: Schnapper Beach

There's a moral there somewhere – the early bird gets the worm, don't believe everything you read, always look on the bright side of life... or, maybe, I'm just a lucky fellow and the gods and goddesses of wind and waves and weather looked kindly on their wandering coastal pilgrim.



There's a moral there somewhere – the early bird gets the worm, don't believe everything you read, always look on the bright side of life...

Urunga means 'long white sands' in the language of the local Gumbaynggirr people, and I loved its amazing boardwalk (which would make a fine walk in and of itself) and its long and white(-ish) sands. Urunga Beach becomes Hungry Head and then Schnapper Beach before lovely Wenonah Head. After rounding the headland, North Valla Beach

stretched 6km southwards to Valla Head and then Mid and South Valla and Hyland Beaches extended a further 5km to Nambucca Heads Main Beach. Beilbys and Shelly Beaches and Wellington Rocks completed the day's coast walk, before a pleasant denouement along the V wall and its many painted stones on the northern shore of the Nambucca River.

The wind did pick up considerably as the day went on, but the many small headlands and rocky outcrops between Urunga and Nambucca provided some shelter as well as perfect views and resting spots along the way. Beach walking is definitely more difficult into



Day 2: Great spot for a rest



the teeth of the wind but, combined with a dramatic southerly swell, it does add plenty of 'action' to the scenery.

There were no real obstacles on this day of the walk, especially at the bottom of the tide. It was shoes off for a knee-deep wade at Deep Creek, Valla, which seemed to amuse the resident pelicans. It was a particularly beautiful stroll from Valla to Nambucca, although I note that this would be a much more difficult walk up in the dunes at a full tide. There are parallel fire trails in the swale behind the dunes, but these are very soft sand and would be much more taxing than the walk in the 'goldilocks zone' of firm wet sand near the water.

I spent the night at Garry's in Valla, who, as well as being a wonderful kayak coach, was also a great source of information about this part of the coast.

### **Day 3: Nambucca Heads to Scotts Head 15 km (and a boat ride across the Nambucca River)**

Day 3 was another superb day's saunter for an extremely contented coastal pilgrim.

I started the day with a 'tinny' boat ride across the gorgeous Nambucca River. Shoutout to Grant and Nambucca Boatshed & Cafe for a perfect way to cross, even in less than ideal conditions. The boat ride is a great investment at \$25 and once across the river, pristine South Beach awaits. It has to be one of the finest wild beaches on the coast. Sea and shorebirds everywhere, pelicans and gannets, terns and little terns and pied oyster catchers and a pair of my totem bird for the coast walk, the white-bellied sea eagle. Sensational!

South Beach (also somewhat confusingly called Forster Beach on Google Maps) is one in a series of longish beaches on this part of coast. It's about 12km long and faces southeast for much of the way from the Nambucca River mouth, before sweeping around to face north in the lee of Scotts Head. Warrell Creek runs parallel for most of its length and there are no crossing points until Scotts Head – so once you cross the Nambucca River you are absolutely and completely committed!



Day 2: North Valla



Day 3: Tinny across the Nambucca River



Day 3: South Beach looking back to Nambucca Heads



Day 3: South Beach towards Scotts Head



With no road access or housing anywhere north of Scotts Head, there was not a soul around - just a perfect, perfect stretch of beach melding into Scotts Head Main Beach. It might not be quite as idyllic in peak season, as there is 4WD access at the southern end of the beach, but simply perfect for my meander in the winter sunshine. It was a little less than my usual quota so I took my time (well, I always do - it's all about the journey as the self-help books relentlessly remind us).

It was still quite windy, along with a powerful southerly swell. It was great to have a bit of dramatic wind and ocean, 'Sturm und Drang' sensory overload to accompany a solitary saunterer, even though it did seem to push the whales a lot further offshore and made the walking a tad chillier and more demanding.

Scotts Head is a gorgeous coastal holiday spot and a bit of a surfing mecca when the conditions are right. I stayed in a beautiful Airbnb granny flat. After a day of southerly gales in my face, a long, hot bath and nice cold beer went down very well indeed!



... it's all about the journey as the self-help books relentlessly remind us.



Day 4: Little Beach

### Day 4: Scotts Head to South West Rocks 22km, 9 hours

Day 4 was a day of mighty swells and cliffs and winds and beaches and rivers. Dramatic, intense and thrilling don't even come close!

Heading south from 100m high Scotts Head the coast feels incredibly wild, despite the houses perched bravely on a few of the clifftops. The winds and thunderous swells made the rock platforms along the way a bit precarious, but it was absolutely top notch sauntering.

On a day of such magnificence, it's hard to select particular highlights but the newish Goanna trail which starts from Waki Beach just south of Scotts Head certainly makes the



Day 4: Walking to Waki



Day 4: Sunshine on my shoulders



cutoff. (Note that Waki Beach is not named on Google Maps, but it is immediately to the south of Little Beach). I'd also like to give a shoutout to Wayne, a perfect Airbnb host, who checked the walk out, took numerous pics of the signage, confirmed details with his surfer son and thus put me onto the trail after I had mentioned my plans the previous afternoon. Thanks Wayne, deeply appreciated. While the natural beauty of our coast is the main driver of my walk, I equally love the interactions with so many great folk along the way - everyone's in a kind and generous mood at the beach!



Day 4: Follow the pink ribbons and all will be well...

The Goanna Trail is an absolutely stunning cliff top walk, probably grade 5 in difficulty, if not length, but some of the best benches in perfect viewing spots I have seen on the coast so far. There is interesting interpretive signage and pink ribbons where needed (put in place by the local hiking group I believe) to guide you through the trickier bits. Just incredible walking and views and probably one of the best 1-2 hour walks on the coast. For anyone in the neighbourhood this is a coast walk to get the heart (and soul) pumping!

The Goanna trail comes out onto Middle Beach with a 2km stroll to Middle Head. This smallish headland represented a bit of a challenge with rock climbs and descents and some dense bush - once again some thoughtful pink ribbons were a guide, but it was very slow going. If it proved too difficult, note that it is also possible to walk back to Grassy Head Road about a km from the headland, and then walk via the road to 'Scratchies' (because you have to scratch around to catch a wave there) and the northern end of Grassy Beach. Grassy Beach had some perfect waves in the lee of Grassy Head today, but definitely for expert surfers only. Waves were huge and powerful, and I winced several times watching some brave (or foolhardy) locals getting gloriously 'chundered'!



Day 4: Another great view on the Goanna Trail





Day 4: Middle Head with Pandanus



Day 4: So much beauty

Grassy Head itself has a few walking tracks to a small lookout but, while only 30m high it seemed impossible to get across to Stuarts Point Beach due to the almost sheer vertical cliffs on its southern side. I couldn't find the right friendly pink ribbons so I retreated and used a 4WD access point at the south end of the caravan park to then come out on long, lonely Stuarts Point Beach, which extends 9km all the way to the 'new' mouth of the Macleay, north of South West Rocks (until the 1890s the mouth was near Grassy Head).

Sadly, the extreme weather meant that my boat ride across the Macleay had to be aborted due to the wind and waves. I made a diversion across the pretty footbridge on the Macleay Arm at Stuarts Point where I could get a pickup from my support crew. Matt at [South West Rocks Estuary Charters](#) is able to offer a river crossing service when the weather is not so extreme, and this would be a wonderful way to cross the Macleay.

It was a pleasure to be in South West Rocks and I enjoyed a short sunset ramble along its beautiful riverside boardwalk and reflected on yet another day of the coast at its finest. Southward Ho!



Day 4: Footbridge across the Macleay Arm near Stuarts Point



Day 4: Horseshoe Bay Beach, Southwest Rocks







## Day 5: South West Rocks to Hat Head 30km, 10 hours

What a day! Just when I thought the coast walk couldn't possibly get any better... it did... again!

It was serene walking at first light from South West Rocks (so-called because it sits southwest of Laggies Point) to Trial Bay Gaol along Front Beach. The beach curves for about 4km, facing northeast then north and finally west, terminating against Laggies Point. Once around Laggies Point, I had coffee with the kangaroos at Trial Bay and then took the superb Monument Hill trail over to Little Bay before the 'up hills and down dales' track to Smoky Cape via the Gap Beach, North Smoky Beach and the 'Ledge'.

For those who fancy a 'trail' as opposed to a beach walk on the coast, the Monument Hill track, combined with the Little Bay and Smoky Cape ones is an absolute pearler. You can add a detour to sublime Gap Beach. This has a steep descent on the north side, and likewise a steep ascent via a 4WD track on the south side, but an untouched 'perfect' beach is your reward. The National Parks signage says it's a 4 hour walk minus the detour to Gap Beach, and for amblers like me that's about right. Probably 'marching bands' could do it in a lot less but why would you want to hurry through paradise? Tree ferns and subtropical rainforest and pretty glades and gorgeous culverts and incredible views – just amazing!



Day 5: Coffee with the kangaroos, Trial Bay



Day 5: Smoky Cape and South Smoky Beach



Day 5: Gap Beach



Day 5: Southwest Rocks dawn



There were a few friendly folks in 4WDs cruising the beach or parked up for fishing, but otherwise it was just the firm, flat sand, the incredible Pacific Ocean (not so pacific today) and moi.

I was pretty exhausted by the time I arrived at magical Hat Head, where I stayed for the night in a quaint little 'container' Airbnb. It had a gorgeous outdoor bath with a wonderful view of the night sky. It was crystal clear and the Milky Way was 'full fat unpasteurised'. I soaked in the hot water looking at the amazing starry, starry night and reflected on another magnificent day on the Dreamtime to Eden quest while pondering the classic Tolkien quote, 'Not all those who wander are lost'. I looked forward to the morrow's walk from Hat Head to Crescent Head with even more sacred coast to celebrate on the way to one of Australia's top surfing spots. Lucky me!

### **Day 6: Hat Head to Crescent Head 22km, 7 hours**

I don't want to sound too much like the 'everything is awesome' Lego guy but wow! Day 6 was just another 'to die for' batch of headlands and beaches. I started out with the 3 km Korogoro track around the 'head' of Hat Head. It was another exceptionally scenic clifftop walk with plenty of kangaroos to add to the magic. The track is listed as grade 4 but there was nothing too difficult for anyone



Day 5: Hat Head



Day 6: Korogoro Track

of average fitness, although hiking shoes or trainers with decent grip would be highly recommended.

I then moved on to the Connors track which was more 'oscar winning' material. I ambled past perfect O'Connors Beach and Kemps



Day 6: Third Beach, Connors Track





Day 6: Looking south from Hungry Gate over Killick Beach

Corner before touching down on the gentle sands of Hungry Gate and Killick Beach. The signage for Connors walk says 6.7km return but I would suggest planning plenty of extra time as it's a headland walk not to be missed.

I had lunch at the northern tip of 14km long Killick Beach and then had a long afternoon beach stroll past the Hat Head sand dunes, Ryan's Cut, Richardson's Crossing and Killick Creek before finally wending my way to Crescent Head where I was stopping for the night.

Once again, I was accompanied over the headland and onto the beach by a beautiful pair of sea eagles who put on a bit of a swooping mating show just for me. It was just like those on the nature documentaries with their perfectly synchronised, entwined soaring and gliding and diving and avian acrobatics... what a thrill!

I have been to Crescent Head many times over the years, as it is a renowned surfing destination, but it is always good to be back, and it somehow felt very different arriving by foot after many leagues of lonely beach (a league is the distance a person can walk in an hour – 3 miles or 4.5km – and I find this 'archaic' measure of distance to be really useful in my mental planning). There's a lot to be said for moving at the speed that we were built for.



Day 6: Crescent Head – don't forget your second wind!

The southerly wind started to drop over the day which made the sauntering much easier. While I had appreciated the drama provided by the strong, chilly southerly winds over the previous few days, it had also made the walking a bit more tiring, so I was glad for a return to 'normal' north coast weather. It was a useful learning experience for me though, as I had not previously taken wind much into account when planning my walks – a detail I'll note for future stages.

### **Day 7: Crescent Head to Point Plomer 19 km, 6 hours**

On Day 7 everything was still awesome. I had a morning stroll up Little Nobby and then Big Nobby, waiting for the tide to ebb a little before setting off to Goolawah Beach via Goolawah track.



When I do this walk all again (!) I've made a note to myself that there is a newly made track below the Big Nobby lookout at Crescent Head. It is just down the road southward and beachward - with the track entrance near the telegraph poles on the left. Unfortunately I only found it once I had already made beachfall via the road.

Goolawah was another fine long stretch of sand, with views south to Racecourse Headland. It's about 7km of sand from Crescent Head to magic Racecourse Headland where the track around the head is another 'to die for' short cliff top walk. From there it was a comfortable beach walk past Delicate Nobby with a stop at the great little cafe at Waves Campground and then on to Big Hill. Big Hill had a pretty loop walk that combined great views with a pretty stretch of littoral rainforest.

There were sheer cliffs on the southside of Big Hill so I returned for a short walk along Point Plomer Rd to the turn off to One Palm Beach. A small beach that packs a big punch. What a place! Dramatic cliffs on both sides, the huge sea thundering in, and a cute little cove that is just splendiferous.



Day 7: A crack in the matrix at Racecourse Head



Day 7: One Palm Beach



Day 7: Delicate Nobby





Day 7: Looking towards Point Plomer

Getting down to the beach was not for the faint hearted and climbing up the steep, steep incline pretty much wore me out. I was just congratulating myself and thinking 'not too bad for an old bloke' when I moved over the headland to see a group of rock fishermen of a similar vintage perched precariously on isolated rocks surrounded by the mean roaring swells. Getting there would have involved serious, serious scrambles and rock climbing surrounded by crashing waves. Those fish must be really tasty to make it worth the danger. As a non-fisher it seems to me you've never known a crazy risk-taker until you've met a fanatic who's into rock fishing - the recreational activity where courage meets insanity!

I stayed the night at Point Plomer campground in a primo little cabin with a balcony looking north up the coast from whence I had come. Just sensational!

### **Day 8: Point Plomer to Port Macquarie 18km, 7 hours**

I had always wondered what was 'up the 4WD track' between Port Macquarie and Point Plomer so it was a pleasure on the last day of this stage to finally see it for myself. I started with a glorious dawn walk around the 'point' of Point Plomer to its beautiful lookout with breaching whales and diving seabirds combining to bring up the majestic sun.



Day 8: Point Plomer sunrise



Day 8: Point Plomer Lookout

I waited till mid-morning due to the tides then made my way across to Back Beach, past some amazing sea caves followed by rounding Queens Head and its superb lookout at the tip, with a fine view of some gun surfers making the most of the ideal conditions.



It was a final, almost melancholic, meander along the 14km of North Shore Beach to Pelican Point. With a few perfect driftwood logs to rest on (and a 'community' table and chairs not far from the southern end) it was a reflective stroll to the northern breakwater of the Hastings. I then wandered a little up the river to the car ferry to take me across from Settlement Point to Port Macquarie, the southern bookend of this section.

### Conclusion

There is something reverential about traversing all these beaches and headlands on foot. Just as our bodies struggle with ultra-processed foods, our minds need a gentler, more natural pace and rhythm for optimal travel rather than the stress and strain and whir and rush of automobiles and aeroplanes.

I just love sitting on a headland, or a piece of driftwood or a firm sandbar in the middle of a long, lonely beach and feeling a part of something much greater than myself. Without being too philosophical, I think many of us find this kind of peace in the bush or on the beach or in the mountains, where everything is quiet and pure and natural and 'just so'. It is a state of mind that lingers and something I



Day 8: North Shore Beach



Day 8: The 'chop'



Day 8: Queens Head Lookout





Day 8: North Shore Beach and a final reflective meander

highly value. It seems to calm one's thoughts in the direction of being kinder, gentler and more forgiving - more like the person we want to be, rather than the one we actually are. I feel so exceptionally privileged to be able to feel this deep serenity so often on this walk – a walk I now regard as my very own coastal Camino.

But for now, it was back to Sydney, the big smoke, where 'normal' life would resume. I vowed that these beaches and headlands and wind and waves and whales and dolphins and eagles and feelings of peace and serenity and



Day 8: Settlement Point Ferry across the Hastings

contentment would remain with me amidst the hurry and worry and hustle and bustle of city life.

And, as an Aussie who has lived and worked for many years abroad, I once again reflected on our unique land. As Dorothea Mackellar wrote so beautifully so many years ago about our magnificent sunburnt country:

*I love her far horizons,  
I love her jewel sea,  
Her beauty and her terror,  
The wide brown land for me...*



Greg grew up in Sydney but lived for many years in SE Asia. He has now returned home to Sydney and loves exploring Australia's magnificent bushwalks, parks, coasts, and waterways. When he's not bushwalking or mountain bike-riding, he works in education for Deloitte Australia and Ecctis UK.

More detailed information on each day of his walk, pics and future posts are all available on Facebook - either on his [personal page](#) or in the FB groups [Hiking in Australia and New Zealand](#), [Take a hike NSW](#) and [Hiking and exploring NSW](#).

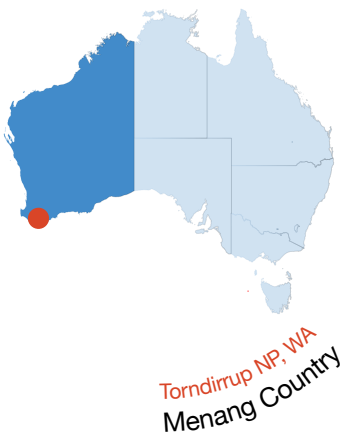


# Bald Head Walk Trail

Text and photos  
**Mark Pybus**

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Often regarded as one of the best day hikes in Western Australia, the Bald Head Walk Trail 13-kilometre return journey sees you scale the limestone and granite ridge of the Flinders Peninsula all the way to the headland of King George Sound.



Iconic view of Flinders Peninsula





Looking back along the Flinders Peninsula

**L**ocated in Torndirrup National Park, a short 20-minute drive from the centre of Albany on the South Coast of WA, this recently upgraded trail provides sweeping views over the Southern Ocean, a vibrant wildflower display from July to November, and a good workout for the legs to boot.

Starting near the Historic Whaling Station, where whaling operations continued right up until the late 1970s, the upgraded trailhead caters for the increased popularity of this walk in the last few years (at the time of writing, works are still continuing on the roads and car park, due for completion at the end of 2024). Starting immediately with a climb, something you'll get used to on this trail, you will enter the shade of the Peppermint Trees, as you rise up to the granite dome of Isthmus Hill. Providing excellent views looking down at Salmons Holes Beach, and back towards Vancouver Peninsula and the centre of Albany, this is just a taste of what to expect from the Bald Head Walk Trail.

Stepping onto the upgraded boardwalk, part of erosion control measures completed in 2023, you round the contours of Isthmus Hill and are presented with the iconic view of Flinders Peninsula, stretching all the way towards the finish at Bald Head. With King George Sound to your left, and the Southern Ocean to your right, you aren't short on magnificent coastal views. Descend down towards the lowest point on the trail, accompanied by the chorus of birds' song, as they flit between the coastal heath and the colourful Banksias found along this section. At the bottom of the hill, you'll find a side trail leading down to a beach on the Southern Ocean side, which offers a greater appreciation of the wildness of the Torndirrup National Park coastline.

Starting to climb, the job has been made easier by the trail upgrades, with the eroded channels replaced with stairs. With two new lookouts installed on the southern side, look back at the exposed granite of Isthmus Hill



Seal Island (WA32199) Nature Reserve

## Isthmus Hill and Bald Head Hike



0 1 2 3km

Bushwalk.com notes and maps on [webpage](#), [GPX](#) and [PDF](#)





Cut-leaf Banksia

as its bare lower flank drops into the ocean. The further you rise, the better the views get, with a series of peppermint groves providing a brief respite from the sun. Through these little pockets of vegetation, keep an eye out in spring for all kinds of different wildflowers and orchids, with over 100 different species found along the peninsula. Some of the more prevalent varieties include Pink Fairies, Cowslip Orchids, Cut-leaf Banksia and Granny Bonnets.

Continuing along the ridge, a series of small climbs dot the trail, with spectacular 360-degree views from each of them. The route takes you closer to the King George Sound edge of the peninsula, with Breaksea and Michaelmas Islands visible in the centre of the entrance to the sound. On the exposed sections, keep an eye out for snakes and lizards in the warmer months, as they love sunning themselves on this northern part of

the trail. Looking across the water, the distant hill is Mount Gardner, part of botanically rich Gull Rock National Park, that is worth checking out if you have the time while visiting Albany.



Pink Fairies



Reaching the first of many granite platforms, this starts to feel a world away from where you started. Reaching the highest point of the trail at 224m ASL, you exit the peppermint thickets and are presented with a mini-moonscape, as you start to descend through a blown-out section of limestone. The trail deposits you onto a giant rocky slab littered with large boulders, where you follow a path through the biggest of them, before linking up a series of cairns that guide you along a rocky platform extending out towards the horizon. If you cop some of the wild weather that the South Coast is famous for, you'll have to work hard not to be blown off your feet through here, eventually reaching the protection of some coastal heath.

Popping out onto the edge of a steep hill, you can see the finishing point at Bald Head in the distance. Descend the new staircase,



Trail going past a large boulder

noting the extreme erosion that hikers used to contend with before the recent upgrades. At the bottom, Bald Head now looks a bit more imposing, as you look up at it from



King George Sound side of the trail





Bald Head as seen from the trail

this viewpoint and follow the cairns for the last stretch. One final climb awaits, as you walk past the impressive coastal heath that survives some pretty rough and windswept conditions. At the top of the climb you've reached the turnaround point, marked with a large cairn.



Cairn at the end

This is an ideal spot for a break, where you can watch for migrating whales that follow the South Coast between May and October each year, or explore the granite dome close to the cairn. To the south, you can see Peak Head in the distance, another great trail in Torndirrup, along with a small island in the waters below that is constantly being pounded by the waves. Staring over the Southern Ocean, there is nothing between you and Antarctica, some 3,500 kilometres to the south. When you're ready, head back the way you came, keeping an eye out for anything you may have missed on the way out.

Bald Head is one of my favourite hikes in Western Australia, and every time I return there's something new and exciting to the experience. My recommendation would be to visit between July and November on a calm day if possible, and start after midday, so you aren't staring into the sun for the journey out to Bald Head. Enjoy.

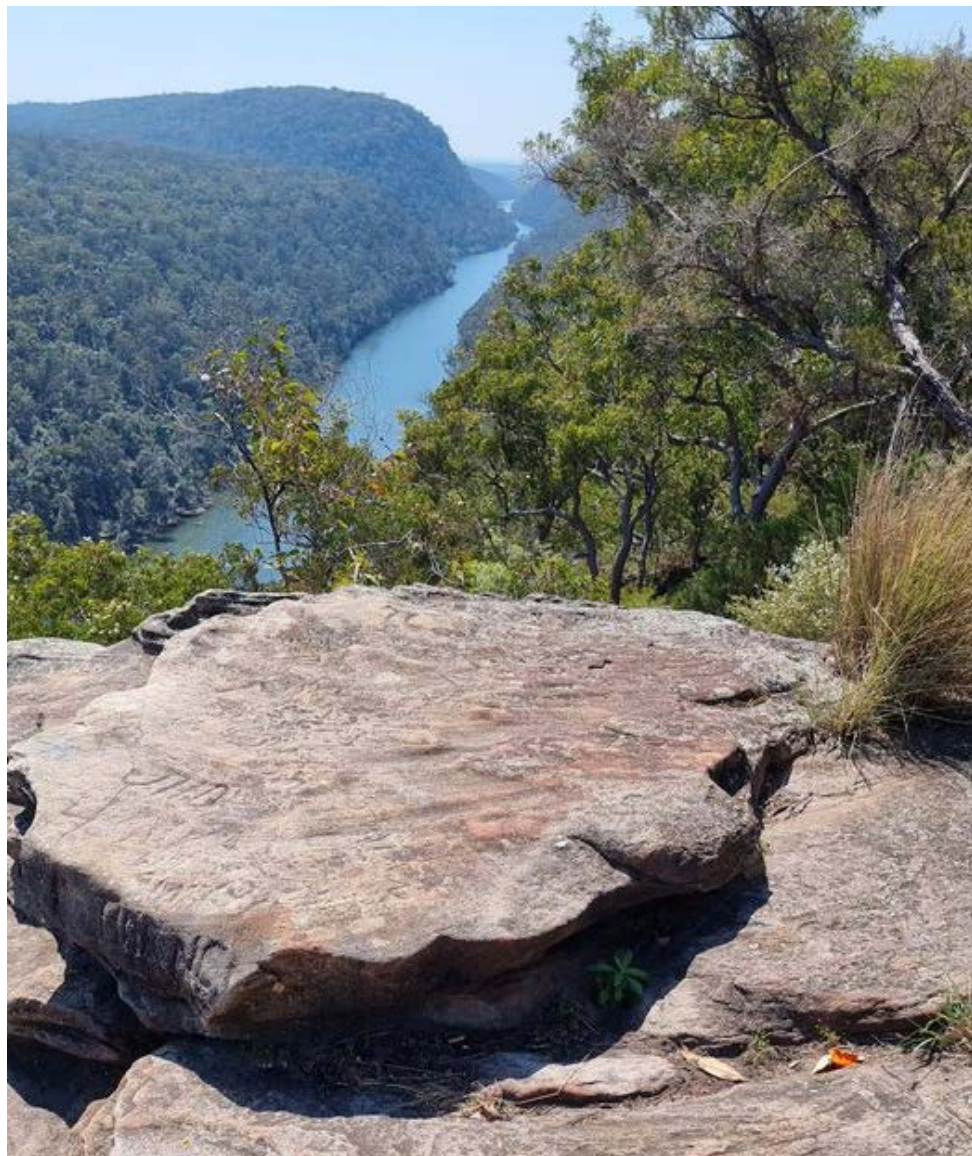


# Rileys Mountain Trail

Text and photos  
**Ian Smith**

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It gnawed at me. Every so often it would erupt in my head, letting me know it hadn't forgotten. The vision of a scene denied by a fly, exacerbated by the fact that I'd only taken the one shot and was so anxious as to whether I'd be able to climb back up the sandstone safely I left it at that. Yet, when I got back to base, that should have been the shot of the day.... and I'd stuffed it up. Or, at least, the fly had.



First look at the Nepean River from The Rock Lookout





Ian C on The Rock



The Rock Lookout

There was also the matter of that little trail at the first lookout of three. People had obviously walked there but, where did this tiny unregistered track go to? Would it get me beneath the sandstone which was the ultimate goal? While most others were satisfied merely with the lookouts, I felt that maybe there was more on offer here, a prize for the adventurous.

About three years previous, I'd been on the other side of the Nepean on the Fern Glen Walking Track. At the apex, beside the river, you can discern the sandstone ridges on the far side. I'd hoped one day to get there, especially beneath them. Today was that day.

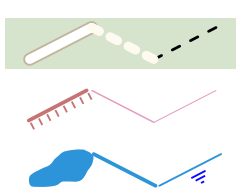
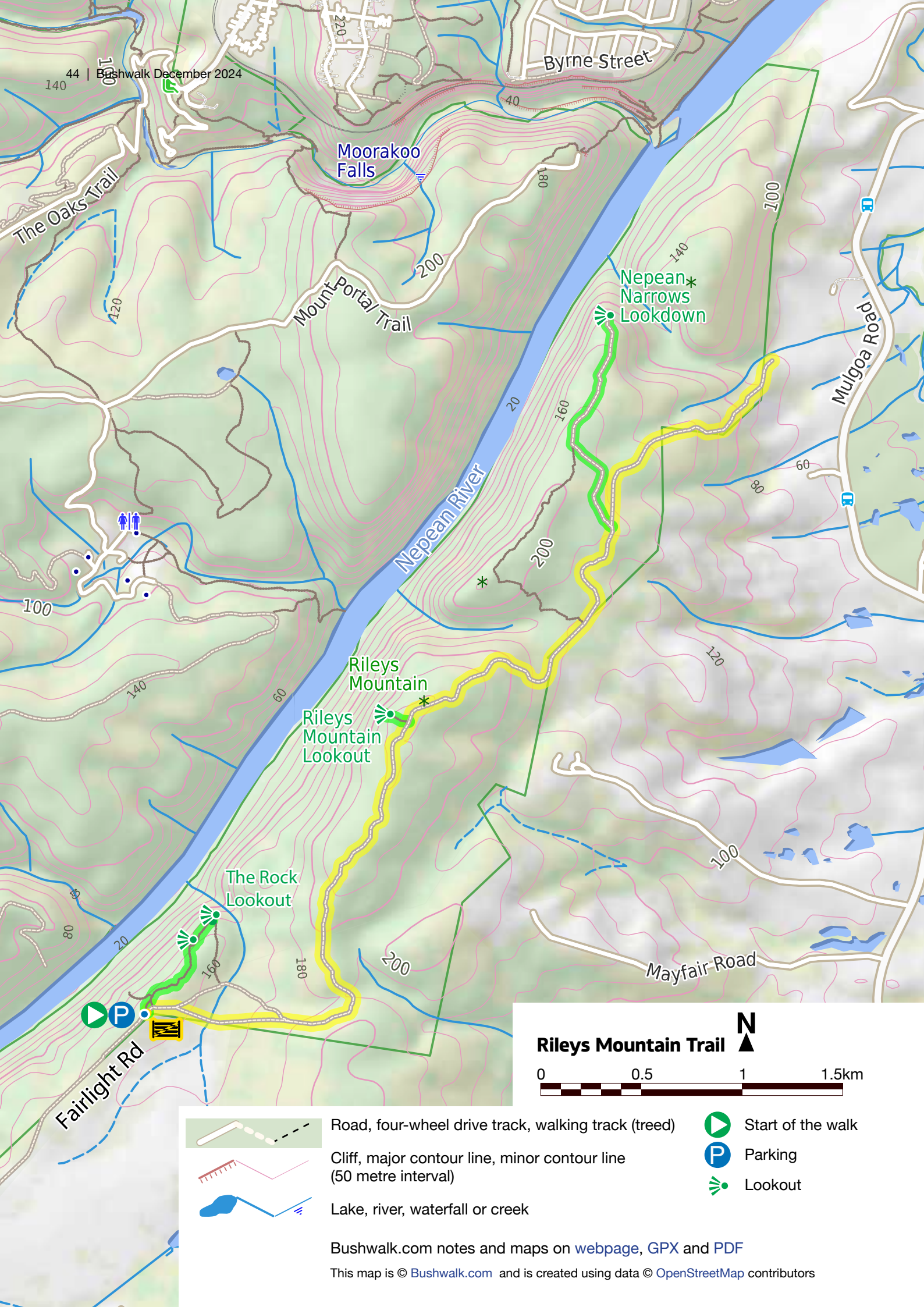
The weather was kind; low twenty degrees and lots of sunshine. The only excuse was my fear of clambering down and up the sandstone again. Still, I had to go. The danger side of it would have to be repressed.

The Blue Mountains National Park entry was only a couple of kms up the road. I pedalled out in anticipation and broached the fence for the fourth time, bypassing the Rock Lookout and riding on past the Rileys Mountain Trail where, just a couple of days previously, I'd



Rileys Mountain Trail





Road, four-wheel drive track, walking track (treed)

Cliff, major contour line, minor contour line  
(50 metre interval)

Lake, river, waterfall or creek

- Start of the walk
- Parking
- Lookout

Bushwalk.com notes and maps on [webpage](#), [GPX](#) and [PDF](#)

This map is © [Bushwalk.com](#) and is created using data © [OpenStreetMap](#) contributors



walked with my namesake - except his middle name starts with 'C' so that's what I call him 'Mr. C.'. We'd met on a misty rainy day somewhere on the Blue Mountains, became instant friends and have done a few walks since.

Up and down the erosion humps, getting slightly airborne as I crested a few, fulfilling the thrill seeker genes.

It was only beyond the Rileys turnoff, en route to Nepean Narrows Lookdown, that I nearly came unstuck. One hill is seriously steep and I'd been warned about it but had made it safely the previous trip. This time I eased off the brakes going downhill, to the point where the speed became unmanageable and it morphed into a real white-knuckle affair. At the bottom there's a sharp left-hand turn and I just managed to pull it up and regather my senses.

Now climbing and more relaxed, I turned off soon after on the Nepean Narrows Lookdown track, a narrow walking trail where speed isn't an option; which is just as well, otherwise I may have hit the large goanna before he had a chance to scarper up the nearby tree.

I parked at the Lookdown and the Nepean River was at its sparkling best. The lovely vista all the way to the Narrows and beyond was at its finest whereas, on my previous visit, the bridge at Penrith in the distance was made invisible by haze. A jet ski, a house boat and a fishing craft were all that disturbed the water.

“

The lovely vista all the way to the Narrows and beyond was at its finest whereas ...



Ian on Rileys Mountain Trail



White gum cluster



Nepean Narrows Lookdown



*Dillwynia retorta*



However, I was after the overhang and safety was the utmost consideration. I edged towards the drop, seeking a potential easier way down to the photographic point, though it was the ascent that I really feared. The descent made, I racked off half a dozen shots and checked them immediately before turning to ascend. After about a minute's study I figured out a safer way up. Relief was palpable as I slithered between two small trees back to safety.

Wandering around to the actual viewpoint, it became apparent that more shots may be available by heading south along the sandstone outcrop. At every opportunity I sought out gaps and possible places for a descent, but none, save for those who carried ropes, were apparent.

In the end I was reduced to flattening myself on the top of a rock, leaning through a large gap with the camera held in a crocodile-like grip and clicking hopefully away in a cave. The results made it worthwhile, but I decided that no more risks would be taken here.

“

The results made it worthwhile, but I decided that no more risks would be taken here.

Back on the bike I kept my eye out for my lizard friend but he obviously didn't view me in the same vein and failed to put in an appearance. So I went back to concentrating



View from Nepean Narrows Lookdown





Bushwalking with my friend Ian C. Smith

on my riding, swinging right onto the fire trail and then walking up the first part of the steepest hill because it's so vertical your tyres just spin. At the top I was exhausted but the downhill thereafter is a thrill seekers' delight. I manage to get slightly airborne a few times on the erosion humps and it's all a bit of a hoot.

“

Tentatively inching around the bases, you can but stare in wonderment at what's before you.

Then, I'm back at The Rock and the mysterious trail that turns away from the regular route. It only carries on for about 100 metres before diverting left, down to the base of a long slab of sandstone fenced in by vegetation. As I brushed past, then turned right through a gap, a new world started to emerge, for here are rock surfaces sculpted by many millennia of weathering. Tentatively inching around the bases, you can but stare in

wonderment at what's before you. Much more interesting than the view down the Nepean. Cup-shaped holes, straight line crevices and honeycomb shapes are all on show here while towering above are massive overhangs that leave you wondering just how long before they fall.

Bent and twisted eucalypts tell of poor soil and tough times in the past but they're survivors, if nothing else. The stable sandstone is layered with dark lichen while recent geological faults show a stark orange surface in total contrast.

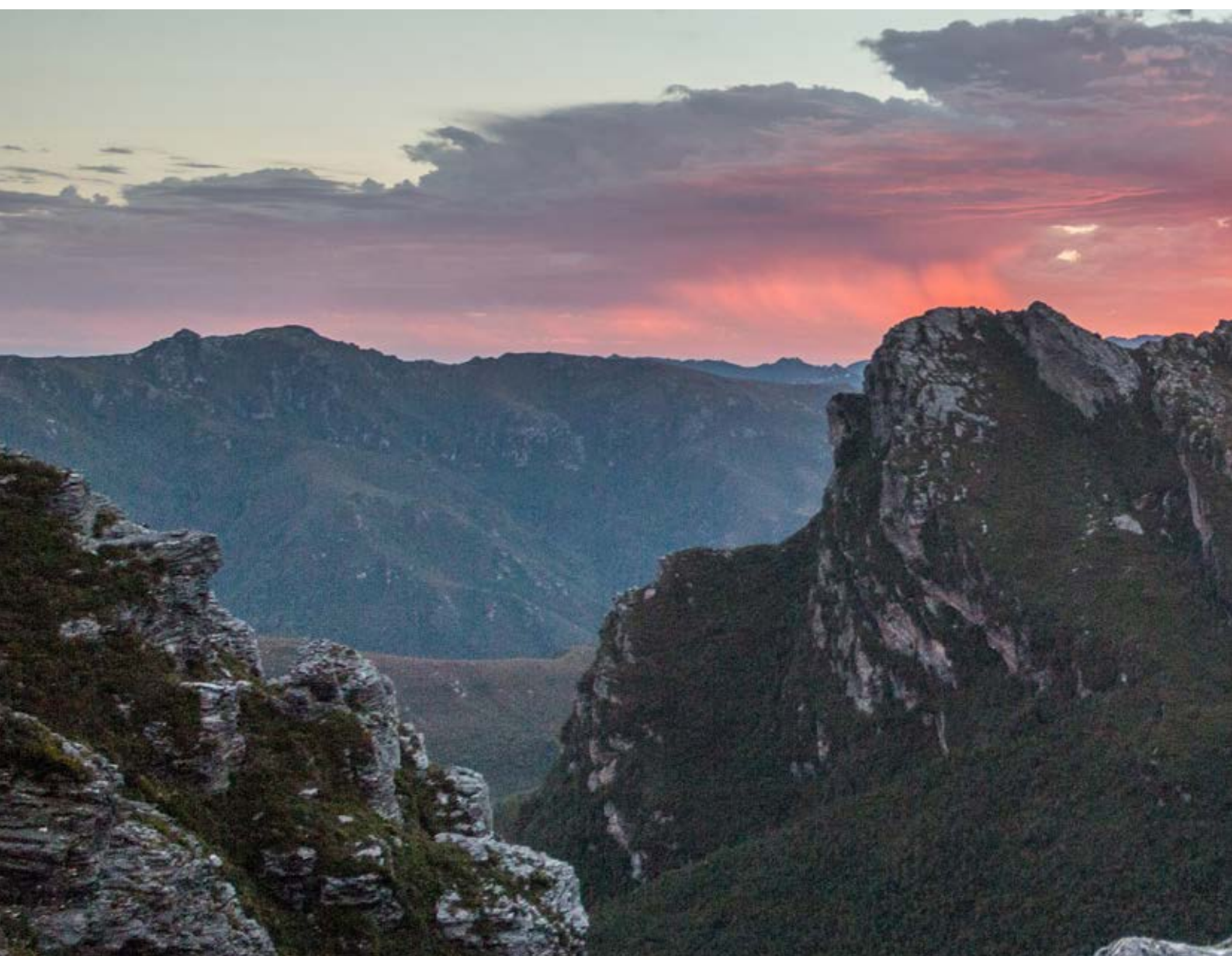
I'd half expected to come across a reptile or two but, apart from some distant bird calls and a few flies, the bush was eerily quiet. It's another world down here, made for those of inquisitive mind with rich rewards. Perhaps you may be able to enjoy it sometime.

Author's note: On two of the four days I rode my bike to the entrance gates. The other two I went in a vehicle and walked from there. All The Rock exploration is definitely walking only! The first two lookouts are relatively easy, the third will take a few hours.



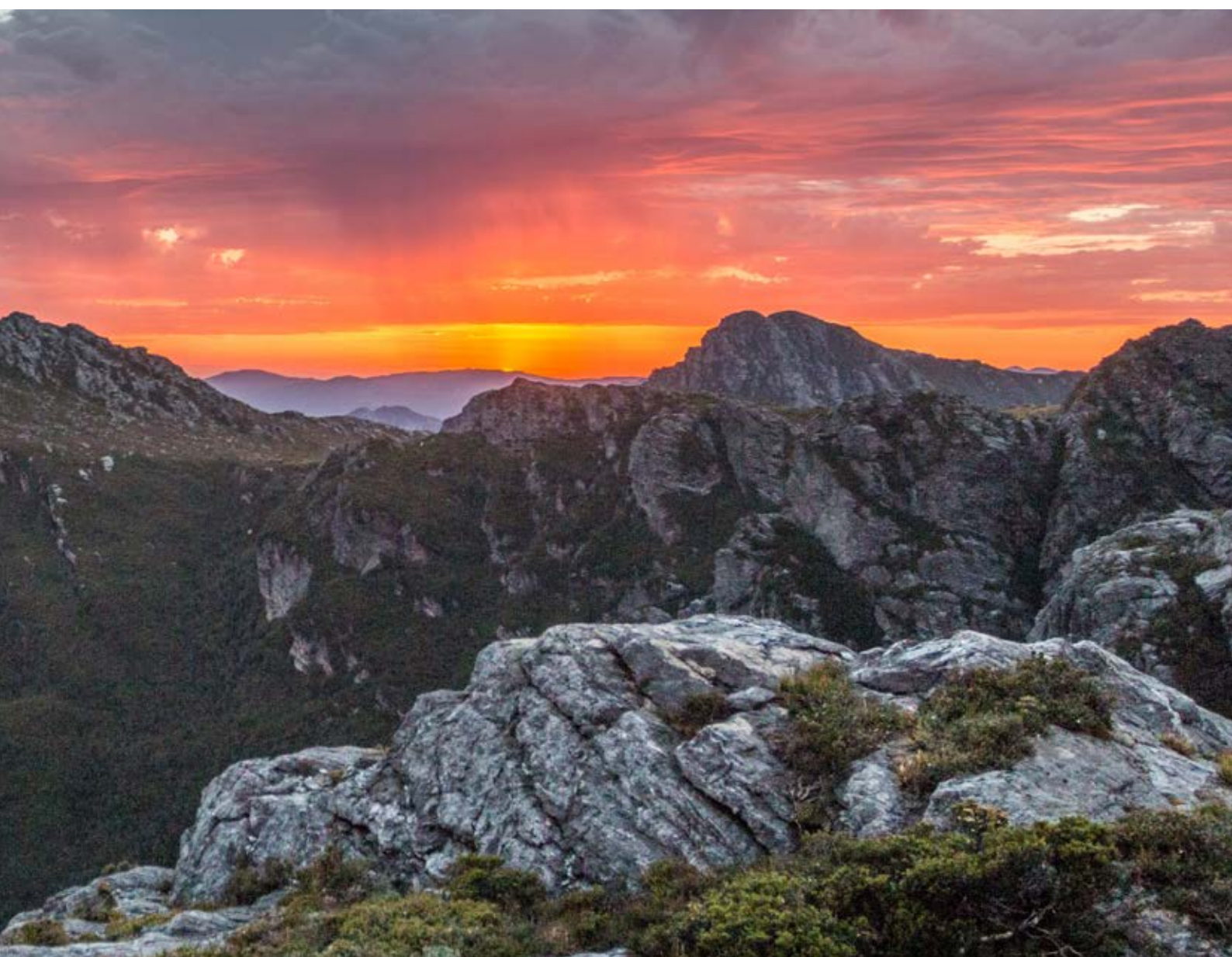
# Photo Gallery

Photos  
**Bushwalk.com** photographers





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other entries at  
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Photo competitions



Evening light show  
North-north-west



# Landscapes

## December 2023

Winner  
Tyndall sunset  
**North-north-west**

The Tyndall range is always good value, any time of year, although fine weather is not the norm. But when you get it - oh my, those sunsets ...



Lake Thor  
**Grunter**



Sandy Bay  
**Eggs**



Classic Mt Geryon  
**Son of a Beach**

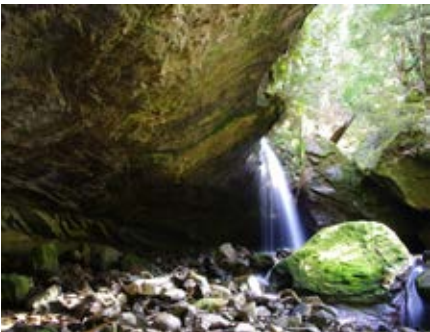


# Non-landscapes

## December 2023

Winner  
Hut in the mist  
**Crollsurf**

I was tired after a long drive and finally reaching the hut. I fell asleep for a while. And then woke to this surreal scene of the hut in the forest, the mist and the rain.



Waterfall on Smoko Creek  
**Teak**



Swamp hen chicks  
**Johnw**



Hibbertia hugs dolerite  
**Whynotwalk**



# Tasmania

## December 2023

Winner  
Mt Jerusalem  
Grunter

Taking the alternate route to Mt Jerusalem after spending a couple of days at Lake Thor and Shepherds Pool. The east wall of Mt Jerusalem looms large with the very fragile Tasmanian Cushion Plant in the foreground. The Valley of Hinom, Jaffa Gate and Dixons Kingdom await me a few kms to the right.



The Acropolis  
**Son of a Beach**



Uhh oh, time to leave  
**North-north-west**



A vast, ancient cushion plant,  
Central Plateau  
**Whynotwalk**



# Other States

## December 2023

Winner  
End of Land  
Eggs

Having been to the northern tip of mainland Australia, it felt special to get to the southern tip of Wilsons Promontory. It takes a bit of walking to get there, and while doing a circuit over a number of days, it is a side track from Roaring Meg campsite. The views are quite surprising and lovely as the granite slopes drop down, and a vista of islands near and far comes into view.



That's not a rock...This, is a  
rock  
**Johnw**



Old farm gate near Mt  
Selwyn, south of Kiandra in  
the Kosciuszko National Park  
**Joe J**



# Landscapes

## January 2024

Winner

Mountains and mountain like clouds. From the Tyndall Range

**Roadtonowhere**

I headed off to the Tyndall Range with a forecast of possible showers, which, of course, meant a day of steady rain. Fortunately, the next morning was a beautiful one, and the clouds in the distance appeared to form another range.



Peak viewing  
**Eggs**



Across the lake  
**North-north-west**



Island Bay  
**Graham51**



# Non-landscapes

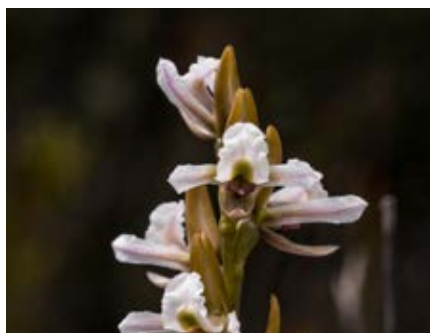
## January 2024

Winner  
Orites Falls  
**Roadtonowhere**

On most of my trips, the focus is on climbing up something rather than getting down to something. It was a somewhat bristly and scrubby descent to Lake Hermione, before the final wander to the falls on a remote section of the Franklin River.



Summer blooms  
**Eggs**



Leek orchid  
**North-north-west**



Fiery skimmer  
**landsmith**



# Tasmania

## January 2024

Winner

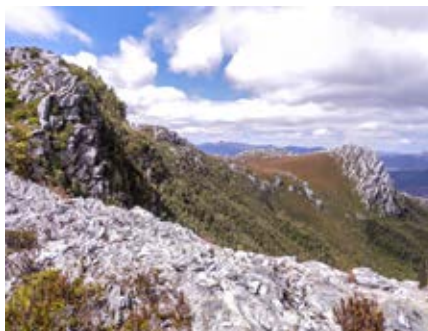
Afternoon light. Window Pane Bay

**Roadtonowhere**

After many years of discussion with my friend, we finally walked the SW Cape circuit. It had been a very long and rather warm day over the SW Cape Range to Window Pane Bay, and it was a relief to be able to sit down at the campsite and look back in the direction we had come from.



Dawn at Lake Ewart  
**Geevesy**



Still going up  
**North-north-west**



Window Pane Bay  
**Graham51**



# Other States

## January 2024

Winner  
Beehive Falls  
Eggs

This small fall in the northern Grampians is usually a trickle at best. But it puts on a display after a heavy rainfall - which was the case on this occasion.



Bark-ing fog  
Johnw



Balaka Falls, Sydney  
landsmith



# The Life of Py Blog

Text  
**Mark Pybus**



Royal Hakea in Fitzgerald River National Park





Summit of Mount Sprent

Hello Bushwalk Magazine readers, my name is Mark and I'm the one behind the hiking blog [The Life of Py](#). Some of you may have come across the website if you've been searching Google for a hike in Western Australia, Tasmania or the Northern Territory. It's been ten years since I started the website, and things have certainly changed a lot over the years, from the old black background and sub-par photography, to the image focused layout it has now. With over 400 trails on the site, it's quite daunting thinking about the time and effort I've spent putting it all together.

“

One of the main reasons I had for starting the website was the lack of information on trails in Western Australia at the time.

One of the main reasons I had for starting the website was the lack of information on trails in Western Australia at the time. I could usually find the basic information about where a trail started and how long it was, with maybe one or two photos, but that didn't tell me what to expect in terms of trail experience, and if it was worth the travel time. One such example was the Bald Head Walk Trail, now one of the most popular hikes in Western Australia, but back when I first heard about it in 2015, there was only one website with any information about it. One image on that site that caught my attention, and from that I discovered an amazing hike that you can read all about on page [36](#). Over the years I've tried to be honest with my trail reviews, adjusting my expectations for when I'm visiting out of season or the landscape has just been affected by fire, and the feedback I've received has reflected that I've been relatively on the mark.



Through the website I've been fortunate enough to connect with many great people in the hiking community, seeing them explore new trails, and providing inspiration for me about new places to visit. One person, Donovan from The Long Ways Better, is now a good friend, and we started the [Real Trail Talk podcast](#) as a means to discuss our love for trails, and also catch up for a glass or two of wine every couple of weeks (less often in recent years).

I've said many times over the years that the website has been a great catalyst for me to explore new trails, visit new places, and get out of my comfort zone. If you'd have shown me before the website started all the great places I've visited in the last ten years, I don't think I'd have believed it. It's also been a gateway to many other hobbies like mountain biking and snorkelling, plus many more that have enriched my love of hiking and provided a deeper appreciation of the natural world. I used to go hiking and look at the flora in terms

of "pretty white flower" or "nice yellow flower" but as the years have progressed, I've come to understand that Western Australia is one of the richest places in the world for biodiversity. Wildflower identification and cataloguing has become part of the hiking experience now, and I love discovering new species I haven't seen before. That has recently expanded into bird watching, and thanks to those two endeavours, I now hike a lot slower than I used to, much to the annoyance of everyone I hike with.

I've been incredibly fortunate to experience some of the best scenery that Australia has to offer, seeing locations like the botanically rich Fitzgerald River National Park, the deep gorges of Karijini, the wilderness of the South Coast Track in Tasmania, swimming with Whale Sharks at Ningaloo Reef, and completing both long-distance trails in WA, the Bibbulmun Track and Munda Biddi Trail. Even after ten years, I'm still scratching the surface of what's out there, with entire



Katherine Gorge, Nitmiluk National Park





Forest Red-tailed Black Cockatoo



Mark in Weano Gorge, Karijini National Park

states unexplored, such as New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland and South Australia, along with plenty I still want to visit in Tasmania. Australia is a big place, and we are lucky to have some of the best natural beauty in the world, offering up a diversity of landscapes, from deserts, to towering forests, to mountain ranges.

Finding the time is the biggest challenge, as I have to juggle full-time work with other life commitments, updating the website with new posts, along with writing a couple of walking guidebooks through Woodslane Press in the last couple of years. Having a well-known publisher approach me to write some guidebooks for WA was a great feeling, and the result of two years of hard work

behind the scenes was two new guidebooks showcasing the [Best Walks of South West WA](#), and the [Best Walks of South Coast WA](#). There might be a few more on the way, so watch this space.

With so many trails to explore, both around Australia and the world, I don't think I'll be stopping anytime soon. I've developed a great love of hiking, cycling and snorkelling, and I don't see that flame burning out. At the time of writing, I still have over forty trails in the backlog, ready to be shared with the world, where I hope they continue to be useful for people planning their next trail adventure. Keep exploring, and if you've found the website useful over the years, I'd love to hear from you.



Mark lives near Fremantle in Western Australia, enjoys hiking, cycling, snorkeling and photography. He shares his adventures on his website [The Life of Py](#), and you can also find him on [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#).



# Pack Light, Travel Far

Text and photos  
**Terry Cornall**

---

## **Ooooh, me back**

What backpack to take?  
Again, purchases in the past  
gave me some options.



Gordon's pack weighed in at 15kg or less then add water





Hmmm, can I call Uber from here? Pack is too heavy

I needed probably more than 40 and less than 80 litres capacity and wanted lightweight, but comfort is definitely a concern. A good supportive belt and straps are essential and don't forget about ease of access. Belt pockets, water bottle pockets, little clips on the shoulder straps for a GPS device and camera bag are all important. You don't want to have to stop and take off the pack just to access water, or find out where the heck you are, or to take a photo.

In the end, I settled on my [ExPed Thunder 70](#) which weighs in at 1.6kg. I could have taken the even lighter [ExPed Lightning 60](#), but I don't like its rolltop (I like a conventional lid pocket). Or the very light (900g) Impact Leisure 40L, but I didn't trust that 40L would be enough. Or maybe the [Kathmandu Vardo 75L](#), but it is a sturdy pack that weighs in a full kg heavier than the ExPed Thunder. It offers better support though, but I wouldn't really need that for a mere 17kg load (hah!).

The ExPed Thunder is supposed to be weatherproof. Nope, it's not. Just as well, I've learned a thing or two over the decades and put everything in dry bags, or I would have had soggy clothes, sleeping bag, food etc.

### Backpack envy

Gordon's [Z-Pack](#) fared better in the waterproof stakes and is even lighter than the ExPed Thunder. Not sure what model he has, but I like the look of their [Arc Air Robic 60L](#), even if it doesn't have a conventional pocketed lid. Only 700-ish grams! A full 1 kilo off my already lightweight ExPed! Wow. You can't pay for that... Actually you have to pay for that. The less you buy, the more it costs, when talking about hiking gear.

“

The less you buy, the more it costs, when talking about hiking gear.

Next time, I will consider my 900g Impact Leisure 40L pack. It would have been big enough in retrospect, and limited capacity might have dissuaded me from taking too much clothing... And despite its low weight, I bought it at a bargain price of \$80 from Anaconda long ago but have never used it much. Never quite trusted it. It seemed too good to be true. Unknown minor brand and



worried that it might be a horror to carry, break a zip or burst a seam in the middle of the hike. The only way to find out is to use the dang thing, so next weekender, it's the one. Actually since then I did try it and wouldn't use it again for more than a day trip. The back length (i.e. the height at which the belt sits) is too short for me and is not adjustable. This is sometimes one of the things they leave out to save weight and cost...

### Take a load off

How much weight to carry in total? Food, plus gear, plus clothing, plus water?

I aimed for 17kg with water and managed to do it, but in the end, that was too much. Ditching stuff at midway helped make the second week much more enjoyable. In the future, I'm going to aim for 12kg for a week. Of course a lot depends on your particular physical state. I used to carry 25kg though admittedly, I never found that to be much fun, and I was always rolling an ankle badly at least once per trip. Better, lighter (and more expensive) gear makes it possible to reduce the load, but really, as evidenced by my ruminations above and below, it comes down to what you choose to take (or maybe more importantly, choose to leave behind).

Don't stint on nourishing food. If it's too heavy, eat faster! But don't be stupid about the weight of packaging. We came across someone's lost gear on the path and it contained a glass bottle of rock salt. Not a small bottle either. What on earth were they thinking? And it had no calories! Madness.

“

Don't stint on nourishing food.  
If it's too heavy, eat faster!

### Fire!

What about cooking? Basically, heating water was all we needed and not for warmth or anything. Choices for us were gas or shellite, and although better than gas in the cold and snow, shellite wasn't really necessary in this case. It is also slightly heavier and more fiddly. And riskier (says he who once almost burnt down New Federation Hut due to a cracked fuel line). Gordon has a lovely gas stove like this one from FireMaple, [Blade 2 Titanium Backpacking Stove](#), though his is not made from titanium. It has the gas connected to the burner via a hose, which makes it lower, more



Don't stint on nourishing food. If it's too heavy, eat faster!



stable and easier to keep out of the wind, unlike my [Pocket Rocket](#) that sits up on the gas cannister. We took both, for redundancy and because I like to boil up water for coffee in the morning whilst the other burner is busy making porridge.

### It's a gas, man

I found a great source of gas at K-Mart where they sell 230g cannisters for \$4, which sell for \$12 dollars in dedicated camping stores (cough, ripoff). These are Korean made and they worked fine. We worked out that 3 of the 230g cans would do us for the 12 days, with plenty of reserve, so we carried one each and had one in the drop barrel. Previous measurements showed that 1x230g can would do the 2 of us for 5 days, based on about 1.5 litres of boiled water per person per day. I.e. say four 250ml cups of coffee/soup/tea, 1/2 cup for porridge and one cup for freeze-dry meal per person, plus maybe a 1/2 cup per person for dessert. Be aware that the 230g is the NETT weight, i.e. just the weight of the gas. The can weighs about 110g empty. So at about 15g of fuel to boil one liter, you get about 15 boiled liters of water from a cannister. Half or even a third of that if it is constantly windy or cold. Half that again if you are going to be melting snow for water. Altitude throws a spanner in the works, too. Water boils sooner but doesn't get as hot, so food can take longer to cook. Do note that unless it is for reasons of killing pathogens, you may not need to actually boil the water. i.e. for coffee or soup.



Be aware that the 230g is the NETT weight, i.e. just the weight of the gas. The can weighs about 110g empty.

I think that we pretty much emptied one can and the other two were probably left about half full each at the end of the trip, so with care (and me drinking less coffee), we could have done it with 2. However, we were not going to give up the hot soup at the end of the day, no way! And I get grumpy if I miss my coffee in the morning...

### Put that fire out!

Keep water handy to put out any grass fires your stove might cause. Cook on something less flammable than old dry grass. I used my soggy gaiters spread out on more than one occasion. Cooking in the rain is challenging, and on a couple of nights we cooked under the tent fly in a vestibule. This is where the shellite stoves would have been at a disadvantage as they can easily flare when first lit, but the gas is better behaved. Ensure good ventilation in this case, and be vigilant and wary of things like an unsecured tent flap dropping onto the stove. This almost happened to me when a wet fly, folded back and held just by water tension, suddenly decided to flop down. Sorry Gordon... Also, be careful of spilling the hot water on yourself when cooking, especially in cramped conditions, on uneven ground, or when passing around the hot soup. In case that happens, pour lots of cold water on the burn as soon as possible. Soak it in the creek for 10 minutes if possible. Don't do what I have seen some YouTube videoers do and cook inside the tent itself. It's too easy to tip it over and burn a hole in your floor. Or unthinkingly put down the hot pot and burn a hole in the floor. Be careful of carbon-dioxide and monoxide build up, too. Make sure of your ventilation. This is very important in snow caves, but also in tents.



Don't do what I have seen some YouTube videoers do and cook inside the tent itself. It's too easy to tip it over and burn a hole in your floor.

Campfires? Despise them. They take too much work when I'd rather be sleeping. The only purpose would be to dry stuff out and that means after or during rain, and then it is even harder to start the damn things. Considered it a bit but never used one. I saw plenty of car-campers that appeared to believe that you absolutely had to have a roaring great fire going in the middle of a stinking hot day in order to sit around drinking



beer and try to keep cool. And who forgot to put them out properly when they left, in at least one case. And which required chain-sawing the bush around the campsite in order to feed aforementioned conflagrations. Did I say I despised campfires? Maybe I should have been more targeted with my contempt.

### Slash and burn

I wondered if I should take a machete? Just for slashing blackberries, not cutting down forests for firewood. The [Gerber Gator](#) or Bolo from Anaconda looked good, though way too heavy at 700g to 1kg. Maybe an [Imacasa 18 Inch Pata de Cuche](#) (300g!). In the end, I decided not to take one. It would have been useful though. A Jedi light-sabre even more so...

### Water

Water is obviously important. You need a lot of it every day. Like 2 or 3 litres per person and even more when it is hot. There is no easy way you can carry enough to meet your needs for multiple days, so you have to resupply frequently. Take some water-purifying tablets, a UV-steriliser, or a good filter (maybe a pump one. I found the squeeze one I tried was much too slow) to prevent infection from dodgy water. Get your water from running sources, well upstream of any campers. And boil, filter, UV-sterilise or add appropriate purifying potions to it if in an area with livestock or ferals like deer, brumbies or pigs. Treat still water (i.e. not running) with even more caution.



One of my most prized bits of camping gear is a simple water bag I made about 40 years ago.

One of my most prized bits of camping gear is a simple water bag I made about 40 years ago. The recipe goes like this:

1. Buy a cheap cardboard cask of wine with a bladder in it. A nice Moscato perhaps, if you like it sweet. 3 or 4 litres ought to do. One with a valve that pops off. This might

be hard to determine at first and some experimentation might be called for.

2. Drink wine. Check on valve popping off ability. Repeat until successful.
3. When hangover subsides and you are feeling better, take bladder out of cardboard box and rinse it out.
4. Get an appropriately sized canvas gear bag, with a drawstring, for the bladder to go into, cut a small hole down the bottom for the valve to poke out of.
5. Tie a string to the valve cap so that you don't drop it in the creek when filling the bladder. Make sure the hole you put in it for the string doesn't compromise watertightness, otherwise go back to step one.
6. Put a handle made from a bit of plastic tubing on the rope of the bag because the thin rope will hurt your hand when carrying the full bag back to camp from hundreds of metres away.



Water bag





The big 'ol blue-tongue

### **Toilet paper and rubbish**

Do remember to take toilet paper and put some spare in your drop barrel. Also, take some Imodium or similar diarrhoea pills, just in case.

“

If you can carry it in, you can damn well carry it out. Don't plan to bury it. It only gets dug up by critters.

Take a lightweight trowel to dig a pit to bury your crap, well away from water. It might be difficult in stony soil, but do your best, and then pile rocks on it. When we did the AAWT, Gordon and I came across where some car campers had stayed and it was disgusting, with a toilet paper littered gully just behind it.

Despite the fact that their 4x4 was carrying a big shovel and a mattock, they had not even tried to bury their crap at all. Yuk. Be better than that.

Plan to carry out your rubbish, or leave it at the drop barrel at midway for later retrieval. Minimise things beforehand by removing cardboard boxes and so on, and not carrying cans or bottles. If you can carry it in, you can damn well carry it out. Don't plan to bury it. It only gets dug up by critters.

### **Snakes and spiders and leeches, oh my**

Plan for some wildlife. Take and know how to use a snake bandage or two and have a means to call for help if the worst happens. Don't rely on your phone. We saw a total of four deadly red-bellied black snakes, two large but inoffensive goannas, one big water dragon, a huge skink (blue tongue? Probably, but he didn't oblige by poking his tongue out at us) and numerous smaller lizards.



No crocodiles. One great big spider I managed to coax out of her hole in the ground and thousands of small spiders that insisted on building webs across the tracks at just about face level. Ptah!

These spiders are one of the reasons Gordon liked it when I went first down the bush tracks, though he'd often run into my back when I stopped suddenly, waving my sticks madly in front of my face to clear away some overly large arachnid that was aimed at a face to face meeting.

When we went down the track near Lazarini Spur we found great water, but it came at the cost of going into leech city. We pulled quite a number of them off ourselves afterwards. Also, on the Black River section they were lurking in the damp undergrowth, and this time one got me. No photos because, by the time I dealt with it after finding where it had battened onto me and gorged, there was nothing left but a burnt, bloody smear on the rocks. Take that, you parasitic hermaphroditic annelid you. It had its posthumous revenge though, as I write this a week later, I still have an unhealed itchy red welt where it bit me.

Deer were apparently plentiful. We heard bugling in the night and saw lots of footprints. No deer themselves though, except for bits of a dead one I found just upstream after getting water. We didn't use that water and thoroughly pilled the water we did get from even further upstream that night.

This next beastie obviously hadn't heard the oft repeated advice about snakes 'hearing us and crawling away'. I think that is a rubbish statement anyway. I've seen numerous snakes like this that weren't in the least bit inclined to slither off. Maybe if they are out in the open, they stay put as a defensive measure, and maybe it's only the snakes in the grass that slither off. (No, not all of those either, as evidenced by an incident we had on the AAWT a coupla years ago.) Either way, keep your eyes open for them and wear protective shoes/boots and gaiters when walking in the grass and bushes.

This article was originally a part of a larger article that you can find on Terry's blog [Outdoors OZ](#).



The snake that wouldn't run away

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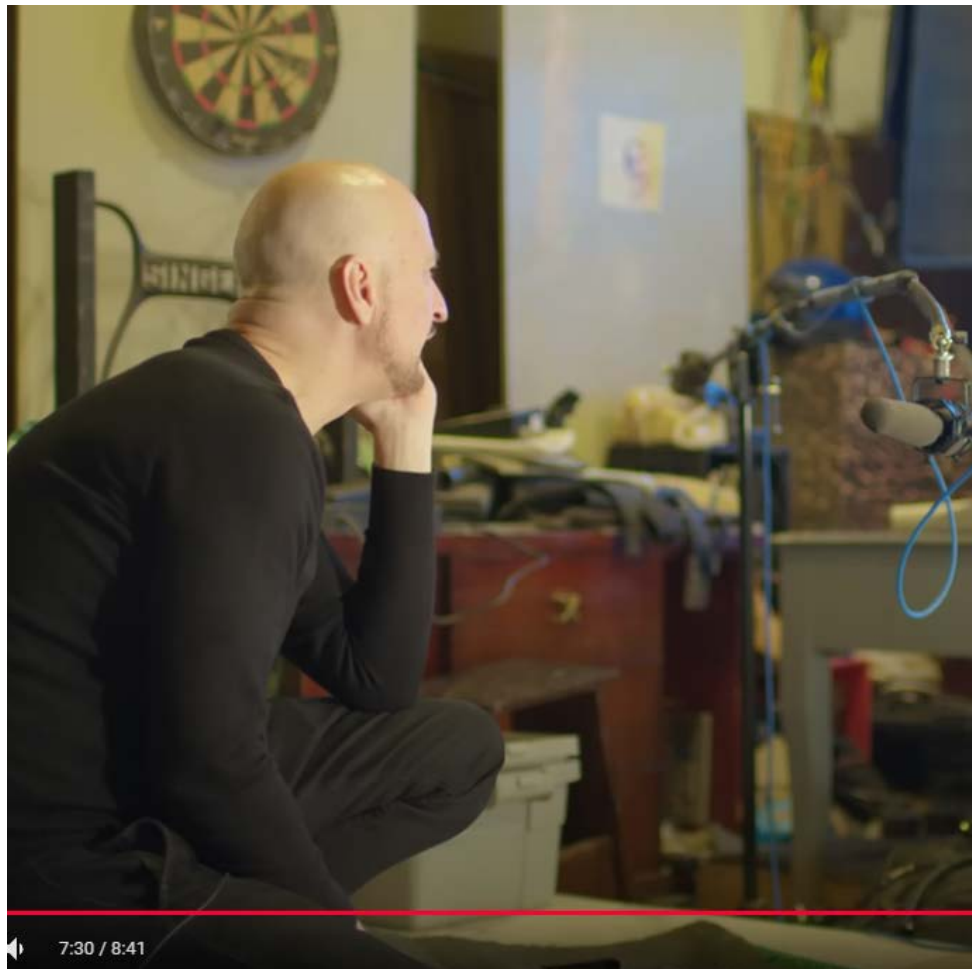
# Animal Sounds in Documentaries

Text  
**Damien Pollard**

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**The animal sounds in most nature documentaries are made by humans – here's how they do it and why it matters**

Wildlife documentaries like the BBC's recent series, Planet Earth III, are renowned for offering breathtaking images of animals in their natural habitats.



Foley artist at work





More Foley artists at work

**Y**ou'd be forgiven for thinking these shows offer an unmediated portrayal of these animals – an objective window into their lives as they hunt, rest and rear their young. But this isn't quite the case.

While the images we see are filmed on location, many of the sounds are recorded and added to the programmes later. The sounds of animals walking, chewing food and panting, for example, are almost always recorded by human 'Foley artists' in a sound studio far away from the filming location, often weeks or months later. Foley artists are specialists who produce bespoke sounds for film and television soundtracks.

This curious fact is an inevitable consequence of modern wildlife filmmaking. A lot of wildlife documentary footage is shot using telephoto lenses that can zoom in on their subjects from a great distance. But sound recordists typically can't get close enough to capture clear sound without disturbing the animals.

Wildlife documentaries also tend to require large crews. If sound were recorded on location, it would be muddled by background noises such as crew chatter or car engines. In other cases, the animals make sounds of a frequency or volume that most microphones simply can't capture clearly.

In my research, I've talked to Foley artists who specialise in animal sound and observed them at work in their studios.

### How Foley artists work

This Foley process generally involves deciding which of the animal's actions or movements need sounds to be created for them, and then deciding on the specific qualities those sounds should have.

These decisions often involve the broader sound production team and sometimes the show's director. The Foley artist then uses their creativity and resourcefulness to create the sounds.



So, what sorts of techniques do they use? It might seem clichéd, but the professionals I've spoken to really do sometimes knock coconut shells against stone slabs to make the sound of horse footsteps. For an elephant, they might use rocks against a straw-covered tub of compacted earth.

A simple pitter-patter of the artist's fingers in a water tank can create the sound of fish jumping across the surface of a lake, while a bundle of old VHS tape swished around a large water tank gives the sound of a shoal of fish moving through the ocean.

A pair of old leather gloves ruffled together quickly might be used to simulate the flutter of a bird's wings as it takes off. And most artists will create the close-up sounds of animals chewing, panting or yawning with their own mouths. These sounds are created as the artist watches the footage on a monitor, making sure they perfectly match the actions they're paired with.

There are some exceptions. Animal cries and roars – which are far too complex to be simulated artificially – tend to be taken from library recordings. And recent developments in microphone technology mean that sound recordists can begin to capture more sounds on location. But for the time being, Foley sound remains a staple of wildlife documentary production.

### Why Foley artist choices matter

Watching Foley artists at work on wildlife projects gives me a thrill like the one we get when we see how a magic trick is done. But the significance of this technique goes further than that, because both the sounds that are attributed to animals and the nature of those sounds have the ability to affect how we perceive a given species.

On the one hand, a slithery, slimy sound may be matched to the image of a snake – even if a human would be unlikely to hear much if they were really stood next to the camera. Emphasising such an unnerving sound is unlikely to win the snake any new fans, whereas a soft yawn accompanying a close-up of a tiger cub may increase the sense of that animal's cuteness or vulnerability.

Sounds guide our emotional interpretation of the things we see, and there have been complaints about previous series of Planet Earth, when this audio guidance seemed too heavy-handed.

This matters because the popularity of certain animal species, driven by these documentaries, [may affect support for conservation efforts](#). Steven Spielberg's fictional film Jaws (1975) made it clear that the way certain animals are portrayed in popular media can have very tangible real-world consequences. Spielberg himself has [expressed regret](#) about the boom in shark hunting that the film may have encouraged by presenting the shark as both villain and potential trophy.

The use of Foley sound in wildlife documentaries is far more subtle, of course, but it still has the potential to affect how we perceive certain species. And it is all the more powerful because it often flies below the radar of our conscious attention.

So, while the masterful work done by Foley artists on wildlife programmes and films should be celebrated for its ingenuity and magical effects, perhaps it should also be taken as an invitation to think critically about exactly what we see, and hear.

---

### Damien Pollard

Lecturer in Film, Northumbria University,  
Northumbria University, Newcastle

This article first appeared in  
[The Conversation](#) on 11 January 2024.



# Published

## Canberra's Best Walks

**Michael Nelmes, Marion Stuart**

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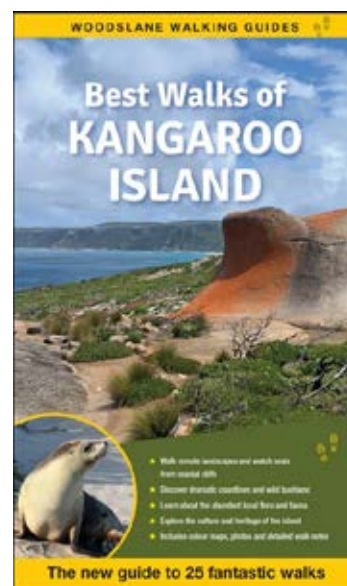
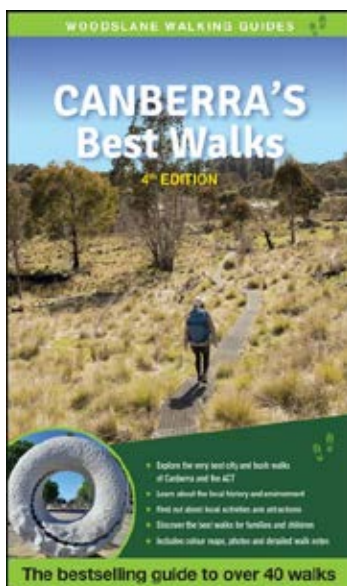
## Best Walks of Kangaroo Island

**Stephanie Zissis**

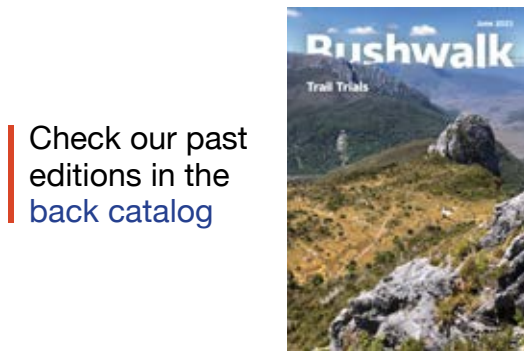
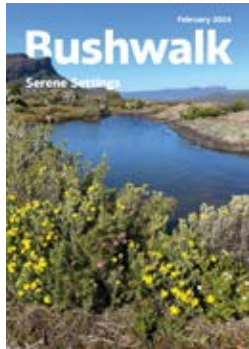
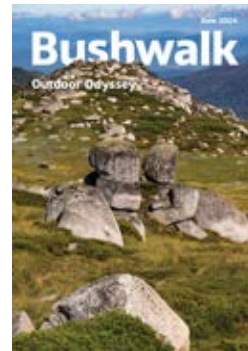
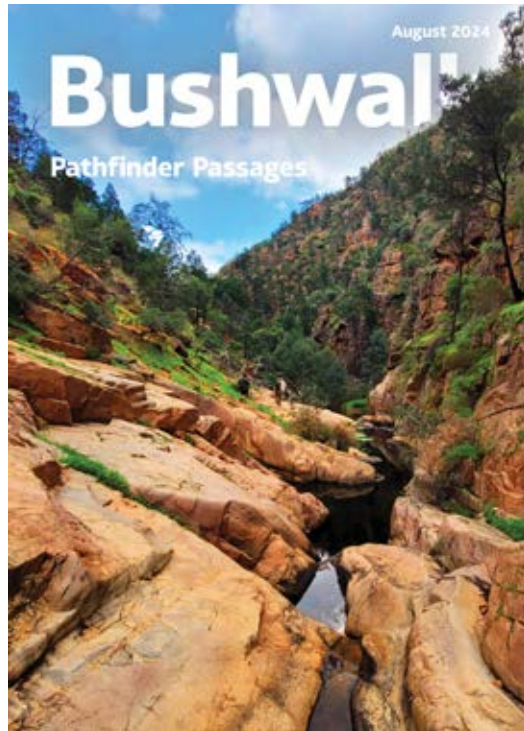
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