

August 2023

# Bushwalk

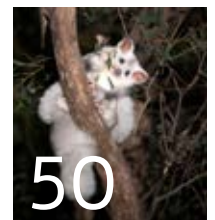
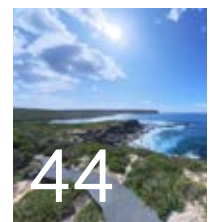
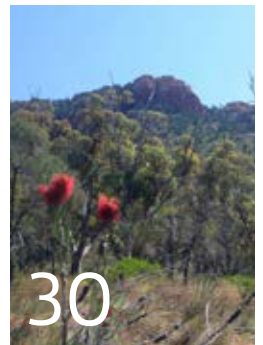
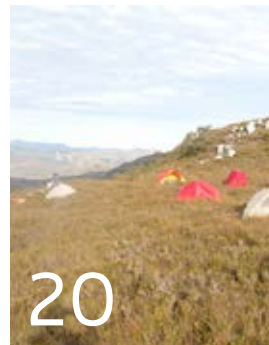
Trail Tips





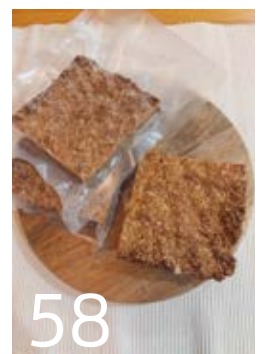
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**Always Was  
Always Will Be  
Aboriginal Land**

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.







# Heysen Trail Thru Hike

Text and photos  
**Sean Smith**

The Heysen Trail is Australia's longest marked footpath at around 1100 kilometres of rough desert, dirty sheep paddocks, country roads and outback towns, and a banger of a southern coastline.



Trail leading into Wilpena Pound and Saint Marys Peak





Jarvis Hill

It's hilly, it's dry, it's peppered with huts and fantastic lookouts and for now, right now, you can have the whole righteous ramble to yourself. The popularity of the often crowded Bibbulmun Track (Australia's other 1000 kilometre walk in Western Australia) hasn't transferred over to the Heysen, and hopefully it stays that way.

I hiked the Heysen southbound over 40 days in June and July 2022 with a couple of zero days in Quorn and Victor Harbor.

### Getting to and from the Trailheads North

I booked the weekly [Genesis shuttle](#) from Adelaide central bus station that departs 7.30 am on Thursdays. It's a smallish vehicle with three people that would be end to end Heysen hikers (only one hardy legend made it to Cape Jervis which gives you an idea of the strike rate) and a variety of other passengers jumping off at various dusty towns on the way.

The bus spits you out at the Parachilna turnoff and the last 17 kilometres is a choose your own adventure between thrifty road walking for a few hours or paying a boofy bloke in a

boofy 4WD blasting Beyonce shizz a fist full of dollars for a speedy drop off. We reached the Parachilna trailhead around 1.30 pm via boofy guy in boofy 4WD.

The return journey back to Adelaide from Parachilna for northbound hikers runs on Fridays.

“

It's hilly, it's dry, it's peppered with huts and fantastic lookouts and for now, right now, you can have the whole righteous ramble to yourself.

### South

The [Sealink bus](#) makes a daily run to Cape Jervis departing from the Adelaide central bus station at 3.30 pm, arriving at the Southern trailhead around 5.15 pm, \$27.

I caught the daily Cape Jervis up to Adelaide shuttle with Sealink (\$27) departing 9.30 am, arriving Adelaide 11.25 am.



## Heysen Trail



0 m 25 50 100 km



Start of the walk



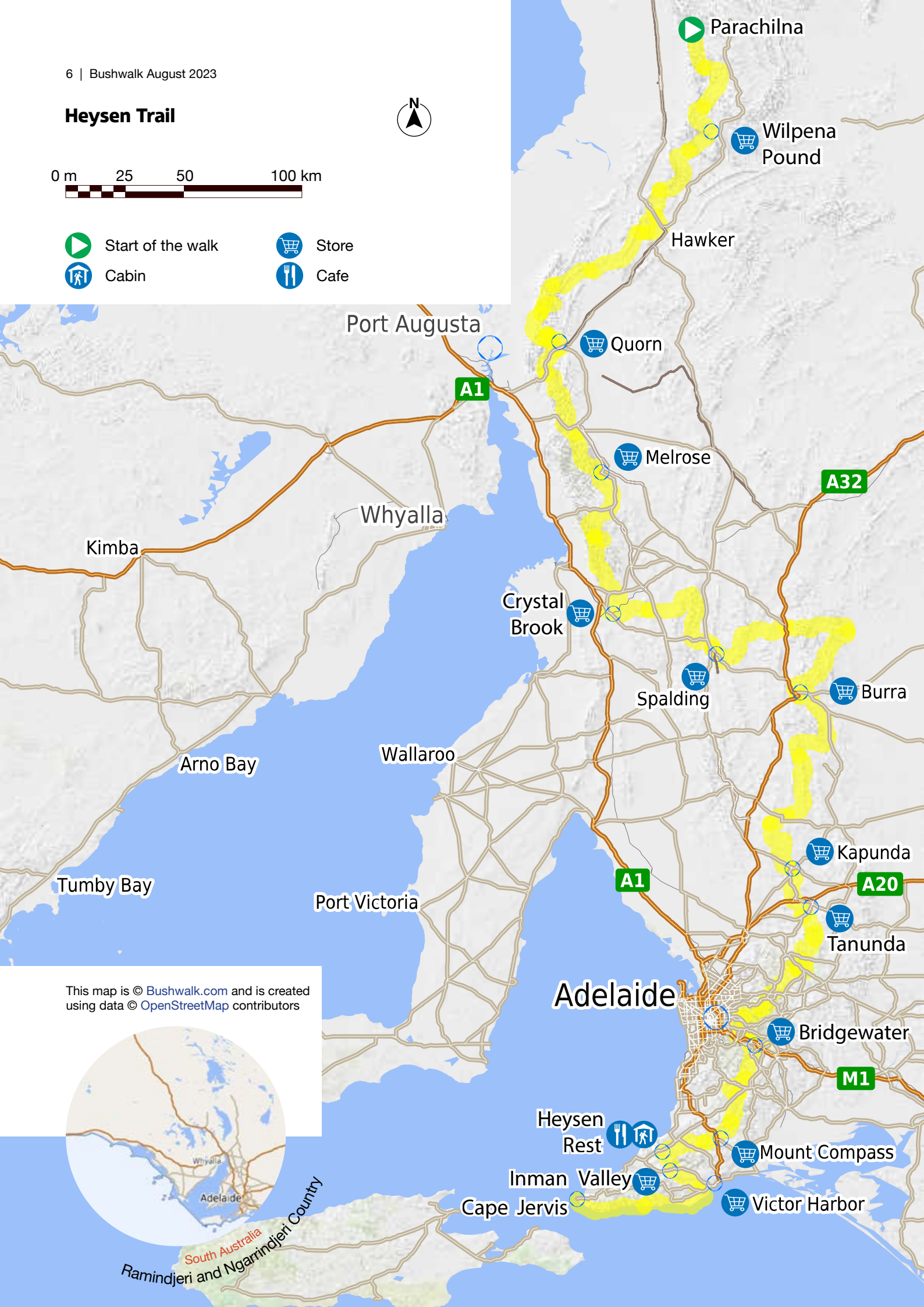
Cabin



Store



Cafe



This map is © [Bushwalk.com](https://bushwalk.com) and is created using data © [OpenStreetMap](https://openstreetmap.org) contributors



Ramindjeri and Ngarrindjeri Country



## Resupply and trail towns

The second best thing about the Heysen is the crazy little outback towns the trail pokes through on it's wiggly route. I carried 3 or 4 days food at a time and stocked up at:

Location	Comments
Wilpena	Good IGA supermarket. Butane gas canisters.
Quorn	Small supermarket and great hiker hostel; Elizabeth House. Gas.
Melrose	Adequate general store and spacious, cheap camping/caravan park. Gas.
Crystal Brook	Good supermarket, pharmacy. Gas.
Spalding	Adequate general store. Gas.
Burra	Good supermarket and town with full facilities. Gas.
Kapunda	Large supermarket and my favourite trail town. I stayed overnight on a whim and had a blast. Gas.
Tanunda	Large supermarket, full on tourist town.
Bridgewater	Coles supermarket.
Mount Compass	Good supermarket.
<a href="#">Heysen's Rest Hiker Cabins</a>	Great overnight stop between Mount Compass and Robinsons Hill campsite. Definitely go the full breakfast next morning. No resupply.
<a href="#">Inman's Valley General Store</a>	No resupply but 100% recommend grabbing a feed off the menu if the kitchen is kicking Cafe.
Victor Harbor	Largest town near the Heysen (7 kilometres off trail), Coles and Woolworths. Gas.

All towns have somewhere to procure water and food to go. There is usually a pub room and/or campsite to crash in too. Dining is generally restricted to simple Aussie pubs with a generic menu and general stores flipping a toasted sandwich at you but the larger tourist towns such as Tanunda and Victor Harbor contain many fast food options and a higher standard of accommodation if that floats your boat.

Water is scarce on the trail. I completely relied on the tanks situated in the walker campsites. Camel up and fill the bottles when you can. I never filtered any water and never got sick. Your call, you do you.

## Navigation and resources

I gave up my curmudgeon ways and downloaded the [Far Out Heysen Trail](#) mapping file, shunned all paper maps and kept a sharp eye out for oft sighted Heysen marker posts as I bumbled along fences and dry creek beds.

The [Friends of the Heysen](#) are a bunch of dedicated walking heroes that maintain and protect and improve the trail. Kudos you badasses! Strongly consider throwing them a donation after walking on the Heysen.

## Camping

Most nights were spent plonked out in a quiet spot either stealth camping in the bush wherever I pleased or in the official hiker walk in sites. These official sites are often located on private land and consist of a bench and water tank and flat ground to throw up the tent, like the photo below of Eyre Depot.



Eyre Depot



There are loads of huts and shelters as well. I avoided these like herpes as most hikers seem to gravitate to a roof and walls when it's available and I value my solitude.

I dunno, I spend enough nights indoors so when I am finally out hiking in the woods the nylon walls of my tent and the stars twinkling above seem like bliss. But the backcountry huts are there if you get excited about mice running over your face in the middle of the night or drunk bogans playing bush warriors on a Saturday evening. All hut hate aside, I'm the first to admit they are great for holing up or taking a break when the weather is hooting down.

### **Weather and landscape**

Most of the Heysen Trail is closed during the summer months due to bushfire risk, particularly where it wends over private land. It's also very hot. I hiked it in the winter and lucked out with mostly fine, settled weather.



Old Mount Bryan East Schoolhouse,  
now a public overnight shelter

Temperatures slid down to single digits in the early morning and up to early teens mid-afternoon.

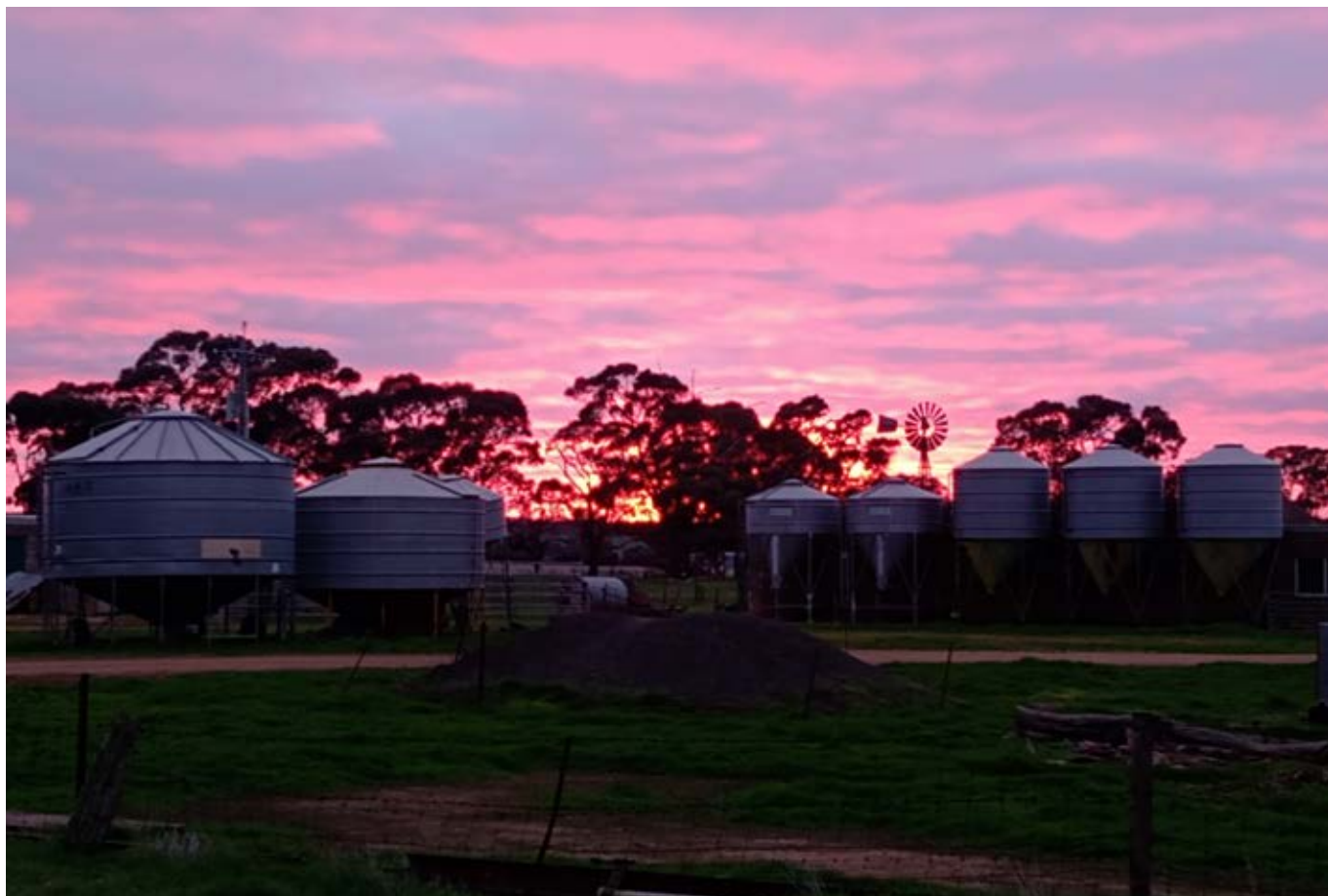


Log book box overlooking Pichi Richi Park and Devils Peak





Tourlie Gorge



Sunrise near Marrabel



The northern area around the [Flinders Ranges National Park](#) features alpine desert forest, spiky spinifex, rocky bluffs and many kilometres trudging in dry creek beds. After descending Mount Remarkable and rolling through Melrose it's green farm country with a few small conservation parks dotted about. I witnessed loads of slippery lambs being born and the sound of baaing sheep was the soundtrack to my walk. South of Adelaide you are charging towards the coast and beautiful sheer cliffs and sandy beaches.

There's much variation in landscape and plenty of surprises. If you don't mind a bit of quiet road walking and straddling 2000 odd fence stiles then a winter walk of this path through South Australia is a solid choice.

### Thoughts

I was never bored on this hike. Never wanted to be somewhere else. Didn't really want it to end either. I slowed right down in the south and dragged out the last 200 kilometres as long as I could.

### Positives

It's unpopular but that's changing, evolving. You get solitude but increasing trail services and friendly locals that kind of know what your doing.



Wilmington bovine

Empty campsites and great intel via the Far Out app.

Well marked trail, easy resupply.

Mobile coverage is good. If you want that.



Grandad's camp



### Not so positive

I heard the occasional bit of gunfire on this walk, as you do. One Saturday night while attempting to stealth camp outside Wilmington a drunk bogan in a 4WD skidded to stop near my tent and proceeded to blast away into the bush, probably random roo shooting. I froze and hoped for the best and listened to him swear and stomp around and completely miss seeing me and after Mr Trigger-happy idiot departed in a hail of gravel I packed up quick smart and bailed into Wilmington, camping on the golf course. There are a couple of reports floating around of wild Friday and Saturday nights around Wilmington involving firearms experienced by bewildered hikers.

The trail is quite exposed. There are not many bug out spots aside from the trail towns and no shelter other than the huts.

If you are chasing a wild landscape with dreamy mountain vistas and alpine lakes then the mundane agricultural land in the middle of the Heysen may disappoint. I just loved being out there but that's me.

Would I hike the Heysen again? Hell yes.

Any questions, see the website [Safari Hiker](#), or give me a hoiy at [safarihiker@gmail.com](mailto:safarihiker@gmail.com).



Deep Creek Conservation Park  
track looking west



Sean lives in northern Tasmania and is a tourism professional by happenstance. He is obsessed with hiking the trails of North America and the parts of Australia no one is interested in. And running Ultramarathons. And Australia's incredible native wildlife.



# Lower Portals Bushwalk

Text

**Roz Glazebrook**

Photos

**Roz Glazebrook** (unless otherwise noted)

The Lower Portals bushwalking track is in Mount Barney National Park, which is part of the Gondwana Rainforest of Australia's World Heritage Area. The national park is recognised as one of the world's outstanding and valuable natural places.



Lower Portals swimming hole





Mount Barney from the road to the car park    Happy bushwalkers Laura and Mel



**T**he area is near the small rural town of Rathdowney, south of Beaudesert. To get there from Brisbane, head onto Boonah-Rathdowney Road then take Upper Logan Road. Follow the signs to Mt Barney Lodge, until you come to a sign for Lower Portals Road on your right. It is a dirt road, but is suitable for two wheel drive cars. Then follow the Lower Portals sign to the car park.

There are great views along the way of Mount Barney, Mount Maroon, Mount May, Mount Lindesay, Mount Ernest, Mount Ballow and Mount Clunie. These rugged peaks are the remains of the ancient Focal Peak Shield Volcano, which erupted 24 million years ago. Mount Barney National Park is one of the largest areas of undisturbed natural vegetation remaining in South East Queensland.

You can do the walk as a day walk or overnight camping trip. I've done both several times, but prefer to camp in the remote area. It can get very hot in summer and freezing in winter, but both times are very interesting.

### **The access track**

The track into the Lower Portals is well marked, but it can be slippery on the downhill parts. Poles are great to prevent sliding. The

track is in the open for a lot of the way, so you need to wear a hat and sunscreen and take plenty of water. There are lots of tree roots, which you need to watch out for, as it would be easy to trip.

This beautiful hike in the foothills of Mount Barney is a gentler alternative to summiting the mountain itself, and the Lower Portals offer the added bonus of the chance for a wild swim. We could see the top of Mount Barney poking up above the rocks at the Lower Portals.



This beautiful hike in the foothills of Mount Barney is a gentler alternative to summiting the mountain itself ...

There are a couple of creek crossings along the track. I've crossed Mount Barney Creek when it has been ankle deep and most recently when it was up to my waist. You never know what to expect when going on a bushwalk there, so be prepared for anything.



The walk in to the Lower Portals from the car park is only 3.7 kilometres, but there are five ridges to climb up and go down. The walk in takes about an hour to an hour and a half, depending on rest stops.

You need a permit to camp in the national park (\$6.15 per person per night, or \$24.60 per family per night).

### Fauna

If you are lucky you can see some amazing native animals during this walk. I've seen bearded dragons, endangered brush tailed rock wallabies and Northern Brown bandicoots. I saw an Eastern Bearded Dragon (*Pogona barbata*) on one of my day walks there. It was my first sighting of one of these dragons. I have seen lots of water dragons and goannas and even the beautiful Boyd's Forest Dragon, which lives up in Far North Queensland previously, but I'd never seen an Eastern Bearded Dragon before.

The Bearded dragon was sunning himself on a large log next to a fence on the track into the Lower Portals. He was very well camouflaged. I read that dragons usually freeze if they feel threatened and puff themselves up, and extend their beard under the throat and open their mouth wide to reveal a bright yellow lining. Our dragon obviously wasn't concerned about us as he didn't puff himself up, or show us his bright yellow throat lining.

These dragons live along the eastern quarter of Australia in open forests, heathland, scrub and in disturbed farmland areas. Dragons mostly eat vegetable matter such as leaves, fruits, berries and flowers, and will also eat insects. I've been very lucky on two of my previous trips to see endangered brush tailed rock wallabies.

“

If you are lucky you can see some amazing native animals during this walk.

On my first camping trip there, after setting up our tents, a group of six of us set off to walk up the ridge behind the large water hole. After a short while one of the other women and I turned back to go for a swim as it was pretty hot. We had an American, a Canadian, a German, a New Zealander and two Australians in our group.

The track ends at a deep pool set within a rocky gorge of Mount Barney Creek. There are some large rocks to negotiate to get to the large swimming hole. The other Australian and I climbed up through the rocks to the beautiful Lower Portals pools. Some bushwalkers don't realise they have to climb up through some

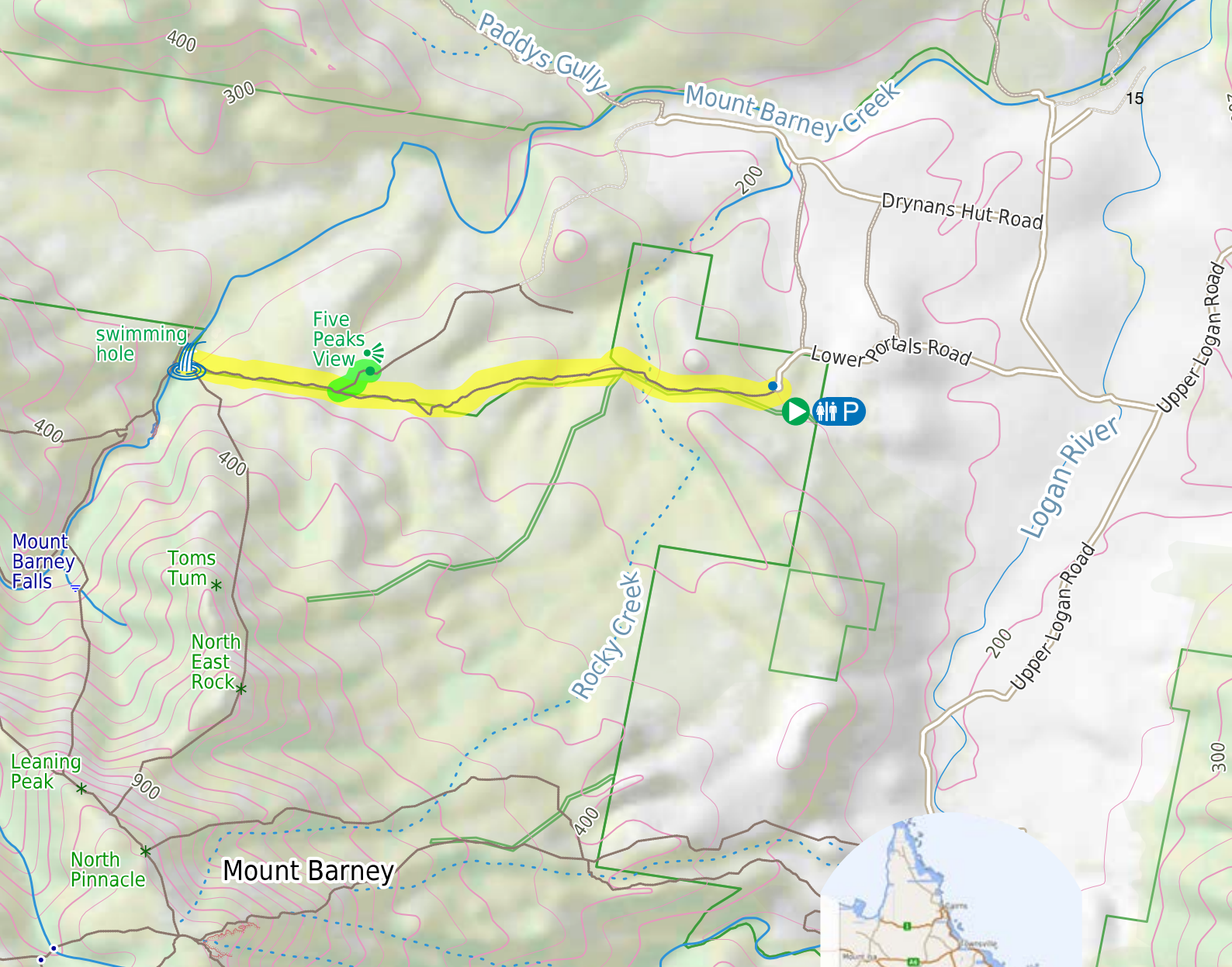


Eastern Bearded Dragon



Brush Tailed Rock Wallaby from 2016 trip





## Mount Barney Creek via Lower Portals Track



0 km 0.5 1 2 km



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



Main track, side trip, alternative route



Cliff, major contour line, minor contour line (20 metre interval)



Lake, river, waterfall or creek



Start of the walk



Parking



Toilet

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

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



Mount Barney National Park, QLD  
Mununjali, Githabul and Yugambeh Country



rocks to get to the large swimming hole. I was lucky the first time I went there that someone showed me the way.

After our swim, we were sitting quietly on the rocks when an inquisitive brush-tailed rock wallaby came and sat near us. The rock wallaby shared the rocks with us for about three-quarters of an hour. It took off when the others returned and bounded straight up the vertical rock face. The four non-Australians were very disappointed they missed seeing this unique native Australian animal up close.

Being very agile, beautiful brush tailed rock wallabies (*Petrogale penicillata*) feel at home on the steep rocky outcrops in the area and can climb very high cliffs. They used to be hunted for their beautiful fur coats, and because they were thought to be a pest. In some areas they have lost their habitat due to timber clearing, and have to compete with introduced animals such as foxes, feral goats, sheep and rabbits for food. These wallabies have a distinctive bushy tail and are listed as vulnerable to extinction. They balance with their tails and grip rocks with their padded

feet. There are still fragmented populations from the Great Dividing Range from South East Queensland to Western Victoria's Grampians. On another visit, I saw some beautiful blue triangle butterflies at the rock pool.

### Swimming and weather

People do need to be careful swimming in the large pool. I spoke to a woman last year who told me she saved someone from drowning when she was there one day. The group she was with was leaving the area when they heard someone calling out. She jumped in and swam to save the person who was in difficulty. She said they were very lucky her group was there, as otherwise, the person would have drowned. I've also heard of people getting into trouble in winter in the extremely cold water, so people need to be very careful as hypothermia could be a problem.

“

People do need to be careful swimming in the large pool.







Well marked track



Start of the track, nice grass trees

I've camped in the campsite there in ferocious storms, where my friend's tent washed away, and freezing cold nights when thieving bandicoots tried to steal our food. On the night of the storm I was sleeping in my new Tarptent Moment tent which I had bought from America and seam sealed it myself. I was very happy with it because I stayed dry and warm. We later learned the Lower Portals was in a black area on the weather radar report. One of our walkers had bought a large plastic fly which we all huddled under. It kept filling up with water which we had to tip off, but it kept us dry until we got into our tents.

Another friend had a problem there once when a large goanna ripped into his tent and urinated all over his sleeping bag and clothes while he was swimming in the gorge. It must have been looking for food in his tent. So be careful when you are camping there and protect your food well. We took all our food with us when we went for a swim. Lucky for him, he had hired the tent from our bushwalking club, so their insurance covered the damage and he didn't lose an expensive lightweight tent.

“

We took all our food with us when we went for a swim.

### The recent trip

On my recent trip three of us drove down from Brisbane on a Friday morning in mid-May. The dirt road leading to the car park is accessible by a 2WD. The last couple of hundred metres up to the car park are a little steep and may be rutted if there's been recent rain. The drive takes about two hours from Brisbane.

After washing our boots at the pathogen control station, we set off on our walk to the campsite. The track leaves from the Lower Portals car park and ends at a beautiful pool along a gorge on Mount Barney Creek. The walk has moderate to steep gradients and is classed as a class 4 track.

The walk was very pleasant. There were a few hills, but it was quite cool so the walking was pretty easy. It is a nice walk with grass trees and bushland. The track was fairly rough and eroded in places and there were a few moderate steep slopes. On other trips I've done to the area in summer, the heat has made the walk much harder. Walking poles are very helpful on the steep bits and for crossing the creek when it is deep.

The track can be fairly slippery so you need to wear boots or shoes with good grip, although on other trips there I've seen people walking in thongs. You also need to carry plenty of





Mel coming through the rocks



Laura squeezing through the rocks to the large swimming hole

drinking water. On a day walk I did to the area on an extremely hot day in 40 degree heat, we all ran out of water on the way out. We were very grateful to our driver who had a large ice cold container of water in her car.

There are a couple of creeks to cross. The last one before the campsite was a lot deeper than on previous walks there. I went across first and obviously went very deep. My two friends took more time and found a shallower place to cross. On previous walks it was only

ankle deep. This time it was up to my waist, although I think I went through a deep hole.

After setting up camp, we took our lunch and headed off through the rocks for a swim in the gorge. It was absolutely freezing, but we all bravely did it. We then headed back to camp and spent some time down by the creek behind the campsite. I had seen rock wallabies there before, but they must have been hiding this time.



Roz crossing Barney Creek  
Mel Grecco



The look on Mel's face says it all



After dinner, while we were sitting around we heard a noise. We shone our torches and discovered a large furry animal trying to get into Laura's food bag. I tried to get a photo and wanted Laura to leave it for a minute, but she wanted to rescue her food, so the photo I got was very blurry as there was a lot of movement going on. I posted it on the Australian mammal identification page, and they identified it as a Northern Brown bandicoot. I've seen lots of endangered Eastern Barred Bandicoots in Westbury in Tasmania where they are protected by the Hawthorne hedges there, and smaller brown bandicoots in Tasmania too, but this one with its head in Laura's food bag was huge.

Irish Laura was excited to see her first Australian bandicoot. We saw several others hopping around so decided it might be safer to hang our food up for the night, even though the possums might have been able to climb up to get it, but luckily it didn't get touched overnight.

We were the only ones in the camping area until about 8 pm when a lone person arrived in the dark. Mel bravely went to check it wasn't a psychopathic killer, but it turned out to be a young man whose mates had bailed out on him. He was sleeping in a hammock and next

morning told us he froze during the night. He also said on previous camps there he had had bandicoots chew through his pack to get to his food. On my first trip to the area one of the men also slept in a hammock. Even though it was summer, he also said he was very cold overnight.

It was a freezing cold night. I stupidly forgot my woolen beanie and my head got very cold during the night. I improvised by wrapping my poncho around my head and it worked in keeping my head warm which helped me to sleep.

The next morning we packed up slowly and headed back along the track to our cars. We were more organized crossing the creek and stripped down to our undies this time and got dressed on the other side.

We passed a lot of people heading in as it was now Saturday and the track was pretty busy. It is better to go on weekdays if possible to avoid the crowds. Campers need to be self-sufficient as there are no facilities at the campsite. You also need to treat the water from the creek before drinking it.

It was another wonderful [Lower Portals](#) experience and I can't wait to go back again.



The Lower Portal campsite in 2019 before the big storm



Hanging our food



# South West Cape Range Circuit

Text and photos  
**Bill Bennett**

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We walked the South West Cape route in a clockwise direction over seven days in late February 2023, following Chapman and some notes from Bushwalk.com forum, including [tasadam](#) (2009), [Mechanic-AI](#) (2017), and particularly [rwildman](#) (2020), which were all very helpful. It also really helped that we had stunning weather. A lot of what I've written duplicates other trip reports but I've added some observations that might help others in future.



Day 2 - Hidden Bay en route to Ketchum Bay





Day 1 - The author enjoying a whisky in the evening sunlight at New Harbour

Overall, the tracks are pretty well-defined now, I think they have been well-walked since Chapman's day. We probably lost the track two or three times every day once we left Wilson Bight, particularly in forests. But a bit of casting around usually found a marker tape, or spotted the pad in the distance. It helped enormously that we had excellent weather going over the South West Cape Range. It would have been more difficult in misty conditions, and definitely heeded rwildman's sage advice that the track goes straight over "Every \*&#\$#! Summit rather than sensibly contouring around."

One of our crew really started to slow down on the second day, and was very slow on the uphills for the next four days. This meant that travel times were much slower than Chapman, and probably slower than most parties considering doing this walk. We had lots of stops. Nevertheless, we made it! Our friend was actually unwell – he wasn't hungry, the food made him faintly nauseous and he had little energy, possibly rotavirus.

### **Day 1: Melaleuca to New Harbour, 12 km, 5 hours**

This was a day on a fast good track from the airstrip to the lovely New Harbour beach. The track pops you out at a lagoon and there's a campsite just south of that with good water. It's quite sheltered but very mossie-ridden, though, so we walked to the larger campsite at the other end. Water in the creek was okay when we were there, but there had been rain the day before.

### **Day 2: New Harbour to Wilson Bight, 13 km, 10 hours**

We originally planned to split this over two days, but our flight was delayed by a day due to weather, so we made up the time. This was a surprisingly long day, taking almost ten hours, although we had some leisurely lunch stops. The track is easy to follow, but crossing the Amy Range from Ketchum to Wilson Bight is pretty overgrown and was hard work pushing through the scrub at the top. Also, make sure you follow the track at the back of the campsite which heads south from



Ketchum Bay, not the older track at the north end of that campsite. Also note that you want to hit Wilson Bight near low tide, to get around that fin of rock in the middle of the beach. There is a small campsite at the east end if you need to wait for the swell to die down.

We camped on the beach at the west end of Wilson Bight GR 256788, beyond the rocky fin. There is a creek with good water coming down here. There are sheltered campsites tucked behind the dunes both east and west of this creek. The campsite is marked on the 1:50,000 map, the creek is not.

Up to this point, the track is very clear and is marked on the map (we used the [digital 2021 South Coast Walks map](#)). After Wilson Bight, the track is not marked, and some navigational skills and track finding will be required. If you absolutely hated pushing through the scrub at the top of the Amy range, then the full circuit will definitely test you to your limits.

All the beaches along this section have good campsites and are absolutely stunning. Any one of these is worth walking there and back from Melaleuca if time, weather, or inclination deters you from doing the full circuit.

### Day 3: Wilson Bight to the South West Cape Range, 6.5 km, 8 hours

As we were moving slower than expected, we bypassed Mount Karamu and took the shortcut straight up onto the South West Cape Range. The track is well-defined and goes straight up the hill from the back of the campsite on the east side of the creek (we could see another track on the west side that looks okay as well). Steep, sustained scrubby climbing (with amazing views) got us up to the 600 metre knoll at GR 247824 on the South West Cape Range, but it took us five hours to get up there. Realising that we were unlikely to get to Window Pane Bay the same day, and with the benefit of excellent weather, we loaded up on water and mentally prepared to camp high.

“

Steep, sustained scrubby climbing (with amazing views) got us up to the 600 metre knoll ...

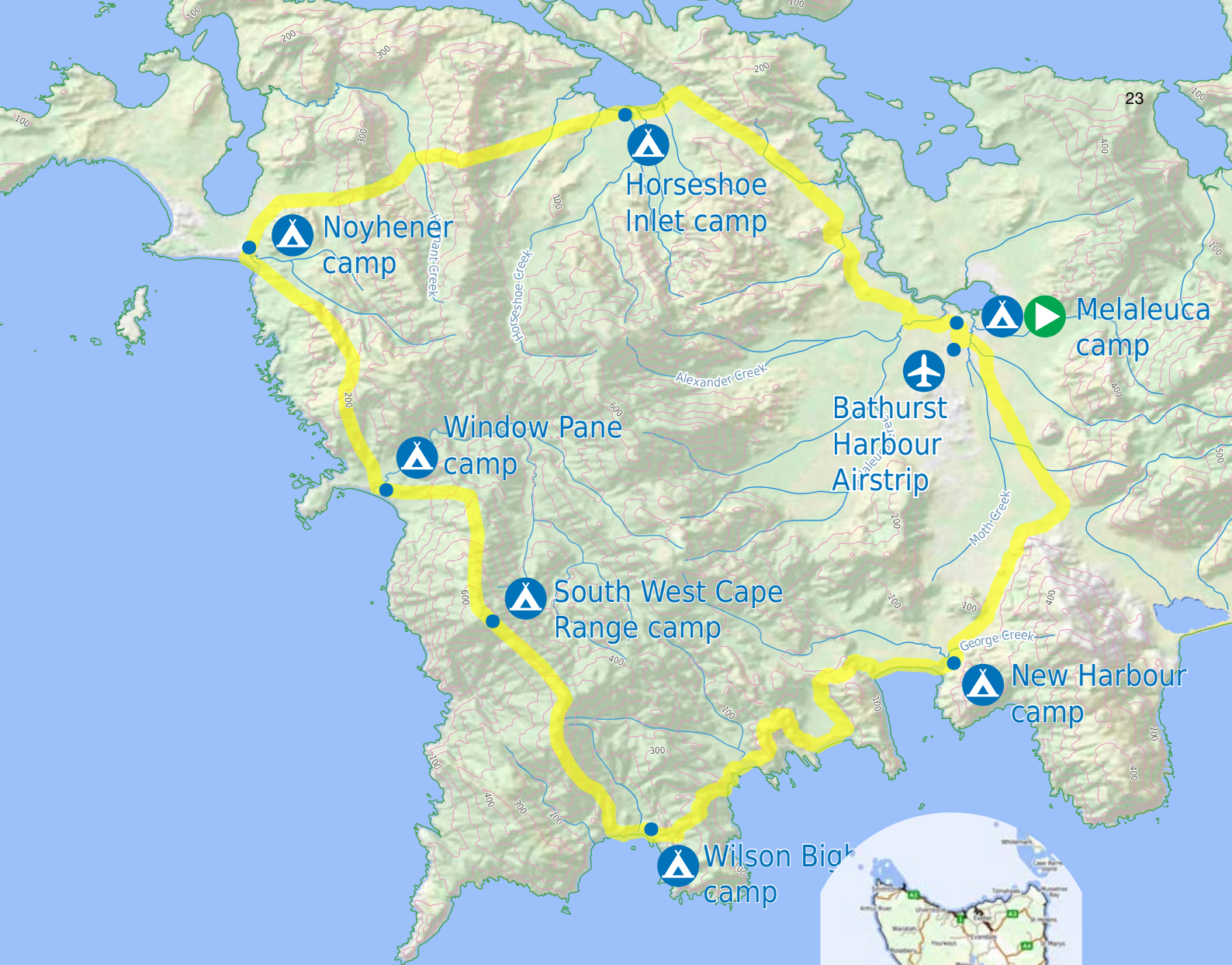


Day 2 - Ketchum Bay



Day 2 - Wilson Bight approaching the rock fin





## South West Cape Range Circuit



0 km 5 10 20 km



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



Main track, side trip, alternative route



Cliff, major contour line, minor contour line (100 metre interval)



Lake, river, waterfall or creek



Start of the walk



Camp



Airstrip



NB Chapman talks about tarns at the main summit with exposed camping. We found this tarn to be very meagre indeed. There was a much deeper and larger tarn shortly after the first knoll at GR 247824. There were lots of frogs and tadpoles and greenery, so we treated our water.

We carried on along the ridge, but we just ran out of oomph and called it at 4 pm after eight hours walking, camping in a saddle just below the climb up the main summit, GR 238836. We pitched tents on grass and low scrub, and with little wind it was a very pleasant campsite – lovely sunset to the west and a stunning dawn over the eastern mountains – Arthurs, PB, Ironbounds, South Coast all laid out for us.

Please also note – we had very calm wind conditions. The prevailing westerlies on the South West Cape Range are fierce and give this area an absolute thumping on a regular basis. This would have made this campsite pretty sketchy – it was difficult to get solid pegs into the ground under the grass and low scrub.

“

We carried on along the ridge,  
but we just ran out of oomph ...



Day 3 - High on the South West Cape Range with New Harbour Range and Maatsuyker Island in the distance



Day 3 - Campsite high on the South West Cape Range



Day 3 - East from high on the South West Cape Range, with the New Harbour Range and Ironbounds in the distance



Day 3 - A tarn high on the South West Cape Range, with a frog population



Day 3 - Group shot on the the South West Cape Range, looking south





Day 4 - South from a high point with the South West Cape just visible in the distance

#### **Day 4: South West Cape Range to Window Pane Bay, 5 km, 7 hours**

Up early and took us a solid two hours to climb the final bit to the summit – overhead scrub and our friend still badly slowed down by illness. But what a summit view!! The main summit plateau is only about 100 metres wide, and we all looked back as we crested it going “shame to be leaving those views behind”. Then we walked 100 metres to the northern end and went “holy crap!”. We stayed there for an hour just soaking in the coast, the beaches, Port Davey and Bathurst, it was stunning. I recognise that there are probably people reading this who may have stood on the exact same spot and seen



Day 4 - Dawn at high camp at 600 metres



Day 4 - Window Pane Bay, ultra-white rocks

bugger all, as the weather is notoriously fickle. But if you get there on a good day, I would say it may well be the best summit view I have ever had in Tasmania.

Descent from the summit took us a long time – temperatures probably hit 30 °C, and we were all feeling it. Our friend collapsed on the track, and we were really worried. But we got some hydralite into him and carried his pack down the hill for about a kilometre and into the blessed shade of the forest. Just after you enter the forest, you drop down steeply into a gully that crosses a creek at approximately GR 231335. This was about 10 degrees cooler than the scorching air outside and the water



Day 4 - The sublime view north from the South West Cape Range high point

was icy cold and delicious - an absolute lifesaver!! Our friend rallied magnificently, shouldered his pack and we carried on to Window Pane along a fairly well-marked forest track. Pink tape was there when we needed it. We reached Window Pane Bay at 5 pm after a nine hour day and had a lovely swim. Window Pane Bay is absolutely stunning (again, with the caveat that it faces south-west into the prevailing winds). There is a sheltered campsite tucked into the trees round by the creek, but we camped on the beach as it was very calm and clear. I was lying in my tent with the door open looking out at the Milky Way when I saw a large quoll slinking along the beach and heading to the tents to check them out! It was a pretty special moment, but make sure your food is secured.

**Day 5: Window Pane to Noyhener,  
7.5 km, 7 hours**

The staked track wasn't hard to follow, except when we crossed a creek in the forest. Just after you climb very steeply up from the creek, the old track carries on straight ahead and is very obvious. It has some crossed sticks on it

which some of us completely failed to notice. The new track turns sharp right here and is marked with tape and a bottle. Go that way. If you run out of tape, you're on the wrong track.

When we got to Faults Bay, we followed what was probably Chapman's original track and then it petered out before we got down to the rocks. We backtracked and found a much better track winding through the forest, marked with pink tape and lots of sawed branches. Follow this, and just keep looking for the tape. This led us down to Noyhener without any drama. This was fortunate, as it was high tide when we arrived. When we looked back along the coast where Chapman advises "just hop along the rocks for 500 m", it was abundantly clear that this would have been impossible at high tide.

Interestingly, there's a study of wave erosion on south-west beaches and Noyhener and Window Pane receive some of the highest wave energy of any beaches in the Southern hemisphere. Hence the enormous sand dunes.



Day 5 - Island Bay, just north of Window Pane Bay



Day 5 - Climbing the ladder to the campsite at Noyhener beach





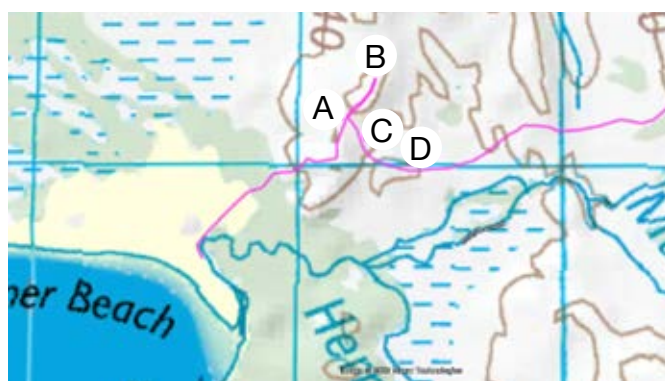
Day 6 - East to the South West Cape Range

### Day 6: Noyhener to Horseshoe Inlet, 10 km, 8 hours

Rain had set in, so we set our alarms for an early start – awoke to the sound of the clocks ringing on Pink Floyd's Time, and broke camp in the drizzle. We had some poor weather today, but visibility was okay. The start of the track is clearly marked with buoys and is a well-defined pad. This heads north in a very clear way after about a kilometre, but it's a trap! As you pass the scrub-filled gully on your right, you can clearly see a track a few hundred metres away heading east towards the South West Cape Range. The track you are on continues north, but you need to turn off down that gully and bash across. There are two white stones on the ground marking the turnoff, but the pad is very unclear in the initial scrub. Just keep heading towards that visible track. The map diagram on the right shows our GPS track.



Day 6 - West from the Pasco Range, with the obvious track over the South West Cape Range and East Pyramid Island in the distance



A is the turnoff you should take;  
B is the point where you realise you are on a track heading north and should turn around;  
C is the short scrub bash, and  
D is the clear track you want to be on.

See also [rwildman's](#) excellent description of this trap. The GPS reference for the turnoff is -43.4009,146.0020.

After that there's a clear track all the way across the South West Cape and Pasco Ranges, with good water at Hannant Creek. We copped a bit of a thumping from the westerly wind and rain, but the pad is well-trodden and we were sheltered once we crossed over to the lee side of the ranges. There was little bit of uncertainty descending off the South West Cape Range just where it drops off steeply, and the main track is about 100 metres right of where you think it should be (we could see traces of an older track at this first point). rwildman has an excellent diagram in his post.

We got to Horseshoe Inlet at about 5 pm, and the tide was high. There is good water where the track crosses a creek about 200 metres before you reach the shore of the inlet. There was no wind, so we ended up camping on the green mossy ground at the shore. Our tents were pitched less than a metre from the water, squeezed into that little strip of green between the water and the trees. It was all very peaceful. It would have been a different story if the wind had been up.



Day 6 - An idyllic campsite, if a little cramped



Day 6 - Tides at Horseshoe Inlet





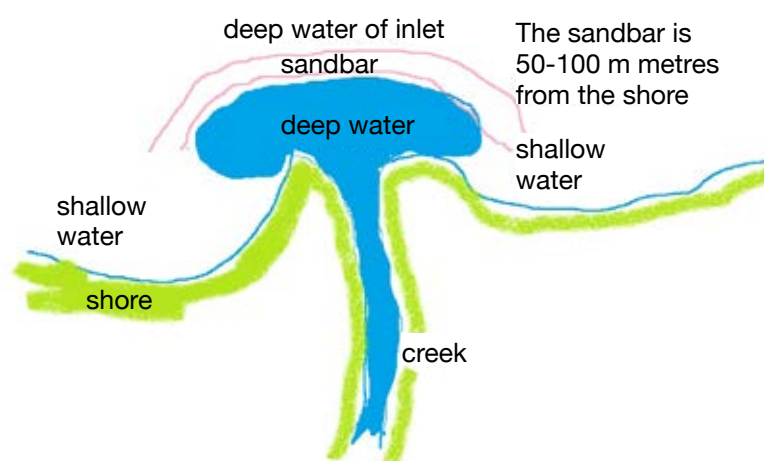
Day 7 - Crossing the bar at Horseshoe Creek

### Day 7: Horseshoe Inlet to Melaleuca, 11 km, 5 hours

We knew that low tide was 9.30 am the next day, so we had a leisurely start. The water had dropped a lot, and we waded barefoot about 500 metres along to Horseshoe Creek. One of our crew had the secret knowledge from a previous trip, and we waded along a sandbar to cross Horseshoe Creek, with the water only reaching our knees. The creek scoops out a lot of sand at its mouth to leave deep water, but if you go out far enough, the semicircular sandbar just under the surface provides easy crossing. You need good light for this, as you want to see where the sandbar is, and probably low tide as well. I used an Android app called [Tide Prediction](#) (developer Muchoviento.net), which works offline. Just enter Bramble Cove for the tidal station, (just north of Horseshoe Inlet). Note that the tides at Bramble Cove are weird, I assume because Bathurst Harbour is a large shallow body of water, so sometimes there is only one low tide each day. Check before you go, and if you can

plan your trip to cross Horseshoe Creek at a proper low tide, then see the crappy MS Paint diagram below for where the sandbar is. Hope this helps!

After that it was just the 4-5 hour muddy slog back along the South Coast Track to Melaleuca and a massive stash of wine and snacks we had left on the shelves in the hut at the airstrip!




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Bill Bennett was born in Scotland in 1964 and started hillwalking when he was five. He is a professional biologist who moved to Tassie with his family in 2009, and is still trying to wrap his head around curried scallop pies. He likes whisky, hates both porridge and bagpipes, and doesn't mind rain all that much.

# A Devil of a Peak

Text and photos  
**Ian Smith**

Further north in South Australia, on my fourth excursion, I investigated my wallet and found some folding stuff and bought a ticket on the famed Pichi Richi Railway.



Ian at Devils Peak





Pichi Richi Railway

As it was school holidays, I wasn't alone and, these days, being featured in a Russell Crowe movie hasn't hurt its patronage either.

It isn't cheap but it is enjoyable. Chatting with my fellow passengers and listening to the happy volunteer dispensing all manner of information along the route combined to add up to a pleasant outing.

The cheering spectators on the nearby road left a smile on my face. A few days later I would be with my partner Lorraine on that road.

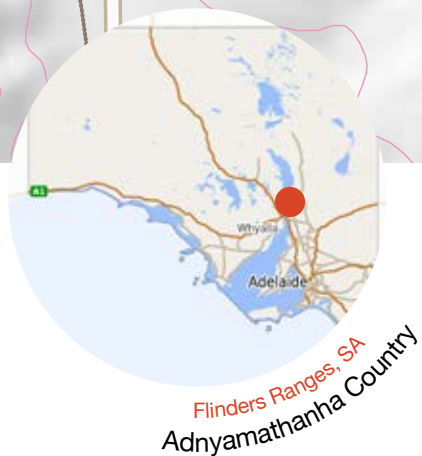
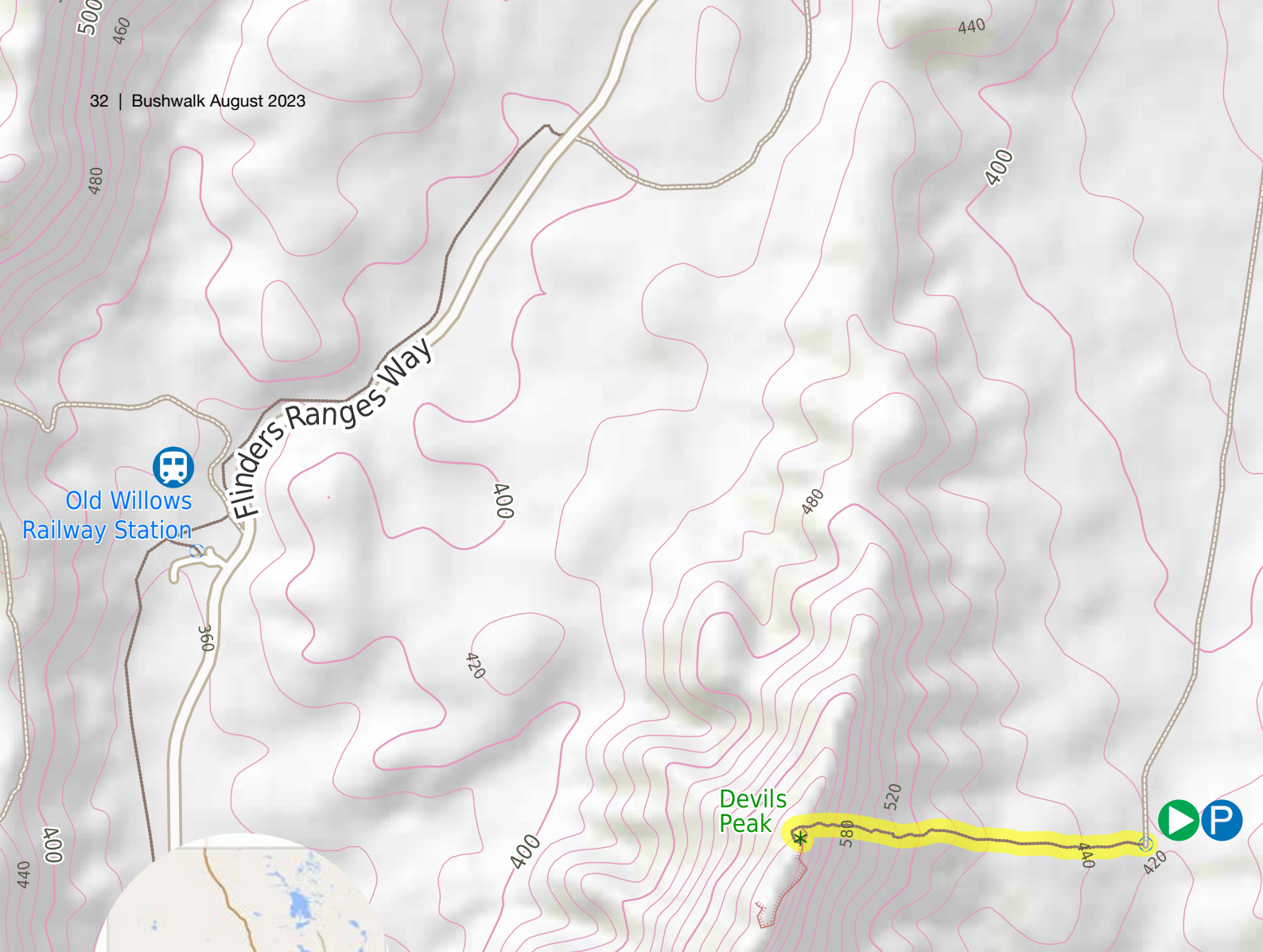
I couldn't help but notice, constantly looming in the distance, there was a standout hill.

“

I couldn't help but notice, constantly looming in the distance, there was a standout hill.



The lure of Devils Peak



## Devils Peak Walking Trail



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



Main track, side trip, alternative route



Cliff, major contour line, minor contour line (20 metre interval)



Lake, river, waterfall or creek



Start of the walk



Parking



Train

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

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





Start of the walk



Devils Peak



Last steps to the top



Vista from the top

Further enquiries led me to find out the name of said hill (Devils Peak) and the joyous news that it could be climbed.

That was my next stop, heading out on a benign dirt road to get to the parking area where it said it was a 2.6 kilometres, 2 hours return to the top but was graded "hard".

The first part was just a normal bushwalk, slightly uphill through scrub and spring flowers with the cliffs beckoning in the background. The part I loved was that they had signposts every 200 metres, so you could judge how far you'd gone but it was the last 100 metres that was taxing and I failed to realise just how steep until the return journey. Near the top you

have to ascend through a crack and presto, you're on the extensive sloping slab of pound quartzite that has been your goal.

The views are 360 degrees and there's a genuine "top of the world" feeling about this place because Devils is the highest point (697 metres) for some distance in any direction, with panoramas over the fields of spring beyond Quorn.

I had to leave this special mount and head to Adelaide to pick up Lorraine who had been tutoring her textile art in Sydney and hadn't been able to get away.

Still, I had a memory I'd never forget.



# Photo Gallery

Photos  
**Bushwalk.com photographers**





Check this and  
other entries at  
[Bushwalk.com](https://bushwalk.com)  
Photo competitions



Storm brewing  
North-north-west

# Landscapes

## August 2022

Winner  
17 Mile Waterfall  
**Rob Grantner**

Walkers enjoying sunset at 17 Mile Waterfall, night three of the Jatbula track Northern Territory.



Thureau Hills summit view  
**North-north-west**



Mount Bell  
**Brian Eglinton**



After the flooding  
**John Walker**



# Non-landscapes

## August 2022

Winner  
Ice cream time  
**David Edwards**

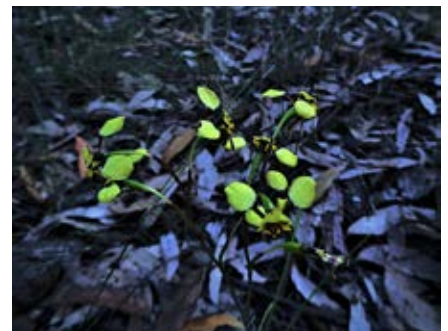
We see or hear yellow tailed black cockatoos relatively regularly where we often go for walks. This time there was a cockatoo attacking a tree right next to our trail so we thought we would watch. For half an hour this cockatoo removed chunks out of the branch before it finally succeeded in getting the prize. Fortunately it only flew a few metres to start feasting so I was able to get a snap and see what was apparently worth the effort.



Forest gleam  
**North-north-west**



Capturing the morning  
**Brian Eglinton**



Orchid time  
**John Walker**

# Tasmania

## August 2022

Winner

Morning light, Lake Burbury

**North-north-west**

A regular overnight stop on west coast trips, and a change from the regular west coast "you don't need to see more than ten metres" weather. But the rocks are the hero here.





# Other States

## August 2022

Winner  
Parachilna view  
**Brian Eglinton**

The north end of the Heysen Trail is at Parachilna Gorge in the Northern Flinders Ranges. The adjacent Heysen Range provides exciting off-track walking with expansive views over the semi-desert surrounds in every direction. This is the view looking back to Parachilna Gorge after a tough ascent..



Early spring colour  
**John Walker**



# Landscapes

## September 2022

Winner  
Takayna coast  
**North-north-west**

Church Rock is an easy half day walk up the coast from Arthur River. Easy and beautiful. This is a coastline that keeps on giving.



Mount Gingera summit,  
looking north-east towards  
Canberra  
**Damomcdermott**



Dramatic landscape,  
Meelup, Western Australia  
**John Walker**



Magnetic Island  
**Tom Brennan**



# Non-landscapes

## September 2022

Winner  
Owlet Nightjar - Great Sandy National Park QLD  
**David Edwards**

I am one of those people that carries the extra weight of a full-frame camera and zoom lens on multi-day walks, always expecting and hopefully being ready for the unexpected. On the Cooloola great walk we surprised this owlet nightjar that flew from it's resting hollow. Seeing one of our night birds in daylight was definitely a bonus.



Death adder  
**Tom Brennan**



Western Crowned Snake,  
Western Australia  
**John Walker**



*Pyrorchis nigricans*  
**North-north-west**



# Tasmania

## September 2022

Winner  
Old Waterfall  
Valley Hut  
**Grunter**

After spending our first night at the luxurious new Waterfall Valley Hut, my daughter and I ventured a short distance to see the old Waterfall Valley Hut. It was built in 1958 and underwent major renovations in 1985. Barn Bluff stands magnificently in the background. With peaceful sounds from the nearby stream and waterfalls make this one of the special places on the Overland Track.



Ronny Creek with fog bow  
**Tortoise**



Swimcart Lagoon  
**North-north-west**



# Other States

## September 2022

Winner  
Berowra Creek reflections  
**Tom Brennan**

Mangroves frame the still afternoon downstream  
from Crosslands on Berowra Creek.



Lake Cooloomera in Great  
Sandy National Park, QLD.  
A happy place for frogs  
**David Edwards**



Other side of the moon,  
Leeuwin-Naturaliste NP,  
Western Australia  
**John Walker**



Tower Hill  
**Brian Eglinton**



# Long Slow Walks

Text and photos  
**Janine Reeves**

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For years I have been regularly chatting to my parents and filling them in on our weekend adventures, walking along the coast of Sydney with my husband Christopher. That often brought up stories from their lives about when they were last there and wishes that they could see it again, now that they are less mobile. During COVID, I had developed an interest in the Slow TV idea sometimes broadcast on SBS, where you could watch a 10-hour train journey minute by minute. For some of course, this would be like watching paint dry, but for myself I appreciated the calming meditative effect it brought, as well as the experience of being there.



Janine with her camera in action





Cape Banks

I had also been hearing about 360° cameras for a while and noticed that not only had no one been filming entire walks, they haven't been doing it with 360° cameras either ... and so "Long Slow Walks" was born. My aim is to film entire walks. Yes, the whole thing, and then host them on our [Youtube channel](#) for anyone to view.

### The process

The videos that these 360° cameras create are unusual, as you can rotate the published video and look at anything you want. So you might choose to just look in the direction I am walking, or you could also turn it around and watch a beautiful view pass by or a beautiful dog. No? So just me then? If you are viewing them on a mobile device, just moving the phone will change the view.

When watching these later I noticed that sometimes looking behind me is the best experience. Whenever I watch the Marley Beach to Jibbon Beach Walk in the Royal National Park to relax, I always point the

video to the back as I exit Marley Beach and head north. For me it's a stunning view that slowly disappears into the distance. A number of the videos have been filmed during whale watching season, so pointing the camera at the ocean and looking for white jets of water, followed by the black bodies of whales surfacing, is the best direction. I was lucky enough to capture some whales at Cape Banks Edge on the Bumbora Point to Cape Banks Edge walk. The fish-eye lens makes the whales a little difficult to see, but there were a number of them travelling north for the winter that day.

Sometimes the response of the people I pass is humorous, with some relishing being in front of the camera and others looking at me like I am crazy, carrying a pole in the middle of nowhere. Sometimes you can almost hear my silent screams to my fellow walkers, casually standing too close to the edge of a cliff. I think it's best that I don't point out the times when some juveniles are behaving ... well ... juvenile.



For those less experienced with hiking, I think the videos give a really good feel for what the walk will be like. For example, those who need to travel with a walking stick or a pram will be able to determine if they will be able to complete it. Those who don't like hills can look for where the video has been spliced when walking up a hill, to cover for me being out of breath. More experienced people can use the videos to plan the next outing, or decide which walks are worth the time. Oh, who am I kidding, they are all worth our time aren't they?

### The plan

My plan is to firstly film the entire Sydney coast from Otford through to Palm Beach, from south to north. One video will end where the next begins, so you can watch the entire coast of Sydney, except for the bays and harbours in between of course. I am almost half-way through that now, after having completed Wattamolla Beach in the Royal National Park through to the South Head of Sydney Harbour.



The red line shows the walks I have done



Cliffs above Little Marley Beach





Greenhills Beach

After the coast is completed, I plan to move onto Sydney Harbour starting from South Head to Parramatta and then back again to North Head, to complete the entire 315 kilometres Sydney Harbour and Coast Walk. After that, and after the blisters heal, I am open to suggestions.

“

After the coastline is completed, I am planning to move onto Sydney Harbour starting from South Head to Parramatta ...

I find narrated videos of nature not to my taste, so instead I attempt to capture the experience and nuances of the walk, with its bird song and sadly, the occasional jack hammer in Bondi - eek! Hopefully then, you

can imagine yourself there instead of me. I do mute distinct voices to give members of the public their privacy, but background noise is always welcome, particularly any waves lapping on the shore. I also go out of my way to try to hide my shadow to avoid breaches of the fourth wall, but of course if you look down you can say hi.

Due to the logistics of battery length, access issues and my lack of stamina, I often have to cover the walks multiple times to get the shots I need. I originally thought this would be the most boring part of this endeavour, but I am finding it quite the opposite. I see things on later visits that I missed the first time through, but also can relax more as I know where I am going and can just enjoy the view.

I had previously been to all the “good bits” of our coast many times, all the bits that everyone knows and loves (and sometimes loves a little too much). However, I was struck

with the beauty of the parts I had never heard of before. The bits no one has ever spoken to me about going to, nor have I read anything about before. Perhaps this is just a product of where I live in Sydney, and an indication that I need to get out more.

“

Gee was I wrong, they should be the destination, not the journey.

When I was planning the walks, I just thought I had to pass through The Balconies or the cliffs above Little Marley Beach in the Royal National Park, just to reach my goal of filming the whole coast. Gee was I wrong, they should be the destination, not the journey. I have found the coast so far to be filled with hidden treasures that are perhaps well known to divers or four-wheel drivers, but sadly not

to me previously. It will come as no surprise to any of you, that it's the bits that haven't been built up that are the prettiest, not the bits with the highest real estate prices. I am happy to be proven wrong though, as I start my journey on the north side of the harbour to continue along the coast.

### **Solution**

So now my parents feel like they are travelling with me, reminiscing of when they were last there or spotting places that in their 80 years of living in Sydney, they also never knew existed. Aged care residents have watched the videos and other people have commented that they only watch them to relax. There is just something about a slow walk along a long and isolated beach that seems to do the trick like little else.

So if you see a crazy woman, walking with a pole above her head on your favourite tracks, feel free to smile and wave for the camera.

You can find us at [LongSlowWalks](#).





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# In the News

## Human Nature movie

Sophie feels overwhelmed by the demands of her life at home, and the need to compare herself to her siblings. She decides to hike 500 kilometres through the Arctic region of Norway. [This is her story.](#)

## 15 best Australian hiking blogs and websites

Check out the [2023 top visited bushwalking blogs](#) according to FeedSpot.

## Climate change impacting World Heritage Areas

A research paper has found that some of the world's most precious places are facing "[unprecedented challenges from climate change](#)" and could lose their World Heritage status.

## Light-to-Light track in Beowa National Park closed

Starting in July, as part of [ongoing upgrades](#), the northern section of the Light-to-Light track in Beowa National Park will be temporarily closed. The track is expected to open in summer.

## Eastern Bettongs reintroduced in Yiraaldiya National Park, NSW

After being extinct on mainland Australia for over a century, eastern bettongs have been [successfully reintroduced](#) to Yiraaldiya National Park in New South Wales. Australia has the worst mammal extinction record in the world, with the primary driver of extinction and decline being predation by feral cats and foxes.

## Ownership of Boodjamulla National Park returned to Traditional Owners

In an historic ceremony, more than 79,000 hectares of Boodjamulla (Lawn Hill) National Park in Queensland have been [returned to the Waanyi People](#), the land's Traditional Owners. The Waanyi Prescribed Body Corporate will lease the national park land to the State.

## South Australian National Parks app

Be your [own tour guide](#) in South Australia's national parks with the help of [local rangers](#), [Traditional Owners](#) and [interactive tour maps](#). One of these is the Wild South Coast Way, a new walk on the Heysen Trail between Victor Harbour and Cape Jervis on the Fleurieu Peninsula.

## Council Backs Great Koala National Park

The City of Coffs Harbour has pledged its [support](#) for the establishment of a Great Koala National Park.

## Australia's largest search and rescue training exercise

S&R exercise [Navshield](#) was recently conducted in the Goulburn River National Park, with more than 500 people from the NSW SES, agencies around Australia and the general public participating.

## Crocodile attacks

A crocodile [attacked](#) a man at Wangi Falls. Data suggests that Northern Territory salties [don't need culling](#) and the current management program seems to be effective.

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# End of Native Forest Logging

Text and photos  
**Victorian National Park Association**

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We are elated! On 23 May the [state government](#) announced their plan to speed up the transition out of native forest logging.

Native forest logging will end in Victoria on 1 January next year.

In about seven months you're going to be living in a state that protects native wildlife habitat instead of smashing it up for pulp, paper, pallets and firewood. This is a game-changer for nature. This is also a testament to the hard work, resilience and determination of the Victorian nature-loving community. A massive thank you to everyone who emailed or called their elected representatives. To those who donated to our important work.



Greater glider  
Justin Cally



To those who spread the word, joined citizen science expeditions, who again and again took action for our special places, creatures and habitats.

We've talked a lot about [the trouble with VicForests](#). From breaking the laws that govern them, to taxpayer funded financial losses, to repeated failures to protect endangered wildlife like the iconic Greater Glider. Now it's time to talk about restoring and recovering what we've lost.

As part of the transition, the government will deliver a program to manage the 1.8 million hectares of public land currently available to log. Importantly, forestry workers will be supported through the transition. Forests will be assessed for protection in new national parks and for activities like camping, hiking and four-wheel driving. This will include opportunities for Traditional Owner management.

We'll be keeping a close eye on what is planned for forest works. Our key concern is the work forest fire agencies are doing is often indistinguishable from intensive logging practices.

This announcement is a powerful reminder that the state-sanctioned destruction of nature isn't inevitable. It's the consequence of poor decisions by the people we've elected and entrusted to look after nature. Better decisions can be made, if we demand them. And that's exactly what our community did, for years on end.

It has finally paid off.

### Comments about the win



Wow!! Just shed a tear and have taken my 'Protect Nature Now End Native Forest Logging' off my front fence. Congratulations to us all for so many years of activism and a bottom of the heart thank you to all legends at VNPA.  
Russell



At last we get the result that is needed for our forests in Victoria. I have been waiting 30 years for this to happen since the Land Conservation Council's final recommendations that created the Yarra Ranges National Park. VNPA led the way then and continues to do so. Congratulations to all those who have worked so hard for so long – both in the VNPA and all the other organisations that have worked together.

Anne Casey, VNPA President  
1996-98



Too often public and private agendas sidestep, or outright ignore, sufficient upfront environmental governance. Government or industry develops an idea from pitch to project. It's then approved without sufficient environmental governance and progresses despite the threats posed. Then a nature conservation community group learns of the project and exposes the environmental threats and/or legal or regulatory non-compliance. Public-debate, citizen science and legal proceedings lead to project delays and cost overruns. It is a counter-productive cycle set to repeat mode.

There are few winners in a process this broken. Potentially valuable programs are delayed, public funds are wasted and volunteers, not-for-profits and local groups devote precious time and resources to make sure any negative impacts on nature and community are considered and managed appropriately. Many of our campaigns address this fundamental issue.

David Nugent, VNPA President

“

I know the devil will always be in the detail but an accelerated end to native forest logging in Victoria is great news. And would not have happened without people's courage and work. Thanks so much for your efforts over time to protect the bark cathedrals, the critters, the water and more. I hope you can take a moment and a breath and know you've made a difference.  
Dave Sweeney, ACF

“

Matt, you are an inspiration and seriously one of my top 5 heroes in business and in life. It is natural to be anxious about how the parks will be managed from here. But take the time to soak in this today. You did this. VNPA, Bob Brown and the EDO are my go-to agencies for environmental issues and thought leadership in this field.  
Blair

“

A while ago I cancelled my membership – what was I thinking? Please reinstate my membership and monthly donation of \$20. Great news regarding the end of native forest logging in Victoria.  
Darren



Corduoy Road  
Pengo



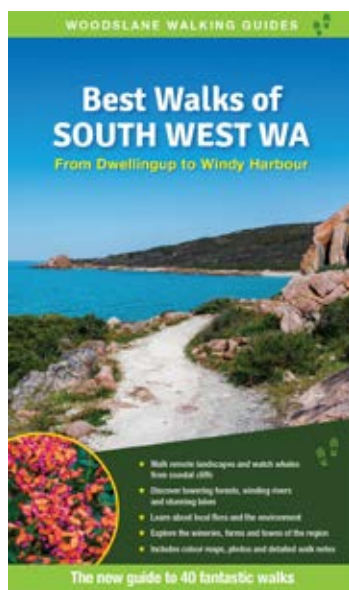
# Published

## **Best Walks of South West WA by Mark Pybus**

The south-west of Western Australia is a walker's paradise. This brand new guide introduces forty walks (plus many suggestions for varying them), ranging from leisurely coastal strolls to forestland- waterfall adventures and more rugged tracks deep in the state's famous national parks. Detailed descriptions and clear maps help the reader explore the stunning forests, rivers and beautiful coasts. The book is richly illustrated with over 200 colour photographs and dozens of maps.

Paperback, 200 pages

Price: \$33



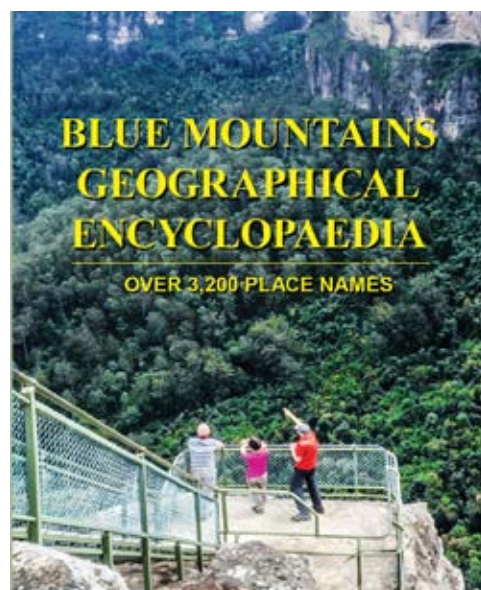
## **Blue Mountains Geographical Encyclopaedia**

**by Brian Fox, Michael Keats OAM, John Fox**

The Nepean River to Mount Victoria has thousands of years of Aboriginal heritage and over 220 years of European history, with around 3200 names. This book is about those names, the men and women who named them, why and when they did. This book is for everyone, whether you are a bushwalker, Blue Mountains resident or just curious about our history.

Paperback, 708 pages

Price: \$82



# Giant "Drop Bears"

Text

**Anusuya Chinsamy-Turan**

**Karen Black**

**Mike Archer**

**Sue Hand**

---

Although long dead, fossil skeletons provide an incredible window into the lifestyle and environment of an extinct animal.

By analysing the various features of fossil bones we can reveal not only the overall size and shape of the animal, but also what kind of movement the animal was capable of, its lifestyle, and the environment in which it lived.

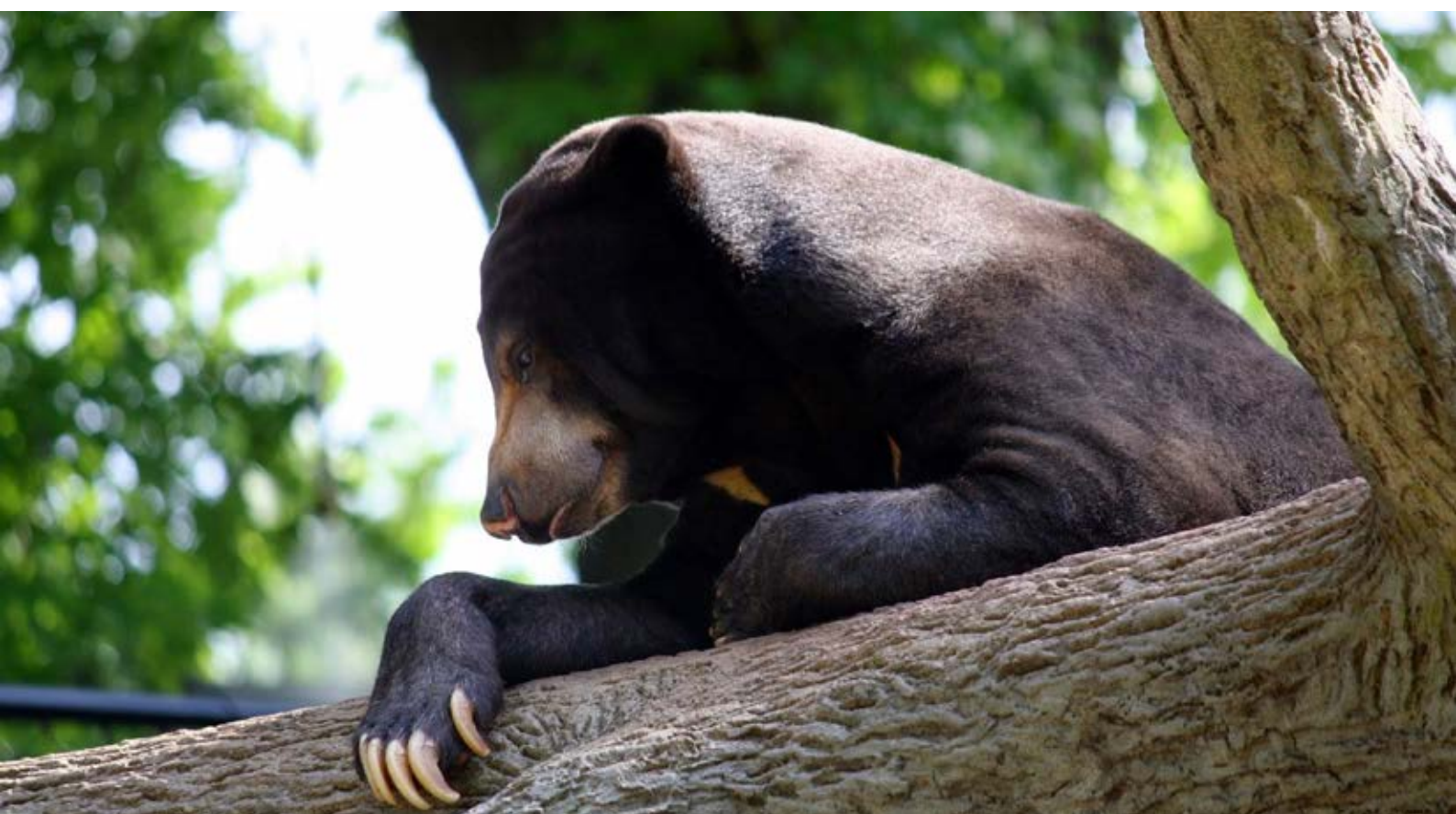
But what if we looked *inside* fossil bones?

What secrets would it reveal about the growth and development of an extinct animal?



Reconstruction of a mother and baby Nimbadon  
Peter Schouten, Author provided





Modern-day sun bears climb trees and lounge there much like sloths do

In a newly published paper in the [Journal of Paleontology](#), we have done just that, using 15 million-year-old skeletons of a giant bear-like marsupial from the world-famous Riversleigh World Heritage Area (Boodjamulla) in Waanyi country of northwest Queensland.

### Tree-dwelling wombat relatives

The huge tree-dwelling herbivorous marsupials, known as *Nimbadon*, weighed about 70kg, making them the largest arboreal (tree dwelling) mammals known from Australia.

*Nimbadon* belongs to a diverse group of long extinct, large-bodied marsupials known as [diprotodontoids](#), the likes of which include the largest marsupial to have ever lived, the 2.5 tonne megafaunal *Diprotodon*, and bizarre trunked marsupials reminiscent of modern-day tapirs.

Among living animals, *Nimbadon* is most closely related to wombats. Yet surprisingly, in terms of body size and lifestyle, they are more comparable to [sun bears](#), which today can be found scaling the rainforest canopies of Southeast Asia.

When we first uncovered jawbones of *Nimbadon* at Riversleigh in 1993, we thought we were looking at very large leaf-eating marsupials who foraged for food on the forest floor.

But like many of the species we've unearthed from Riversleigh, the closer we look at these animals, the more bizarre and fascinating they become.

*Nimbadon* is now known from its complete skeleton, including material representing developmental ages ranging from tiny pouch-young to mature adults. It had strong arms with very mobile shoulder and elbow joints. Its hands and feet had specially adapted opposable thumbs with huge curved claws for climbing, penetrating bark and grasping branches.

These animals were highly specialised climbers and lived vastly different lifestyles compared to their closest living relatives – the land-dwelling, burrowing wombats.



Fossil skeleton of a mature adult *Nimbadoron*.  
Karen Black, Author provided

Our initial research showed that *Nimbadoron* was not only a “tree-hugger”, but also a “tree-hanger”, spending some of its time suspended from tree branches like a sloth.

*Nimbadoron* lived 15 million years ago in the canopy of lowland Australian rainforests. These biodiverse, lush forests were home to some equally strange animals: flesh-eating kangaroos, tree-climbing crocodiles, ancestral thylacines, cat- to leopard-sized marsupial lions, huge anaconda-like snakes, giant toothed platypuses and mysterious marsupials so strange they have been called “Thingodonta”. It was a very different Australia than the one we see today.

### Sectioning the bones

Despite the wealth of information we have gleaned from *Nimbadoron* skeletons, until now we hadn’t fully understood the growth patterns of these ancient marsupials.

Were they affected by seasonality? How long did they take to grow to adult body size in the canopies of the ancient forest? Clues to these questions lay in the bones’ microscopic structure.

To look inside the fossil bones, we needed to select the right material. Long bones, such as the bones of the leg, are known to preserve a good record of growth, so we analysed ten long bones of several different-sized individuals.



We began by removing a section from the shaft of the bone, and embedded it in resin. Using a diamond-edged blade, we cut our samples into thin sections and polished them further until light could pass through them. These thinned sections were mounted on glass microscope slides to be studied.

Remarkably, even after millions of years of fossilisation, the microscopic structure of the fossil bones had remained intact. We were amazed to discover that *Nimbadon* grew in periodic spurts. Individuals had fast growth periods, each followed by a slow growth period, often associated with a band of arrested growth.

### Seasonal growers

Cyclical growth patterns have previously been documented for marsupials such as in the living western grey kangaroo. However, our results indicate that, overall, the limbs of *Nimbadon* had a much slower, more extenuated growth than kangaroo limbs.

One individual recorded at least seven to eight growth cycles, which suggests this arboreal giant needed at least this amount of time – and probably more – to become a fully-grown, sexually mature adult.

Based on these alternating cycles of fast and slow growth, *Nimbadon* may have been affected by seasonal conditions such as food availability. However, exactly how long it took for eight growth cycles to develop remains a mystery. If indeed they represent annual cycles, it would be at least eight years

until sexual maturity, which is unusual in the modern marsupial world.

For example, kangaroos are sexually mature at one to two years. That being said, *Nimbadon* is an unusual beast and a very large one at that, so an extended developmental period (and lifespan) is not unlikely.

### Real-life drop bears

We have come to think about these strange arboreal marsupials as real versions of the legendary “drop bears” of Australian folklore – mysterious tree-dwelling creatures that would drop down on unsuspecting animals below.

While moving in herds through the rainforest canopy, both young and adult *Nimbadon* would have occasionally lost their grip before dropping down from the treetops. Sometimes they would end up in forest floor caves, which is where we have been finding their still-articulated skeletons.

Given the constant surprises that research into this extraordinary, extinct Riversleigh mammal has already produced, we are eager and prepared for still more.

Currently we are looking into wear in the enamel microstructure of *Nimbadon*’s teeth to determine this legendary drop bear’s diet. We expect that what we find down the track will continue to upend our naïve first presumptions about the lifestyles of this and many of the other strange inhabitants of the ancient inland rainforests of Riversleigh.

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# Breakfast Bars & Lava Cake

Text and photos  
**Sonya Muhlsimmer**

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In July I trekked the Larapinta trail, an epic hike in the Northern Territory starting from Alice Springs and heading west to Mount Sonder, about 223 kilometres. The Larapinta goes over the West MacDonnell Ranges and into some amazing gorges like Ormiston and Serpentine Gorges and through Standley Chasm. These are some pretty spectacular places to visit. I did this over 16 days with a cozy three rest days. I also had three food drops, which just so happened to be on the rest days so I didn't have to carry so much food on the entire hike. Sounds good, right, and it was hard to wait before the trip.



Ormiston Gorge, Tjoritja/West MacDonnell National Park, Northern Territory





Breakfast bars

A lot went into the planning like getting fit, how to get there, where to camp, how to get home and most importantly what to eat.

The distances vary a lot: some days are up to 30 kilometres and others are around 15 kilometres. The shortest day's walk is a mere nine kilometres; that day will be a walk in the park, right.

This trip I tried out some new recipes and also fell back on my old time favorites, but I was really looking forward to trying out some new meals. I hoped that my friend would be as excited as me. This proved to be the case, and she said the food was amazing. So taking into consideration there will be some pretty early starts to cover a lot of ground, I thought about trying a new recipe for a breakfast bar. This way it will be up early to pack the gear into the rucksack and off we go. So to save washing up on those long days an alternative is eating a breakfast bar, with a coffee of course.

I had a look at the supermarket and there is already a plethora of muesli bars, oat slices

and breakfast biscuits but I do find they are too sweet for me and are not very satisfying. On that note, I tried creating my own highly nutritious bar with a not so popular ingredient, amaranth and also another fairly popular ingredient such as whey powder. Amaranth was a staple food in the Inca, Maya and Aztec times and it is full of protein, fibre and micronutrients such as iron and magnesium. Amaranth is known as a super food, beneficial to one's health, and has a high GI, just the type of nutrients we need on a multi-day hike. Whey powder packs a punch for protein and it is a common sports supplement. A lot of body builders use this as it can help build lean muscle mass and improve strength. So why not use these two ingredients and make a super nutritious breakfast bar?

This breakfast bar is so easy to make and how you cut the bars varies the serving size. This recipe cut into six suits me so I suggest you play around with this and get them to the size of your liking. Oh and by the way you can add chopped dates, cranberries or even chocolate or cacao nibs, the choice is endless as to what you can do with this bar.

Ingredients

Rolled Oats	2 cup
Whey powder	8 Tbsp
Almond meal	4 Tbsp
Amaranth (puffed or grain)	2 Tbsp
Chopped and toasted walnuts	4 Tbsp
Desiccated coconut	4 Tbsp
Brown sugar	1 cup

Wet ingredients

Melted butter	120 grams
Honey	2 Tbsp
Vanilla essence	2 tsp
Water	2 Tbsp

Method

Preheat a fan forced oven to 160 °C. Line a 28 x 18 cm baking tray with greaseproof paper. Place all the dry ingredients into a food processor and pulse for about 5-10 seconds, just enough that the mix is blended together. Then place these ingredients into a bowl and add the wet ingredients. With your hands mix the ingredients together until the mix sticks together. Place this mixture onto the lined tray, pad down with your hand then smooth out with a spoon firmly and bake for about 20 minutes. Then let the slice cool in the tin for about 10 minutes and transfer to a wire rack to cool completely. Cut this into four or six bars. If you have a vacuum sealer, vacuum and seal the bars. Enjoy on your hike.



Celebration cake

Celebration cake

On another note, this edition is BWA's sixtieth edition, well done team. It has been an amazing journey over the years, reading many stories of adventures from our community. So, to celebrate how about a little bit of peanut butter lava cake to share? I have published this before, but it was a while ago now. So hey, who doesn't like a piece of chocolate cake for a worthy celebration?

Ingredients

Bag

Peanut butter powder	4 Tbsp
Egg powder	2 Tbsp
Cocoa powder	2 Tbsp
Chocolate chips	40 grams
Plain flour	¼ cup
Vanilla sugar	2 tsp
Salt	Pinch

Ghee	30 grams
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Water	¼ cup
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At home preparation

Place the ghee in a well-sealed, airtight container. Place all other dry ingredients into the bag. Label the bag, print out the method at camp instructions and pack with the bag.

Method at camp

Add the ghee to the cake mix in the bag. Seal the bag and with your fingers work the ghee from the outside through the mix. Now add the water to the bag and mix well. The bag shouldn't break when you do this. Boil about 2 cups of water in a pot and place the sealed bag in the water. Cover if you have a lid and cook for about 6 minutes. If you don't have a lid cook the cake for an extra minute or two. Serve from the bag or empty onto a plate. Optional, sprinkle with golden flakes and enjoy. Serves 2 decent sized portions. Enjoy!



# Videos



## Snake safety when hiking in Australia

This video was inspired by a friend who was so scared of snakes it prevented them from getting outdoors and enjoying nature. Hopefully the video helps someone feel a little more comfortable outdoors.



## 10 day Larapinta Trail end to end solo hike

Join Laura Waddell as she spent 10 days solo hiking 230 kilometres from Alice Springs across the Larapinta Trail to Mount Sonder in the remote Australian outback.



## Grampians Peaks Trail

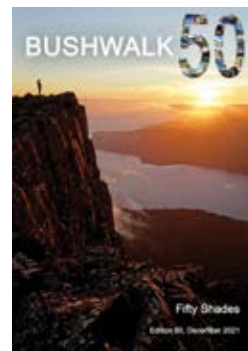
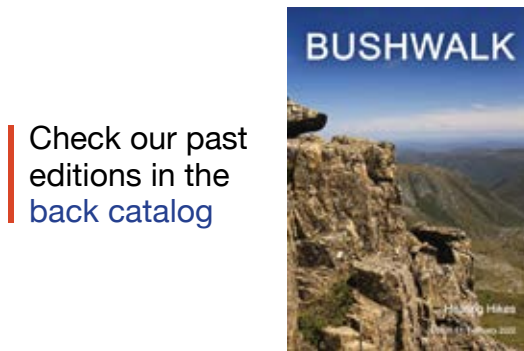
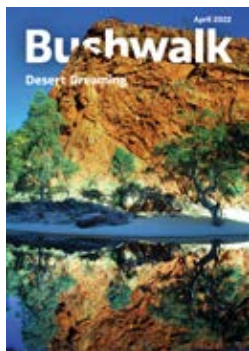
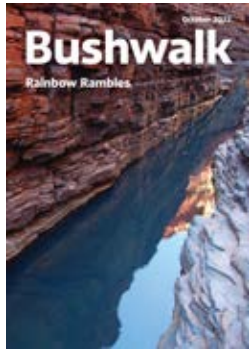
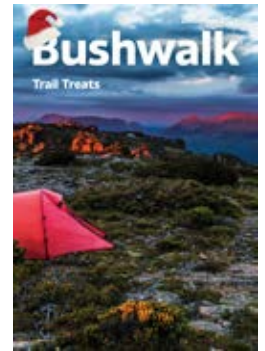
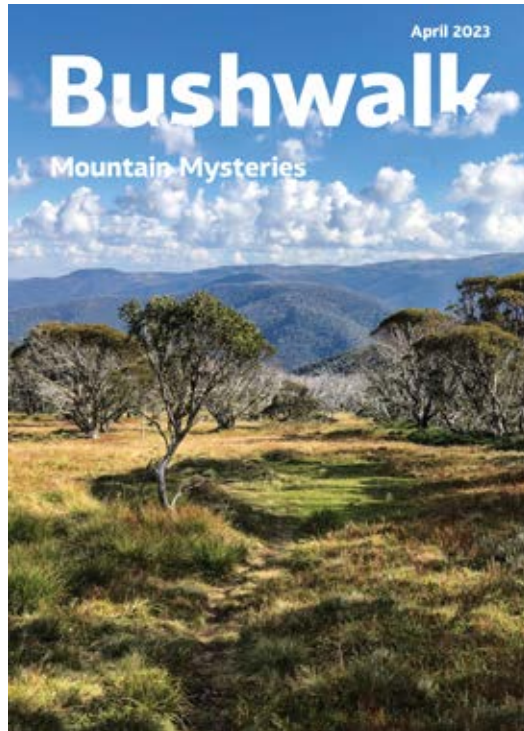
This discusses the north section of the GPT, with helpful tips, tricks and essential information.



## Minimising and recovering from danger in wild places

Before heading into the bush, being aware of the possible mishaps will make the trip safer.





Check our past editions in the [back catalog](#)

