



December 2025

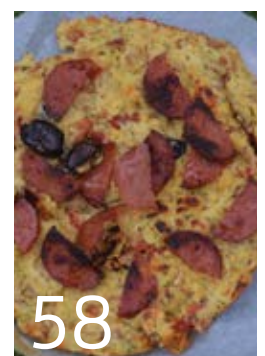
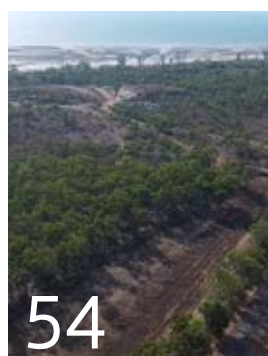
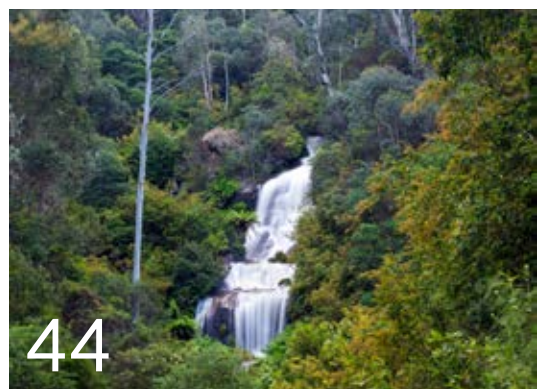
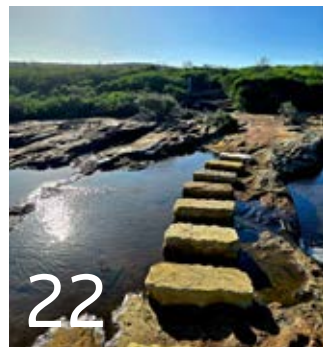
Bushwalk

Wilderness Wonders



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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,

I hope this summer edition finds you well and ready for some wonderful wilderness adventures.

In this packed edition, Glen takes us on a his plan-B six-day hut-hopping walk through the wonderful NSW Jagungal Wilderness, while Michael shares a culturally rich and challenging traverse of Mt Wilhelm in rugged Papua New Guinea. Greg continues to share his epic coastal journey, walking the spectacular cliff lines and beaches from Cronulla to Gerringong. Ian helps us encounter waterfalls—and meets up with some very unexpected fellow walkers on the Warrie Circuit in Queensland.

Justine helps us dive into and better understand the critical overhaul of Australia's environmental laws, and Sonya cooks up a scrumptious Spanish omelette for the trail. Be sure to check out the amazing winning entries in our Photo Gallery for some visual inspiration.

This magazine is and always will be written by bushwalkers for bushwalkers, so if you have an idea for a story to share, please reach out to Eva and let us give you a hand.

Happy walking and reading!

Matt :)

Matt McClelland (aka Wildwalks)

matt@bushwalk.com

Cover image

Looking across Back Flat Creek at Valentine Falls along the Valentine Fire Trail
Glen Andrews



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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. 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, Wildwalks.com and 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.

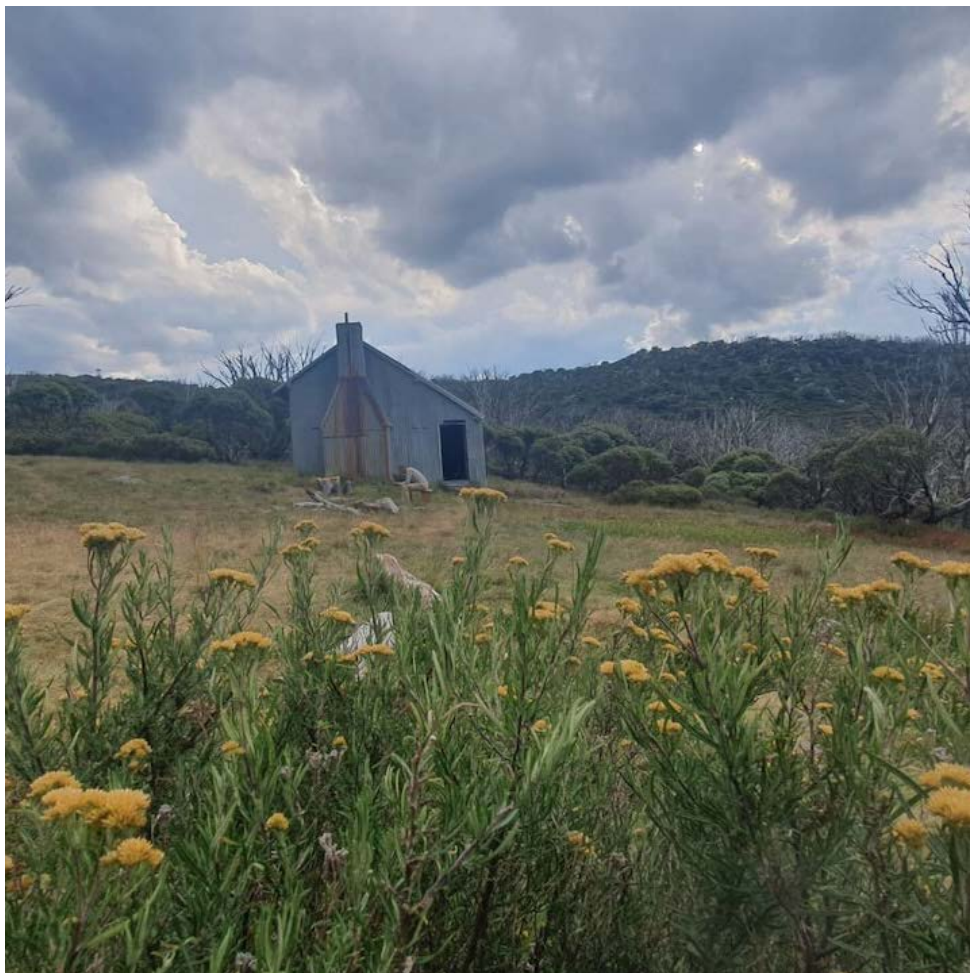
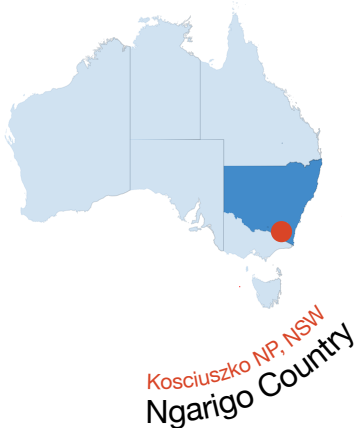
Please consider joining a walking club or undertaking formal training in other ways to ensure you are well prepared for any activities you are planning. Please report any errors or omissions to the editor or in the forum at Bushwalk magazine.

The Jagungal Wilderness

Text and photos
Glen Andrews

Six Days in the Australian Alps

I completed a six-day trek in the Jagungal area, running from January 11-16 2025.



Day 2: Mawsons Hut



Day 1: Grey Mare Hut



Day 2: Part of the group remained here at Valentines Hut on day 2

Our original plan was to start at Thredbo, go over the Main Range, and visit some off-piste huts we hadn't seen before en route to Mt Selwyn. However, the weather forecast looked rainy pretty much every day. A six-day rainy hike with many nights in remote areas didn't seem like the best idea, so we implemented Plan B, which involved putting the tents up next to a hut every night. This meant we could cook and enjoy a fire and company each night. I was testing some new gear on this trip, with a lighter pack, tent, sleeping bag, and pad. Dry weight was 15kg including food. Not exactly ultralight, but a lot better than my normal 18–20kg dry (I am 191cm and 85kg).

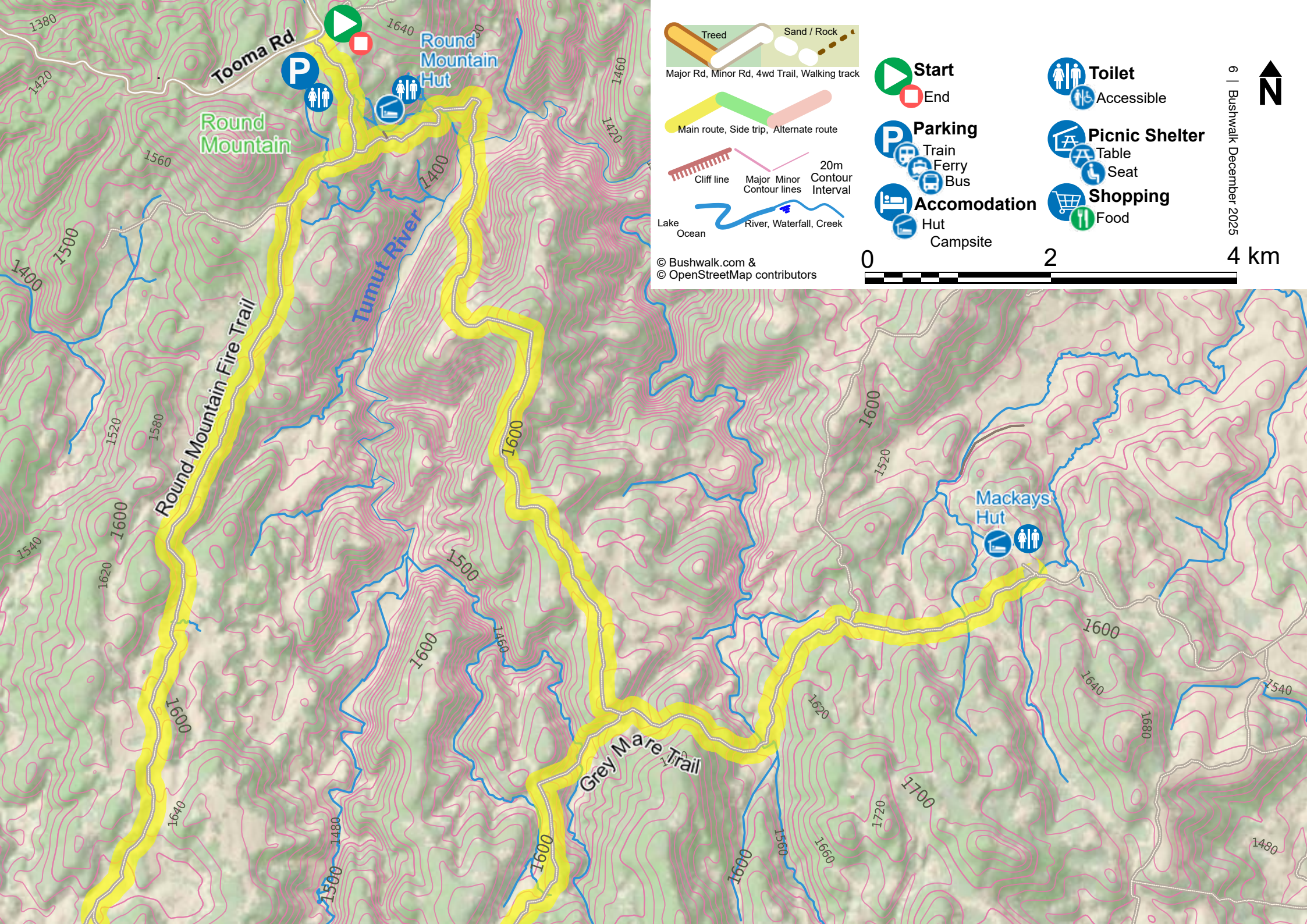
Day 1: Round Mountain to Grey Mare 25km

Starting at Round Mountain, we set off for Grey Mare on Day 1 at 10 AM. Early on, one member of our party suffered terrible calf cramps that would not abate, and at 7km he made the difficult decision to turn back. Another member accompanied him for safety, and we were a party of six, down from the original eight. We had a largely dry day; however, about two hours before sunset

and an hour before getting to the hut, the rain began. With rain gear on, we pushed on to the hut. It was a long day given all the runaround with managing the retiring walker. A party of three was already there (with their tents up); we set our tents up and then enjoyed the fire and shelter to cook, dry our things, and socialize. We got stormed on and rained on in our tents that night, but all our setups held up well, keeping us dry—a successful gear test. This was a 25km day, with some runaround.

Day 2: Strategic Split to Mawsons Hut 14km

Day 2's goal was Mawsons Hut, though the group dynamic required a small adjustment. A couple of our remaining six were concerned by their level of fatigue after Day 1 and didn't think they were up for the next five reasonably full-on days. So, we agreed on Plan C: we all walked to Valentine's Hut, whereupon three of the party would take a rest afternoon while the other three pushed on to Mawson's Hut. We'd then meet up again on Day 3. This worked well. We enjoyed great walking weather, arriving at Valentine's at 1 PM, and then three of us set off for Mawson's at 2 PM.



1380

1420

1560

1400

1500

1520

1580

1600

1540

1620

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1600

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1600

1600

1560

1620

1600

1520

1600

1640

1720

1700

1660

1600

1600

1640

1680

1480

Tooma Rd

Round Mountain

Round Mountain Fire Trail

Round Mountain Hut

Tumut River

Grey Mare Trail

Mackays Hut

Treed Sand / Rock

Major Rd, Minor Rd, 4wd Trail, Walking track

Main route, Side trip, Alternate route

Cliff line Major Minor Contour lines 20m Contour Interval

Lake Ocean River, Waterfall, Creek

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Start **End**

Toilet **Accessible**

Parking **Train** **Ferry** **Bus**

Accommodation **Hut** **Campsite**

Picnic Shelter **Table** **Seat**

Shopping **Food**

0 2 4 km

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I was a bit apprehensive after my brother failed to get to Mawson's last year by following the river; however the directions I got from members of this forum, when I put up a post asking for help, were sensational. We navigated off-trail into Mawson's in 2 hours 10 minutes. We have a group ritual of rating trails, tundra, or bush bashes, on a 1-5 scale (1 easiest, 5 hardest). We rated the walk into Mawson's (the correct way) as a Tundra Category 2 with some patches of 3. We arrived just after 4 PM under dark clouds and the threat of a storm; however, the storm didn't arrive until about 6 PM. We enjoyed sensational storm viewing, great views of Jagungal (later tattooed on my right calf), a super hut, and an overall top experience. Sensational chilling out by the hut, great camaraderie and chatting, and Mawson's rated very high on the best hut experience list. We slept on the floor in the hut this night. This was about a 14km day (4.5km off-piste).

“

We enjoyed sensational storm viewing, great views of Jagungal (later tattooed on my right calf), a super hut, and an overall top experience.

Day 3: Reconciliation at Grey Mare 14km

Day 3 was a walk back to Grey Mare. We'd agreed with the Valentine's-three that they could set off whenever they were ready. The Mawson's to Valentine's return took 1 hour 35 minutes. We all arrived at Grey Mare at about midday and, being pretty much our favourite place in the area, were thankful to have bulk time for exploring, relaxing and enjoying company. We spent the afternoon chilling out, exploring the gold mining relics, brewing



Day 2: Leigh and Glen in front Mawsons Hut

coffee, cutting some firewood (the saws were noticeably blunt), and decided how Days 4–5 would play out. Plan C was further adapted, and we decided to exit via Round Mountain. The revised plan was to go to O'Keefe's, then some of us would do an out-and-back to Mackays Hut, then on Day 6, we'd walk back along the Round Mountain Fire Trail. We later changed that to go out via the Farm Ridge Fire Trail, which was a great decision. We slept in tents this night. Also a 14 km day.

Day 4: Relaxing at O'Keefe's (14 km)

Great walking conditions to O'Keefe's Hut, sunny and cool. We arrived just after midday. A relaxing afternoon talking, adjusting gear, eating, drinking, and being merry. Another 14 km day.

“

Great walking conditions to O'Keefe's Hut, sunny and cool.



Day 3: Sleeping in tents by Grey Mare Hut



Day 4: Glen, Grant, Leigh, Jason, Mike and Dale departing Grey Mare for O'Keefe's Hut



Day 4: The team chilling out in front of O'Keefe's Hut



Legend:

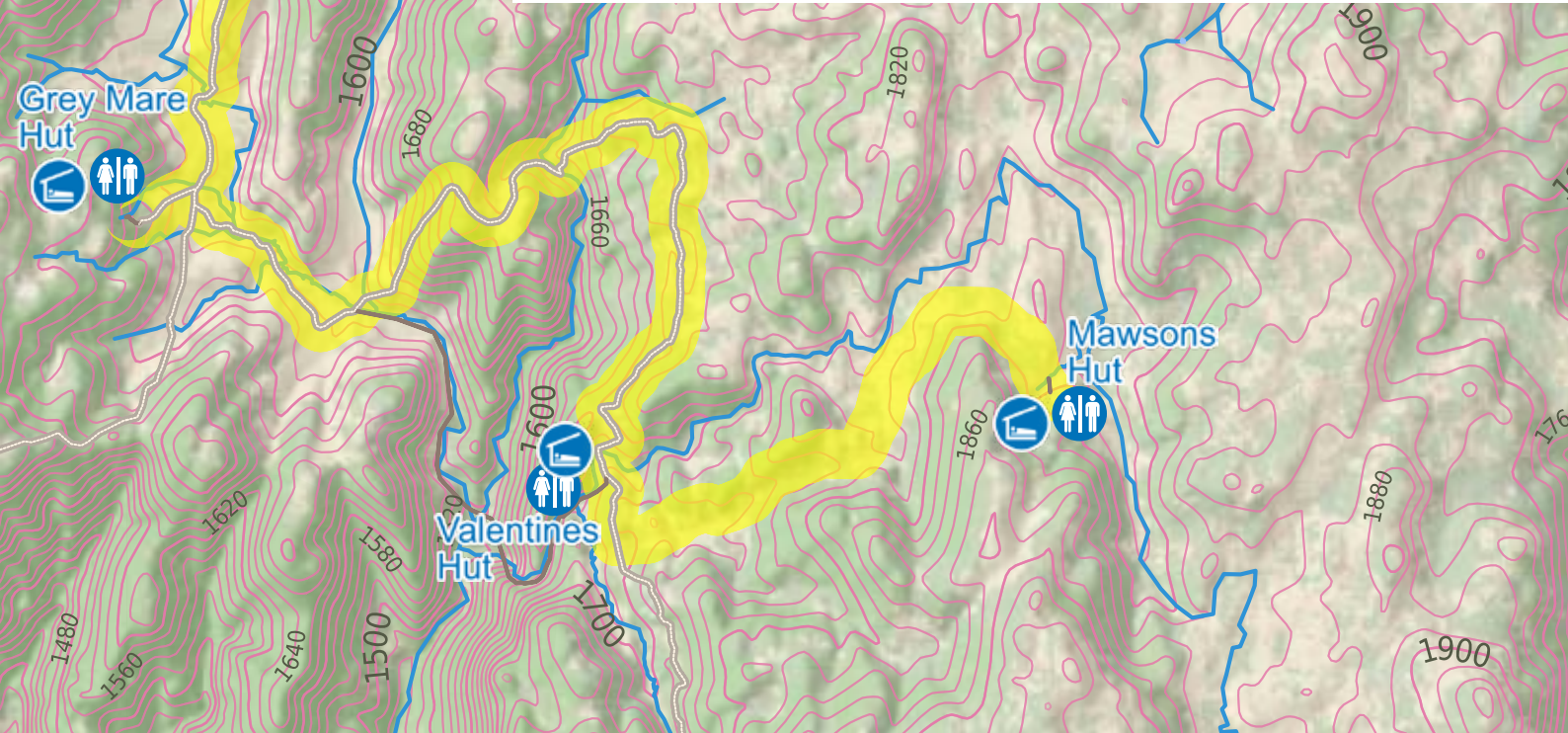
- Treed:** Orange line
- Sand / Rock:** White line
- Major Rd, Minor Rd, 4wd Trail, Walking track:** Grey line
- Main route, Side trip, Alternate route:** Yellow, Green, and Red lines
- Cliff line:** Red comb-like symbol
- Major Contour lines:** Pink lines
- Minor Contour lines:** Light pink lines
- 20m Contour Interval:** Text label
- Lake:** Blue wavy line
- Ocean:** Blue line
- River, Waterfall, Creek:** Blue line with waterfall symbol

Icons:

- Start:** Green play button icon
- End:** Red square icon
- Parking:** Blue 'P' icon with sub-icons for Train, Ferry, Bus
- Accommodation:** Blue hut icon with sub-icons for Hut, Campsite
- Toilet:** Blue toilet icon with sub-icon for Accessible
- Picnic Shelter:** Blue picnic shelter icon with sub-icons for Table, Seat
- Shopping:** Blue shopping cart icon with sub-icon for Food

Scale: 0 to 2 kilometers.

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Day 5: Out and Back to Mackays Hut 27km for author

I ran the first section of the out and back to Mackays Hut solo. I saw a couple of snakes, which was mainly due to the fact that I ran 14 km and startled them (I had gaiters and all required safety gear). I set off at 7:30 AM in my running gear and ran to Mackays Hut, then turned around to meet four of the others who'd started walking at 8 AM. Then the five of us went to Mackay's (again, for me).

I was testing the Salomon Cross Hike as a hybrid-style boot that should be good as a trail runner, and it was a success. We enjoyed the walk and the hut, and got back to O'Keefe's for lunch and a relaxing afternoon. 27 km for me today, including running.



Day 2: A great view of Mount Jagungal from Mawsons Hut, as a storm approaches



Day 4: Passing by Jagungal en route to O'Keefe's Hut



Day 6: Along the Farm Ridge Fire Trail and heading down to cross the Tumut River

Day 6: Exit via Farm Ridge Fire Trail 15km

We left O'Keefes Hut at 8 AM and enjoyed a lovely 15km walk back to Round Mountain via the Farm Ridge Fire Trail. The trail was in great shape, offering easy walking. It was a lovely low-grass covered trail, pleasing to the eye, easy to follow, etc.—a welcome change from the Round Mountain FT, which I've done more than a dozen times. The massive wide open valley toward the end, with a stunning Tumut River, made the route choice worth it all by itself—what a great piece of country! We arrived back at the car at about midday, for another cruisy afternoon and an early mark home. Well, for most of us. My mate and I got a puncture in our car and had to stay overnight in Cooma waiting for a new tyre, oh well...

The new pack, tent, sleeping bag, and pad performed great. Next time, I'll be shooting for a dry weight of 14.0 kg or less!

You're welcome to message me (glenpandrews) on [Bushwalk.com](https://www.bushwalk.com) if you have any questions about the trip, gear etc.

If you'd like to see some video of this country, my friend Dale made [this video](#) after the hike...

“

It was a lovely low-grass covered trail, pleasing to the eye, easy to follow, etc...

Wilhelm Traverse, Papua New Guinea

Text
Michael Bates

It's 2.15am. Summit day.
The culmination of years of
organisation and hard work
by an entire community.



Day 5: Ascending the summit ridge with the Seeku Valley below
Alison Harris



Day 1: The Maine River Bridge and why our cars could not use it.
Alison Harris

Is it going to rain? It was a few hours ago. Unzipping the tent door, cold air smacks me in the face. That feeling is quickly replaced with awe as the Milky Way, unhindered by even the slightest amount of light pollution, stretches across the valley sky. Today is going to be everything we hoped for, and more.

Day 1: Kol to Delima (Ambullua), 15.6km, 1430m

Mt Wilhelm (4509m above mean sea level) is Papua New Guinea's (PNG's) highest mountain and was first climbed in 1938. Most people climbing it do so on a well-worn path from the village of Keglsugl. We were on the

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The first known ascent from Ambullua in 1998 inspired a community to come together to try and create a sustainable income from tourism in a remote corner of PNG.



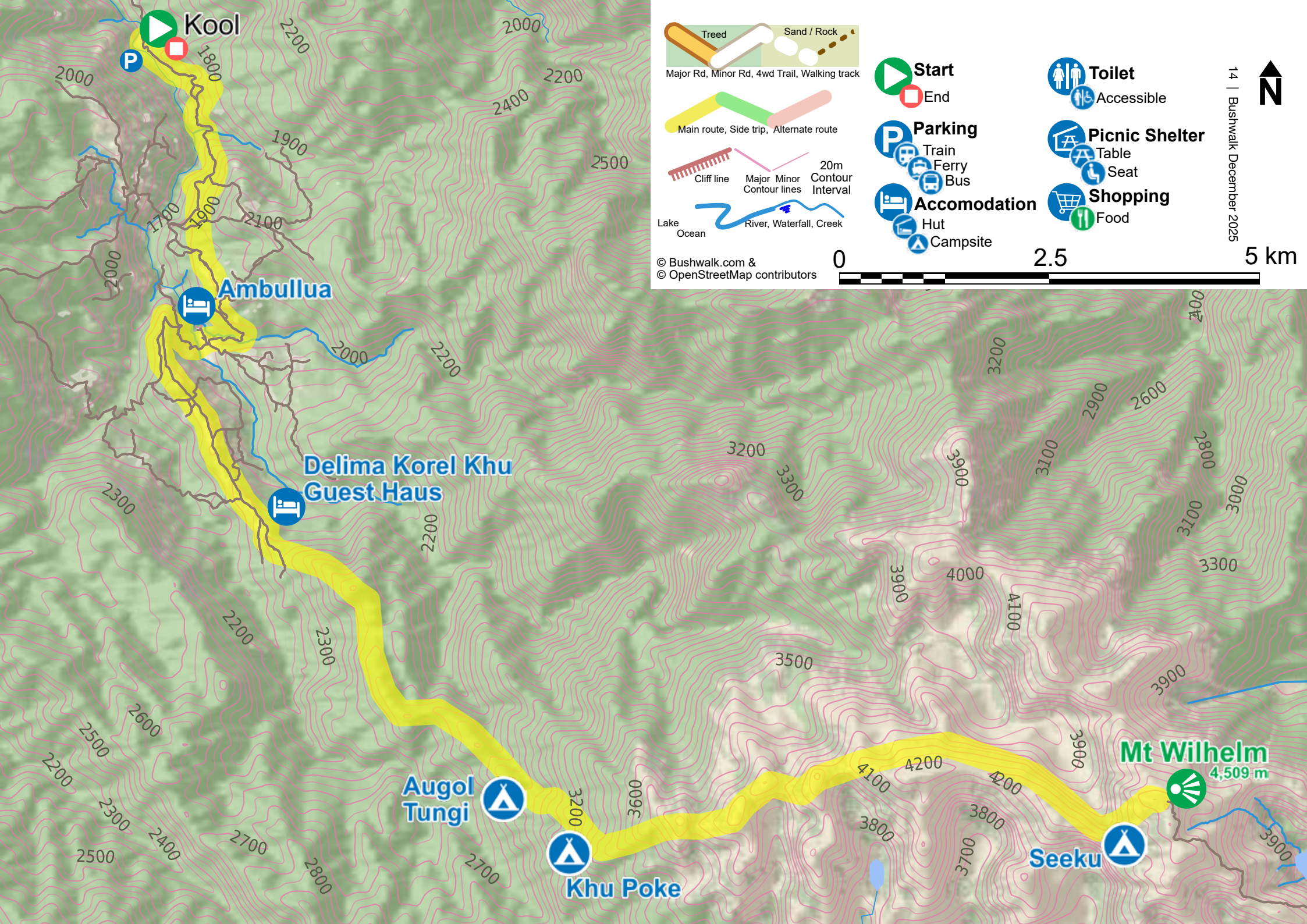
Day 1: A rainbow appears over the Jimi Valley en route from Mt Hagen to Kol

Ambullua route – a much more remote and difficult route. The first known ascent from Ambullua in 1998 inspired a community to come together to try and create a sustainable income from tourism in a remote corner of PNG.

Even getting to Ambullua, the start of the track, is an adventure. We left Mt Hagen at 4am driving six hours to Kol Station. The drive by itself, much of which was along a rough but spectacular track only passable by 4WD, would have been enough adventure for many.

Arriving in the village of Kol (1600m) we had to start walking sooner than anticipated; a tribal fight had closed the bridge across the Maine River. As a neutral party, we were granted safe passage, but a fence had been erected across the bridge and much of the decking had been removed to prevent surprise attacks. Crossing the bridge by foot, balancing on the frame, we started walking towards Mt Wilhelm.

The first few kilometres were steep, but easy going on a gravel road. But the road between Kol and Ambullua is incomplete, and it soon



Kool



Ambullua



Delima Korel Khu Guest Haus



Augol Tungji



Khu Poke



Seeku



Mt Wilhelm
4,509 m



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Start

End



Parking

Train
Ferry
Bus



Accommodation

Hut
Campsite



Toilet

Accessible



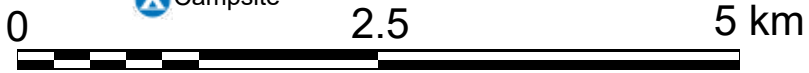
Picnic Shelter

Table
Seat



Shopping

Food



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gave way to a rough mountain track. When the afternoon rains set in, it made conditions slippery and cold. At 7pm, after 16km, 1350m of cumulative elevation gain, two river crossings and seven hours of solid walking we arrived at the guest house (2150m). Exhausted, everyone quickly downed some dinner and slid into their sleeping bags.

Day 2: Delima to Augol Tungi, 9.5km, 1370m

The next day we awoke to find ourselves in an idyllic setting – Delima Korel Khu Guest Haus is made from traditional materials and in traditional ways, set in manicured gardens and surrounded by subsistence *kau kau* (sweet potato) gardens. We were treated to a traditional sing-sing and flute playing from our hosts, including a song composed in our honour. We were the first group of climbers in around 20 years, and the community was overjoyed to have us. They had rallied together and had been working hard for the last couple of years on the track with no mechanical or technological assistance. Everything is hand done and hand carried, even for the upper reaches of the track which is a couple of days walk in each direction. They lead a traditional, subsistence lifestyle – their clothes are basic and often lack even shoes. Their extremely limited resources make the quality of the track they have created very impressive.

After the festivities, we started on our way to camp 1 at Augol Tungi, a small clearing amongst the tropical mossy forest perched high on a spur at about 2900m altitude. This forest is home to unique flora and fauna including tree kangaroos and birds of paradise. The local people consider themselves custodians of this unique mountain environment and have banned hunting in these forests to preserve its ecological values.

The first section was relatively easy going following the Kon River, before the path turned upwards. After about 9.5km and 1350m cumulative elevation gain we arrived before the afternoon rains. Our porters and guides stayed in a small bush hut, and we joined them to exchange stories by the fire before retiring to bed.



Day 2: Traditional flute players in Ambullua



Day 2: We were treated to a sing sing in Ambullua



Day 2: The camp site at Augol Tungi is in the mossy forest



Day 2: Preparing dinner at Augol Tungi



Day 3: The track through the mossy forest follows a spur and has a consistently steep gradient
Alison Harris



Day 3: Sections are reminiscent of the Gondwana Rainforests of Southeast Queensland/Northern New South Wales
Alison Harris

Day 3: Augol Tungi to Khu Poke, 2.6km, 780m

The next day we set off to camp 2 at Khu Poke which is 3600m in altitude. A relatively short day of only a few hours and 3km walking, the cumulative elevation gain is still over 700m. The track continues through the mossy forest eventually giving way to alpine grasslands and views down to Ambullua and across the Jimi Valley. The afternoon rains arrived early and everyone was pleased to get into their tents to stay warm and dry. A nearby rocky overhang was the shelter for our guides and porters.



Day 3: A ramp after a creek crossing
Alison Harris

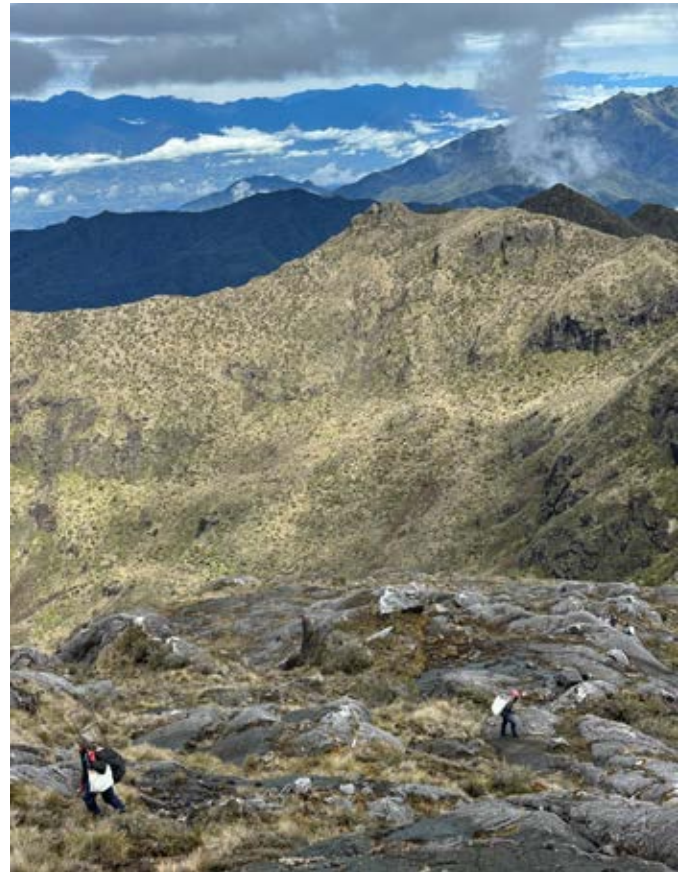


Day 3: A view to the Jimi Valley as the forest starts to give way to alpine grasslands

**Day 4: Khu Poke to Seeku,
6.5km, 940m**

After a restful night we set out for camp 3 at Seeku which is around 6.5km and only a net gain of around 250m, although the cumulative gain was over 900m. It is one of my favourite days of hiking anywhere in the world. Most of the day is spent atop a ridge with views of the surrounding valleys and mountain ranges, many over 4000m, including Mt Giluwe PNG's second highest mountain and one of the seven volcanic summits. We had a high overcast with some occasional drizzle, but that didn't dampen the views or our spirits.

The alpine grasslands mark the permanent snow line during the last glacial maximum. Glacially carved valleys are a feature of Mt Wilhelm, and the campsite at Seeku has a wonderful vista towards Korel Erum, two moraine dammed lakes – one large and one small. Our guides told us that the large lake is male as with its larger fetch it is prone to rough waters, whilst the smaller and calmer



Day 4: Walking through the alpine grasslands looking towards the Wahgi Valley, Kubor Range, and distant Mt Giluwe



Day 4: One of the many glacially carved valleys that are common in the alpine grasslands



Day 4: Camp at Seeku overlooking the lake Korel Erum

lake is female. In the other direction is a view to the summit, known in the local Upper Jimi language as Korel Khu, or Enduwa Kombuglu in the Simbu language spoken at Keglsugl. PNG is home to over 800 languages, which accounts for around 12% of the world's living languages.



PNG is home to over 800 languages, which accounts for around 12% of the world's living languages.

Another small bush hut was the shelter for our guides and porters, whose numbers were reducing as we all ate through our food and reduced our cargo. After a while enjoying the panorama over the valley, the afternoon rains set in, and everyone retired to their tents nice and early. We planned to get moving by 3.30am – late enough so we had enough

natural light ascending the steep slopes of the summit ridge but early enough to have the best chance of clear views of the sun on the Bismarck Sea.

Day 5: Seeku to Lake Piunde to Keglsugl, 13.8km, 1060m

Rain continued into the night, and I was worried our summit day would be a wet and miserable day. But when I got out of my tent at 2.15am, the night sky was crystal clear.



Day 5: A lenticular cloud as the sun starts to shine on higher peaks on summit day

We got moving as scheduled. At the end of the valley the path becomes very steep with a final scramble on the western side of the summit ridge. When we reached the summit ridge we were greeted by the sun glistening on the Bismarck Sea and mighty Ramu River.

A bit more climbing and we were on top of Oceania with 360 degree views of the surrounding mountains, valleys, and sea. There were congratulations all around. It had been a challenging few days with some of the group members experiencing a wide range of emotions on the journey. For myself, coming back to Mt Wilhelm after a 20 year absence, reconnecting with the Ambullua community and summiting with such incredible weather was an overwhelmingly fulfilling experience.

We then continued down the standard route on our way to the village of Keglsugl, past plaques dedicated to those who lost their lives on the mountain, and the wreckage of 'Under Exposed' – an American B-24 bomber that crashed in 1944 – arriving at the twin moraine dammed Lakes Aunde and Piunde. We had originally planned to stay at a hut on the shores of Lake Piunde, however, the



Day 5: The trigonometric marker on the summit with the Bismarck Sea in the background
Alison Harris

weather was favourable and hot showers were calling us. So, we pressed on all the way to Betty's Place, a welcoming and comfortable accommodation at a trout and vegetable farm in Keglsugl.



Day 5: Trekkers and porters alike were very pleased to make it to the summit

The trip back to Mt Hagen the next day was another spectacular affair driving down the Chimbu Gorge. We had a few hours as a group to debrief and help each other understand not just the physicality of the walk but also the cultural and ecological experiences we had had.

Our final night was spent at very comfortable accommodation in Mt Hagen. The adventures continued for some group members who stayed on to go bird watching and attend a cultural festival, while most of us had to bid PNG adieu and return to families and work.

Information

Permits are not required to climb Mt Wilhelm, however, landowners may charge track fees and it is expected that guides and porters are used from local communities. Papua New Guinea is a destination where arrangements should be made prior to arriving in the country through reputable tour operators. Delima Korel Khu Guest Haus can be contacted through their [Facebook page](#) for recommendations and to make arrangements.

GPS data was collected on our trip and has been uploaded to Strava routes:

[Day 0 – Kol to Delima \(Ambullua\)](#)

[Day 1 – Delima to Augol Tungi](#)

[Day 2 – Augol Tungi to Khu Poke](#)

[Day 3 – Khu Poke to Seeku](#)

[Day 4/5 – Seeku to Lake Piunde to Keglsugl](#)

Getting there

The best base for climbing Mt Wilhelm is from Mt Hagen which is Papua New Guinea's third largest city and main highlands centre. All international flights are via the capital, Port Moresby and require a domestic connection to Mt Hagen. Direct flights connect Port Moresby with Cairns, Brisbane, and Sydney.

To get from Mt Hagen to Ambullua is either via road and foot (as described in the article) or via helicopter. Both Ambullua and Kol have airstrips suitable for light aircraft but at the time of writing both airstrips are unserviceable.

Best time to go

Being 5 degrees south of the equator, there is very little variation in temperature and daylight throughout the year. Weather tends to be on a daily cycle, rather than seasonal. Rains are common starting mid-afternoon, so it is advisable to start walking early and be established in camp by early afternoon. Having said all that, the austral winter statistically has less rain and is slightly colder than the austral summer; but there can be very wet spells in winter and relatively dry spells in summer.



Day 5: On the summit looking back at Seeku, Korel Erum, and the Jimi Valley

2026 Calendar

Brighten up your wall in 2026 with the stunning winning photos from the Bushwalk.com photo competitions.

To enjoy this amazing imagery, order your copy at \$18 including postage in Australia by emailing Eva at eva@wildwalks.com or click [PayPal](#) to order it straight away.

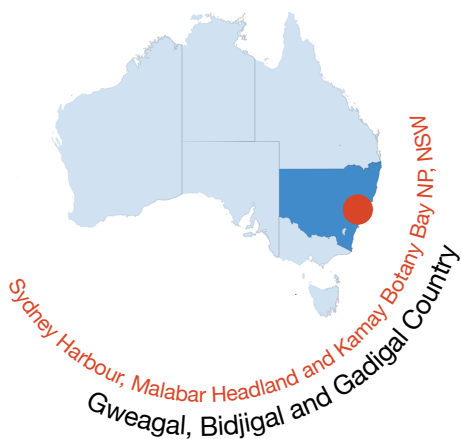


Cronulla to Gerringong Coast Walk

Text and photos
Greg Keaney

Greg is walking from 'Dreamtime to Eden' along the length of the NSW coast. The first nine stages of the walk appear in earlier issues of this magazine (commencing in June 2024). In this article Greg recounts the 10th stage of the coast walk; 6 days and 132 km from Cronulla to Gerringong.

Smell the sea and feel the sky. Let your soul and spirit fly.
Van Morrison



Day 3: Figure 8 Pool



Day 1: National Park Coast Track – looking south from The Balconies

I'm doing a 'thousand mile, thousand beaches' NSW coastal camino, walking every beach and headland of the incredible fringe of this magnificent part of Australia. I do the walk in stages and this article recounts Stage 10 from Cronulla across Port Hacking by the Bundeena ferry and then the magnificent National Park Coast Track. Then onto the Illawarra through Wollongong and down the coast to Gerringong at the end of the (train) line.

This section of the walk is both spectacular and transport friendly. Easy enough to do every day of the walk from Sydney or Wollongong with the Illawarra train line always nearby.

“

Starting out on the first section of the crown jewel of Sydney coast walking begins with a delightful ferry ride from Cronulla to Bundeena.



Day 1: The Waterrun

I did all of this stage by public transport from Sydney except for Royal National Park due to some track closures – but at the time of publication the full track is open once again. Now that the full track is open the through walk for this stage could be shortened to 103 km. The campground at North Era remains closed at the time of writing so if you were doing the walk without support you would need to either walk the 34 km from Bundeena Ferry Wharf to Otford Station in one go, or else find a bush camping spot. You can check out the Bushwalk forum [here](#).

Day 1: Bundeena to Wattamolla (and return) 21km, 6 hours

Highlights:

- Ferry ride from Cronulla to Bundeena at sunrise
- Whale watching from the Balconies (in season)
- Wedding Cake Rock and Marley Head
- Big and Little Marley Beaches
- Rainbow Rocks
- Brunch and swim at Wattamolla Beach

Starting out on the first section of the crown jewel of Sydney coast walking begins with a delightful ferry ride from Cronulla to

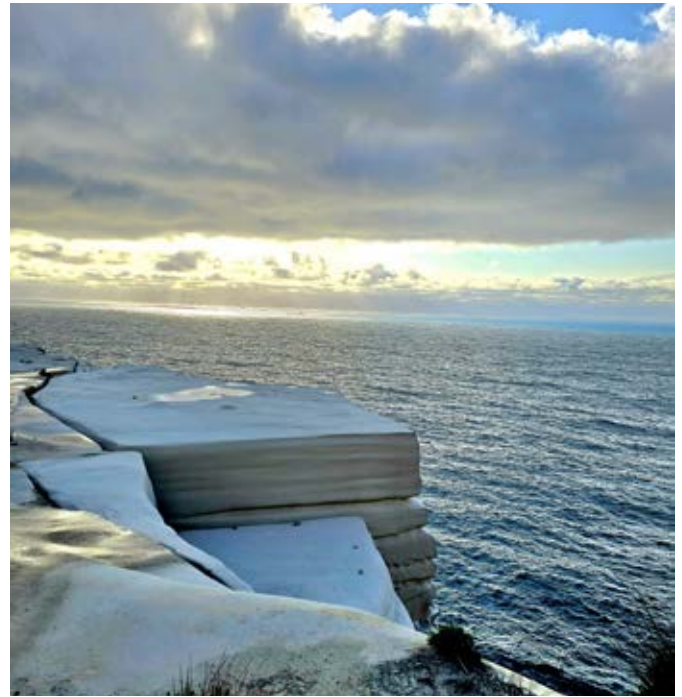
Bundeena. If you can catch the first ferry at 5.30 am you are treated to a glorious sunrise over Port Hacking.

Sadly, the track, which is generally a 34km 'through walk', had a couple of closed areas at the time I was doing it. Never mind... when you're walking the NSW coast there will always be the odd moment of challenge caused by track maintenance. Always a good idea to check out the NPWS website to see if there are any local alerts.

I broke this section into three 'out and back' walks, giving me plenty of opportunities to enjoy and share the beauty of this part of the world. Day 1 covered Bundeena to Wattamolla and back.

It's a couple of kms from Bundeena Wharf to the start of the track (and it's absolutely worth adding on the few more to round Jibbon Beach and Jibbon Head - the scenic southern headland of Port Hacking).

First stop was, of course, sunrise from the Balconies, which is always an awesome experience. This is my go-to whale watching spot in the season, but my big buddies were all far south cooling their fins in the Antarctic Ocean at the time of year I was doing this walk. It was a short walk from there via what I



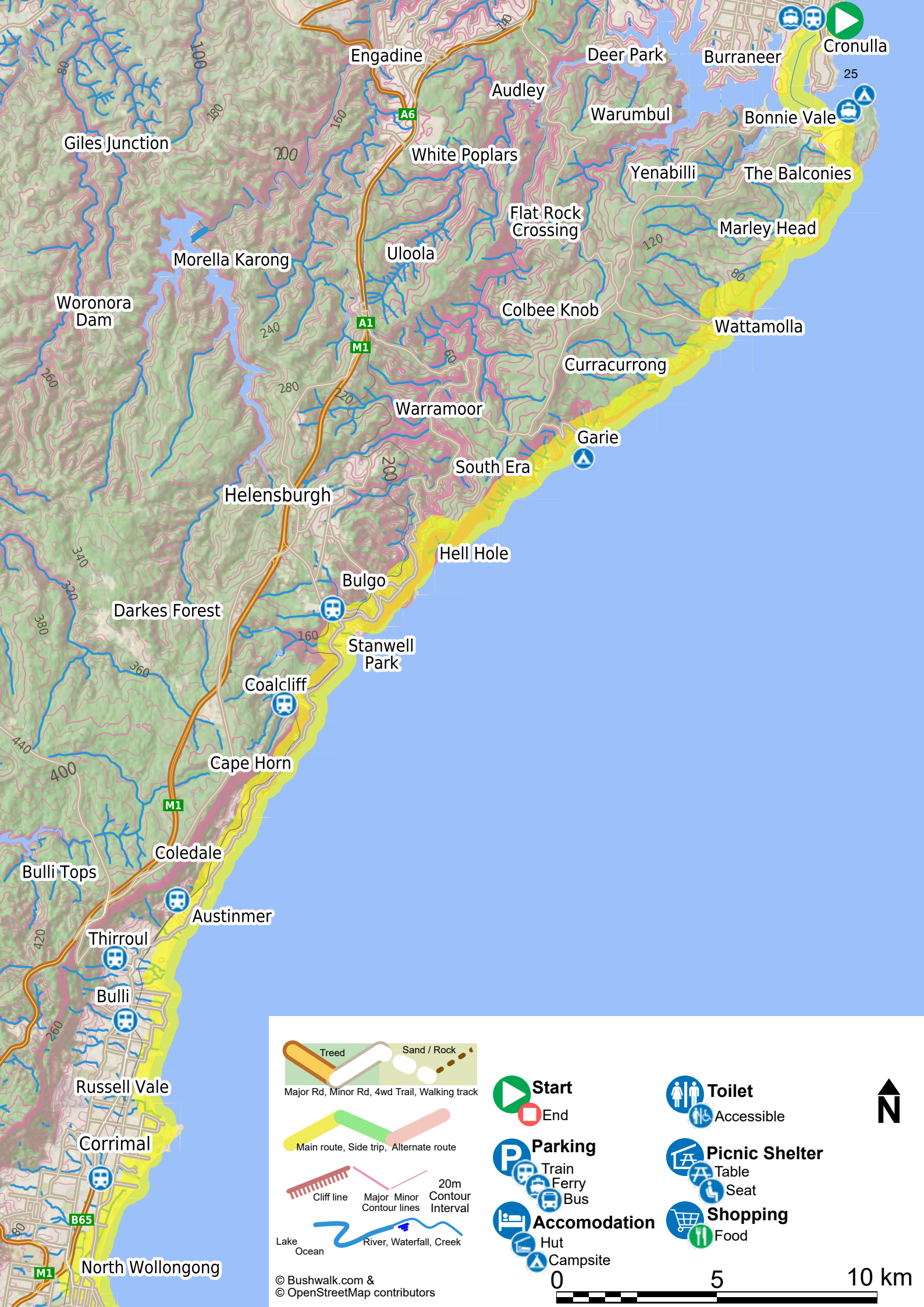
Day 1: Wedding Cake Rock



Day 1: Big Marley – the journey continues



Day 1: The Coast Track is a well-formed path



Giles Junction

Engadine

Deer Park

Burraneer

Cronulla

Audley

Warumbul

Bonnie Vale

Morella Karong

Uloola

Flat Rock Crossing

Yenabilli

The Balconies

Marley Head

Woronora Dam

Colbee Knob

Wattamolla

A1

M1

Curracurrong

Warramoor

Garie

South Era

Helensburgh

Hell Hole

Bulgo

Darkes Forest

Stanwell Park

Coalcliff

Cape Horn

Coledale

Bulli Tops

Austinmer

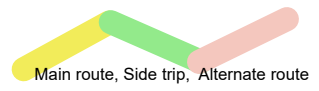
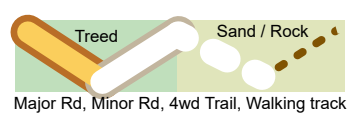
Thirroul

Bulli

Russell Vale

Corrimal

North Wollongong



Start

End

Parking

Train

Ferry

Bus

Accomodation

Hut

Campsite

Toilet

Accessible

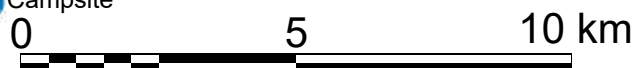
Picnic Shelter

Table

Seat

Shopping

Food



think of as Balconies 2 and 3 and then to the Waterrun, the picturesque rill running down to the ocean and looking especially fine that morning.

Next up was Wedding Cake Rock – now fenced off to prevent clueless instagrammers falling to their deaths while trying to get their perfect shot. While fences in natural places are unfortunate, they are increasingly necessary for the safety of ‘insta-idiots’.

Never fear, not far from Wedding Cake Rock was magnificent, unfenced Marley Head, with its cracking views and wonderful isolated feel. Descending from the headland, it was Big and Little Marley Beaches - two of the best wild beaches to be found near the big smoke. Both are steep and unpredictable, so swim responsibly. No-one's coming to rescue you!

Next stop was Rainbow Rocks, plenty of Red, Orange, Yellow and Green but the Blue, Indigo and Violet will depend on reflections from the sky. My limited photography skills just don't do the place justice, so you will just have to go and enjoy this place for yourself!

I had a brunch stop and another swim at perfect Wattamolla Beach – there are toilets, water, picnic tables and BBQs in the picnic area. Combined with its scenic waterfall, lagoon, and beach, Wattamolla is an outstanding spot. And there is car access at Wattamolla if you have a friendly chauffeur or support crew handy.

I turned around to head back to Bundeena. A strong southerly blew up late morning, so I had a wind assisted meander most of the way back. Bundeena itself is a quaint little treasure of a town on the southern Sydney fringes. While I'm usually a north-south coast walker (sun at your back) this track is magnificent either way, and quite different in each direction.

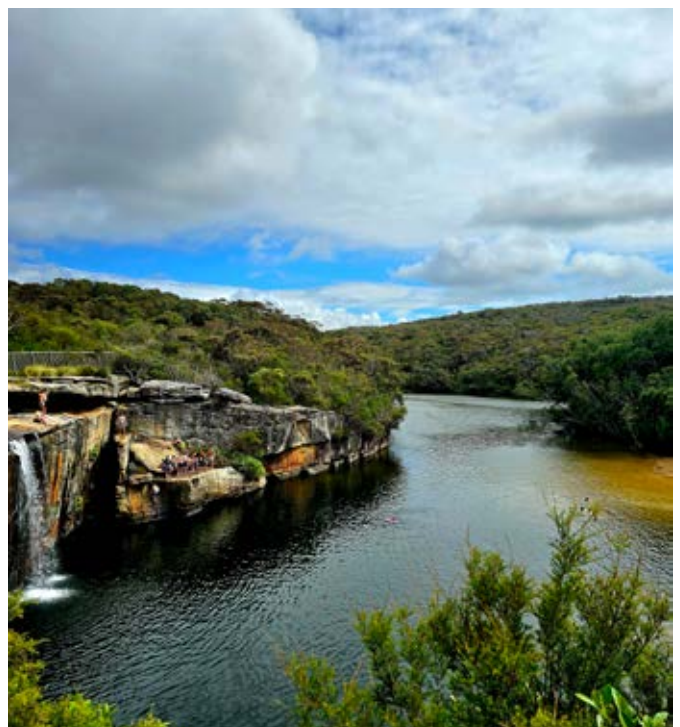
Nowadays, the Coast Track is rather gentrified. Excellent signage and clear markings make it easy to follow, with raised rubber mats over the hanging swamps, and sandstone or rock steps, stepping-stones, and little bridges in all the right places. There is a great flow to the walk too, as there's plenty of cliffscapes, headlands, rills, dips,



Day 1: Rainbow Rocks

climbs, bushland pockets, wildlife, and incredible coastal vistas along the way. You simply can't ask for more!

So, another fantabulous day bookmarked with the return ferry from Bundeena to Cronulla and a train ride back home.



Day 1: Wattamolla



Day 2: Providential Point

Day 2: Wattamolla to Garie (and return) 17km, 6 hours

Highlights:

- Sunrise at Providential Point Lookout
- Curracurrang Falls (wild swimming spot)
- Eagle Rock and Curracurrang Waterfall
- Garie Head
- Swim at Wattamolla Beach and Coote Creek

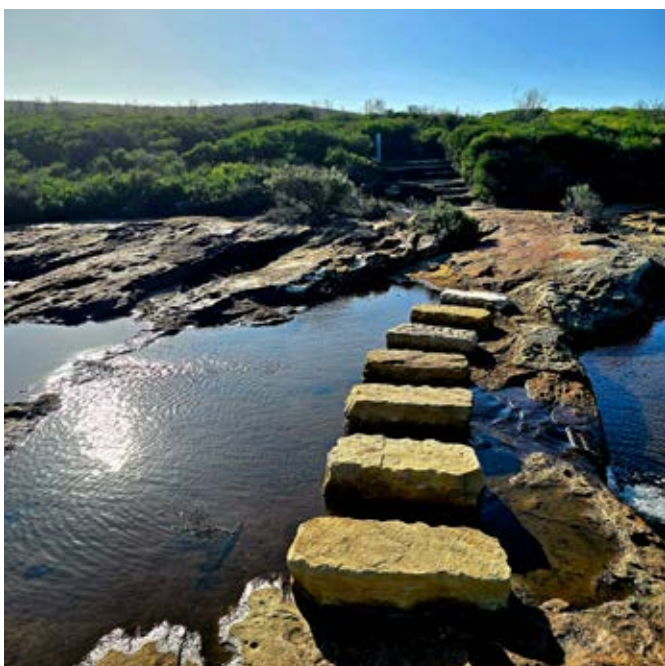
Day 2 was the 50th of my Dreamtime to Eden coastal camino, notching up 1165km of glorious sun, sea and sand sanctified sauntering so far. So, it was appropriate to celebrate with the middle section of the Royal (I prefer Republic) National Park Coast Track, which was a perfect way to mark the half century. It's 7.5 kms on the official track each way, but a true coastal pilgrim must add on detours to all of the magical cliff lookouts and the track inland to the sacred secret swimming spot.



Day 2: Clifftop 'rockpool'



The day started at wonderful Wattamolla, which was looking simply perfect in the dawn light, anticipating the first rays of the sun to emerge from the Pacific.



Day 2: Curracurrang Crossing (track to the beautiful secret swimming spot head inland from the northern side of the crossing)

The day started at wonderful Wattamolla, which was looking simply perfect in the dawn light, anticipating the first rays of the sun to emerge from the Pacific. It is always worth getting out to Providential Point Lookout for the sunrise if you can – although you might have to walk the 3 kms from the Wattamolla gate (or bring a bike like I did today) if you plan on hitting the cliffs before the official gate opening at 7am.

From Providential Point the track snakes around the magnificently bleached sandstone edifices for a few kms towards Curracurrang Gully Lookout. Just before the crossing of Curracurrang Gully and Creek, a small track inland takes you to the wonderful Curracurrang Falls and its perfect wild swimming spot. Early birds and weekday

wanderers can almost always have this sacred space to themselves - baptism for nature-believers - just sublime!

Returning to the main Coast Track I then continued along the cliffside 'alternative route' and made a short detour out to the crown of Eagle Rock before crossing Curracurrong Creek (not to be confused with Curracurrang (above) - the linguist in me always tries to unravel the significance of that indigenous vowel inflection.

Next was the gorgeous Curracurrong Waterfall – one of the very few in Australia that flows directly into the ocean. A strong wind today made for a reverse waterfall with the water flowing skywards - nature just doing its thing, minding little, or not at all, about its audience of one!

Sadly, the Garie precinct remains officially closed right now (as is the road access to Garie Beach). There was a rockfall near Little Garie some years ago which is why there was an 'alert' on the NP website that the



Day 2: Garie Beach

through coast walk was not officially possible (even though the route itself was still fine). No worries - it gave me the opportunity to do the concluding section of the NP walk the next day with my wife, and the possibility of sunrise from the superb Otford Lookout. Note that at the time of publication the whole route is now once again open – hurrah!



Day 2: Every rill is a thrill



Day 2: Signage on the National Park Coastal Walk is excellent

Anyway, it was therefore a quick beachfall and an early lunch stop at Garie Head, and the breeze again at my back to speed the return journey. While I've often walked the Coast Track, I generally do it going southwards so it was fascinating to enjoy the different but equally majestic sauntering, 'in reverse'.

Ended the day with a swim at Wattamolla Beach and then in Coote Creek underneath Wattamolla Falls. What a perfect end to a perfect day. (Although the bike ride uphill back to the gate in the early afternoon summer heat was, perhaps, a tiny bit of 'wabi-sabi' – the Japanese philosophy that finds beauty in imperfection, impermanence, and incompleteness.

So, if you agree with D. H. Lawrence that 'the human soul needs actual beauty even more than bread' get yourself to this section of the National Park – like so many parts of the NSW coast, 100% soul nourishment guaranteed!

Day 3: Little Garie to Coalcliff 20km, 7 hours

Highlights:

- Sunrise from Otford Lookout
- North Era and Era Beaches
- Burning Palms Beach and Palm Jungle
- Bulgo Beach (historic shacks)
- Bald Hill and Stanwell Park Beach
- Swim at Coalcliff Rock Pool

Day 3 was the completion of the last section of the Coast Track and the first few beaches of the Illawarra. Started with a sunrise from Otford Lookout at the southern edge of the Coast Track before heading northwards to Garawarra Farm and then down to the spectacular Burgh Ridge descent to the coast.

Wonderful to be sauntering with my wife who had not done this part of the coast before. The Coast Track is such an exquisite hike and today's variety show (heading south) from Little Garie Beach and Thelma Head down to North Era Beach then over Mols Ridge to stunning Era Beach was enhanced by some absolutely thumping waves.

Next it was The Dagger Headland and incredible Burning Palms Beach before Palm Jungle and the steep return back up to the ridge to Otford. From there we descended



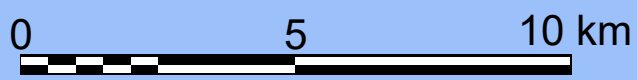
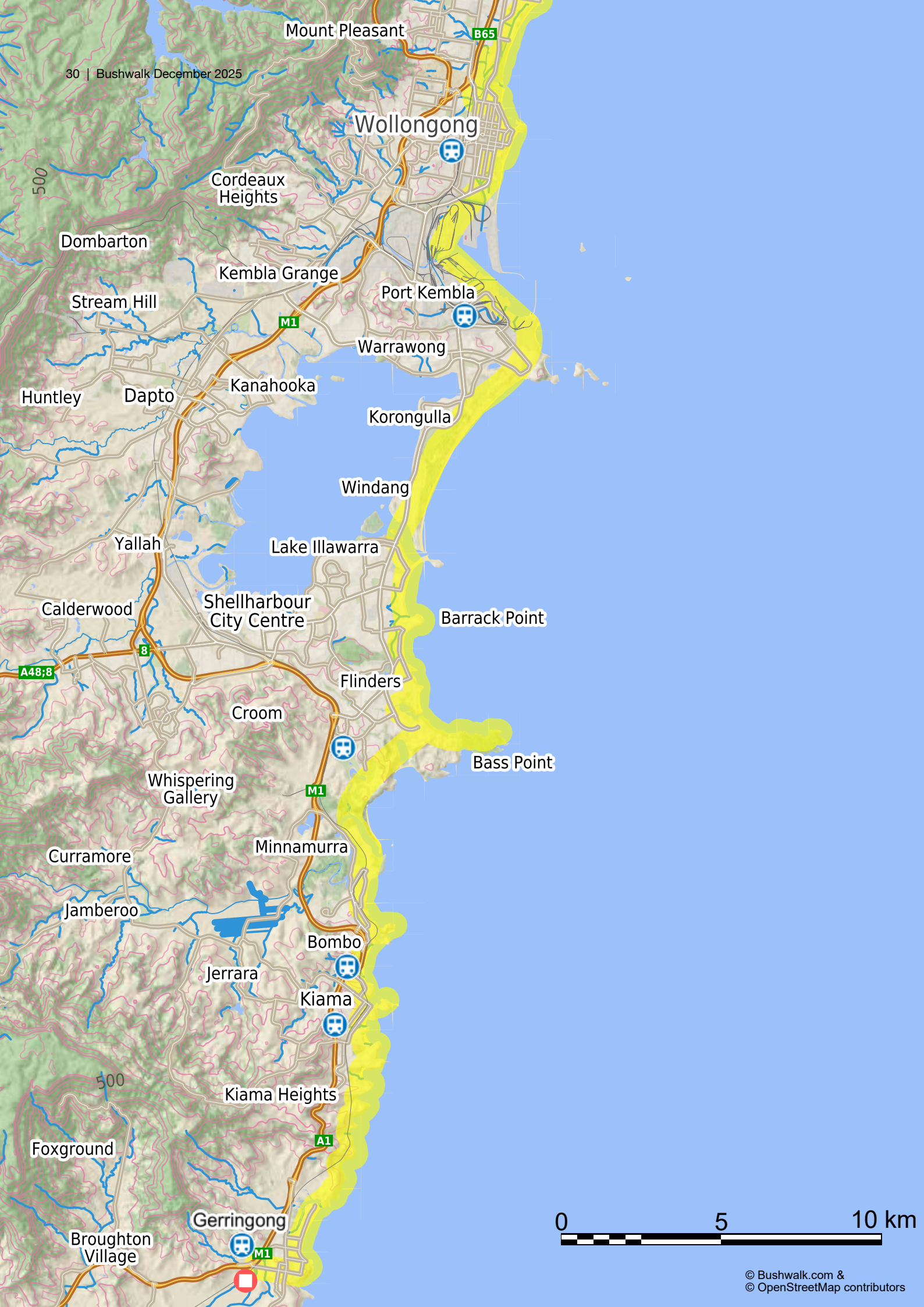
Day 2: Eagle Rock



Day 2: Curracurrang Gully is one of my favourite secret swimming spots



Day 3: Figure 8 Pool



to intriguing Bulgo Beach. Lots of lucky folk with historical shacks here. In 1909 a coalminers strike led to the setting up of the huts and, according to the Helensburgh Historical Society, good times, long strikes, personal hardships and later attempts by the NPWS to evict the owners have produced the flourishing community that exists today - nice.

I love going down to Bulgo. It always feels as if it was antecedently named after a hobbit, but actually it was the original name of Otford, and is probably of local indigenous origin meaning 'hill' - very apt as it is backed by a bloody steep hill - bulgo bulgo perhaps!

“

I love going down to Bulgo (it always feels as if it was antecedently named after a hobbit, but actually it was the original name of Otford...

So, it was back up to the ridge (oh, our aching calves) and on to Bald Hill before descending at the southern edge of the lookout to Stanwell Park Beach.

Finally, to top another awesome coastal wander, it was magic Coalcliff Beach with an encore swim at the amazing Coalcliff Rock Pool which is simply one of the finest ocean pools anywhere. All in all, an absolutely sensational day's saunter.

Day 4: Sea Cliff Bridge to Wollongong **23km, 9 hours**

Highlights:

- Sea Cliff Bridge at sunrise
- Scarborough/Wombarra, Coledale, and Austinmer Beaches
- Thirroul (DH Lawrence's cottage)
- Bulli Beach (brunch at the headland café)
- Bellambi, Corrimal, Towradgi, and Fairy Meadow Beaches
- North Wollongong Beach and Breakwater

It was Sea Cliff Bridge to Wollongong on Day 4, once again together with my wife – solo sauntering is grand but so too is sharing



Day 3: Burning Palms



Day 3: Collaery Gully



Day 3: Bulgo Beach – who could possibly be grumpy living here?

magnificence with a loved one. This walk is a long stretch of some of the finest beaches and incredible rock pools/ocean baths on the coast. While many hikers might prefer the tracks that wind their way up to and along the escarpment, we stuck to the 'every beach and every headland' maxim to walk south along the shoreline.

We started with a cloudy sunrise at iconic Sea Cliff Bridge. While the bridge is indeed impressive, I do miss the old 'dangerous rockfalls' cliff hugging road. It was an eerie mysterious sky above as we made our way around to Scarborough/Wombarra Beach and Rock Pool before the Aussie blue sky returned and the day warmed up.

Next, via one of so many superb rock platforms, to Coledale Beach and outstanding Coledale Rockpool perched on yet another amazing rock shelf, before we picked our way around to Sharky and Headlands Beaches.

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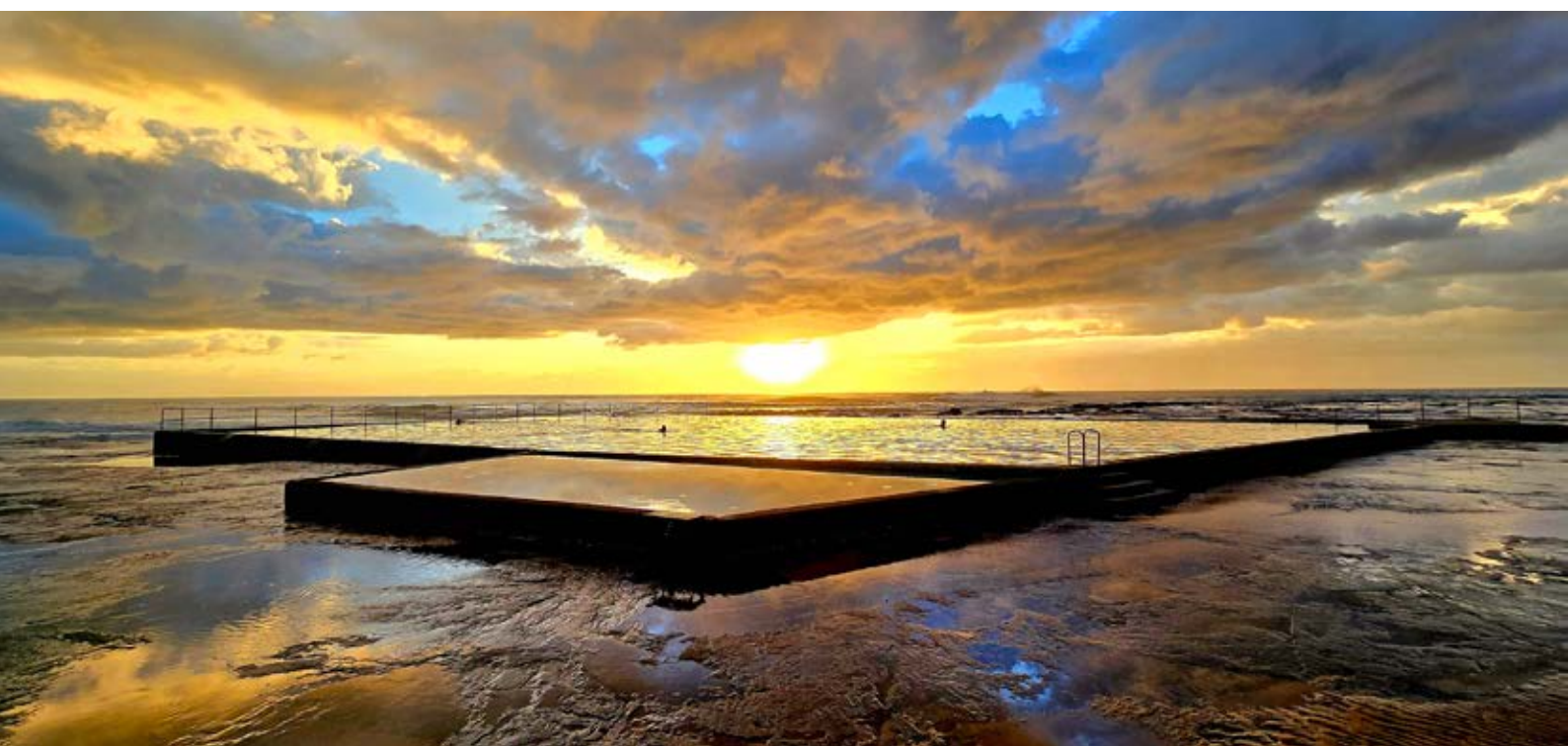
The odd stretch of bush that is big enough to get lost in but small enough not to be threatening and a few perfect places for a rest along the way.



Day 4: Coledale Beach backed by the spectacular Wollongong Escarpment



Day 4: Coniston Beach, Wollongong



Day 4: Coalcliff ocean pool

Little Austinmer and Austinmer Beaches followed - wow - so many inviting options for a swim that it was almost too difficult to keep moving.

After Austinmer it was Herah's Beach and then Thirroul where we were joined by my brother. Thirroul was DH Lawrence's abode during his sojourn in Oz and Lawrence's 'cottage by the sea' in Thirroul (nicely named Wyewurk) still sits above the beach at 3 Craig St.

Anyway, onwards and southwards to McCauleys, Sandon Point and then Bulli Beach where we had a smashing avo toast brunch at the headland cafe. Woonona and Bellambi Beaches came next - and time for a glorious dip at yet another incredible rock pool near Bellambi Point.

Around Bellambi and Sandspit Points to Corrimal, Towradji and Fairy Meadow Beaches before the superb strip of North Wollongong Beach and finally the Wollongong Breakwater and Wollongong Beach stretching southwards to Port Kembla. (Wollongong is perhaps an indigenous onomatopoeic word for the sound of the waves - very apt with today's big swells).

“

So, overall, a long, incredible stretch of easily accessed, near perfect beaches framed by the towering escarpment.

So, overall, a long, incredible stretch of easily accessed, near perfect beaches framed by the towering escarpment. Rock shelves at lower tides and an excellent esplanade pathway (signposted as the Grand Pacific Walk and bike path) following the shore as the tide flows in. A plethora of scenic cafes and gob-smacking ocean pools everywhere - what coastal pilgrim could ask for more?

The folk of the Illawarra (high, pleasant place by the sea) are truly spoilt. It is all just so astonishingly, beautifully, idyllically gentle and relaxed - hard to believe it is only a short (and

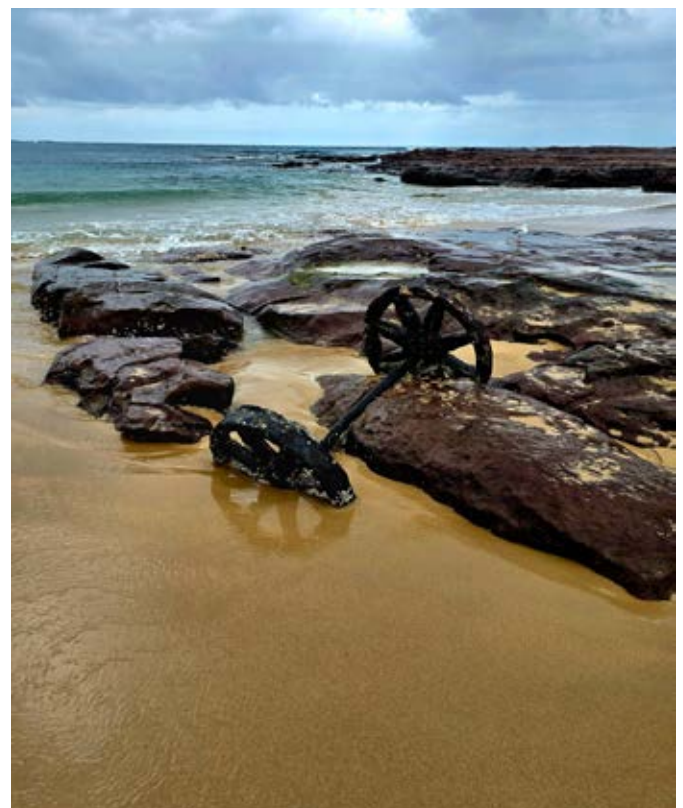
very scenic) train ride from the big smoke. A brilliant day's coastal walk with an easy, formed path and train and bus connections the whole way. Outstanding!

Day 5: Wollongong to Minnamurra 30 km, 9 hours

Highlights:

- Port Kembla Breakwater
- MM Beach, Fishermans Beach, and long stretches of sand
- Warilla Beach and Windang Island (shipwreck relics)
- Barrack Point, Blacks Beach, Shell Harbour North, and Cowrie Island
- Bass Point Aquatic Reserve and Bushrangers Bay
- Killalea Beach and Mystics Beach
- Isolated Minnamurra Beach

Started out from Port Kembla Breakwater today which avoids the long traverse around the Port Kembla steelworks south of Wollongong. Overcast skies and a chilly dawn wind didn't make for a picture-perfect sunrise but did make for a fast warm up march down MM Beach, Fishermans Beach and long Port Kembla/Perkins/Windang Beaches to the mouth of Lake Illawarra.



Day 5: Windang Island Wheels

After crossing the mouth of the lake, it was over to Warilla Beach and Windang Island - looking somewhat spooky in the cloudy gloom - an intriguing place in which to wander. 'Shipwrecked' rails and carriage wheels scattered on the rock platforms added to the eerie atmosphere. (I believe in the 1880s rails and trolleys were used to move stone to create a break wall for the mouth of Lake Illawarra). There was a fire on Windang Island in between my traverse and publication date - hopefully, recovery will be swift as it is a magical, and often overlooked, island of intrigue.

Warilla Beach has a great shared path above the sand with a convenient pedestrian/bike bridge across Elliott Lake. Perhaps it's the influence of Shell in this area, but the 'outdoor facilities' - benches, picnic areas, pathways, etc. all have a rather luxurious 'resort' feel to them around here - climate emergency and all that, but extra nice for a coastal walker.

Next it was around Barrack Point to Blacks Beach followed by Shell Harbour North and Cowrie Island. I noted the Ocean Beach Hotel as a potentially excellent spot for a sundowner one day - but it was not this day...

On around Shell Cove, past the Gravel Loader and out to magnificent Bass Point Aquatic Reserve and Bushrangers Bay. This area rarely gets the kudos it deserves. Incredible rock platforms, spectacularly-coloured lichen-covered rocks, amazing, eroded inlets and a whole host of secret little nooks and crannies just waiting to be enjoyed. Mystic place (despite the slag heaps of the large quarry that sits a little inland).

It's technically possible to walk all the way around the rock shelves (and that was my intention) but there were definitely a few 'technical' sections that led to yet another 'discretion is the better part of valour' decision on my part to take the long way round via the road to Maloneys Bay.

Impressive Killalea Beach and the Farm were next. Killalea Regional Park is well known to locals but again does not seem to figure as often on those 'must see places' list as it should! Highly recommended.



Day 5: Bushrangers Bay



Day 5: Stack Island at Boyds Beach near Minnamurra

At the southern edge of Killalea is magical Mystics Beach and then wonderfully isolated Minnamurra Beach. The Minnamurra River cuts this off from the Minnamurra 'mainland' but you can access it from the northern end in Killalea Park (via the Dunmore Wetlands Walk and then Riverside Drive) or by swimming or boating across the river.

Coast photos never look as 'tourist promo' when the skies are grey. I so love Killalea and Bass Point that I'd hoped to show them in a 'perfect' light. But then again, I was reflecting that perhaps these spots that I know and love so well, just want to keep their 'lights under a bushel' remaining a little shrouded to thus reward those who take the time to discover and appreciate them all by themselves! Go for it.

Another great day's meander – headed home with a look forward to the next day's walk and the end of this stage. Minnamurra - Kiama - Gerringong on the superb Kiama Coastal Walk, with a bonus catch up with some old friends from my Brunei days. What a joy!

Day 6: Minnamurra to Gerringong 21km, 8 hours

Highlights:

- Kiama Coastal Walk (Minnamurra to Gerringong)
- Jones Beach and Cathedral Rocks
- Bombo Headland and the Boneyard
- Kiama Blowhole and Little Blowhole
- Easts Beach, Loves Bay, and Bare Bluff
- Campbell Hole and Werri Beach
- Finish at Gerringong station (with a possible stop at the “Mick Cronin” pub)

A perfect day full of green, green grass, blue, blue sky, magnificent beaches and lava crusted headlands.

Started at Minnamurra and followed the deservedly well-known Kiama Coastal Walk, past Jones Beach and Cathedral Rocks to magnificent Bombo Headland which is well worth the 2km detour from the main track. The beautifully named Boneyard was looking perfect that morning under a cloudless sky - crystal water just begging me for the first swim of the day.



Day 6: Kiama Coastal Walk

Then it was along Bombo Beach and around Pheasant (Plucker) Point to Kiama and the Blowhole (unfortunately just a 'hole' with minimal 'blow' on Day 6 of this stage). Great to catch up with some old friends before heading south of Kiama (or 'kiarama' = the place where the sea booms) along a well-made and easy to enjoy path around Storm Bay, Kiama, and Kendalls Beaches and then out to Kaleula Head.

Next, the Little Blowhole (a more dependable 'blow' than the big one) and Marsden Head, before lovely Easts Beach and a stop for another swim. From Easts Beach the track is open grassy fields winding around the dramatic, layered latite and sandstone headlands and the matching eroded inlets.



Day 6: Minnamurra River sunrise

Loves Bay is a great little 'secret' beach, while Bare Bluff provided some of the most dramatic views along the way.

Minimal shade along this part, so not a walk for the sun shy in peak summer - my recommendation would be to do it on a calm winter's day with the whales offshore (as I did the previous July) - it is and would then be a walk of total and absolute and complete perfection. And then it was on to Campbell Hole, a km or so around the rock shelf from Werri Beach – it always looks so blissful from above and is a mighty fine place to while away a few hours either side of low tide.

Once at Werri Beach I thought I was done, but it might be good to note that the train station is a further few kms 'up hill and down dale' hike from the southern end of the beach. Nothing to worry about as you can always stop in at the famous 'Mick Cronin' pub along the way for a cool down schooner to celebrate the conclusion to Stage 10.

And to top it all off if you are returning to Kiama or Sydney there is the quirky little 2 carriage diesel train from Gerringong to



Day 6: Grassy headlands between Kiama and Gerringong

Kiama. The train hugs the coast and skirts many parts of the walk giving you a great denouement for the day, and of course you can change at Kiama to electric train to return to Minnamurra or Sydney.



Day 6: A beautiful walk but a tragedy about the loss of trees

Conclusion

So, that was a wrap for Stage 10. I did each of the 6 days of this part of the walk from my home. While I used a car to access parts of the Royal National Park Coast Walk this is no longer necessary with the recent reopening of the whole route.

“

Every day of this stage involved another incredible walk - all with easy public transport and beautiful feels.

Every day of this stage involved another incredible walk - all with easy public transport and beautiful feels. Apart from a relatively easy swim at the Minnamurra River it is all completely straightforward but just as good as any other stretch along the coast.

It was just another reminder how fortunate we are to have so much fantastic coastal walking in NSW - 1000 miles and 1000 beaches - free, accessible and absolutely spellbinding - magic upon magic upon magic. We are blessed!

The next stage from Gerringong to Ulladulla was commencing a few weeks later. This would involve some unfamiliar and intriguing

bits of the coast in the next stretch, and I was already excited!

Hope you all find a coastal patch to let your soul and spirit fly!



Day 6: Werri Beach, Gerringong

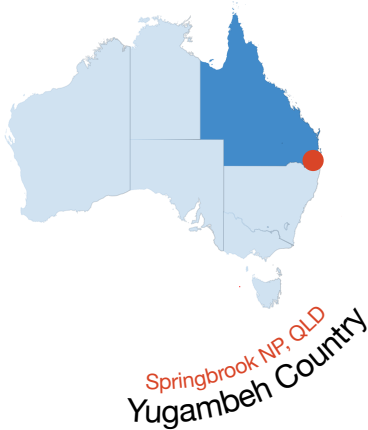


Greg grew up in Sydney but lived for many years in SE Asia. He has now returned home to Sydney and loves exploring Australia's magnificent bushwalks, parks, coasts, and waterways. He did the coast walk in 16 stages. He completed it in August 2025. When he's not bushwalking or mountain bike-riding, he works in education for Deloitte Australia and Ecctis UK. A full daily blog of Greg's walk is available on his [website](#), as well as on his Facebook [personal page](#) or in the FB groups [Hiking and Bushwalking in Australia and New Zealand](#), [Take a hike NSW](#) and [Hiking and exploring NSW](#). You can hear the podcast about the journey on [Australian Hiker podcast](#) or [Walking Post](#).

Warrie Circuit

Text and photos
Ian Smith

There was a wedding but
no funeral, though the nuns
were there. Just a typical
Ian bushwalking day, what
would you expect?



Above Goomoolhara Falls



A side stream en route to Warringa Pool

I'd finally found a spot at Tallanbana carpark. Not an easy thing to do because, when I'd tried twice before, it was full and, even when it wasn't, it only held just over a dozen cars.

I grabbed the sandwich and drink I had, put my backpack on and moved just 30 metres away to a picnic table inside the forest, hoping to soak up the atmosphere of the bush before I started hiking. The food was going down well when I sensed some movement nearby. Turning around, it was impossible not to notice a Japanese lady in a wedding dress. It was such an incongruous setting for a bulging white outfit. Her husband and a photographer were right behind her, and they headed off down the trail, much to my surprise.

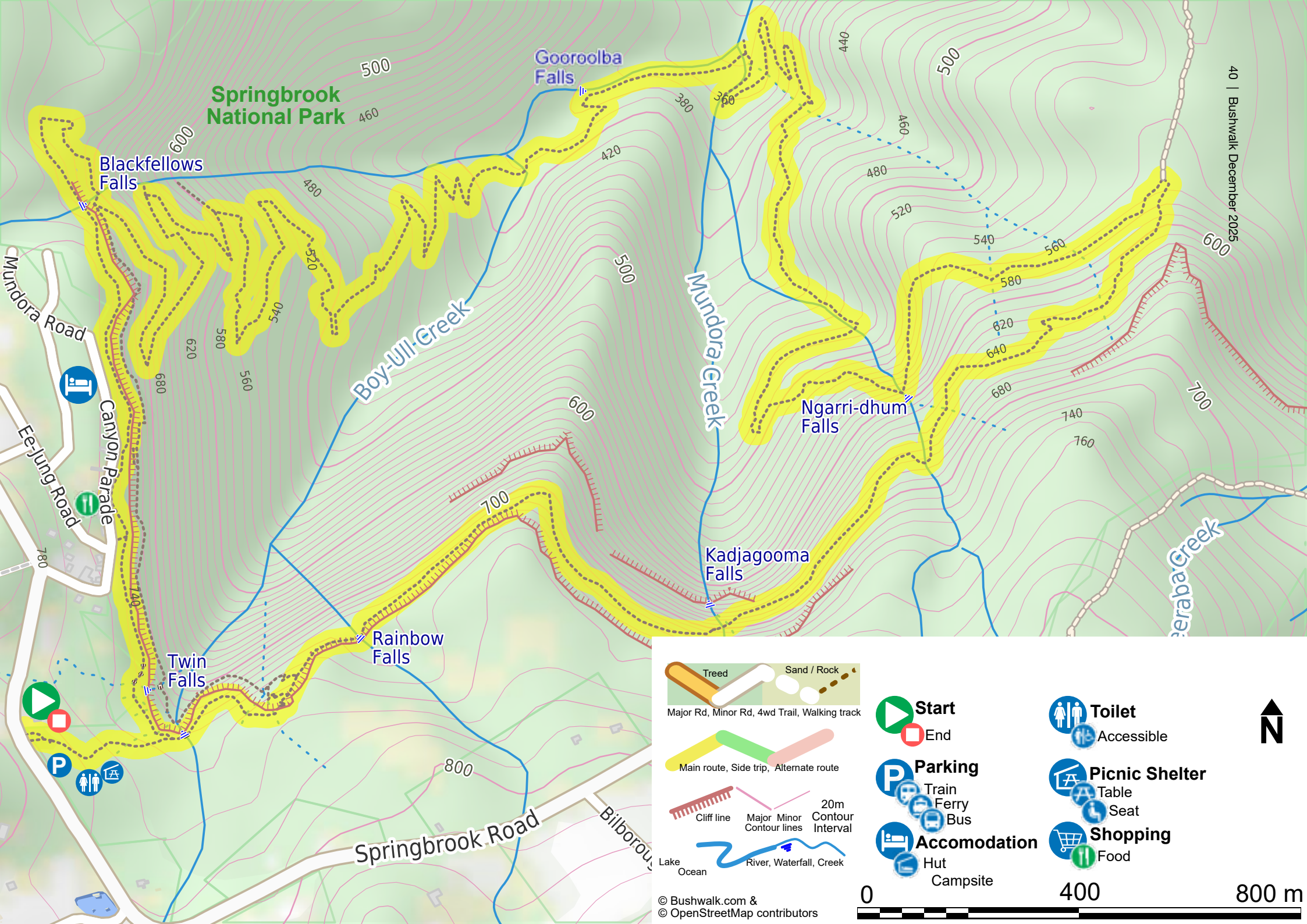
A short time later I followed, heading for two waterfalls I'd not had time to do a few days previously. Aiming for the Warrie Circuit which had a common descent with the Twin Falls Walk, I noticed the wedding party way below me, en route to the lower part of Twin Falls.

The lady in a bulky wedding dress doing a 2km downhill hike in the bush. I shook my head and moved down the steep zig-zag to their level but headed in the opposite direction, unnoticed by anyone.

You head through a gate with serious warnings about the Warrie Circuit. It's a 14km loop that goes way down into the valley, and you're sternly advised not to leave after 11.00; I imagined that would equally apply to a.m. or p.m.!

“

It's a 14km loop that goes way down into the valley, and you're sternly advised not to leave after 11.00; I imagined that would equally apply to a.m. or p.m.!



Springbrook National Park

Treed **Sand / Rock**

Major Rd, Minor Rd, 4wd Trail, Walking track

Main route, Side trip, Alternate route

Cliff line **Major Contour lines** **Minor Contour lines** **20m Contour Interval**

Lake **Ocean** **River, Waterfall, Creek**

Start **End**

Toilet **Accessible**

Parking **Train** **Ferry** **Bus**

Accommodation **Hut** **Campsite**

Picnic Shelter **Table** **Seat**

Shopping **Food**





elow the carpark at the bottom of the rock shelf



The track to Twin Falls that you have to turn off

The sheer cliffs provide a dramatic background, at times you're all but brushing alongside them. It's such a delight just being in this mature sub-tropical rainforest; the variety of foliage and size of the trees is so distracting you're not sure where to look next, and, somewhere, there's ever the sound of water falling, tempting you ever onwards.

The track was a tad rough in places but generally easy and well maintained, as evidenced by the chainsaw marks on the trees that had fallen over the trail and since been decapitated.

I had almost arrived at the first falls when a female hiker emerged and said she'd been to the Pinnacle, an off-piste area where there is no main trail. She warned me about how slippery the rock surface was where the trail went behind the falls. She got that right, it was akin to a skating rink.

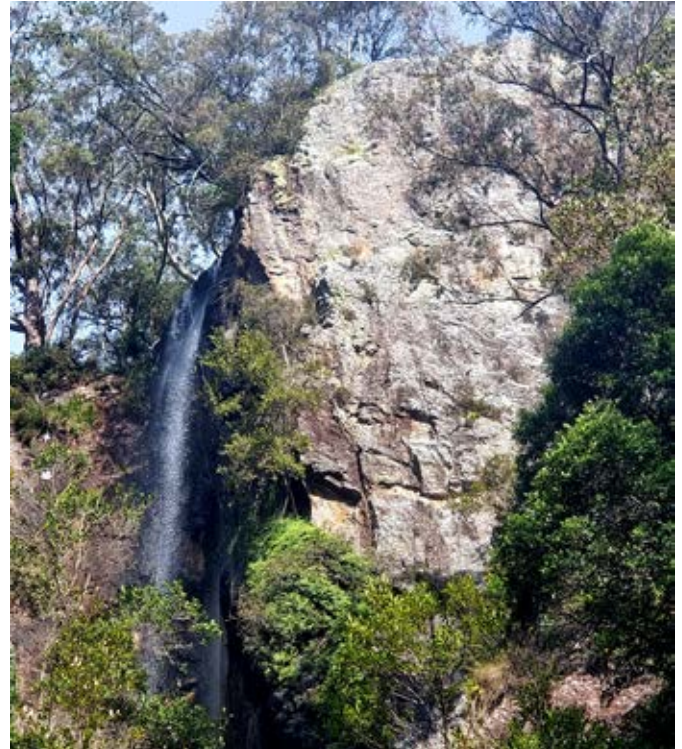


The nuns

I'd suggested that I planned to go to the second falls and then return, and she of the vaster knowledge felt that made sense.

The initial falls almost had a decent rainbow effect, and I suspected if you were here at the right time it might actually happen but, for now, I was more concerned about the slime covered rocks around the falls; they really were very slippery, especially in the cave-like overhang that took you behind the shower.

Escaping them, I moved on, noting that some trees had huge burls on them and wondering just what might have caused them. As the trail rotated slightly to starboard, the significant lower section of the next falls, Goomoolahra, offered glimpses between the foliage. It's not a sheer drop but, very close to it and it goes down a long way, so far down you can't see where it ends.



Goomoolahra Falls



Rainbow Falls



Father at Rainbow Falls

I get around to the mid-section, which is a huge, jumbled pile of collapsed rocks that you have to climb if you wish to view the upper falls. It's a bit daunting with the water flowing through in places, offering more potential dangers. Assessing the rock barrier, I estimated that climbing the first half was doable and started clambering. It was slow progress, but I made it and then was able to clamber further till there was an open view of the top falls cascading over the ridge line.

Getting over to the actual base was an exercise too far with seemingly no point so it was time to descend all the way to the bridge that crossed over the start of the cascade to the valley. There was little on offer there save for an appreciation of just how much further down the valley was from where you were standing.

Time to head home, maybe that previous fall might have better light this time. Little did I realise what was about to happen. No sooner had I reached the outskirts than an Indian family arrived on the other side; all six of them and all with cameras. There went my exclusivity for the afternoon. As with all Indian groups I've ever encountered, there's an obsession with selfies and I figured they'd be

here for half an hour. The apparent father was sitting on a rock, posing, and as I viewed him, realised what a wonderful shot it was, with the dazzling rainbow effect behind his outline. So like Rodin's "The Thinker", only buried in nature.

Had I done my research I'd have known that the falls are actually called "Rainbow", so it would have come as no surprise. Since there were so many other camera people I figured I'd get them to take a picture of me before I moved on, back to the steep ascent where I interrupted three serious hikers who were just about to complete the entire Warrie Track, taking over five hours.

They said the falls in the valley weren't a patch on those up here which made me feel good that I hadn't missed out on much.

With just a few hundred metres to go I got the biggest surprise of all. Was it a vision splendid? Three nuns were coming towards me; not what you normally expect in the Aussie bush! When I suggested a photograph, they were positively exuberant.

I walked to the car not knowing what to make of the outing, but I was sure I'd been blessed!

Photo Gallery

Photos
Bushwalk.com photographers



Check this and
other entries at
Bushwalk.com
Photo competitions



Fed Peak from Geeves Bluff
James Vincent

Landscapes

December 2024

Winner
Light in a dark place
Tom_brennan



Lake Sandra
teak



Windblown Snow Gum on
a very windy and foggy day
towards Mt Gungartan
Joe J



On Mt Jaithmathang
eggs

Non-landscapes

December 2024

Winner
Snow Gum
Eggs

The plan was some day walks on the Bogong High Plains, but the first day began indoors sheltered from some seriously heavy rain. However, we took the opportunity to risk it in the afternoon and in a break in showers climbed up Mt Cope. This colorful snow gum is right next to the summit cairn.



Millers Hut
Joe J

Tasmania

December 2024

Winner
Shaded Lake
Teak

I took this photo during a walk around the Lake Sandra to Mount Murchison circuit. On a clear day the views are impressive.



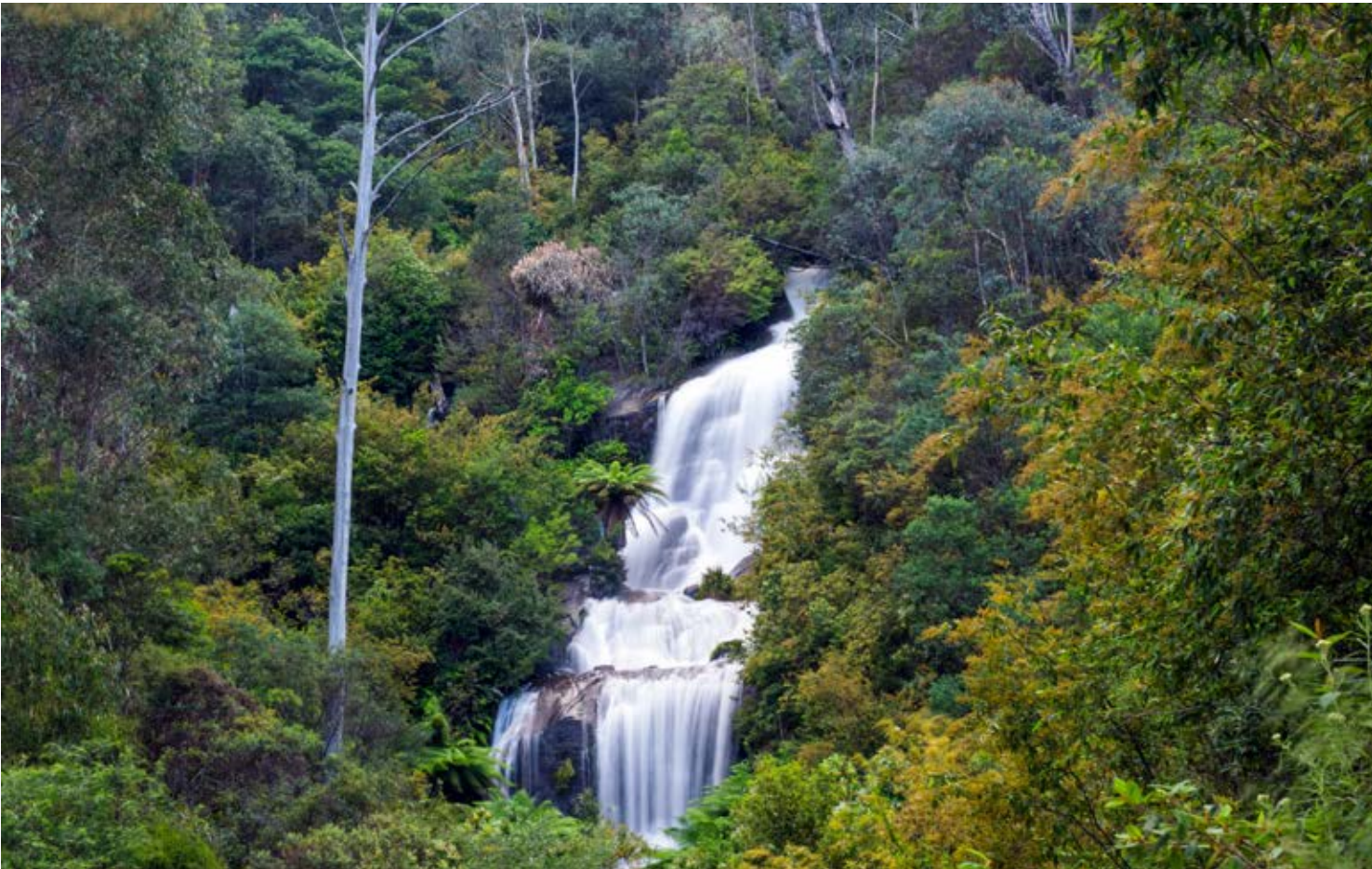
Teds Beach Lake Pedder
Lostsoul

Other States

December 2024

Winner
Fainter Falls
Eggs

Visiting the Bogong High Plains after heavy rain, we took the opportunity of a short walk to check out the Fainter Falls.



Mt Bimberri from across the
Coolleman Plain at Bill Jones
Hut
Joe J



Late afternoon in pagoda
country
tom_brennan

Landscapes

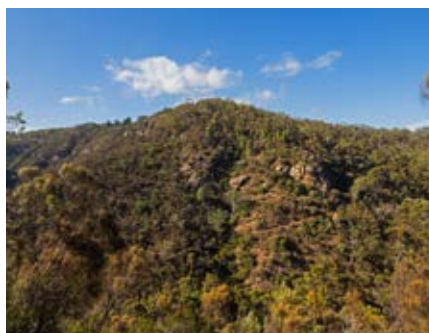
January 2025

Winner
Climbing Stacks
North-north-west

Despite having explored most of Ben Lomond NP on numerous trips, I'd never tried the traverse from Storys to Carr Villa, until this beautiful summer's day. The climb to the plateau can be brutal, but no-one's complaining with views like this.



Exploring the Snowies Alpine Walk Stage 3
johnw



Morialta
Eggs

Non-landscapes

January 2025

Winner
I can see you
Eggs

It is always exciting to spot Tawny frogmouths in the wild as they blend in so well. Even better in this case as we were being checked out by one before the closing eyes resumed the statue like stance.



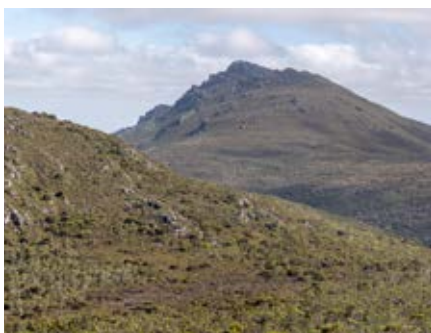
Alpine colour
johnw

Tasmania

January 2025

Winner
View from Cathedral Mountain
Teak

This photo was taken on an overnight walk to Cathedral Mountain on a very hot weekend.



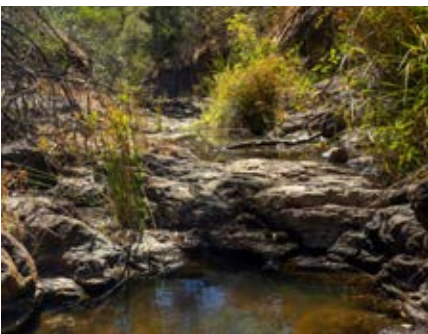
Whole lotta scrub down there
North-north-west

Other States

January 2025

Winner
Taking a break
at Trapyard Creek
Johnw

During a short holiday in Jindabyne in January I took the opportunity to do some walking. I'd been following the progress of the Snowies Alpine Walk project, so I wanted to try the newest section between Charlotte Pass and Perisher Valley. I was on my own so decided to walk from CP to Porcupine Rocks and back. The Trapyard Creek crossing on the new track is one of those pretty spots in the Snowy Mountains that demands more than a glance. And as you can see in the photo I had a brilliant day for it.



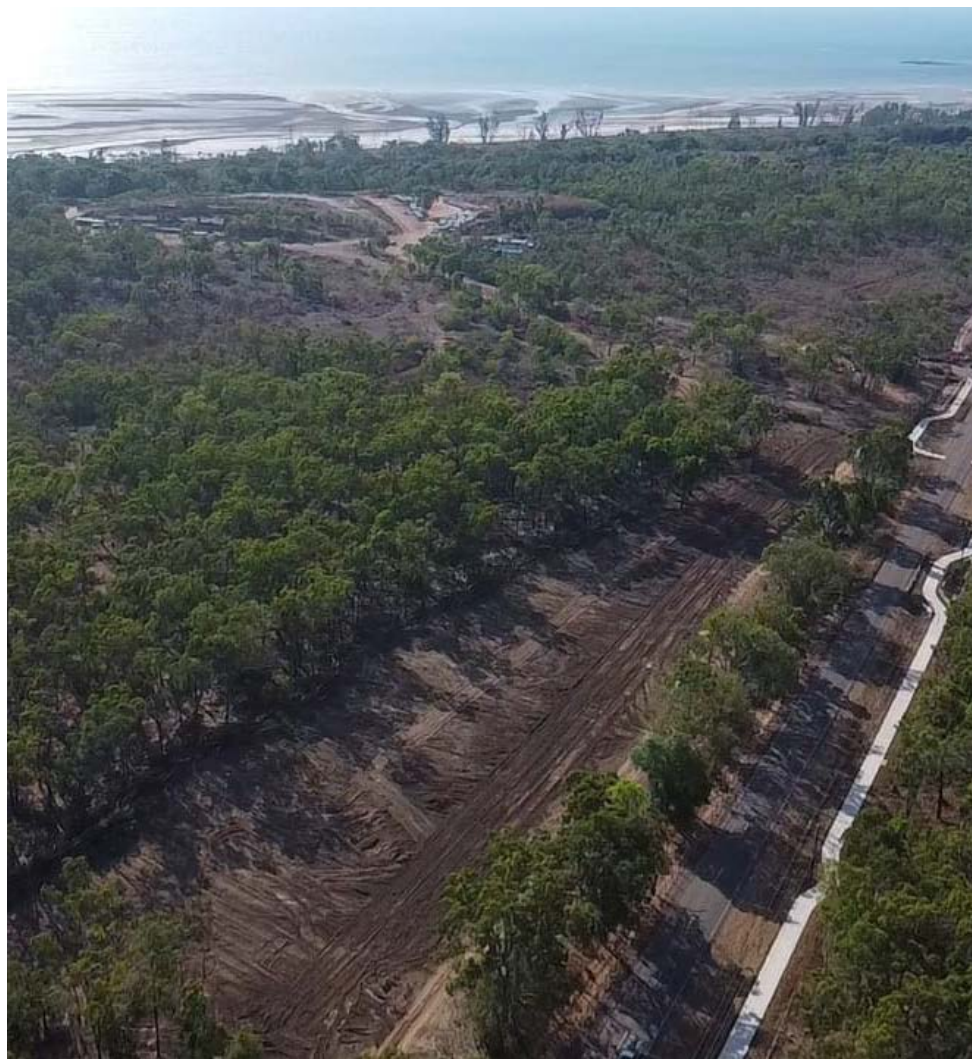
Pools remain
Eggs

Environmental law overhaul

Text
Justine Bell-James

The 25-year-old Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act has been [repeatedly criticised](#) for failing to stem Australia's biodiversity decline. These national laws are meant to protect threatened species and scrutinise some developments over the damage done to ecosystems.

But they haven't worked. Species have [kept going extinct](#), land clearing in Queensland and the Northern Territory has [continued](#) at high levels, and threatened species have declined [every year](#) since 2000.



Lee Point Binybara weeks after the community campaign led by Larrakia Traditional Owners paused Defence Housing Australia's development of the area and the bulldozing of 400 year old trees by [Orange.2023](#)

The act's flaws were laid bare in the [2020 Samuel Review](#). Lead author Graeme Samuel and his technical panel also laid out a reform blueprint.

Labor promised to overhaul these laws in its first term, using this blueprint as a guide, but ran into [intractable political challenges](#).

Today, the government has tried again, tabling a reform package in parliament that includes bills to [reform environmental protection](#) and establish a [national environmental protection agency](#).

Environment Minister Murray Watt has pitched the reforms as a win for both the environment and for business, which would benefit from faster approvals. It [remains to be seen](#) whether the legislation will get the support it needs to pass into law.

Could these draft laws really stop the steady decline of Australia's unique species? My assessment is that some good features are included, but signs of compromise are everywhere.



Could these draft laws really stop the steady decline of Australia's unique species?

Ministerial discretion wound back, no national standards yet

A key criticism of the existing laws is the almost unfettered discretion given to the environment minister of the day. A project found likely to cause significant environmental harm by the environment department can still be given a green light by the minister.

The [Samuel Review](#) recommended this discretion be tightened up by developing National Environmental Standards to help promote the survival of threatened species.

The minister's decision would need to be consistent with these standards unless, as the review states, there was a 'rare exception, justified in the public interest'.

On these grounds, the draft laws aren't enough. The reforms would let the minister make standards, but not require them to be developed. The standards would be [statutory instruments](#) rather than laws, and are under development, according to the government.

This is a glaring absence, given the standards were described by Samuel as the 'centrepiece' of his reform proposal.

If standards are created, they will have some effect on decisions. Under the new bill, the minister must not approve an action unless satisfied the approval is 'not inconsistent' with them. The same requirement would apply to a state government if a decision is delegated to them.

This seems promising. But the use of the term 'satisfied' means the minister still retains more discretion than Samuel intended. Much also depends on the standards themselves.

More positively, the bill addresses the question of [unacceptable impacts](#). For instance, if a developer wants to build a new suburb on grasslands that represent one of the last remaining tracts of habitat for a critically endangered species, this could be considered an unacceptable impact.

Under the bill, the minister must not approve a development unless satisfied it will not have unacceptable impacts. Again, the word 'satisfied' makes it a subjective assessment, but the inclusion of unacceptable impacts is an improvement over the current law.

This amendment is already shaping up to be [unpopular with the mining lobby](#), so it's yet to be seen if it becomes law. Mining company pushback was [influential in killing](#) Labor's reform efforts in its first term.

Finally, all of these slight improvements in discretion can be overridden if the minister deems it to be in the 'national interest', a phrase not defined in the act.

Offsets still too prominent

The existing laws have long been criticised for their overreliance on biodiversity offsets, where a development doing damage to habitat can offset this by buying or restoring equivalent habitat elsewhere.

In his review, Samuel noted offsets had become the default option, rather than a last resort. It's far better if damage can be avoided in the first place.

Unfortunately, offsets are still front and centre. The reform bill doesn't require project developers to explore avoiding or reducing damage before moving to offsets under the so-called [mitigation hierarchy](#). The minister must 'consider' the hierarchy, but is not obliged to apply it.

The bill tabled today also introduces 'restoration contributions'. These essentially allow applicants to pay money into a offset fund rather than doing it themselves. A New South Wales scheme like this has attracted controversy as the [fund has amassed money](#) that can't be spent as there's [no suitable replacement habitat](#). Without proper safeguards, these contributions are likely to become a payment for doing harm.

Offsets should only be used where habitat is actually replaceable. Despite this, the reform bill doesn't require consideration of whether offsets are feasible for a project. The minister can't apply offsets to unacceptable impacts, but again, this is a matter of discretion.

A new national EPA with few teeth

Today's amendments provide for the creation of a new National Environmental Protection Agency. This seems like an improvement, as there's no federal watchdog at present.

But at this stage, its proposed powers would extend only to compliance and enforcement, not environmental approvals as originally proposed last year. Giving an independent body power to approve or refuse projects proved [highly unpopular](#) with the mining lobby. The amendments do include some strengthened compliance and enforcement powers to be administered by the EPA.

Who will sign off?

The reforms allow the federal minister to delegate environmental decision making to the relevant state or territory government. This [greatly concerns environmental groups](#), as it would avoid the existing extra layer of federal oversight of controversial proposals.

To delegate, the minister must be satisfied the state process is not inconsistent with any national environmental standard, and meets other requirements. The minister must also be sure any actions will be approved in accordance with the planned federal standards and that they will not have unacceptable impacts.

The reforms also allow for planning at a regional scale. This allows governments to zoom out to the landscape scale and zone areas for development and conservation. If [done well](#), regional planning can be a good way to provide certainty for developers, while stemming the trend of habitat being carved up into smaller, disconnected islands. The devil will be in the detail – any new regional plans will need to be scrutinised carefully.

What about climate change?

Environment groups and [the Greens](#) have repeatedly called for the reforms to contain a 'climate trigger'. This has been [roundly rejected](#) by two independent reviews of the act and by government.

A climate trigger would mean proposed projects would have their impact on the climate [thoroughly assessed](#), which would increase scrutiny of coal and gas projects.

[As anticipated](#), the amendments provide only a small concession to climate change considerations. Project developers will be required to provide an estimate of their direct emissions, but the minister doesn't have to

consider these. There's no mention of the very large Scope 3 emissions caused by the burning of Australian coal or gas overseas.

Some progress amid many compromises

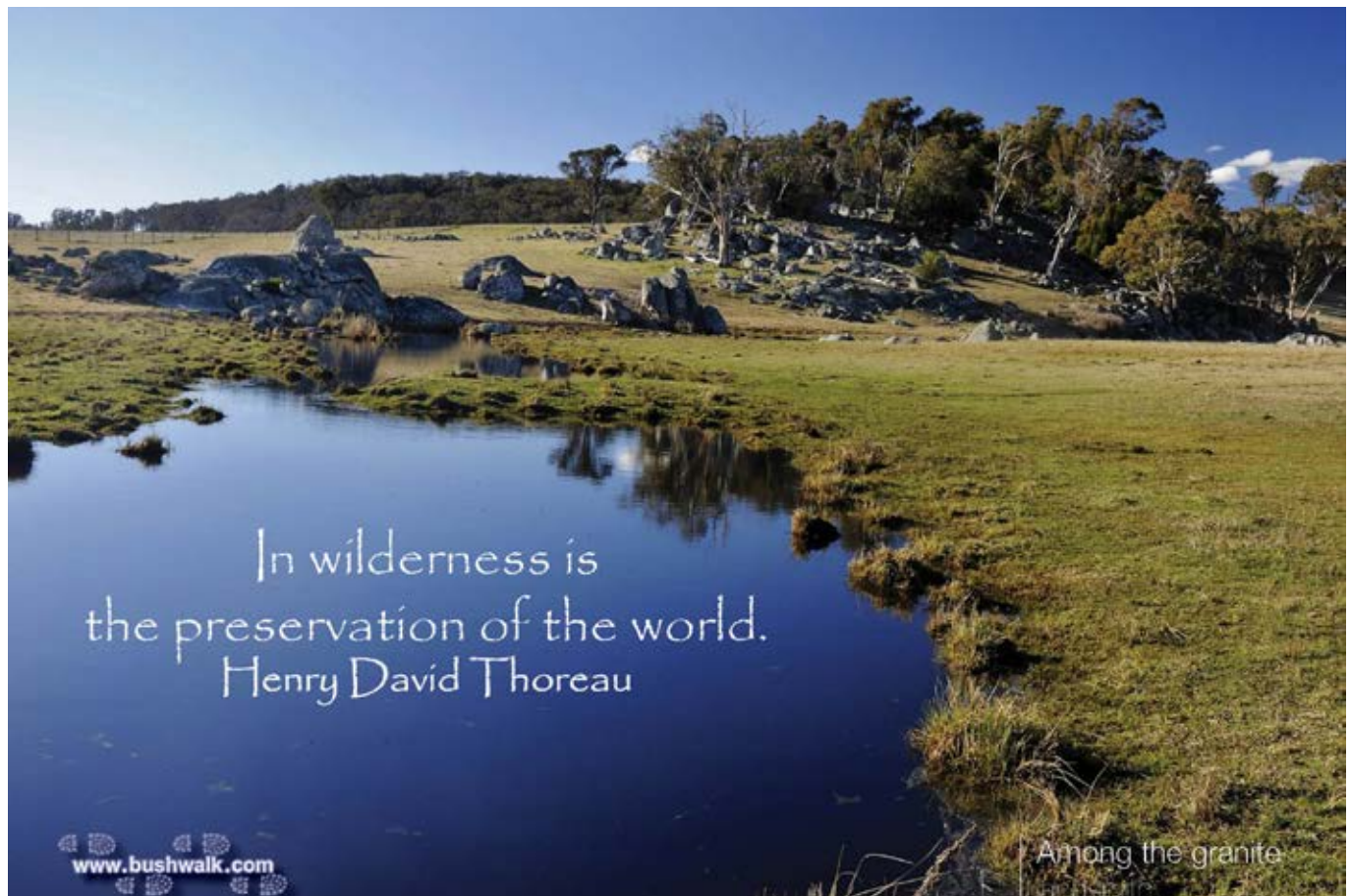
These environmental reforms are unsurprisingly a product of significant compromise due to the intensely political environment and past failures to progress reform. Even so, they face a rocky path to become law.

While the proposed reforms fail to fix some of the most problematic parts of the current laws, creating a federal EPA and legislating unacceptable impacts could lead to some improvement for the environment if other weak spots are addressed.

Justine Bell-James

Professor, TC Beirne School of Law, The University of Queensland

This article first appeared in [The Conversation](#) on 30 October 2025.



Spanish Omelette

Text
Sonya Muhlsimmer





Cut out a piece of baking paper to fit the bottom of the pan. Label the bag and place all ingredients into the allocated bag and container. Copy or print out Method at camp and keep together with the bag.

Method at camp

Chop the salami. In a pan add the contents of Bag 1 (omelette mix), slowly add $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of water to the mix to make a thick paste. Add the sun dried tomatoes and olives, stir through then layer salami on top of mix, drizzle olive oil over the omelette. Place the pan on a low heat and cook for about 3-4 mins on one side until the mix holds together when you slide a knife under it and the base is a golden brown colour. Take the pan off the heat; lay a piece of grease proof paper over the top of the omelette. Then on top of the baking paper with your hand or small chopping board or plate, flip the pan upside down so the omelette comes out of the pan. Then place the omelette paper side down into the pan and return the pan to the stove. Cook for about 2-3 mins and serve.

Extra tip

Be careful when flipping the omelette, try to make sure it is cooked through or it may crumble and break. If you are making this for two people, I recommend cooking one serve at a time, otherwise the mix may be too thick and will not cook properly.

Ingredients

Bag 1 (omelette mix)

Instant mash potato	$\frac{1}{2}$ cup	26 grams
Egg powder	3 Tbsp	24 grams
Milk powder	2 Tbsp	20 grams
Grated parmesan	2 Tbsp	20 grams
Fried shallots	2 Tbsp	12 grams
Vegetable stock	$\frac{1}{2}$ tsp	3 grams
Dried chives	1 tsp	1 gram
Dried parsley	$\frac{1}{2}$ tsp	1 gram
Dried onion	$\frac{1}{8}$ tsp	1 gram
Dried garlic	$\frac{1}{8}$ tsp	1 gram
Sweet paprika	$\frac{1}{4}$ tsp	1 gram
Ground chilli		few pinches
Salt, pepper		few pinches

Bag 2 (tomatoes and olives)

Sun dried tomatoes	2 each	10 grams
Dried olives	4 each	4 grams

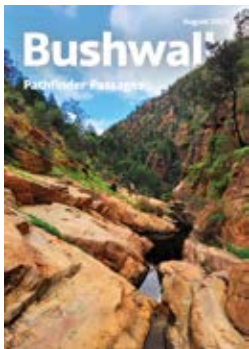
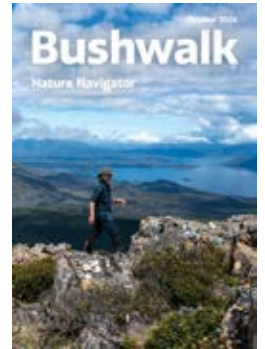
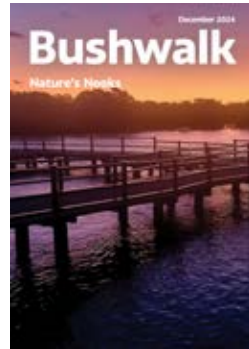
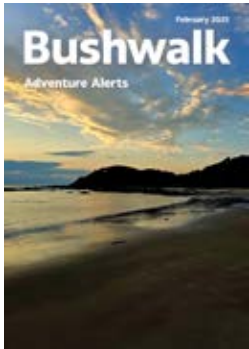
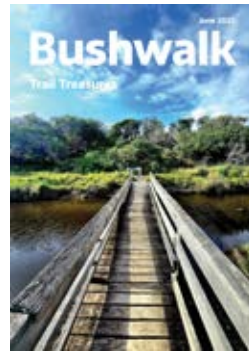
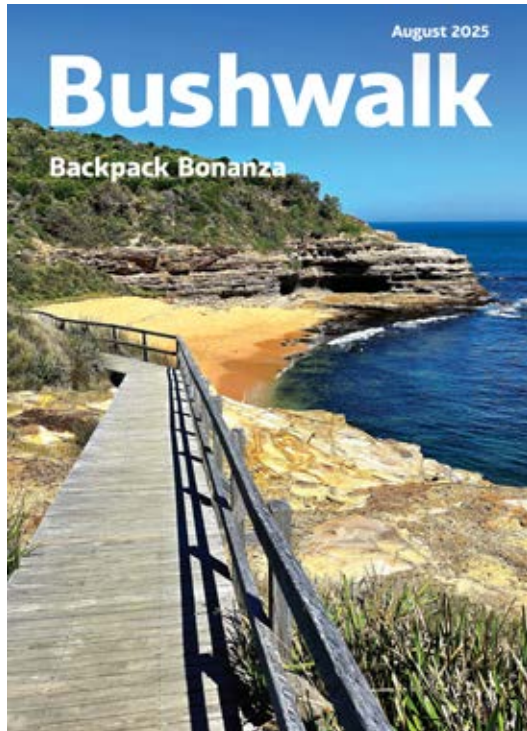
Bag 3 (salami)

Salami	8 slices	30 grams
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Container

Olive oil	2 Tbsp	30 grams
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Water - $\frac{1}{2}$ cup



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

