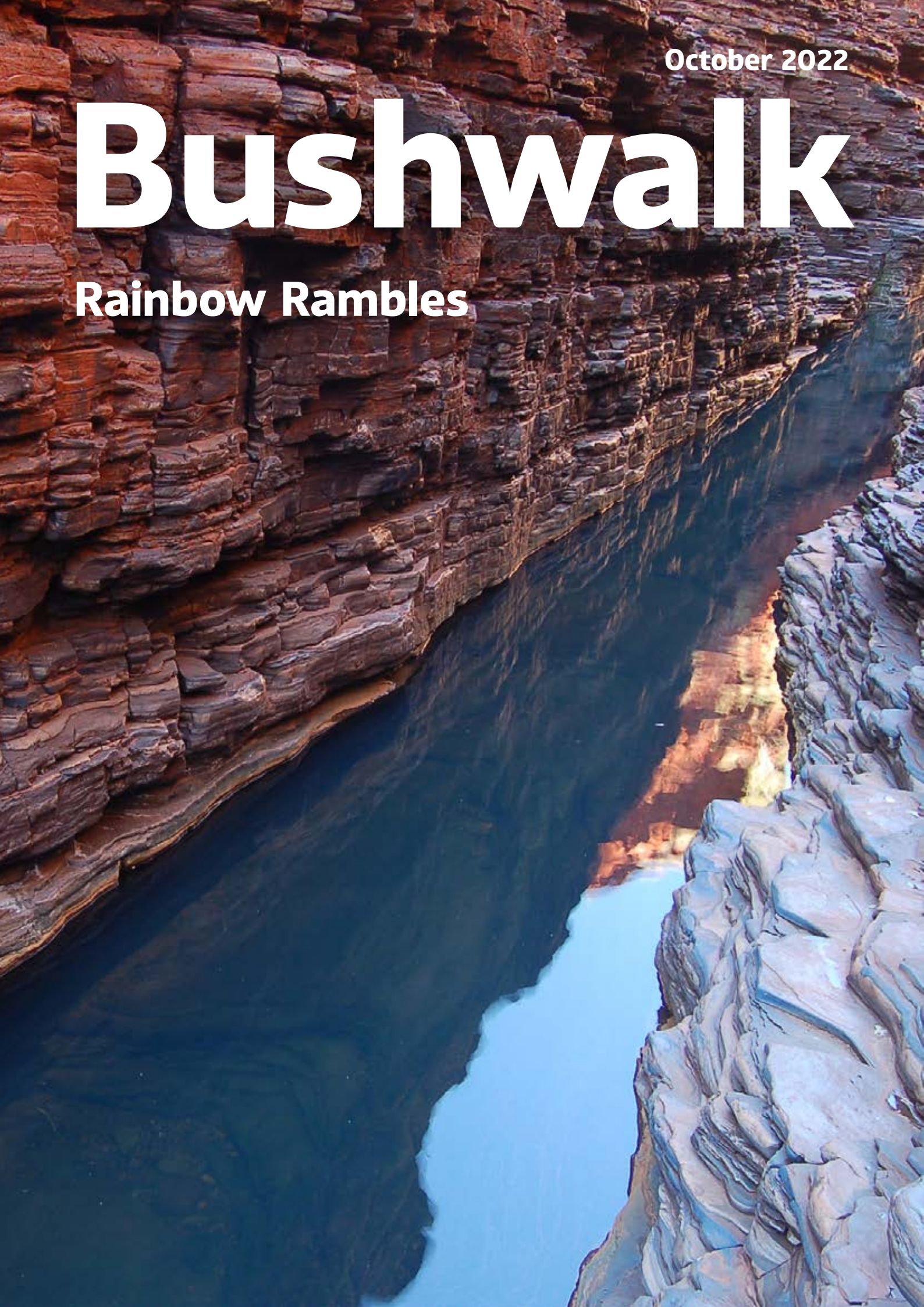


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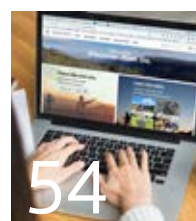
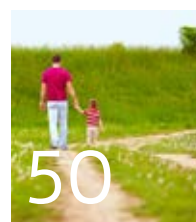
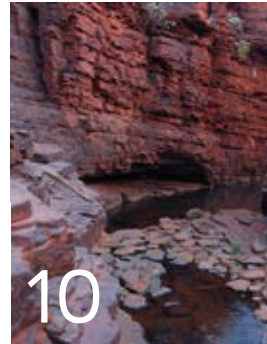
Bushwalk

Rainbow Rambles



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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

I hope this edition finds you well.

In the past month I had the great pleasure of exploring a bunch of walks in the Top End in the Northern Territory - walking in the morning, swimming in the afternoons and meeting new friends on track. There are so many amazing places to explore.

In this edition Brian takes us for a challenging two day walk around the Howitt Circuit in the Alpine NP, Victoria. Ian guides us through Hancock Gorge to Kermits Pool in Karijini NP, in the north of Western Australia. Rob takes us for a partly off track adventure along the Chewings Range in the Northern Territory, from Ellery Creek to Ormiston Gorge. Sonya heads off on her annual ski trip from Guthega Power Station to Schlink Hilton, where there is a huge storm in a very exposed part of Kosciuszko NP, NSW. Ryan heads to the Victorian desert for a walk through Murray-Sunset NP, two big days with salt lakes and much more. Eva gets us motivated to enjoy Walktober and Josh shares his passion for walking through his "A Hikers Friend" blog. We also learn about why we need 30% of Australia protected by 2030 - it is not just a catchphrase.

Happy walking and reading

Matt :)

Matt McClelland (aka Wildwalks)

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Cover image
Karijini gorge
Ian Smith



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Please send any articles, suggestions or advertising enquires to Eva. We would love you to be part of the magazine. Read our [Writer's Guide](#) to get started, 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.

Howitt Circuit

Text and photos
Brian English

After having a taste of the Mount Howitt area, I had a chance to go up again. I wanted to go via Gippsland and the Howitt Road, but wasn't sure of the road condition, and with heavy rain forecast, I decided to enter via Upper Howqua again. It turned out the rain didn't happen, and several people I spoke with had driven their 2WD cars in that way, avoiding potholes, but passable.



Razor-Viking in the distance, day 1



Clearing the tree on the Stirling Circuit Road, day 1

Day 1: Upper Howqua to Mac Springs, 12 km

At the 31 kilometre marker on the Stirling Circuit Road, a tree was across the road. I don't carry a chainsaw, so I turned back, thinking I'd head the other way around the circuit. A few minutes later I saw vehicles approaching, flagged them down and let them know the track was blocked. They had a chainsaw, so I followed them back and they cleared the road. Thanks guys! They were going down to pick up some people who'd walked a section of the AAWT.

“

They had a chainsaw, so I followed them back and they cleared the road.

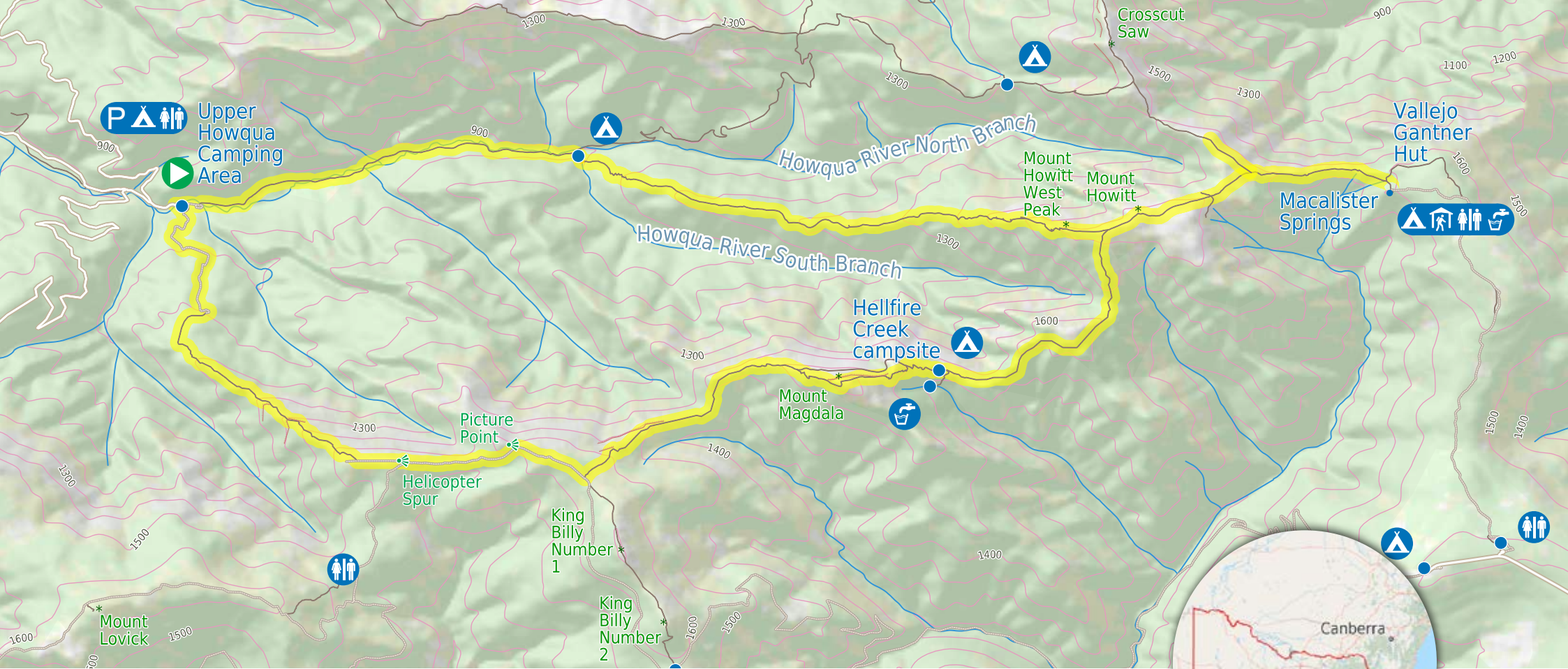
I was starting later than I'd like in the first place, then the road clearing delayed things more. I walked up Howitt Spur, taking about the same time as two weeks earlier, but didn't feel as fatigued when I got to Mac Springs.

I was sweating buckets all the way up, but otherwise it was good. I saw three Alpine copperheads; one made me jump as I thought I'd stepped on it, and another was right near my foot looking like it wasn't impressed with me.

I was thinking of going somewhere else before evening but it was getting late (late start and delay) by the time I got to Mac Springs. A few drops of rain started, with a forecast of 4 mm of rain and a possible thunderstorm, so I decided to camp. When I was getting water, for a moment I thought there must have been a bushfire, as a white cloud billowed up over the saddle between Mac Springs and Mount Howitt. I worked out it was a rising cloud, or fog that soon enveloped the whole area and stayed until early morning, when it receded into the Wonnangatta Valley.

Day 2: Mac Springs, Magdala, Helicopter Spur, Upper Howqua, 15 km

I left Mac Springs at about 7 am, with the fog cleared and no clouds above. When the Terrible Hollow became visible, The Razor and Viking had a sea of white clouds heading off in the distance.



Mount Howitt Circuit



- Start of the walk
- Hut
- Campsite
- Toilet
- Parking



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



Main track, side trip, alternate route



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



Lake, river, waterfall or creek



Alpine National Park, VIC
Taungurung and Gunaikurnai Country

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

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

I dropped the pack at the Crosscut junction and walked towards Speculation a bit, didn't go far, but the views were great, with the Howqua Valley clear of cloud. I wanted to push on to Mount Magdala, and then see how far I would get before deciding how to get back down that day or stay another night.

“

... the views were great, with the Howqua Valley clear of cloud.

There's a nice campsite between Big Hill and Mount Magdala, and I think a red marker on a tree indicated where to head for Hellfire Creek, but I didn't check it out. I felt good so far, and it wasn't until ascending Magdala that I started to feel it a bit. The break for a view

at Hells Window was much appreciated, as well as the chilled breeze. The hardest thing is when you're below the treeline is that there's barely a breath of wind and with the sun at its peak, I really felt hot and was sweating heaps again.

After Magdala, I slipped on loose stones a bit on the way down and fell once, nothing terrible, just annoying. I spoke with two young blokes who were doing a seven day trip from Upper Howqua to The Viking via Dry Creek anticlockwise (I think). They'd ascended Helicopter Spur the day before, realised they'd left something, so they went back down leaving packs behind, got what they were missing, and went back up. Hard work.

The day was warming up (or felt like it) and the climb/walk up to Bluff Track was slow and hot, and I was feeling it. By this stage I'd decided I was going to get down the Helicopter Spur or die trying. PCV had suggested walking along



A sea of cloud over the Wonnangatta, with Razor-Viking just above the clouds, day 2

the Bluff Track to Bluff Hut, staying the night, then heading down Bluff link as a way to get down. However, I was starting to run low on water and wasn't sure where to find it near King Billy 1 and was starting to suffer from the walking/sweating/blisters/chafing. It felt like heading back to the car the shorter route would do. The Bluff road was hot and boring in that section anyway.

I found some water near the campsite at the top of Helicopter Spur, a big puddle about 5 cm deep, so I filtered a bit. The March flies were becoming a pain, and drawing blood a lot. I sprayed 40% Deet on my clothes and arms. That only seemed to inflame them, as they kept trying to distract me and drawing blood down the spur.

I started heading down Helicopter Spur, but wasn't sure of the route at first, as people seemed to have walked out various ways leaving trails (or animals?). NNW's GPS track

came in handy here! Once the spur starts, it's easy to follow, and soon enough was at the top of the third (highest) band of rocks. I went down the rocks with my pack on, a little bit sitting on my bum, and lowering down until legs touched something firm, a little bit facing rocks gripping plants/rocks. It felt like I could slip and in hindsight taking off the pack and lowering would have made it easier.

Shortly after I was at the second rock band. I found the dreaded chute, lowered the pack and looked at the options. The place I got stuck on last time didn't look enticing. The V-shape seemed good. I noticed the slab in the middle which forms part of the V-shape had notch or step like features and would probably be the easiest way to ascend or descend facing the rocks. I decided to go down into the V, and twisted under the gum tree while facing forward, and using hands and feet lowered myself down. It was very simple; gravity helps a bit I guess.



Mount Buller and Mount Stirling through Hells Window, day 2



Looking back up third band, day 2

I continued, but was really feeling the exhaustion/dehydration and found on the last step I felt unsteady on my feet with the pack. I took off the pack and tethering it with the cord I'd brought, pushed it down a bit in front of me and slid after it, or walked down a bit and

“

... I've completed
Helicopter Spur (if going
down counts)

dragged it down to where I was to get down the steep part of the first band. This was ugly, slow, but effective. Anyway, I've completed Helicopter Spur (if going down counts)!

My phone died at about this point, so no more pictures. After that, it was just a slow slog back to the campsite. It took a long time to

get down the spur and a bit of suffering was involved, but the height/exposure thing never bothered me. Weird. Maybe too tired to care?

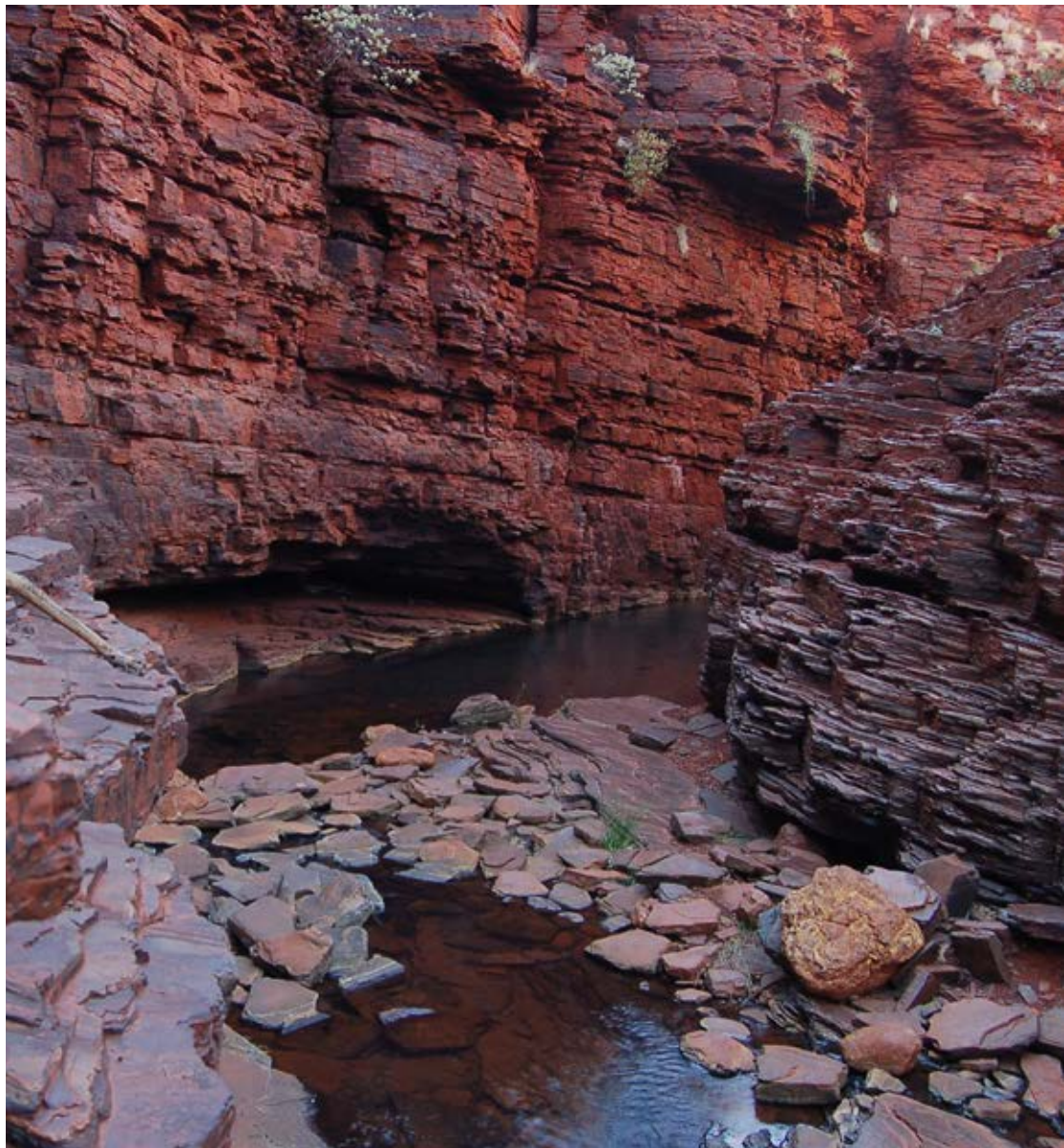
About 13 hours from when I left Mac Springs I got to the Upper Howqua with lots of photo breaks, but not too many pack-off stops. Only snacking along the way. I'm just slow.

I decided to drive home. I got massive cramps in the hands just after I hit the Circuit Road, so much so that I had to pull over for 10 minutes to keep stretching my hands out as they cramped into deformed fists ... fun! I'd been drinking sports drinks and water with hydrolyte throughout the day and had more in the car which I hopped into at the end of the walk. They seemed to kick in, as after that, only a few small cramps in the legs and arms on the way home. I nearly hit a Lyrebird who thought it was Road Runner just before Howqua Gap. I got home in one piece, so all good.

Karijini Dreaming

Text and photos
Ian Smith

For me, it was a magnet more than all the other attractions. Situated hundreds of kilometres inland, Karijini is the formerly named Hamersley Ranges National Park in Western Australia. The images people had shown me, the stories I had heard, and what the internet had thrown up indicated that this is a place with unique features.



Karijini gorge



Karijini gorge

We had left Coral Bay late in the afternoon and managed to put about 270 kilometres of the trip behind us, making for an easy run the next day to soak up the last 300 kilometres. Of course, that was fine in theory. The only problem was that the two people in the motorhome were both keen on taking a few snaps and the reality was that we averaged around 20 kilometres/hour. For the first five hours, such were the vibrant stark reds of the small outcrops we kept coming across. That, and a few flowers and a perentie lizard that I stalked while he checked me out before he went chasing a disturbed bird at

amazing speed, though he fell just short of his goal and the pigeon escaped. Now, that would have been a shot!

Karijini is rapidly becoming a major attraction in WA. Most caravanners and motorhomers we spoke to were going there at some stage. For once in my life, I opted to take the sealed road via Paraburdoo and then Tom Price instead of the shorter dirt track. I'm so over corrugations!

On our first full day we chose Weano Gorge lookout as our base though this is where four gorges intersect. The views are breathtaking



Patterns in stone



Hancock Gorge and Kermits Pool



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



Main track, side trip, alternate route



Cliff, major contour line, minor contour line (10 metre interval)



Lake, river, waterfall or creek



Start of the walk



Picnic shelter



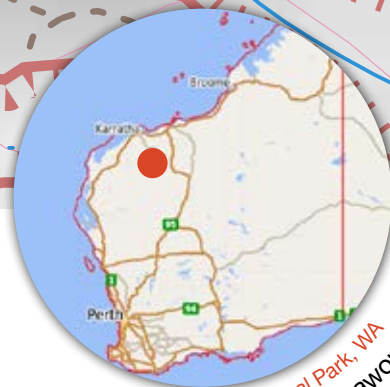
Campsite



Toilet



Parking



Banyjima, Kurrama and Innawonga Country
Karijini National Park, WA

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

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Ian on the ladder at Hancock Gorge



Karijini gorge

and the red canyons are magnificent. It wasn't long before we were packed and ready to descend into Hancock Gorge, probably one of the most popular canyon walks. We were the first down there that day and the walks here are all rated. The start of proceedings is graded four; that gets you, via a ladder at the last stage, to the floor of the canyon. Then it becomes a five, that's where you have to take your shoes and socks off and wade thigh-deep through a 50-metre pool before balancing on rocks on a narrow unmade path past the next pool.

That gets you to the impressive Amphitheatre where there used to be a resident four-metre python that was part of the scene. That was until he slid silently up to a lady who was sitting, enjoying herself and wrapped around her leg. Understandably she became a little agitated when she realised what was happening, and so the snake latched onto her leg with his teeth before someone, unfortunately, smashed its head in with a rock.

After the Amphitheatre it gets worse, but I saw worse and decided against it. That's where it enters the Spider Walk where you

have to balance with one leg either side of the narrow section before you reach Kermit's Pool. Then you have to jump into the very cold water. From then on you require abseiling gear, that's rated a definite six! Still, the scenery is stunning. The rated one and a half hour walk took Bob and me around four hours, such is its magnetism.

We tarried at the Amphitheatre and met yet another German couple to add to the two on bikes going around the world (they'd done Russia, Kazakhstan, Mongolia etc. already) we saw earlier and the ones who'd passed us in Hancock Gorge some time ago. After coming across so many in Tassie earlier in the year, it's a wonder any of them are left in their homeland. None of them knew of each other's presence, and Bob had a wonderful time practising his school German on them, much to their amusement.

We returned to the motorhome for lunch and drove to Knox Gorge, some 20 kilometres away. This too was special, and I learned that it actually links up with where we were earlier in the day. You can do an eight hour trek from here and come up the ladder at Hancock Gorge. That would be one heck of a day!

A Short Walk Through the Chewings

Text and photos
Rob Wildman

A year ago, my friend Frank mused about driving to Central Australia as he'd never been there, and having just retired, thought it would be something to do. Nice idea but when Google maps came back with a driving time of 26 hours to Alice Springs, the whole kernel of the trip was evolving by the minute. Okay, so now we would fly and then do a walk. Larapinta Trail? Why not?



Looking west from Hill Top on the Larapinta towards Rocky Bar Gap



Looking back towards the Heavitree Range

The start at Ellery Creek Big Hole:
Helen, Michelle, Frank and Rob

The more we researched, the more we kept seeing this Namatjira-like mountain range in the background; the Chewings. Named after a very energetic South Australian who explored this whole area in the 1860s (for how it could make money, of course), the Chewings also had the second highest peak in the area, Mount Giles, and some attractive ups and downs. Adding in two other walkers, we had the final package: a 12 day walk broken into eight days off-track and then four on the Larapinta.

The Larapinta

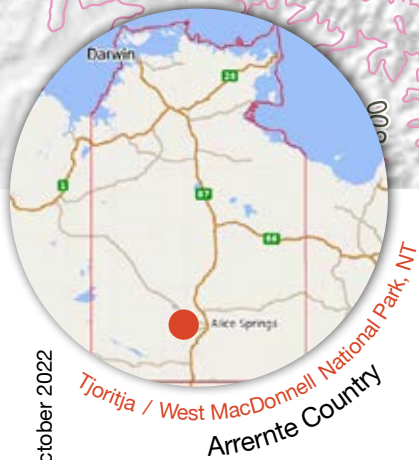
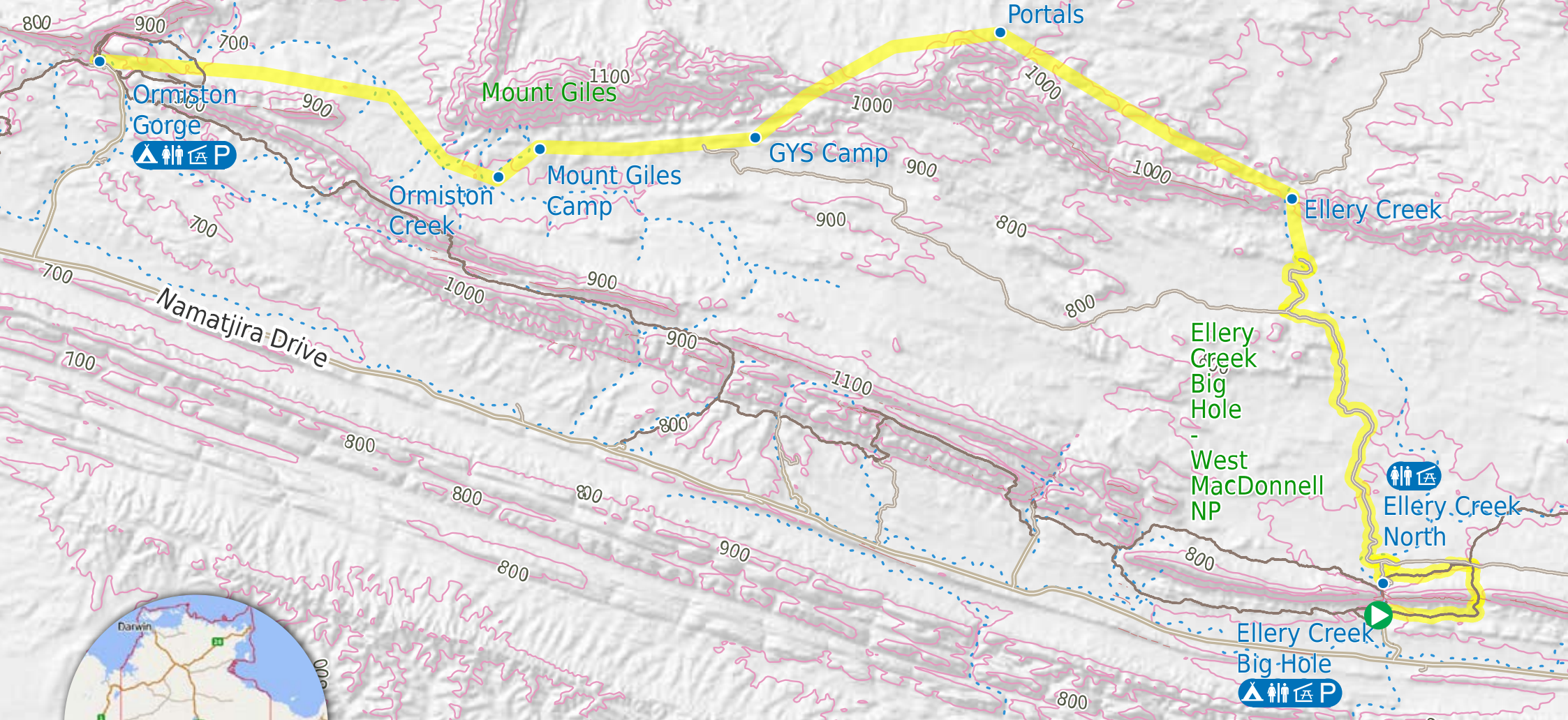
The Larapinta Trail itself stretches from just north of Alice to Mount Sonder, some 150 kilometres almost directly west of the town. Originating in the 1980s and 1990s, it cobbled together a whole series of smaller trails in order to become one of the premier walking trails in the world, continually attracting walkers/hikers/trampers from all around the world. The national park which encompasses both the Larapinta Trail and the one mountain range to its north, the Chewings, is the Tjoritja National Park or, and this is much less evocative, the West MacDonnell Ranges National Park, which is jointly managed by the government and the Traditional Owners.

There is a huge local industry associated with the support of walkers along this trail, and this includes cafes, transport to and from the trailheads, private tourist facilities like campgrounds and accommodation and, of course, the Tjoritja National Park machinery which ensures that there is always water available and adequate infrastructure for walker comfort.

The Chewings






We had finally decided to do an eight day walk in the Chewings first and then follow this up with four days on the Larapinta. I was interested to see what the difference would be between having to deal with untracked open country and following a set trail with possibly many walkers. Would it make that much difference given we were walking through much the same country, climbing the same hills?

While the plan was to start our walk from Hugh Gorge, the 4WD track into this point had been washed away in the January rains. So, under an enormous sky and a crisp, cool morning, we found ourselves overwhelmed by the beauty of our new starting point, Ellery Big Hole. The colours of the rock walls contrasting with the chalk white of the trunks of the gums



Map of the walk



-  Start of the walk
-  Picnic shelter
-  Campsite
-  Toilet
-  Parking



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



Main track, side trip, alternate route



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



Lake, river, waterfall or creek



Across the Alice Valley towards the Chewings

clinging to the cliffs was everything we had read about. All of this reflecting in a deep pool which passed through the gap in the range. We all goofed about taking photos. Philippo, our driver, expressed optimism that we would see him in twelve days at the other end of the range. I wasn't so positive.

The start

The early section, our breaking-in part, was to take the Larapinta Trail through the next dry gap in the range and head around to Ellery Creek North, the trailhead for sections 6 and 7. Crossing through the range, we saw the magnificent Chewings dead ahead across the valley, some fourteen kilometres away. Arriving at the trailhead early, we decided to start the trek across Alice Valley. The day was bright and clear, there were some pools remaining in Ellery Creek and no flies, all leading us to load up with several litres of water and head down the old cattle track which cuts across the valley.

This was pleasant walking, even with the extra water and eight days of food. By mid-afternoon we reached a dry sandy creek bed and made camp. Time to sample the delights of our first night in the middle of nowhere. Keeping hands and feet warm was a challenge as the cool evening crept over us and the sun quietly dropped below the western mountains, leaving us with the first

of many wonderful, fiery sunsets. The light at this time is beguiling, almost like a blanket, making the harsh rocky outcrops soft and the velvet grasses of the plains appear smooth.

We were forced into bed soon enough but occasionally we crept out to watch the show that was going on above us. The milky way seemed to have been brush painted on, it was so intense.

We tried to imagine how this land had provided for the Arrernte people when we could only see its naked harshness. To survive here, people must have had strong connections and based their societies on sharing everything. Modern society doesn't come close.



First night camp on an unnamed creek midway through Alice Valley

Ellery Creek

The road across the valley swung away to the west after the Cumming stock yard, a relic of what this country was used for prior to its declaration as a national park. We pushed through open country until we descended the banks of Ellery Creek close to the point where it dramatically cuts through the Chewings range. The creek was, as with most of these dry rivers, very sandy and, to give us some relief, we searched out patches of hard sand and rock. The base rock layer, usually coloured a light blue, appeared occasionally and nearly always contained some remnant pools from the rains in January.

Following the creek through the first break in the range, we found the glistening big pools and sandy beaches which became camp two. Ancient rocks, split into thousands of cracks and splashed with reds, yellows, greys and blue surrounded us making us somehow feel comfortable and safe. A couple of rock wallabies flitted across the two pools just as evening lowered around us.

In the first few days of the walk, we never learnt to deal with a gusty wind which seemed to come from many directions at once. We kept telling ourselves that it was because of the wind that we were not being plagued

by flies but that gave us little consolation in dealing with the sand being blown into the tents and, at one point, lifting one of the tents and sending it in cartwheels through the rough vegetation near the walls, ripping great holes in the fly.

“

... lifting one of the tents and sending it in cartwheels through the rough vegetation near the walls ...

Ellery Creek amazingly passes through the Chewings via a series of big loops, passing a well named spot called Fish Hole, which when we saw it, had plenty of water, although one suspects that more often than not there isn't any water or fish to speak of. It then pushes its way out through the northern wall of the range. At this point, we broke off the main stream and headed up a side creek aiming to breach the top of the ridge and then head along the side of the range till we came to Portals Canyon. The route up the creek soon narrowed and became more ominous with the cliffs starting to tower overhead. We then met what we thought was the end of the road; the way forward involved two steep



Frank on blue rocks in Ellery Creek

sided slopes and a very deep, very cold pool in the middle. We were halfway through the third day's walk and there was really no going back. We inched our way up the near vertical side, holding on magnetically to the patchy footholds and handholds. The higher we got the more menacing the dark pool appeared but a few expletives later and we were all safely through.

A superb small waterfall was next but nature had provided an easy path around and with our enthusiasm growing we climbed the last slope to the top of the ridge.

The valley ahead appeared very graceful and we were relieved at the thought of some easier walking for a while. Well, that lasted about one hundred metres before we were back into the rocks. For the next few hours, we dragged our feet over ridges followed by creek beds, some of which were deeply incised into the hill. We started seeing more birds of prey and at one point, just in front of us, stood a huge grey kangaroo. Flocks of tiny finches sprang unexpectedly from equally small trees giving us all an instant thrill.



Broken wall at Ellery Creek camp site



Passing through the range at Fish Hole, this time with water

Portals Canyon

We kept thinking we were at Portals Canyon on a number of occasions and the disappointment was palpable when we realised we had even more ridges and creeks to cross. At almost five in the evening, very tired and now thirsty, we spotted another human; a fellow walker obviously camped at the place we were heading for. It seemed to take forever to get there. At five thirty, tired, scratched and depleted, we bulldozed our tent sites in some very rocky, but flat, ground.

Portals Canyon is a very indistinct crack in the mountain. There is a trickle of a stream lazying through rock pools till it spills onto the sandy floor of the valley where it spreads and fosters

the growth of a small forest for some distance. But head back upstream and a magnificent walled canyon leads back into the bowels of the range. One member of the other group told me he swam through there ten years ago and almost ended up with hypothermia; it's so cold. He said this, I think, as a kind of challenge to us mere weaklings and there's no prizes for guessing what we didn't do.

From the nearby hills it's possible, like most places in this area, to see far into the northern section of the park. The yellow carpet just seems to go on and on, rolling gently till it bumps into a distant blue peak or another fold in the earth's crust.



Country to the north of Portals Canyon

Rest day and Giles Springs Yard

After a rest day, which is so worthwhile on a walk like this, we were ready to do the long plains walk to what's termed the "low point in the range" where it is possible to cross back to the southern side of the range. The other group also decided on the same route, passing through bursts of beautiful red, yellow and purple wildflowers. We kept crossing their paths until we all ended up in the dry creek canyon just below the low point. Creeping back into the range, this creek revealed some shaded pools, some at creek level and others in a cascade which fell from the top of the range. I could imagine the water tumbling through each of these pools and rushing through the creek during a heavy storm.

“

We now needed to climb, chest to the wall, extending our spider fingers and clamber up out of the canyon.

We now needed to climb, chest to the wall, extending our spider fingers and clamber up out of the canyon. This is not inherently dangerous but with a large pack disturbing

the balance, it scared all of us to some extent. Once on top the view rewarded our efforts. We looked back across the valley and could clearly see the dramatic gash in the Heavitree Range which formed the Ellery Creek Big Hole, where we had started five days ago. There aren't many places you can walk where you see as far as this; the sense of space overwhelms and the blue dome overhead accentuates this feeling, squeezing the horizons into the flat earth.

The proposed route to our night camp was to slide down the other side, then ease ourselves over a rise and down to the dry creek on the other side before it entered a wonderful long canyon. We saw a flat creek swinging off to the right, which, according to the map, joined up with the main creek on the other side of the hill. We took it. With misgivings. Very soon the easy sandy bottom ended abruptly at a dry waterfall. Detour number one. Soon we met the second waterfall and scrambled uneasily around the side of this, not without some choice language and tears. The journey from here to the camp was one of gentle rock hopping down a canyon which changed colour at every bend, and towered over us, the walls reflecting streaks of late afternoon sun.

This camp, Giles Springs Yard, is on a permanent creek which, given the earlier rains in the year, still had lovely clear pools of cold, fresh water. That night, after we'd made conversation with a cheeky small marsupial mouse who was cleaning up dropped food from around our feet, we reckoned the temperature dropped to minus eight degrees. The morning, as you would expect, was cold but with the sun bouncing over the mountain we were thawing quickly and contemplating how we would use the day.

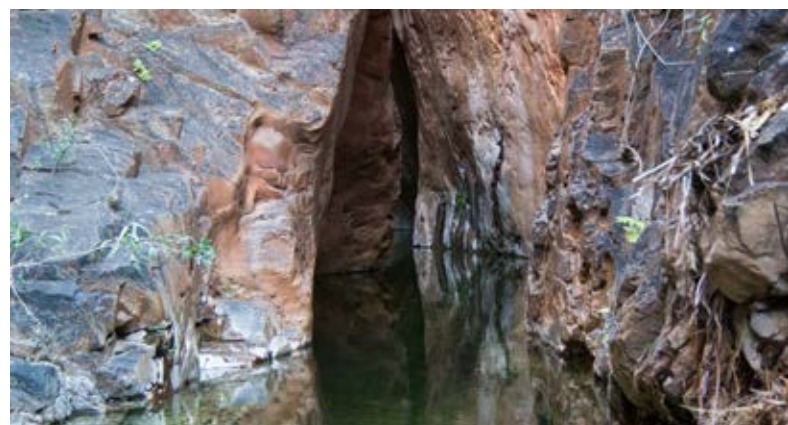
Meeting friends

So easy – another rest day! A nearby small hill we dubbed Mount Tit, which looked just like Didthul (or Pigeon House Mountain near Milton on the NSW south coast), rose

just behind the camp so we scrambled to the top to view the country buttressing the range. It was an ancient landscape with small valleys and bumps for hills in between; again appearing much smoother than it really was underneath. Having been told about the source of the water further up the mountain, we spent a few hours just milling around the deep pool which was perched at the edge of the mountain. The sun struck the water in sharp laser like beams showing us its mass of colours from obsidian to aqua to teal. As always, there was a signature white gum starkly contrasting with the black pool below it. We could see there would have been other pools above this one but we were content to just sit and absorb this rare site, amazed at seeing sundews (*Drosera*) around its edges.



Helen and Michelle on Mount Tit with the Chewings Range looking west towards Mount Giles



Portals Canyon

That night, another party of walkers pulled in to share our camp. Within minutes, I recognised the group from a walk I did in 2020 on the south western tip of Tasmania and of course all the memories of that time were rekindled and raked through. We tried to calculate the odds of this but, of course, with both groups exploring remote parts of Australia, it's hard to see the meeting not happening at some time.

Ormiston Creek and Mount Giles

Another very cold night and crisp morning found us up and out, heading for the next waterhole along the range; the spring below Mount Giles, the tallest mountain in this range. The valley we followed was just wonderful and rewarded us with a rare sighting of a wild

dingo. When we arrived early at the spring, the thought of camping off the mountain and down in the sands of Ormiston Creek was compelling so we loaded up with our overnight supply of water, about 4-5 litres each, and stumbled down a ridge to the dry creek bed, about two kilometres from the range.

The prospect of climbing Mount Giles was always going to draw us back and, at eight the next morning, two of us slipped out of the camp and retraced our steps to the base of the mountain. We had been looking at the ascent ridge the previous day and wondered if the climb was possible as every angle looked covered by shiny, slippery rock cliffs. Now we faced finding a way and surprisingly, each

new awkward looking section above us was avoided by some neat groove in the rock. We couldn't imagine carrying packs to the top, as we knew the first walking group had done several days before. And then they camped at the top in a howling gale – not appealing.

We were amused, on reaching the top, at the ingenuity of the surveyors who had placed an empty, 44-gallon drum on top of a tall steel pole to serve as the trig station for sightings. But then, taking our time and looking around, we saw the magnificence of this country. Way into the western distance we could see the caterpillar range at the back of Glen Helen Gorge with its characteristic coloured stripes. To the north west stood the dark walls of the Ormiston Pound and Bowmans Gorge and to our south lay the string of hills upon which snaked the Larapinta Trail.

Journey's end

Last day! We had planned to head down Ormiston Creek until it met the route, not a trail, which ran from Mount Giles to Ormiston Gorge. All the way down the creek we kept bumping into small remaining water holes which had dying fish. We found out later that these would have filled the creek during the heavy rains, and then die off as the water recedes. Branching off from the creek and heading west, we could now make out the undeniable shape known as The Elephant.

This stayed with us for the next few hours as we, again, were faced with ups and downs of jagged streams which crossed our path, leaving sometimes deep incisions in our way. And did I tell you about the rocks? No walking in this country is easy with the toll placed mostly on one's trusty boots. Mine had already started to come apart several days before and were now being held together with tent repair tape and some very strong Elastoplast. Sadly, I would consign them to the bin on returning to Sydney.

We reached the tourist track which loops around Ormiston Gorge at around two, totally surprising a group of day walkers, who couldn't understand where the hell we had come from, certainly in the state we were in. One of our group, Frank, had decided that the cafe at the Gorge served hamburgers and as well, the kitchen closed early. With the absolute desire of a gold digger, he turned onto the track and fled up and over the hill. But it was all too much – just before the cafe he collapsed, desperately calling out 'get me a hamburger Wildman'. Of course, as I moved unwaveringly on, I was not going to spoil the thought of such a beautiful place by indulging in city, fat-inducing, take-away food. So I bought a focaccia instead, complete with anchovies, salami and mozzarella. What did I say about remote walking?



Helen on Mount Giles with the sheer walls of Ormiston Pound in the middle distance, and Mount Ziel on the skyline

We stayed at Ormiston, collected our food container with the next four days' supply of meals and nick nacks and then cruised on down the trail over the next few days to Redbank Gorge, the end of the Larapinta. We tried to climb the second highest peak, Mount Sonder, but got to within one hundred metres of the top and piked out as the wind was screaming. But what did we care? We'd already had an experience on Giles which we would probably never repeat, and never forget.

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... it just doesn't have that edge, that elemental risk factor in not knowing where you are going ...

So to that question of walking on the set trail or ploughing our own way through open country; in the end I have to say that while the Larapinta is wonderful for information –



Pool on Ormiston Creek en route to the Gorge

milestones, data on the track, designated camping spots – and makes the country accessible to singles, both male and female, it just doesn't have that edge, that elemental risk factor in not knowing where you are going to go and where you will end up. We also saw much more wildlife on the off-track portion of the walk as well as more wild flowers. In the end it is a much bigger gamble walking off track in this area and requires much, much more planning and preparation. But if this is done, the rewards are much greater – it's just wild and exciting!

Practical Notes on Walking in the Chewings Maps

There is a 1:100,000 set of two maps which covers the Larapinta Trail from end to end and we used this for the section from just west of Ellery Creek in the Chewings to Ormiston Gorge. The Department of Defence has 1:50,000 maps of the area closer to Alice Springs and I was able to download these free and load them up into my computer mapping software. But, to be honest, the 1:100,000 maps are quite okay for this country even though they are nowhere near as clear as normal 1:25,000 topographics.

Guide

Given I didn't know a thing about the Chewings before we started, I relied on the brief notes supplied by John Chapman on his website. A big thank you to John for his help. Once you started getting used to this country and what was possible or not possible, you can often venture a lot further than John's notes suggest. The other groups we met had been to the area on previous occasions and knew of gorges, canyons and safe routes down off mountains which are not marked on the maps at all. In fact, there is virtually nothing marked on the West MacDonnell Ranges maps and it would be essential to

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... there is virtually nothing marked on the West MacDonnell Ranges maps ...

at least have knowledge of the permanent waterholes if you want to walk here. There is no substitute for research on this area.

Essential equipment

It gets cold during the walking season, as well as hot. You will need a good tent and it doesn't matter if its free-standing or not. Good boots are essential as this country will tear them apart. Fly nets, which we didn't use, would be important during normal years. We took walking poles and they are recommended here. Carry water containers (like Platypus bottles) for when you need to camp away from water. Layered clothing is important, ensuring that you carry enough for the cold including headgear and gloves.

Meals

There were four of us and one of us prepared all the food for all our dinners. Most of the meals weighed around 550 g for four people with the heaviest being 720 g. We used a



Looking back down the Larapinta near Ormiston Gorge



Frank on the Larapinta between Finke River and Rocky Bar Gap

combination of dehydrated food and vacuum sealed ingredients. We had a lot of variety from curries, to laksa, to noodles to pasta and some Chinese dishes; all interesting and nutritious. It is worth taking the time to

prepare good meals that you can cook over the camp cooker in a short amount of time. In our case we were preparing meals 6-12 months in advance.



Our camp on Ormiston Creek with Mount Giles in the background

Bob Brothers Annual Pilgrimage

Text and photos
Sonya Muhlsimmer

This year's annual pilgrimage was a little bit different. There are usually four of us and we all travel down together, in two cars and spend the first night in Cooma. This year, Steve did not join us, so it will just be Joe, Bruce and me. Oh, by the way, Steve will be coming down, but he will be doing his own adventure doing day trips, and I travelled down earlier to catch up with a few long lost friends in Canberra. I hoped to get a day of ice climbing in at Blue Lake before we headed out for our adventure.



Crossing a creek on the aqueduct trail



Nico, Bruce, me, Marc and Joe at Whites River Hut

Just before COVID I bought some crampons and ice axes with the intention of going ice climbing. I have had the gear now for a couple of years and I have not used it due to lockdowns. I am finally down here, with a lot of snow about. I was planning on going to Blue Lake for the day and I had set my alarm for a really early start to meet some people I know that were up there ice climbing. However, I did not check the day on the alarm, so the alarm did not go off. I know if I make it up to Blue Lake, my friends will probably be packing up by the time I get there, but I went anyway to see how far I could make it. I only made it as far as Illawong Lodge, but I did run into my friends as they were on the way out and at least I got to carry my new gear for an outing. Maybe next year I will get some climbing in. Oh well, back to Island Bend for the night. I now had some time to explore Island Bend down by the river before it got too dark.

Day 1: Guthega Power Station to Whites River Hut, 8 km, 4.5 hours

The first day is always about picking up last supplies in Jindabyne, fiddling around with gear and struggling with a heavy pack, especially after two years of not doing much activity. I was meeting Joe and Bruce at Guthega Power Station. As I was camping at

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The first day is always about picking up last supplies in Jindabyne ...

Island Bend, I did not have far to travel that morning, with plenty of time to fiddle with my gear. The Bob brothers arrived in good time, we organised our gear and we were off. For meals for the trip, three dinners are going to be shared, then we fend for ourselves for the rest of the trip. I wonder what they have

brought for dinner. From the power station we had to walk up the hill for a few hundred metres to the snow line, but there was good cover when we reached it. Today's trip took us as far as Whites River Hut, just under eight kilometres, to camp for the night. We shared the hut facilities with Nico and Marc, and what great company we had. Many interesting discussions that night, and it was great to meet them. Dinner was Bruce's green beef curry.

Day 2: Whites River to Schlink Hilton, 3 km, 1.5 hours

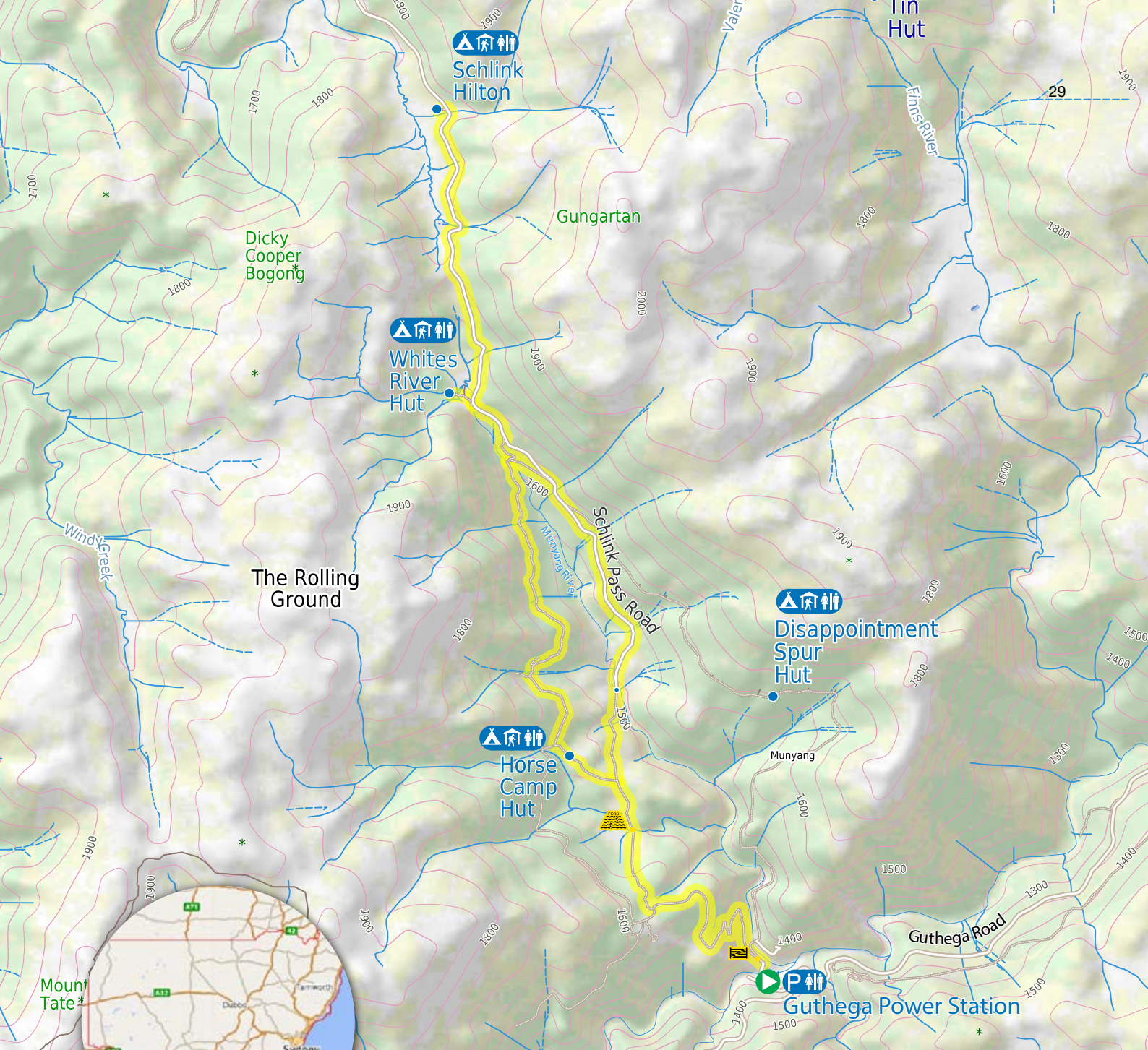
It was a beautiful day and we were off to Schlink Hilton where the hut would be our base camp. If the forecast is correct we were in for some serious weather - around 120 mm of rain and thunderstorms at some point soon, best to be at a hut if this does come to fruition. Then if all goes well, we were intending to explore up near Gungartan, visit Tin Hut for a night, and venture off to Consett

Stephen Pass for a night out as well. Onwards and upwards, we head off to Schlink Hilton. It is only a couple of kilometres travelling today, so it will be an easy and relaxing day, taking in the beautiful sunshine and so much snow.

At least a few hundred metres from Schlink Hilton we encountered a steep incline, a snow drift over the road where the creek is in a pipe before the turn to the left to get to the hut. The drift looked a bit daunting, especially with a pulk to navigate with. We looked at getting to the hut along the creek, but the snow did not seem safe or strong enough, so we decided to tackle the hill. Joe went first with no problems. Then I went up and after a few attempts, I could not get up, so I took off my skis and walked. After pushing myself by lunging forward a few times, I finally made it, thinking the pulk had managed to get up the incline with no problem. But as I looked back, I could see my pulk further down the drift than expected, with the two poles attached to me.



Bruce and Joe repairing the pulk poles at Schlink Hilton



Map of the pilgrimage



0 km 0.5 1 2 3 km



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



Main track, side trip, alternate route



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



Lake, river, waterfall or creek



Start of the walk



Hut



Campsite



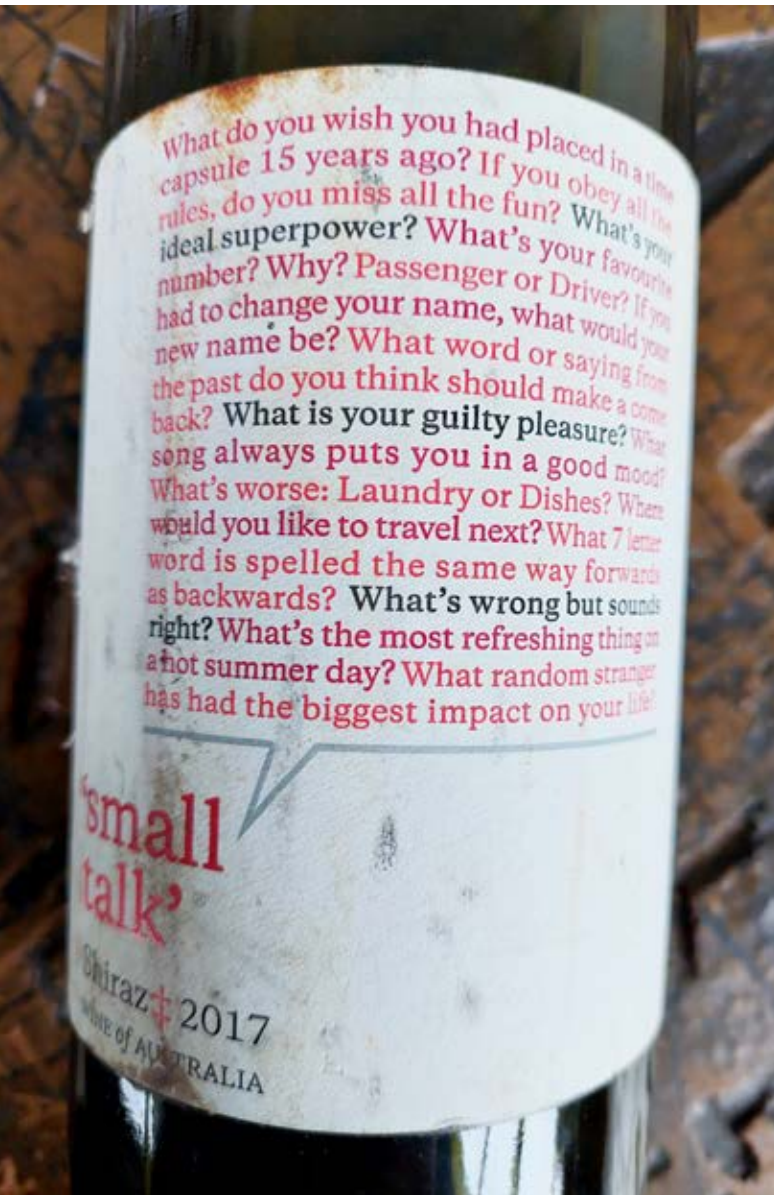
Toilet



Parking

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

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



Small Talk, a south-east Australian wine with a very appropriate label



Snow Gum

My poles had broken in half, a real pain. With Bruce's help we got the pulk up, and I put it to one side. Now it was Bruce's turn. Well, he fell over and got his arm stuck in the snow and was tangled in his skis, so Joe went to help him up. It did look funny, but I will not tell him that, and the photo of him lying in a heap with a missing arm is staying private. After a lot of hassle and what felt like a lot of time, we finally reached Schlink Hilton. The rest of the afternoon, Joe and Bruce were fixing my pulk poles with trusty gaffer tape, twigs to place inside the poles for extra strength and an extra bit of piping. Not bad handy work I say; it was good for the rest of the trip. For tonight's dinner, we were eating Joe's beef stew.

Days 3 and 4: Schlink Hilton storm

As predicted, during the night the wild weather came. A big storm, wind so strong that it shook the hut, keeping us up all night. There was constant lightning, wind, and it sounded like hail or very heavy rain beating down on us. I really felt for anyone that was out in this in tents - it would have been a nightmare. We were wondering if, or how many people are up out in this storm. Being a weekday and with storms predicted, who would plan to go out in these conditions, apart from us that is?

During the two days at Schlink Hilton we ventured out when we had to. When there was a small break in the weather to go to the toilet, collect water and firewood, getting drenched

every time. At least we had something to do for the rest of the day, as we had to stoke the fire and rotate our clothes to get dry. The small creek just outside the hut was pumping over a metre higher than normal, washing the snow away downstream, which looked like little icebergs. I kept looking out the window to see how high the creek was going to get. There was a lot of water about, not good for the snow.

Card games were played, homemade salami was roasted and enjoyed, and a whole lot of “Small Talk” was done, and drunk. Small talk is a 2017 Shiraz from south-east Australia, with a lot of questions on the wine label that lead you to have interesting conversations ... Thanks for bringing the very appropriately named wine Bruce. Wednesday night we were eating my dehydrated vegetable tagine with chili chorizo, then for desert, it was time for chocolate cake. Thursday night dinner for me was honey soy noodles.

Day 5: Schlink Hilton to Whites River Hut, 3 km, 1.5 hours

The rain finally stopped, but the visibility was not great. There go our plans to getting up to Gungartan Pass and down to Tin Hut. Oh well, that can be our plan for next year. We decided to go to the site of the old Orange Hut, then to look for a bridge that I know is somewhere along Duck Creek, down from the meteorological station. I have seen it in summer but have not been able to locate it exactly in winter. I have been talking about this crossing for years with the Bob brothers

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It was so good to get out of the hut after being hut bound for two days.

as it would be so much easier to cross that the way we take going to Valentine Hut. Now to geo-pin the location to my phone. We always seem to take this dodgy creek crossing at Duck Creek, not the straightforward route along the road. Oh no, that would be too easy. We have crossed over a pipe, around near a bend in a really

awkward spot. I will not tell you the location as it is not worth the effort to cross there. I have to convince the Bob brothers this is the correct way to go. Now they have seen it, I am sure the next visit to Valentine Hut won't be so hard ...

It was so good to get out of the hut after being hut bound for two days. Back at Schlink Hilton in the afternoon, a party of 11 skiers turned up, so we decided it was time to return to Whites River Hut. We packed up and left. It seems that after a break of a year or two, after COVID lockdowns, everyone is getting out.

Whites River Hut was busy. We met another group who were just leaving. Titch told me he was up near Blue Lake on the night of the storm; let's just say it was not a pleasant night for his party at all. They ended up bailing due to the weather and managed to get accommodation for two nights in Smiggins, a well-deserved room after facing a night through that storm.

Jacquie and her partner were at Whites River Hut. I met her on the Western Arthur Ranges in Tasmania about four years back. It's funny who you run into in the middle of nowhere, and mind you, it seems a lot of people know me ... David Lock, David Bursting, Ralph Pickering, Brian Reeves, and Graham Fryer were all there too. They cooked a mighty fine looking pasta puttanesca for their group. They got the recipe from a magazine, and they had a paper version of the recipe, very impressive. I also really liked their pot they were using for cooking. The base doubling up as a chopping board, and the pot held enough to feed an army, and it was pretty lightweight considering the size of the pot. Tonight, Joe and Bruce had Back Country meals, and I had laksa for dinner.

Day 6: Whites River to Horse Camp Hut, 5 km, 2 hours

Today we decided to go back to Horse Camp Hut. An easy day and it would be a quick exit to get back to Sydney on Sunday afternoon. Due to the amount of rain we have encountered, we decided to take the aqueduct trail. Even this way, we had to stop, take off our skis and shuffle skis and pulks across where the creeks washed the snow

away. It did not take too long to get to the hut. Tonight we met a few more people. Lloyd, Daniel and Liam were travelling together. It was Liam's first time down in snow, and I reckon he did pretty well considering the weather. Daniel made this amazing looking dehydrated chilli con carne kind of dish for them all that looked good. Also, another Daniel was there, and he was with Abi, from Cooma. They cooked up this amazing smoked chicken green curry noodle dish which was something else, wow. They nearly did make everyone cough when they were stirring the spices in though. Okay they made us all cough. They used a recipe downloaded from the net. There were three other campers who we didn't have much to do with. They kept to themselves in their tents most of the night. My dinner tonight was a vegetable stew.

Day 7: Horse Camp Hut, Guthega Power Station, 4.4 km, 2 hours

We woke up to a bluebird day. It was such a shame to be leaving this place. I wanted to stay for another week, but I had to go. We packed up slowly and eventually left. The ford crossing just down the hill from the hut was easy enough considering the amount

of rain we had a few days back. About a kilometre away from Guthega Power Station, before it got to the really windy part, the snow had melted, probably washed away in the storm. I ended up putting my pack and pulk

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There have only been about four years of my adult life that I have not gone to Kosciuszko for a skiing trip ...

on my back and walking down the hill. Joe and Bruce dragged their pulks down. At the cars, we changed clothes and left to meet in Cooma for lunch for something different, then it was home time. I am already thinking about next year's trip. What a great week we all had, and it was so good to be back in the snow. There have only been about four years of my walking life that I have not gone to Kosciuszko for a skiing trip, and last year was one of them due to COVID lockdown. It was so good to be back here. Till the next trip!



A bluebird day, camping at Horse Camp Hut

In the News

Blue Mountains closures

Many walking tracks, roads and fire trails within the Blue Mountains National Park remain closed following sustained wet weather, subsequent geological instability or infrastructure upgrades. Please check for track closures on the [NPWS visitor website](#).

Intro to Navigation (Level 1)

Caro Ryan runs beginners navigational courses. Available dates are 4 and 5 October, and 26 and 27 November. More details are at [lotsafreshair.com](#)

Vale Keith Tan by Joshua Atherton

A well-known Bushwalk.com member Keith died suddenly on 18 September whilst attempting the Jatbula Trail, doing what he loved most. He was very active in technical areas such as Bushwalk and Whirlpool. We'd like to send out our condolences to those who knew Keith. Rest assured he lived his best life, travelling around the world, hiking across many many countries. Keith was always happy to offer advice when asked, but it's the one piece of advice that he would tell people without speaking it that was the most important. That would be to live life to the fullest, smile every day, and always remain humble.



Keith in Moroka Gorge on our last big trip together

Another Halls Island application

If nothing else Daniel Hackett is persistent. After seven years of applications, massive opposition, being refused by the local council and court hearings up to the Supreme Court he has submitted [documents to federal minister](#) Tanya Plibersek for approval. It's time to start contacting the Minister. TNPA will hopefully provide guidance.

Emergency communications with iPhone 14

[Apple](#) has announced the ability to send emergency messages via satellite when out of mobile phone coverage will soon be possible. This will be possible with new hardware in the iPhone 14 that can connect to the Globalstar network. Initially this will only be available in USA and Canada for text messages.

Mobile phones towers in space

[Spacex](#) and [T-mobile](#) have announced a new service that aims to provide satellite-based two-way SMS for people using standard mobile phone handsets in the USA. The system will use Starlink's second-generation satellite network to communicate directly with common phones with a clear view of the sky. SMS and MMS will be possible at launch with plans to improve the service to include voice, lower speed data and global coverage in the next few years.

What's your bushwalking personality?

NSW National Park and Wildlife Service website offers a quiz where you can have some fun discovering [what type of bushwalking personality](#) you are. At the end they also offer a list of walks suggested for your personality.

Sunset Remote Walking Track

Text and photos
Ryan Cho

As far as I'm concerned, when it comes to hiking, the more pristine the environment, the better. Add the word "remote" to the name and voila – you have my full attention. The prospect of hiking in the Australian outback has always fascinated me. When people think of hikes in the outback, the first name that often springs to mind is the Larapinta Trail. While I haven't had the pleasure of completing this world-class hike, I'm sure it will be a cracker when I eventually get to it. In the meantime, I've taken on more achievable weekend jaunts that suit my busy schedule, yet still offer a taste of the "soft outback".



Roger chugging along at the end of a 45 kilometre day



Rise and shine at Lake Hardy

To my knowledge, there are two recognised overnight “desert” hikes in Victoria – the 74 kilometre [Little Desert Discovery Walk](#) (Little Desert walk) and the 66 kilometre (or 57 kilometres according to AllTrails) [Sunset Remote Walking Track](#) (Sunset walk). Both trails are relatively unheard of and certainly receive much less attention when compared to the usual suspects like the Great Ocean Walk and the Grampians Peaks Trail. I solo hiked the Little Desert walk – around 90 kilometres in two days (including road walking from and to Dimboola) in late November 2021, after a relatively long hiatus from hiking, or any other form of cardio. I had initially planned on hiking the Sunset walk as it looked more interesting to me, but settled for the Little Desert walk as I did not have a car and it was much easier to access. A combination of a lack of fitness, poor food/gear choices and the heat made the Little Desert walk more challenging than expected, and the result was a four kilogram post-hike weight loss (weight taken after a full plate of dumplings and a few litres of water!). Truth be told, I found the scenery to be quite repetitive and uninspiring for large parts of the journey, and so needless to say, I wasn’t in a rush to do more desert hiking any time soon.

By July 2022, having checked more overnight hikes off my list, I was once again seeking another novel adventure. The plan was to do my first snow hike – a winter ascent of Mount Feathertop, but I was forced to postpone the trip due to inclement weather. I completed it weeks later, in what is probably my favourite hike of the year so far. As I went down the list of overnight hikes on AllTrails, I realised that the Sunset walk was calling out to me once again. At last, I had recovered from the trauma of Little Desert, and I was ready for another round!

I was joined by three mates for the Sunset walk – Nat, Jack and Roger. We left Melbourne on a Friday evening and made the six hour drive to Murray-Sunset National Park, setting up camp at around midnight. We got our first glimpses of the surrounding landscape the following morning – flat and almost featureless terrain as far as the eye can see. It’s easy to see why they call this a place for stunning sunrises and sunsets. Chances are you will see one even if you weren’t trying to find it, regardless of where you are in the park.

Day 1: Lake Hardy to Mount Jess Camp, 45 km

We enjoyed a leisurely breakfast as we watched the sunrise from Lake Hardy, the smallest and pinkest lake in the park. We had planned on covering the Pink Lakes area through short day walks, driving in between each walk but were left with no choice other than to walk the entire way due to a car malfunction. As we walked along the shore of Lake Hardy, we were able to better appreciate the pastel pink colour of the lake up close. A walking track takes you around the lake but it didn't look too dissimilar from the start of the trail, and having found ourselves behind schedule after a late start, we decided to keep going. Next up was Lake Crosbie and Lake Kenyon. It was mesmerising just to observe the gentle waves along the shore, and the pink salt crystals glistening in the sun. "It's like Himalayan pink salt," said Roger.



Pink salt crystals

While poking around at some of the decaying relics nearby, something caught our attention. "That looks like a tiny watermelon. Surely bring it along for later!" said someone. We completed the day walks shortly after, and walked on to Lake Becking, where the Sunset walk officially begins.



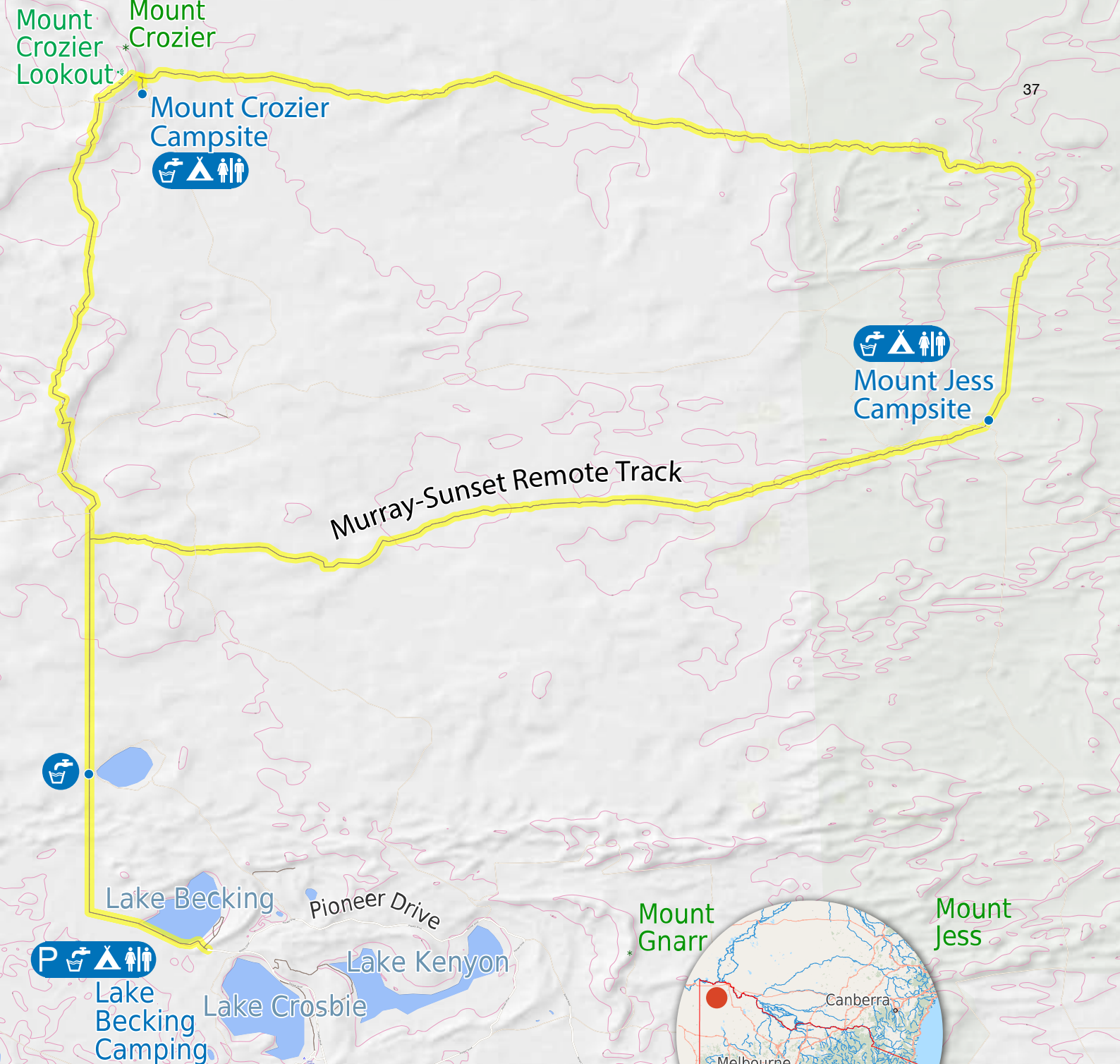
Paddy melon

When we stopped for our next break, Nat decided to whip out the watermelon so we could have a taste. He sliced it in half and opened it up to reveal its pale green interior. "Surprise – it's not a watermelon! Or maybe it's just not ripe," Nat exclaimed. He took a bite out of it. A look of disgust flashed across his face as he spat it out almost immediately.

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A look of disgust flashed across his face as he spat it out almost immediately.

"Why did I even carry this?" he sighed. Naturally, we all came over for a taste. It wasn't the worst thing I've ever had but it did taste extremely bitter and unlike anything I've had. Thankfully, it wasn't difficult to wash down the horrible aftertaste with some chocolate. On further reading, I learned that said fruit is commonly referred to as "paddy melon". From what I could gather however, this is a misnomer, and more accurately refers to a toxic variant that is smaller – around the size of a golf ball. The one we found was apparently a different wild (and harmless) variant of the watermelon that is common in these parts.



Sunset Remote Walking Track



0 km 1 2 3 4 km



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



Main track, side trip, alternate route



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



Lake, river, waterfall or creek



Start of the walk



Drinking water



Campsite



Toilet



Parking



Lookout



Pink Lake Salt Museum

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

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

We had planned on hiking around 45 kilometres that day, so we still had some ways to go. Most of the hike is on sand so it was a slog at times, especially after each short spell of rain. As we approached sunset, the team was starting to tire from a long day of hiking, but we tried to keep our spirits up through conversation and Nat's eclectic selection of music.

There were sections where we hiked through vast plains. As I watched the sun setting behind the trees in the distance, I wondered if this remotely resembled the savannas of Africa. Perhaps not. Nevertheless, it's still unique country, beautiful in its own way.

It was 10 pm by the time we reached Mount Jess Camp, which meant we had spent 14 hours on the trail. There were a few groups camping there that night, which was unexpected given that we had only seen one other party up to this point. It rained throughout the entire night, but I managed to stay dry, and slept comfortably under my trusty poncho tarp.

Day 2: Mount Jess Camp to Lake Hardy, 23 km

We were treated to more beautiful skies the following morning. Another 25 kilometres or so to go. The scenery and experience on Sunday was quite similar to that of Saturday. Before we knew it, we arrived back at our car shortly after lunchtime, having hiked 68 kilometres (inclusive of walking around the Pink Lakes area from Lake Hardy to Lake Becking) in 1.5 days.

All in all, the Sunset walk is very well maintained. It is extremely well signed and it would be very difficult for one to get lost. The facilities were fantastic; from what I could tell from the logbooks, water tanks are filled, and toilets kept spick-and-span by park rangers every five days or so. It is advisable to hike this track in the cooler months and contact the local park ranger regarding water availability prior to commencing your hike. Temperatures in July 2022 were 15-20 °C during the day and just over 10 °C overnight. Due to the mild conditions, we didn't need to carry more than two litres of water per person at any time.



Morning skies at Mount Jess Camp

This hike is not for everyone. There are no grandstand views, the scenery may seem repetitive, and it can feel like things are dragging on if you are not used to how time passes on a longer hike. These are probably reasons as to why the Sunset walk is not talked about more in many hiking circles. That being said, I'd say that it is a worthwhile experience if you are someone who:

1. loves hiking for reasons beyond the amazing scenery;
2. has already done many of the other classic hikes around Victoria or Australia; and
3. is looking for something a bit different.

I certainly fall into this category and I had a good time.

I was able to enjoy this hike far more than the Little Desert walk, and I reckon it's not just because I'm now fitter and more experienced, but also because I found the Sunset walk to be a more varied and unique walk. Desert heathland would transition, sometimes suddenly to lush, green fields or forests, and before you know it, you'll find yourself hiking through desolate landscapes, seemingly devoid of life.

Bonus tip – don't miss Lake Tyrrell if you are in the area. We did some astrophotography there after our hike, and witnessed an amazing moonrise and sunrise over the reflective lake. More photos and videos can be found on my Instagram page [@rc_hikes](#), where I post most of my hiking content. Happy trails!



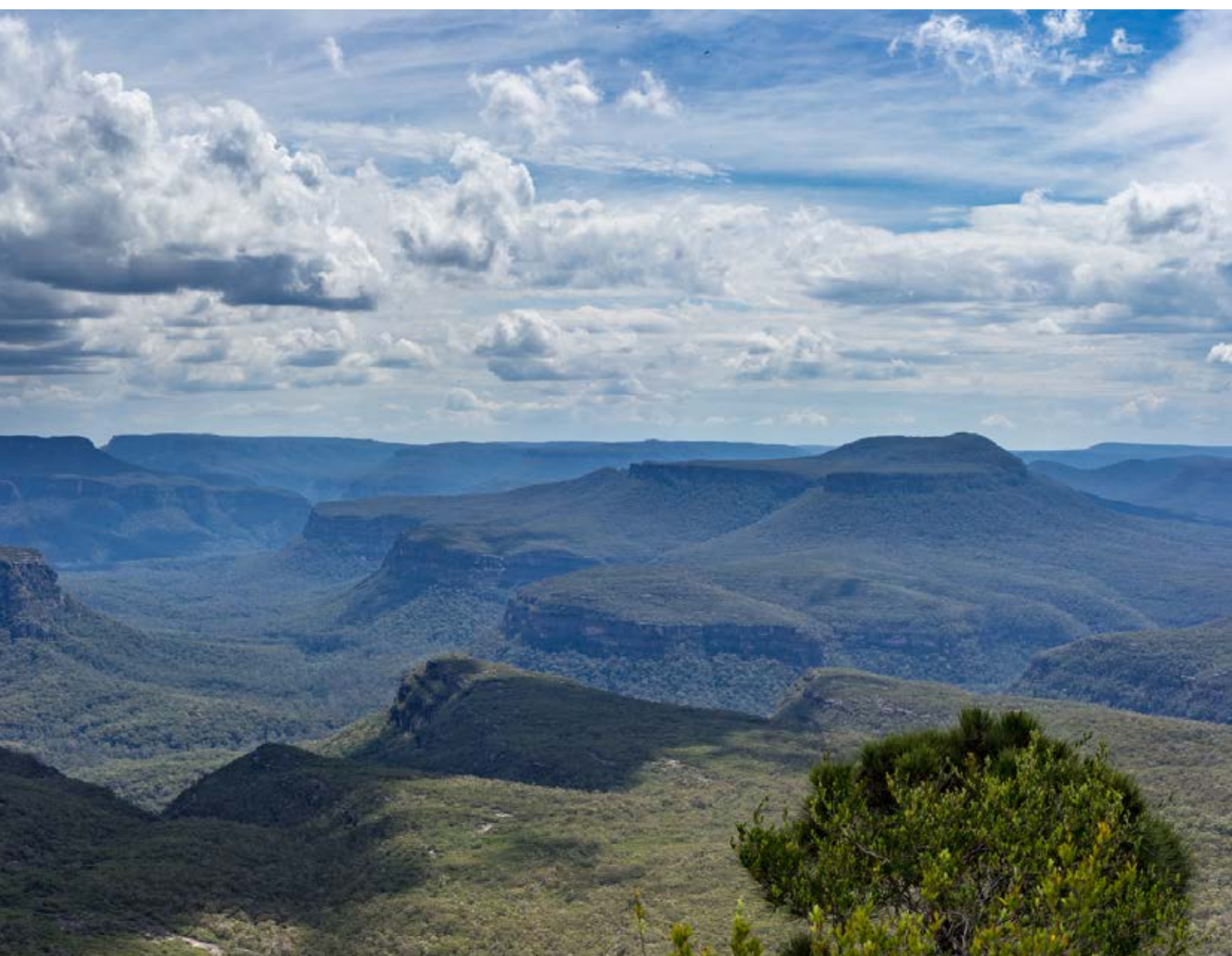
The squad: Roger, Jack and Nat

Photo Gallery

Photos
Bushwalk.com photographers



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



Budawangs from the top of Pigeon House
Mandy Creighton

Landscapes

October 2021

Winner
The narrows
North-north-west

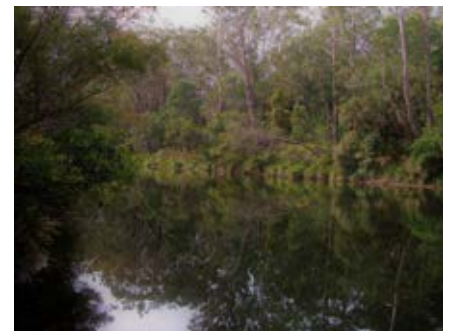
The Twelvvetrees Range is a little unusual for SW Tassie - low, minimal scrub, easy to get to, easy off-track walking. At the northern end it drops almost sheer into one of my most favourite places: Twelvvetrees Narrows. Paddling through here on a calm day is absolute magic, but seeing it from the top is not to be sneezed at either.



On the Ironbounds
Doogs



View from Celtic Hill
Bluewombat



Riparian mirror
John Walker

Non-landscapes

October 2021

Winner
Take Off
Brian Eglinton

Alternating between landscape shots and bird shots is a bit of a challenge. It's off with one lens and on with the tele zoom, remember to adjust ISO way up and F stop wide open. Hopefully your subject is still hanging around. And if you get the speed fast enough, you can sometimes catch them in flight. This sulphur crested cockatoo was kind enough to wait for me to get set up before dropping off the yacka.



Bastion Cascades
North-north-west



River history
John Walker

Tasmania

October 2021

Winner
Heading for Harper Point
North-north-west

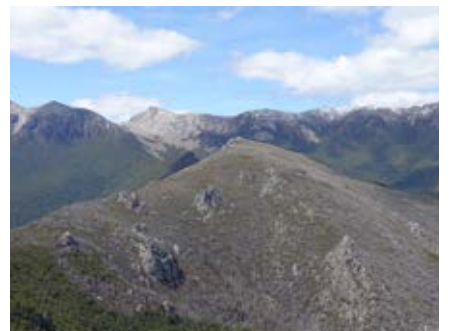
I'd paddled past Harper Point on the infamous Spires trip; previous walks on this little range had never quite reached the end. This time, a break in the usual foul spring weather meant an easy overnight ramble and finally getting right to the tip.



Southern rainforest
Doogs



Frenchmans Cap
Grunter



Mount Anne from the Druids
Bluewombat

Other States

October 2021

Winner
Ingallalla Falls
Brian Eglinton

South of Adelaide the Adelaide Hills sweep down to the sea. This is where you can find the Ingallalla Falls, here seen after some good rain. It is a two drop fall and this is the lower half. We took the time to visit late afternoon after completing a section of the nearby Heysen Trail.



Exploratory
John Walker

Landscapes

November 2021

Winner
Breaking up
North-north-west

The summits had already been visited, but the connecting ridges cried out to be explored, so back I went, this time camping high and watching the weather changes. An hour later the skies were clear and I was somewhere out beyond.



Sunset Hut
Crollsurf



The cascades
John Walker



Living tapestry
Tortoise

Non-landscapes

November 2021

Winner
South Pacific Headland Reserve Flannel Flowers
Lorraine



Dracopyllum milliganii
North-north-west



The devil in the plant
landsmith



Together we can
Tortoise



Tasmania

November 2021

Winner
Vertical bushwalking
Tortoise



Sunset at the Picton River
North-north-west

Other States

November 2021

Winner
Jagungal Morning
Crollsurf

There were quite a few people at Derschkos Hut the previous evening, so I decided to camp up on the ridge, looking across to Jagungal. And this is what I woke up to in the morning.



The Bogey Hole
landsmith



Mount Chambers
Brian Eglinton



Cloud in the valley
John Walker

Walktober

If you or your friends have spent too much time on the couch over the past while, then maybe Walktober is the motivation needed to get more active again.

Text
Eva Gomiscek





As bushwalkers we might get out and do big walks a few times a year, but regular short walks are fun and good for us. [Research shows](#) that if we sit for about eight hours a day, the impact on our health is similar to that of smoking or being obese. The good news is you don't need to quit your job, but making time for 60 minutes of moderately intense physical activity each day will help balance sitting for too long each day.

[Walktober Australia](#) health awareness initiative challenges everyone to walk for 31 minutes each day of the month (31 days in October, so 31 minutes). The hope is that if we go for a walk each day in a month then we will have a good new habit and better friendships. It doesn't matter about your age, your fitness or your pace, everyone can participate. What do you say, are you in?

As an avid bushwalker you may well prefer longer walks, but most people don't have enough time for longer walks every day. So

this October, consider asking your friends, family, and neighbours to join you, and you can go and explore your neighbourhood together. Maybe join a club, or ask others on [bushwalk.com forum](#) to join you. Who knows, you might meet some other like-minded people and become bushwalking buddies on your overnight walks. If you rather do solo walking, then you can skip that step and just get started.

Maybe you can use this time to try out different walking styles that might turn out to be more fun than you initially thought. Maybe try Nordic walking, a historical or a cultural walk, a chatty social walk, a silent mindfulness walk, power walking, a hill challenge, beach walking, garden walks, walk to work, sunrise walks or even a zombie run (yep, it is a thing, google it.)

If you are into organised and group events, then there are lots on. So let's do this and make the Walktober count.

Australia

Adventure Day

International [Adventure Day](#) is 16 October, so why not seize the opportunity and plan a special day out for you and your family or friends?

National Walk your dog week

Take out your four-legged friend on [1-7 October](#), a perfect week to do special walks and your 31 minutes a day as well.

Walk For Mental Health

[Mental Health Foundation Australia](#) is preparing a short walk in support of mental health diseases. [Join them](#) live or on a virtual walk on 16 October in any capital city in Australia.

Walk for Prens

[Life's Little Treasures Foundation](#) organises short walks in several cities in Australia on 23 October. [Join them on the day](#) or become a [Walk for Prens Warrior](#) for walking until 23 October and raise money for the cause.

Your bushwalking club

Check the calendar of your bushwalking club (if you're not a member why not consider joining one this October) and try to participate in as many events as possible.

Victoria

FedWalks2022

[Benalla Bushwalking Club](#), [Warby Range Bushwalkers](#) and [Border Bushwalking Club](#) are organising a FedWalks2022 event in the Warby Ranges and Wangaratta Region on 1-2 October. It includes several different walks so [register](#) quickly to get a spot.

Mini Great Aussie Hike

As a preparation for the big event, [The Great Aussie Hike](#) organises a mini event on 15 October. [Register](#) and walk with them from Beechworth to Myrtleford.

Tasmania

Walk for Wild

[Tasmanian Walking Company](#) and [WWF Australia](#) have partnered for four different events starting on 9 October. Choose the one you like most and register to help in restoring and rehabilitating wilderness and land that were impacted by the 2019-20 bushfires.

UN Women Trek for Rights

The [UN Women in Tasmania](#) is organising a trek in Cradle Mountain National Park from 22-26 October to raise funds for UN Women's Centres. [Register](#) to be a part of this great cause and enjoy a stunning walk through Tassie's Wilderness World Heritage Area.



Beechworth Hospital ruins, Victoria



City walk in Sydney

New South Wales

Bridge Walk

This wellness walk celebrates the tenth anniversary this year. [Join them](#) either for the virtual walk during 3-9 October or at the major live event in Sydney on 9 October to support people with mental illnesses.

7 Bridges Walk

[Cancer Council NSW](#) organises this walk on 23 October. [Register](#) and support them by walking the 28 kilometre circuit walk around Sydney Harbour.

Guy Fawkes River NP fiftieth anniversary walk and talk

[NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service](#) are organising this 7 kilometre event in celebration of 50 years of Guy Fawkes River National Park. [Join them](#) on 9 October on the return walk to Lucifers Thumb Lookout.

Sydney Harbour Hike

On 15 October the [Fred Hollows Foundation](#) organises a fundraising walk from either Bondi or Manly to finish at Kirribilli Market Park. [Sign up](#) and join them for breathtaking sights of Sydney.

Coastal Walking Challenge

[Michael Tynan Challenge](#) organises a Coastal Walk from Otford to Bundeena on 29 October. [Register](#) for the event in support of local medical research.

South Australia

Billion Steps Challenge

[Wellbeing SA](#) and [10,000 Steps](#) are starting this challenge for the third time in a row. So if you're from SA, [sign up or login](#) here and help achieve the goal of a million steps.

The Bloody Long Walk

This [35 kilometre challenge](#) supports people affected by mitochondrial disease (mito). Join them on 16 October in [Mornington Peninsula](#) or on 30 October in [Adelaide](#).

Western Australia

Coastrek, Margaret River

Organised by [Wild Women on Top](#) this hiking challenge for women only takes place on 28 October in Margaret River. [Register](#) quickly as they say it will be the wildest yet.

Wheezy Walk

Asthma WA organises this walk to support the Western Australians who are living with asthma. So [join this challenge](#) to help them reach the 237,000 steps by signing up and walking about 8000 steps per day.

Thinking past Walktober

While researching for this article we've come across an interesting list of walks. The article [Around the World in 40 Walks](#) explains how travelling all over our globe can now be done in a bushwalking style. Is this a new item on your bucket list?

Have a great Walktober everyone!

A Hikers Friend Blog

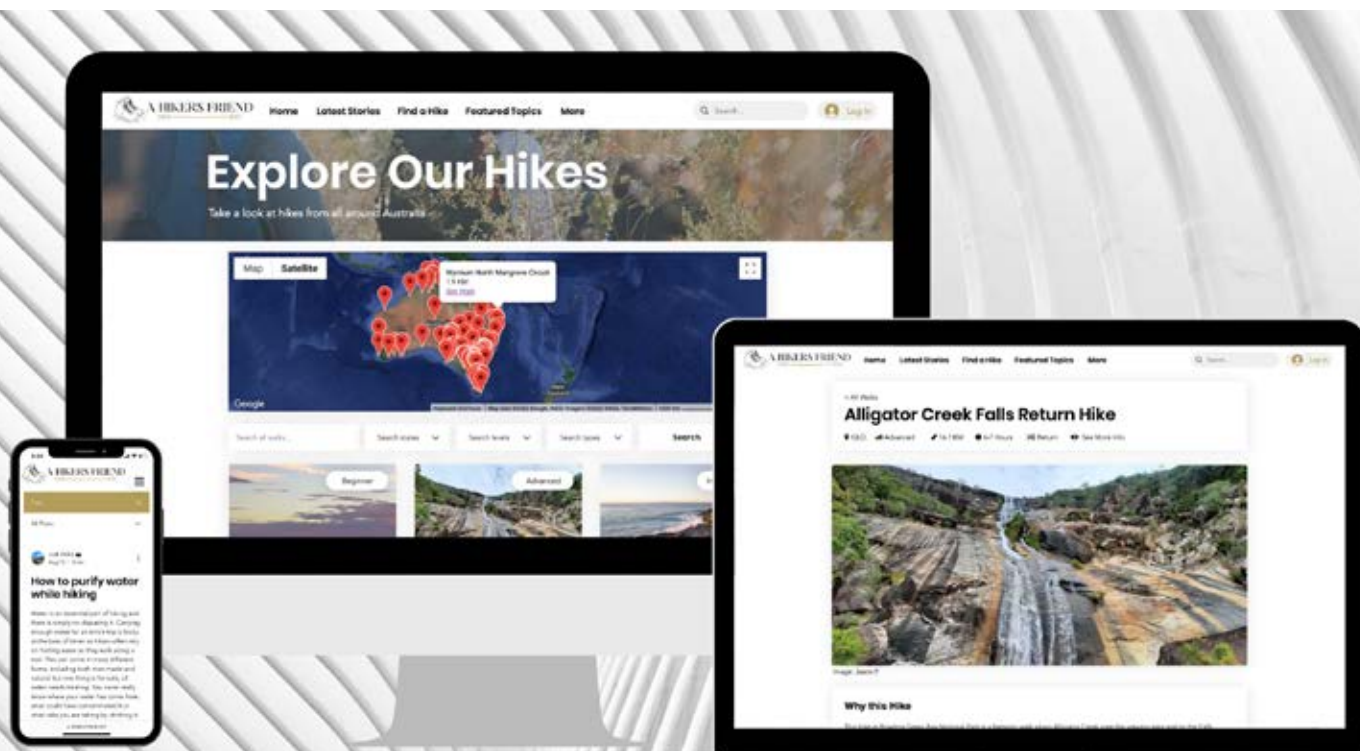
Text and images
Josh Welch

Growing my passion through sharing with others

When I started creating [A Hikers Friend](#) nearly two years ago I couldn't even begin to imagine the journey it would lead me on. At the outset it would be fair to say that I had a lot to learn, even if at the time I would have said otherwise. As this journey has progressed I have undoubtedly grown far more than I could have ever imagined and have truly unlocked my passion for hiking in ways I could have never done before.



On Mount William, Grampians



My passion for hiking started through Scouting at just 10 years-of-age. As soon as the seed of completing my first walk was planted there was really no stopping me from going on more and more adventures. Although most of my hikes are in South Gippsland, I have a special place in my heart for the Grampians (Gariwerd) National Park where I discovered truly how beautiful it can be to spend some time in natural places.

For me, setting off on a trip creates a vacuum of time. Bushwalking trips are a space away from our busy lives, away from the constant structure and timetables of a typical day. You can suddenly find yourself just caring about putting one foot in front of the other and pushing through to the next hill. The simple act of completing a hike over a weekend can create memories that for me will last a lifetime and are always far more memorable than the memories I make when I get home.

Website origins

In 2020 while researching a Grampians hike I found myself going from website to website looking for information, never really feeling satisfied with my experience on any of them. Naive me decided that creating my own

website with an easy to use web design, helpful advice and clearly laid out hikes would be easy, but I quickly came to realise why so many sites just felt a little flat.

Within three weeks of starting out I thought I had the final design of the website, but a few months ago when I went back to look at it, I saw how basic it truly was. The website was clunky, poorly laid out and ultimately empty of the useful information I aimed to produce. The site back then is unrecognisable compared to what it looks like today, but the goal of making something that is truly useful to other hikers remained the same throughout my journey.

As a one person team I was a little overoptimistic about how much I could do in such a small space of time, but even with these limitations I launched the website in January 2021. Almost every day since then I have found myself thinking about how I could improve the features on the website to help others grow their skills. This may be new articles, creating a better user experience or adding all the hikes I knew. I worked hard to constantly push myself to get it to a standard where the average hiker would chose to use it.

Writing an article on a regular basis forced me out of my comfort zones to learn new things and discover parts to hiking I had never experienced or even knew about. I never claimed to be some sort of know-all hiker who held all the wisdom of the hiking world, but rather someone who was passionate about learning, just like the reader.

“

These experiences of learning from others have grown me as a hiker beyond words ...

I sought regular outside advice and assistance from people who had years of experience in the areas I wrote about because as much as I have learnt there are some things that require time to understand. These experiences of learning from others have grown me as a hiker beyond words and gave me the passion to share these experiences and the knowledge with other hikers.

Recent developments – AHF+

It's only been in the last few months that I have started to be really happy with how the website looked and functioned along with the amount of content I had. However, I'm sure that in a year's time I will be yelling at myself thinking there are so many things I could improve to make it better. Helping others grow their skills and find new places to walk is what drives me to create and help people every day but that hasn't come without its sacrifices.

I've always been someone who is focused and driven when it comes to projects I undertake, and without this I would have never been able to create something of this size and detail without giving in half way through.

The cost of keeping the site running recently came to my attention. It was a passion for me but definitely an expensive one which I didn't want to plaster with ads to completely go against a major reason why I decided to start this project. I became conflicted about this because I was always wanting it to be free

for everyone to use as a community resource but the amount of money the site cost every month was simply unsustainable for me to keep running on my own.

That led me to create AHF+, my way of trying to make it pay for itself without sacrificing the user experience and the valuable content I had created for other hikers. I kept everything that people came to the site for free but then created extra content specifically for people who joined AHF+ and wanted a little more than what the site had to offer.

These features weren't meant to be revolutionary but rather smaller things that made it worth the \$10 a year price tag. As part of this I made a hiking quiz, 29 page beginner's guide, customisable packing lists, packing placement diagrams, posters and more.



Something I always had at the core of the site was to welcome people's contributions and I did this through a few ways. Firstly I welcomed people to write articles for the site on any subject around hiking that they were interested in. I also created a way for people to add the hikes they knew to the website. I can't do every hike in the country and I know so many hikers are passionate about sharing their knowledge of their local area too so I created an "add a hike" area on the site. This made it easy for people to add their hikes to the list and is something I hope gains even more traction.



Near First Wannon hiker's camp, Grampians

When I look back at all I've done to create A Hikers Friend over the last two years I find it simply hard to believe. The quality of writing I first created is almost unrecognisable compared to what I write today, and without the constant push of publishing almost every week I would have never improved on it so much.

Anyone who has worked on a major project over several years in which they have put hundreds if not thousands of hours would agree that it is a learning experience which grows you as a person. I am undoubtedly a far more experienced and educated person than when I started and I am so happy I started this adventure for that very reason.

I'm always looking forward to creating more features and updates to help fellow hikers because after all that is the purpose of the site. Even after adding over 100 hikes myself, I want to more than triple that with the help of the readers who know the hikes in their area.

Goals

My goal is to make the website a place that people can rely on for trustworthy and easily accessible information on as many walks in Australia as possible, a big ambitious goal I can't reach without help from others. No matter how many hours I put in there is no way for me add them all, so I encourage you to help me create a community resource which anyone can use with ease.

Ultimately I've loved every moment of creating this website because it has allowed me to be better connected with the thing I love most, hiking. The people I've met along the way have been amazing and truly inspiring. They've taught me so many things that I never would have discovered on my own and that is something I am eternally grateful for.

I can't wait to keep pushing the boundaries of A Hikers Friend - a place where hikers can trust and explore which is something I hope only continues to develop and flourish going into the future.

30% of Australia Protected by 2030?

Text

Benjamin Cooke

Aidan Davison

Jamie Kirkpatrick

Lilian Pearce

You would have heard Australia's environment isn't doing well. A grim story of "crisis and decline" was how Environment Minister Tanya Plibersek described the situation when she launched the [State of the Environment Report](#) last week. Climate change, habitat destruction, ocean acidification, extinction, and soil, river and coastal health have all worsened.



Marine protected areas such as the Great Barrier Reef already cover more than the 30% goal



Panoramic aerial shot of Christmas Island and lagoon in Kiribati

In response, Plibersek promised to protect 30% of Australia's land and waters by 2030. Australia committed to this under the previous government last year, joining 100 other countries that have signed onto this "30 by 30" target.

While this may be a worthy commitment, it's not a big leap. Indeed, we've already gone well past the ocean goal, with 45% protected. And, at present, around 22% of Australia's land mass is protected in our national reserve system.

To get protected lands up to 30% through the current approach will mean relying on reserves created by non-government organisations and Indigenous people, rather than more public reserves like national parks. This approach will not be sufficient by itself.

The problem is, biodiversity loss and environmental decline in Australia have continued – and accelerated – even as our

protected areas have grown significantly in recent decades. After years of underfunding, our protected areas urgently need proper resourcing. Without that, protected area targets don't mean much on the ground.

What counts as a protected area?

In 1996, the federal government set up the [National Reserve System](#) to coordinate our network of protected areas. The goal was to protect a comprehensive, adequate and representative sample of Australia's rich biodiversity.

Since then, marine reserves have expanded the most, with the government protecting Commonwealth waters such as around [Cocos Islands and Christmas Island](#).

On land, the government has been very hands-off. Progress has been driven by non-government organisations, Indigenous communities and individuals. New types of protected area, offering different levels of

protection, have emerged. The [Australian Wildlife Conservancy](#) now protects or manages almost 13 million hectares – about twice the size of Tasmania. [Bush Heritage Australia](#) protects more than 11 million hectares. While these organisations do not always own the land, they have become [influential players](#) in conservation.

Partnerships between Traditional Owners and the federal government have produced 81 Indigenous Protected Areas, mainly on native title land. These cover 85 million hectares – fully 50% of our entire [protected land estate](#). Independent ranger groups are also managing Country outside the Indigenous Protected Area system.

Protected areas have also grown through covenants on private land titles, aided by groups such as Trust for Nature (Victoria) and the Tasmanian Land Conservancy.

In total, public protected areas like national parks have only contributed to around 5% of the expansion of terrestrial protected area since 1996. Non-governmental organisation land purchases, Indigenous Protected Areas and individual private landholders have facilitated 95% of this growth.

The real challenge for protected areas? Management

So how did non-government organisations become such large players? After the national reserve system was set up, the federal government provided money for NGOs to buy land for conservation, if they could secure some private funding. Protected lands expanded rapidly before the scheme ended in 2012.

Unfortunately, federal funding did not cover the cost of managing these new protected areas. Support for Traditional Owners to manage Indigenous Protected Areas has continued, albeit on erratic short-term cycles and [very minimally](#), to the tune of a few cents per hectare per year.

As a result, NGOs and Traditional Owners have increasingly had to rely on market approaches and philanthropy. Between 2015 and 2020, for example, the Traditional Owner non-profit carbon business [Arnhem Land](#)

[Fire Abatement Limited](#) earned \$31 million in the carbon credit market through emissions reductions. This money supports a significant portion of the conservation efforts of member groups.

What does this mean? In short, corporate partnerships and market-based approaches once seen as incompatible with conservation are now a necessity to address the long-term shortfall of government support.

“

Unfortunately, federal funding did not cover the cost of managing these new protected areas.

You might think wider investment in conservation is great. But there are risks in relying on NGOs funded by corporations and philanthropists to conserve Australia's wildlife.

For instance, NGOs may no longer feel able to push for transformative political change in conservation if this doesn't align with donor interests. There's also lack of transparent process in how conservation funding is allocated, and for what purpose.

Protection on paper isn't protection on the ground

On paper, conservation in Australia looks in good shape. But even as protected areas of land and sea have grown, the health of our environment has plunged. The 2021 State of the Environment Report is a sobering reminder that it's not enough simply to expand protected areas. It's what happens next that matters.

If we value these protected lands, we have to fund their management. Without management – which costs money – protected areas can rapidly decline, especially under the impacts of climate change.

We also have to tackle what happens outside protected areas. We can't simply keep sectioning off more and more poorly funded areas for nature while ignoring the drivers

of biodiversity loss, such as land clearing, resource extraction, mismanagement and the dispossession of Indigenous lands.

“

... creating protected areas is just the start.

It's excellent our new environment minister wants to begin the environmental repair job. But creating protected areas is just the start. Now we have to answer the bigger questions: how we care for ecologies, whose knowledge is valued, who does this work and how will it be funded over the long term.

We also have to go beyond lip service to Indigenous knowledge and Caring for Country to genuinely acknowledge First Nations sovereignty and [support self-determination](#).

On this front, moves by conservation organisations to [return land to First Nations](#) suggests a willingness in the conservation community to begin this work.

While our protected area estate is large and set to grow further towards the 30 by 30 goal, lines on a map do not equate to protection. We have long known the funding and capability for actual protection is woefully inadequate. For us to reverse our ongoing environmental collapse, that has to change.



Feral animals like foxes can damage ecosystems in protected areas

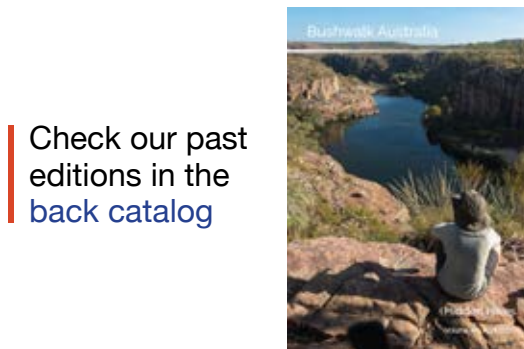
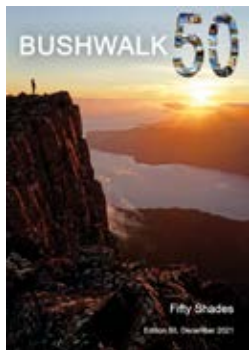
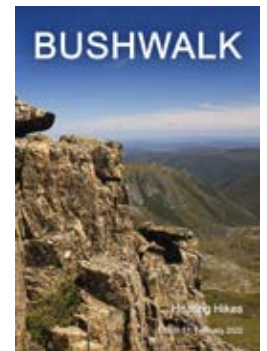
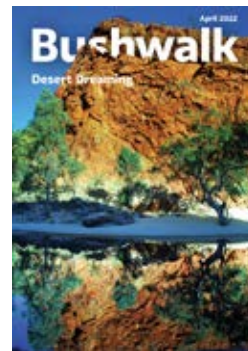
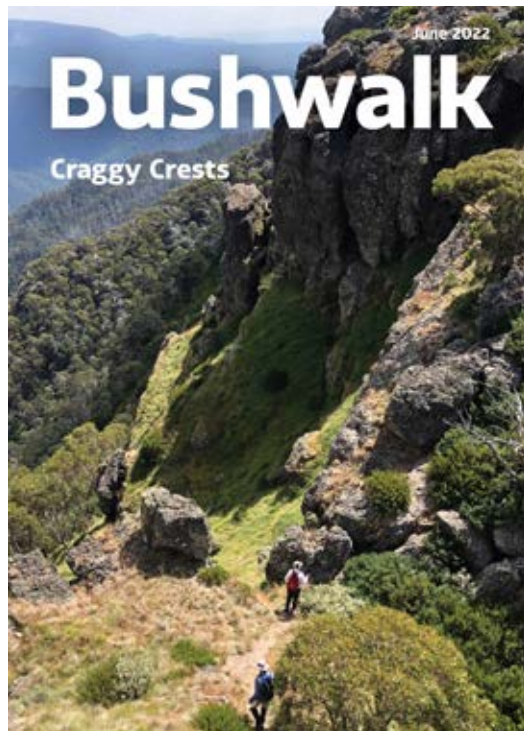
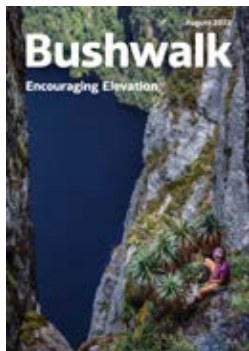
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