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THE RED BARON

Manfred von Richthofen.



DON'T you love it when you go on a bushwalk and learn something extraordinary. The 13km walk from Brooklyn to Cowan in Sydney's Ku-ring-gai Chase NP it has an interesting link to Germany's most famous fighter pilot, Manfred von Richthofen, the Red Baron. The trail is part of the 250km Great North Walk (GNW) linking Sydney with the Hunter Valley and Newcastle. To get to the trail from Brooklyn either park your car at Parsley Bay and walk along George St, then turn onto William St, or get out at the train station, head up Bridge St past the pub, turn left onto George and then right onto William.

From there enter the steep, concreted fire trail and follow the GNW marker posts to Brooklyn Dam. On the dam's western side turn left and follow the markers up the hill. Soon you come to a junction and follow the GNW markers left. You'll get great views looking back towards Brooklyn and you'll spot a small nondescript park which features a tiny plaque

dedicated to Robert Buie, a Brooklyn oyster farmer and local bushwalker who enlisted in the Australian Army in October 1916.

For the next hour the path undulates and there's a bit of rock hopping. From the highest point follow the markers down to Jerusalem Bay. Continue along the GNW past the bay to a footbridge across the freeway to Cowan train station.

Back to the Red Baron. On the day he was shot, April 21st, 1918, von Richthofen was leading his circus of multi-coloured triplanes against a squadron of British planes and had just scored his 80th victim. Von Richthofen was involved in a dogfight with two British biplanes when he flew low over Australian lines.

Sitting in the trenches was Robert Buie and on that cold April day he had the Red Baron in his sights. "I was manning one gun and 'Digger' Evans the other," Buie wrote in a letter to the *Central Coast Express* in 1957. "As the planes neared us Evans opened fire, but the British plane came on... as soon as our plane was out of the line of fire, I started firing directly at the German pilot. Fragments came off the plane and it lessened speed. It came down a few hundred yards away. When the place was reached, Richthofen was dead."

The Red Baron died from a single bullet that passed through his body and was found in the folds of his uniform. In his 1957 letter Buie said: "There were quite a few who tried to claim von Richthofen's downing. All the evidence was sent to British Army HQ in France and a month later, while I was still in the line, a dispatch came from General Rawlinson giving me the credit for shooting down the German ace. I have the proof in my possession and I cannot see why the controversy goes on."

I hope you find some ripping yarns on your next bushwalk but in the meantime this issue of *Great Walks* is brimming with them! 🌞

Happy walking
Brent McKean

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GLASS HOUSE MOUNTAINS NP

The Glass House Mountains, 1hr north of Brisbane, are famous for their craggy peaks that tower above the surrounding landscape. In fact, they are so significant they are listed on the Queensland and National Heritage Register as a landscape of national significance. The mountains are remnants of volcanic activity that occurred 25–27 million years ago. Millions of years of erosion has removed the surrounding exteriors of the volcanic cones and softer sandstone rocks, leaving the magnificent landscape features you see today.

Bushwalking tracks lead through a variety of open forests to lookouts with panoramic views. You can walk around the base of Mount Tibrogargan to see its profile from many angles and to the top of Mount Ngungun for spectacular views of nearby peaks. The Mt Beerwah summit walk will get you to the highest point of the Glass House Mountains and as this photo shows the views are worth the effort! parks.des.qld.gov.au





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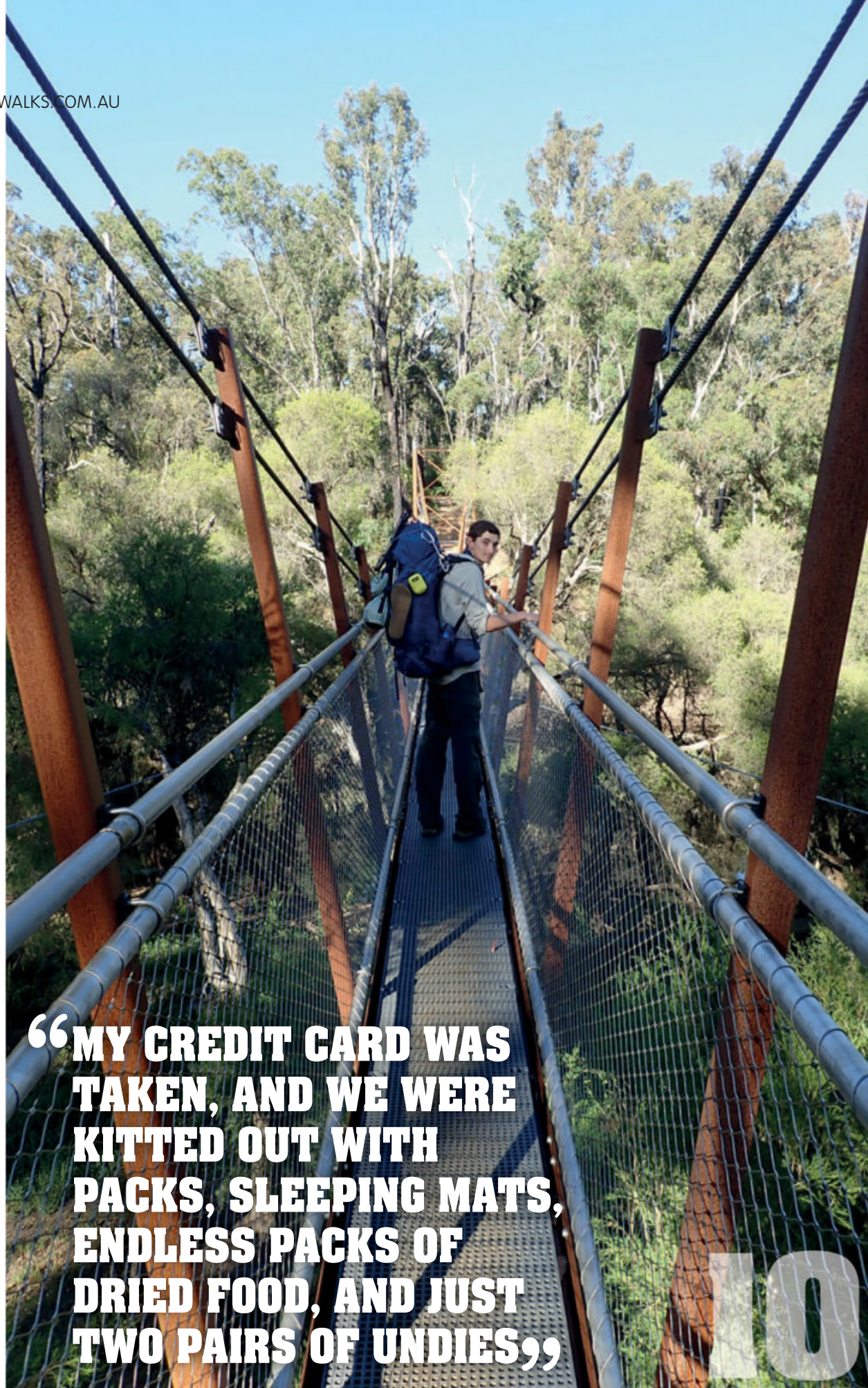
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WALK & LEARN

A multiday bushwalk offers plenty of life lessons for Teresa Duggan.

WORDS AND PHOTOS_ **TERESA DUGGAN**

NATURE never fails to be the great teacher. I was once again reminded of this on the Green Gully Track in Oxley Wild Rivers National Park, NSW. The Green Gully is a 65km, four-day, five-night walk. It's a hut to hut walk, one of the few in NSW. It travels along the worn tracks of past cattlemen, who once leased the land and ran cattle up and down the gorges of this magnificent park. The huts are rudimentary but are a welcoming sight after a hard day's walk. They offer a warm fire, cooking facilities, water tanks, solar lights and sleeping stretchers.


I headed out on the walk with four friends. We left on a frosty New England morning and my thoughts were on the day we would be wading through the creek and anticipating the deep, freezing water. I had completed this walk previously through the drought and still spent the creek day wet. After significant rain and flooding I was dreading what is in fact the pinnacle of the walk. In anticipation of the wet day, we had armed ourselves with polypropylene thermals with the idea that they would keep us warm even when wet.

There are two days of walking ahead of the creek day, days of walking along the ridge of the gorge and then the mammoth drop down 900m on day two. The night was spent sipping



a much-appreciated drop of sherry soaking the warmth of the fire in anticipation of the next day ahead in the water.

The creek day, as it turned out was a sheer delight. We played like children, skipping on rocks from one side of the creek to the other, finding our own track along the creek all day. Stopping in fairy-like groves to boil up water for tea along the way. Yes, the water was chilly, but the valley was glorious and because of its isolation and the two days struggle to reach it, it is a great sense of privilege to be there, to experience the magical serenity and the sheer untouched beauty. There is no mistaking this day is the highlight of the walk. The valley is alive with wildlife, and we were lucky enough to meet rock wallabies, water lizards and a chorus of birds to guide us along the way.

So yet again, nature has taught me to live in the moment. I wasted many thoughts wondering how I would manage things I didn't have control of, like the height of the creek, state of the track or the weather. I learnt to approach walks with an open mind, to be prepared but have a willingness to accept all things, even if they are arduous. This is something we need more than ever. As we drove back into civilisation, we were shocked to see that everyone was wearing masks – that one certainly came out of left field. 



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GREAT ICONIC
WALKS

BIBBULMUN
TRACK, WA

WEATHERED AND WISER

On the Bibbulmun Track a naturalist and his son
bond over flora, fauna and freeze-dried food.

WORDS AND PHOTOS **LEIGH W. SIMMONS**

Morning fog, residual bushfire smoke and sunrise
combine to provide a striking perspective on the
Pingerup Plains south of Mount Chance.





NOONGAR Dreaming tells how during the Nyitting (the ‘cold time’, most likely the end of the last glacial maximum) the Waugal rose from Mount Eliza at the eastern end of the Kings Park escarpment and formed the Derbarl Yerrigan (Swan) and Djarlgarro Beeliar (Canning) rivers. As the Waugal slithered across the landscape it created the sand dunes and river courses of the south-west corner of Western Australia, and it now lies along its length in the form of the Darling escarpment.

The Bibbulmun Track is a world class walking trail that runs along the Darling escarpment from Kalamunda in the north to D’Entrecasteaux in the south, before heading east along the south coast of WA to Albany, a distance of just over 1000km, guided by way markers depicting the Waugal. I first walked on the Bibbulmun in the early 1990s, through the tingle forests of the Walpole-Nornalup NP. In the Walpole Visitor Centre, I had picked up a copy of the then recently published *A Guide to the Bibbulmun Track* and found several stretches that could be done as day hikes. I fell in love with the beauty of the Gondwanan forests the moment I entered them. From those early days I have returned with my family at least once a year to holiday in the hamlet of Nornalup, where we spend most of our time walking through the forests, or along the clifftops between Peaceful Bay and Conspicuous Cliff.

**Clockwise from left:**

Writing up the day's natural history notes at Warren campground.

Crossing Irwin Inlet.

Fresh faced and naïve walkers departing from the Northern Terminus in Kalamunda.

Conspicuous Cliff beach.

A plan is hatched

Over Christmas 2018 we were walking from Boxhall Road to Frankland River campground, a frequently walked and much-loved day on the Bibbulmun. My son was in the last year of his veterinary degree and announced that when he completed it the following November, he would walk the length of the track by way of celebration and asked if I would walk with him. No harm in saying yes, I thought, expecting that he would probably end up going with some of his fellow graduates. But as the months passed and Freddy's planning for our end-to-end took shape, it slowly dawned on me that I might just have to do it. Not that that was a bad thing, it had always been an ambition.

My credit card was taken, and we were kitted out with packs, sleeping mats, endless packs of dried food, and just two pairs of undies, one to be worn and one to be drying! I had never attempted anything like this in my life. Freddy was 24 but I was 58. Was I physically and mentally capable? Or would I go stark staring mad denied access to my books and journals?

That winter I visited an old friend and colleague, John Alcock, in the United States. We went for a day walk on the Appalachian Trail. John is an extraordinary naturalist and has written many natural history books, several of which describe his travels through

the Australian bush. While walking on the Appalachian with John, searching for orchids on the forest floor and birds in the forest canopy, it occurred to me that I could focus my attention while walking the Bibbulmun on its natural history and write a narrative of all we encountered along the way. I could use the Bibbulmun Track as a biological transect to document the flora and fauna of the south-western corner of Western Australia, and in so doing share my knowledge of the evolutionary ecology of the animals and plants that cling to existence in our rapidly changing corner of the world.

Keep it cool

Perhaps the best time to walk the Bibbulmun is in the cooler months from April to October. Walking in the summer months is not recommended because of the heat, especially in the northern sections, and the associated risk of fire. But for us it was November to January or never, a brief window of opportunity before Freddy left home to pursue his career as a veterinary surgeon and the time of year when I could be away from the university with minimum impact on my research and teaching. And so we set off in mid-November, towards the end of Kamberang, the Noongar season of birth.

“WAS I PHYSICALLY AND MENTALLY CAPABLE? OR WOULD I GO STARK STARING MAD”

Our plan was to take our time, to overnight at all 49 of the track's three-sided shelters as well as the towns through which the track passes; our journey would last 60 days with walks of 10-25km each day. We did have some stinking hot days in the northern sections but fortunately we were not affected by fire to any great extent: we were redirected just once, south of Donnelly River, due to a controlled burn, and our traverse of one of the most botanically rich areas of the south-west, the Pingerup Plains, was less rewarding than it should have been due to a prescribed burn just weeks before we arrived.

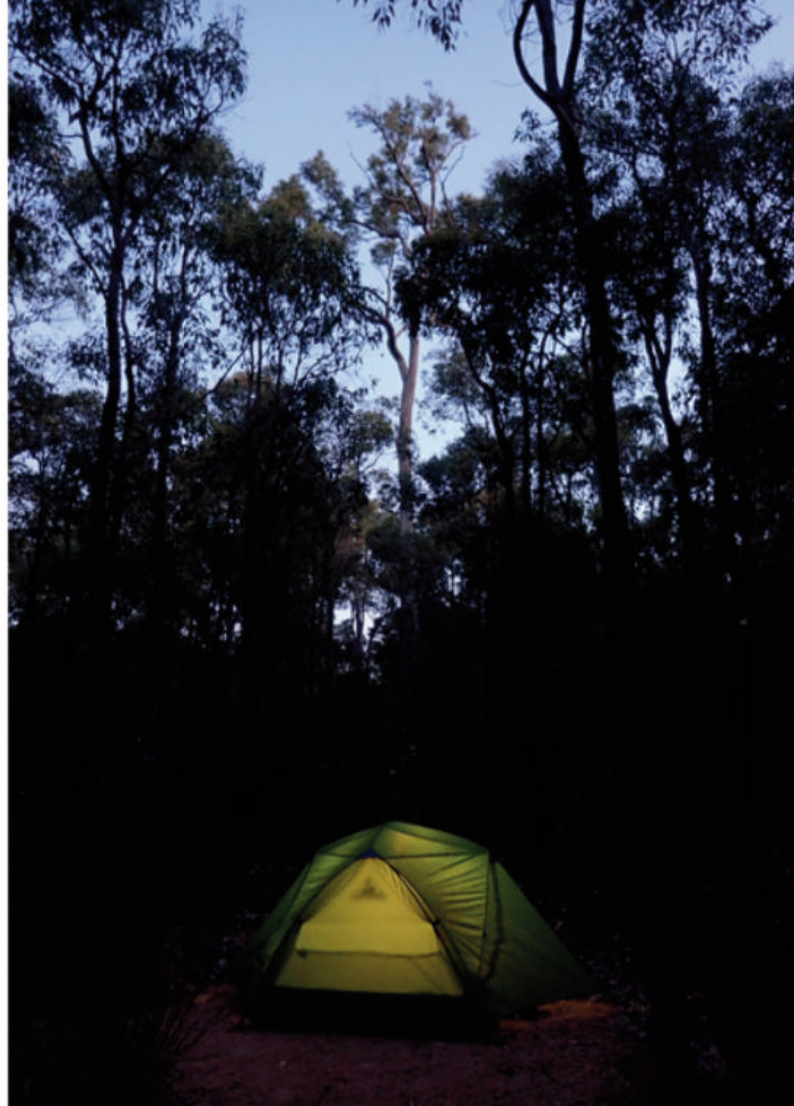
To avoid the heat of the day, we would be up at first light, just before five. We would start the day with a small breakfast after which we packed up our gear, filled our water bladders from the rainwater tank, hoisted our packs and set off. Our packs were reasonably comfortable

“IT TOOK AT LEAST TWO WEEKS BEFORE WE BECAME REASONABLY TRACK FIT.”

for the first half-hour or so. The first pains of the day came from the ITBs, the iliotibial bands that run between the hip and the knee, which I didn't even know could hurt until we set out from Kalamunda.

It took at least two weeks before we became reasonably track fit, but at the start it was pretty full-on pain for most of the day. *A Guide to the Bibbulmun Track* recommends that you rest with packs off each hour “to delay the onset of fatigue”. Sound advice indeed, and we would generally stop after the first 5km for second breakfast. Typically, walking became harder from then on, though not because of the walking per se. It is one thing to walk 10km but is another to carry 18kg for 10km. After a couple of hours, our shoulders began to ache, and eventually cramps between the shoulder blades called for a stop for morning tea, a shared muesli bar.

The rationing became tiresome very quickly. An hour later would be a stop for first lunch, trail mix. We would generally arrive at camp anywhere between 11am-2pm, depending on the distance travelled. On arrival, our most pressing task was to release our feet from our boots and wipe down with a cold wet flannel. Such are the luxuries enjoyed by the long-distance walker. Second lunch consisted of rehydrated noodles, and then I would write up my all-important track notes that would form the bones of *Naturalist on the Bibbulmun*.



Natural rhythms

Our afternoons would be spent sheltering from the sun, setting up our sleeping gear and reading books on our smartphones that were kept charged by mini solar panels hung from the back of our packs. Afternoon tea was at four, and then at five we would eat dried chickpeas while doing a crossword. Freddy would ‘cook’ at six – or rather add water to our freeze-dried dinner – and we would be in bed by dusk. The simplicity of our routine, rising and retiring with the passage of the sun, was magical. That feeling of freedom and release from modern living provided by a simple routine dictated by the rising and the setting of the sun is something that most long-distance walkers cherish the most.

Above: Essential to carry a tent least the shelter be full, as it was at Hewett's Hill campground.

Below: Granite outcrops of the White Horse Hills.



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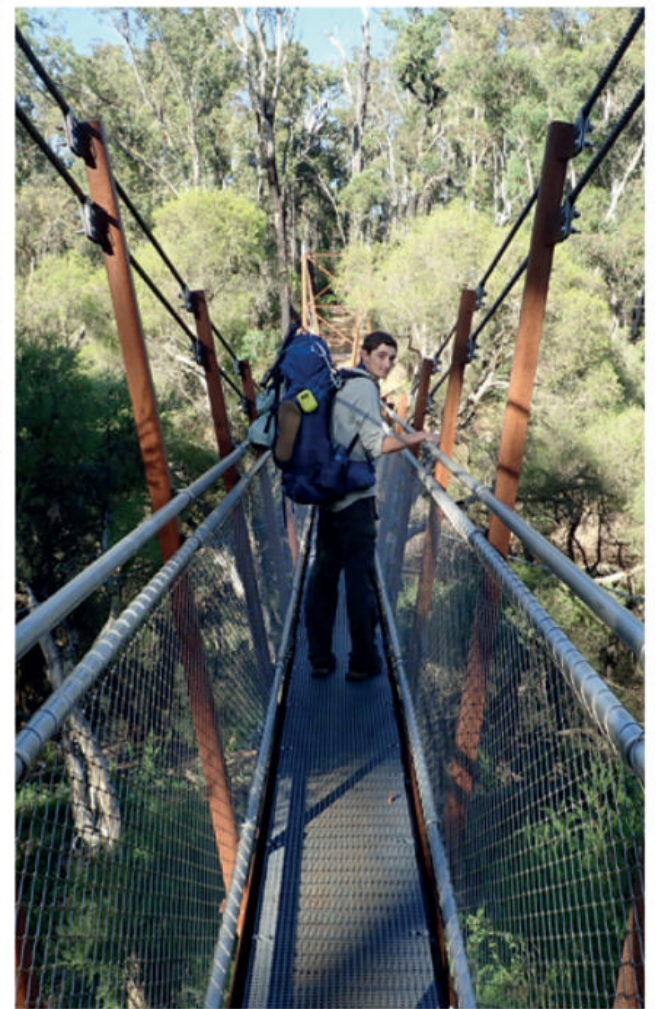
JB HI-FI

Harvey Norman



Left: Walking the coastal cliffs between Boat Harbour and Mazzeletti Beach, looking west along the coast to Point Nuyts in the distance.

Below: The Bibbulmun is maintained largely through the work of the Bibbulmun Foundation that relies on donations and membership. Here the newly constructed Bilya Djena Bidi provides walkers a safe crossing of the Murray River.



Certainly, it was commented upon frequently by those that had entered their thoughts in the campsite logbooks.

The northern sections of the Bibbulmun pass through mixed dry forests of marri, jarrah and wandoo, with prominent geological features including the granite outcrops of the Monadnock and White Horse Hills. South of Dwellingup the track reaches stretches of standing water, such as the Murray and Collier rivers. These wetter forests transition to the mighty karri as the track passes through the homelands of the pibelmen noongar, from Donnelly River through to Northcliff.

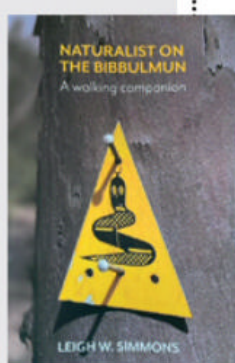
From there the track traverses its most isolated region, across the coastal heathlands of the D'Entrecasteaux NP to Lake Maringup, before turning east eventually passing through the mighty tingle forests of the Walpole-Nornalup NP and along the coastal dune systems through Denmark to the Southern Terminus in Albany. Along the way we would identify 223 flowering plants, a very small proportion of the known 8,000 species that are unique to south-western WA. We recorded 105 bird species and an assortment of mammals, snakes, lizards and invertebrates. Why do kookaburras laugh, and why are fairy wrens so blue? Why do cicadas click in unison, and why are snakes so venomous? Why do wasps have sex with flowers? The answer to these and many others question are revealed in *Naturalist on the Bibbulmun*.

“biodiversity hotspot”. But it is not. For the definition of a biodiversity hotspot is a region that is a significant reservoir of plant and animal species that is critically endangered. A criterion to be in the biodiversity hotspot club is that anthropogenic changes to the natural environment, through burning and clearing of land, and the warming and drying effects of human-induced climate change, have resulted in the loss of 70 percent of the natural habitat. With that anthropogenic change comes the loss of those species of plants and animals that are unique to the region.

It is not difficult to see how now may be our last chance to witness and to save what remains of the ancient wilderness through which the mighty Bibbulmun Track passes. My hope is that *Naturalist on the Bibbulmun* may in some small way arouse a sense of country (boodja) and draw the reader into the small but growing mob who recognise the need to preserve the wilderness of this place, and of Planet Earth more widely. In the words of David Attenborough, “few people will help protect the natural world if they don't first love and understand it”. We must embrace the Noongar's sense of connection to boodja if we are to save this unique part of the world for future generations. 🌿

NEED TO KNOW

Naturalist on the Bibbulmun (\$39.99) is available from uwap.uwa.edu.au. All royalties flow to the Bibbulmun Track Foundation. For all info on walking the Bibbulmun visit bibbulmuntrack.org.au.



A fragile world

The south-west of WA was recognised in 2000 as one of the world's 25 biodiversity hotspots. That sounds great doesn't it, a



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RIPPING YARNS

There are as many great stories as there are great views on Sydney's new Bondi to Manly Walk.

WORDS_TARA WELLS. PHOTOS_DESTINATION NSW



Views of Sydney Harbour
from Bradleys Head
Walking Track, Mosman.





Clockwise from above:

Bondi to Manly Walk symbols along the trail at Bondi Beach.

The Bondi to Manly offers gorgeous views over Sydney Harbour.

Exploring the historic fort and military relics at Middle Head in Sydney Harbour National Park, Mosman.

Scenic harbour views along the Hermitage Foreshore Track, Vaucluse.

A walk can be more than an accumulation of footsteps, more than stringing two locations together by foot. One of the best ways to get to this deeper experience is through story. That was my goal in writing *The Bondi to Manly Walk Guidebook*. Keeping the comfort of how to get from A to B but with more. I set out to weave together the many layers of a green city into one common thread and by doing so, transform a (very pretty) walk into a memorable experience.

The Bondi to Manly Walk is an 80km route connecting two of Australia's most iconic beaches and passing every bay, beach and headland along the way. The semi-urban walk passes through the glittering harbour city, over the Harbour Bridge and through Sydney Harbour National Park with its remnant bushland alongside multi-million-dollar mansions.

I'd walked most of the track before, some sections countless times. And each time I admired the views. Every harbour vista, every cliff-top expanse, every winding bush track.

I had even improved at naming what I was seeing: twisting angophora only outdone by the curlicues of fig roots finding hold among the sandstone; New Holland honeyeaters darting about the banksia scrub; a field of flannel flowers distracting my eye from camouflaged tawny frogmouths above.

But something changed when I discovered the stories of the places that I walked through. I understood Sydney – its landscape, people, the connectedness of the past to the

present – in a way I never had before. And walking through this history, these stories, was the only way to get there.

Going public

Nudging at me with every step was the first question: how was I even walking through so much bushland in Australia's largest city? Miraculously, 392 hectares of prime harbourside real estate is a protected national park. I sought to find out how.

Gazetted in 1975, Sydney Harbour National Park consists of disjointed land parcels dotted along the harbour foreshore. The park's genesis came from demand for public access to privately owned foreshore from the late 19th century onwards. It exists alongside numerous foreshore reserves owned by councils and trusts that, like the park, were formed through a series of laws, community movements and protests.

William Notting, founder of the community-led Harbour Foreshores Vigilance Committee in 1905, summed it up: "It is useless ... to talk about Sydney possessing the most beautiful harbour in the world, unless steps be taken to prevent it becoming a private lake. At present it is little better than a pond in a privately-owned paddock."

The resulting Foreshores Resumption Scheme – a government pot of money used to buy back harbourside land – is responsible for Nielsen Park and the Hermitage Foreshore Reserve, amongst others. A century later, the walking track that winds through these places



“A TRADE UNION WAS AN UNLIKELY COMMUNITY PARTNER IN THE EARLY 1970S,”

enjoys the largest patch of remnant bushland on the south side of the harbour.

An even earlier short-lived government policy still resonates down the decades. For 11 years from 1831, land sales were governed by a 100-foot-wide (30m) foreshore reservation. It irrevocably excluded the waterside from private ownership. Properties that first sold while this clause was in place include Manly, Reef Beach and Cremorne Point. When I walk on bush track, minding my step over gnarled roots and Sydney red gums framing views of the aquamarine harbour, I'm directly benefiting from the foresight of a handful of long-dead lawmakers.

Green acres

By the 1960s, the state government was in full swing buying foreshore land to use as public green space, a task made easier by now obsolete headland forts such as Bradleys Head, Middle Head and North Head. These particular tracks have outmoded technology to thank for their existence. Goodbye defensive cannons, hello pristine bush.





Above: Sulphur-crested cockatoo feeding from a grevillea bush in Mosman, Sydney.

Above right: Couple enjoying a scenic walk around Parsley Bay, Vaucluse.



A trade union was an unlikely community partner in the early 1970s. Members of the Builder Labourers Federation, led by Jack Munday, refused to work on construction sites that would either have ripped up green space (imagine the Royal Botanic Gardens as the Opera House's carpark) or destroyed heritage buildings in The Rocks, Potts Point and Woolloomooloo. These became known as 'green bans' and as well as protecting parkland, the community recognised there was a built environment worth preserving too. Woolloomooloo's finger wharf is one such example. Walkers can pop their head inside the revamped hotel lobby to see the bones of the building and its sympathetic revitalisation.

There is no better example of the layers of history and the thread of geography than at the recently revitalised Barangaroo – a part of Sydney I've deliberately included in a city walk circuit in addition to the official coastline-hugging beach-to-beach route.

The Great Depression played out on this now gleaming stretch of former dockyards. Wanna-be workers walked from pier to wharf, seeking a day of low-paid casual employment. No work; no money, no food. This was 'the Hungry Mile' (knowing this transforms today's long stretch of wharfside restaurants into an Alanis Morissette-worthy irony).

This colloquial naming – the Hungry Mile – was suggested when the area was mooted for revival in the early 2000s. The government chose

a tribute name instead but bucked a 200-year trend of naming places after either a patron or people in prominent jobs – of which there were only men to choose from. (Here's to you, Lord Sydney, the British home secretary who hired Captain Arthur Phillip to head the fledgling colony.) This time, it chose Barangaroo.

Naming rights

Barangaroo was a Gamaragal woman from the Manly area at the time of the First Fleet. She would have been there at North Harbour – part of the walking route – during a meeting of the two cultures when Captain Phillip noted how 'manly' the men presented. The smallpox brought unwittingly by the newcomers killed her husband and two children and she remarried, to Bennelong – a man with his own complex relationship with Europeans, first kidnapped and later on more friendly terms, an epic three year return journey to London. (I'm reminded of his story walking around Bennelong Point, site of the Sydney Opera House).

Barangaroo saw what increasing contact with the European colonists meant. And she didn't like it. She broke Bennelong's fishing spear when he first got about in European clothes. She also snatched the whip out of a flogger's hands when a convict was being whipped for stealing. The officers' written journals show they too were wary of Barangaroo.



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Above: Aerial view of Sydney Harbour from Clifton Gardens

Right: North Fort, Manly section of the Bondi to Manly Walk.



This naming – Barangaroo – may be an aberration because way off-track, Sydney’s new airport space has been announced as Bradfield. At Clontarf along the route I’d walked past a most impressive Egyptian Revival heritage-listed poo-pumping station designed by chief engineer J.C.C. Bradfield, and paused for 180° views over the eastern harbour beside noisy eight-laned Bradfield Highway stretching over Sydney Harbour Bridge. Ah well, Bradfield, eh, the new suburb. Add it to the list.

Flower power

The six-year old parkland of Barangaroo Reserve also marks a significant shift in what Australians value in their gardens and green space. I’d peeked into the faithfully reconstructed 19th century garden of Observatory Hill and seen the errant bamboo grove escaped from exotic species brought to Vacluse House’s gardens in the 1800s (and nodded appreciatively to knobbly old melaleucas growing nearby). But Barangaroo was planted with 75,000 plants, all endemic to Australia.


It complements Sydney’s increasing appreciation for what was here before: one of the most extravagant displays of blooming red bottlebrush was on a roadside kerb, and Bushcare volunteers are to thank for the revitalisation of Diamond Bay’s threatened cliffside hanging swamp and Cremorne Point’s lush bushland. The pervasive lantana of my childhood thankfully grows dimmer with time.

There are other places along the Bondi to Manly Walk where a casual bystander simply appreciates the view, like from McKell Park

down the end of a long suburban road reaching to Darling Point’s ferry wharf. It’s a hidden gem, easy to miss but boasting close-up views of Clark Island and across to the tree-covered headland of Bradleys Head (more bushland for walkers to explore en route). But it’s the story that makes this place memorable.

Real estate intrigue and dodgy development deals between political mates started at what is now called McKell Park. In 1828, Arthur Kemmis applied for a land grant on the point between Rushcutters Bay and Double Bay. He wanted to start a whaling business (Mosman Bay’s story across the water explains why: it was a goldmine before there was gold) but was refused. He was told “it’s specially reserved for public purposes”. Four years later the Colonial Treasurer, a good mate of the Acting Governor, was miraculously reserved the same site. Kemmis got cranky; there was a hoo-hah; the land was granted to someone else.

No matter, the Treasurer simply bought it from him for 50 percent more than the grant awardee had paid six weeks earlier. The Treasurer, the Honourable Campbell Drummond Riddell, named his newly-built property after his mate, the Acting Governor, Colonel Lindesay. Now a National Trust house museum, Lindesay was subdivided in 184 and finally became a park in 1983. At last, it is ‘specially reserved for public purposes’.

I wrote the guidebook for people like me: walkers who appreciate the scenery, but want more, a deeper understanding. Through the stories we don’t just walk a footpath or bush track, we walk in the steps of those that came before us. Then we can feel that a walk is about connectedness, place and belonging. 

NEED TO KNOW

For info on the Bondi to Manly Walk visit **bonditomanly.com** and to purchase a copy of Tara Wells’ guidebook (\$34.99) visit **newsouthbooks.com.au**





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GREAT WISH
LIST WALKS

10 OF THE BEST

DON'T DREAM IT, WALK IT!

Great Walks showcases 10 Aussie walks you need to do in 2022.

WORDS **LAURA WATERS**

I had big dreams once. I was going to fly (yes, fly) to Spain (on the other side of the world) and hike the GR11, an 840km route from the Atlantic to the Mediterranean across the Pyrenees with all its glorious mountains, lakes and villages. I'd already collected maps and guidebook. It was on! Then it was off.

It feels like a lifetime since the possibility of such exciting plans was relatively commonplace but we walkers were made to roam. For me, it's freedom and fresh air that I hold dear – both of which have been in short supply lately – but boy am I going to run free when this COVID drama is over. Having something to look forward to is a well known strategy for getting through life's boring bits, which is why I've been compiling a list of Australian hikes I'm keen to pounce on as soon as border restrictions are a thing of the past.

Grampians Peaks Trail, Vic

I don't know anyone who isn't champing at the bit for this one. The Grampians has long been a favourite playground for Victorians with its impressive sandstone mountains and waterfalls, but any day now a new 160km trail will be open for business and it's going to be epic. Walkers will hike from Mt Zero in the north to Dunkeld in the south over 13 days, threading along the spine of Mt Difficult Range before passing through the town of Halls Gap (the region's main base) and continuing on along the Serra Range. It'll feature some well-known gems like the precipitous finger of rock called The Pinnacle, Mt William (the highest point) and the sheer-sided Major Mitchell Plateau, along with some previously inaccessible areas with new and dazzling views. Architecturally designed campsites have tent pads, and two sites will also feature four-bed huts. This Grampians traverse is set to be a world-class hike.

parks.vic.gov.au.



2

Flinders Ranges Camel Trek, SA

There's a romance about travelling with animals. Walking across the open expanses of the outback with camels brings to mind Robyn Davidson's epic crossing from Alice Springs to the Indian Ocean in 1977, so stepping into the shoes of a nomad cameleer makes for a tempting proposition. World Expeditions run treks in the Northern Flinders Ranges, across rugged plains and dry creek beds lined with river red gums, and past dramatic gorges while camels walk alongside carrying all gear. Guides are experts in geology, flora, fauna, history as well as constellations of the Milky Way – comes in handy when you crawl into a swag at night beneath a billion stars. Safaris venture into truly remote terrain, and if you want to rest your feet, climbing into the saddle for an hour or so is perfectly legit.

worldexpeditions.com.



3

Wukalina Walk, Tas

Understanding the stories interwoven with a place give it far more meaning and although I've visited the Bay of Fires before, walking it with the palawa is another experience altogether. The four-day guided journey is as much about understanding culture as it is about the 33km of hiking. While walking wukalina (Mt William National Park), hikers hunt out bush tucker, hear stories, and have a go at weaving, clapstick making and stringing shells. Sleeping under wallaby throws in domed huts and feasting on traditional foods such as mutton bird and wallaby only adds to the cultural immersion. On top of all that is the scenery: blinding white beaches, aqua bays cradled by rocky headlands smeared in orange lichen, forests, coastal heath, and views over the Furneaux and Cape Barren Islands. The possibility of spotting wombats, arctic terns, sea eagles and whales is a bonus. wukalinawalk.com.au.

**Hakea Trail, WA**

Named after the royal hakea shrub that grows along the route, this trail stretches along the south coast of remote Fitzgerald River National Park. It's 23km one way but with car shuffles a challenge, most people tackle the 46km return route over three days (there are two campgrounds enroute). Spanning Cave Point to Quoin Head, the track is sandwiched between the ocean and central wilderness with views of Thumb Peak, Mid Mount Barren and the western park peaks. Billions of years of geological history has created some pretty unique terrain including limestone karst cliffs and ancient wave cut platforms, along with blinding white beaches, rocky headlands and a waterfall. The broad sandy expanse surrounding Hamersley Inlet is a great place to linger and spot a few birds or drop in a fishing line.

parks.dpaw.wa.gov.au.

Great North Walk, NSW

I love a long walk, and hiking from one city to another makes it feel like you're really 'travelling' somewhere too, making this one all the more appealing. Stretching around 260km between Sydney and Newcastle, the Great North Walk can be tackled in sections or as a 10-14 day through-hike. It includes a string of national parks – Lane Cove, Ku-ring-gai Chase, Brisbane Water – the mighty Hawkesbury River, Myall Range, and a whole lot of forest before finishing on the coast and beaches of Newcastle. One of the most popular sections is the 46km Benowie Track (Thornleigh to Berowra Waters) which visits sandstone overhangs, rugged bushland, waterfalls, and First Nations rock carvings and paintings. Other highlights are the divine river and hilltop views on the Hawkesbury section, between Berowra Waters and Somersby.

thegreatnorthwalk.com.



6

Wharf to Wharf Walk, NSW

This one's brand new but I've already heard good things about it. Located in the state's far south, on the Sapphire Coast, the 27km trail stretches between two historic wharves in Merimbula and Tathra. Expect to wander rocky headlands with expansive views over the twinkling ocean (the area is a hotspot for whale watching), crystal clear bays, honey coloured beaches and coastal forest with stands of melaleucas. The wetlands around Wallagoot Lake make for great bird watching, and Bournda Lagoon (fed by a freshwater creek) is ideal for a swim. You could bang it out in one very big day but it's not a place you want to rush, plus there are many side trails that dip out

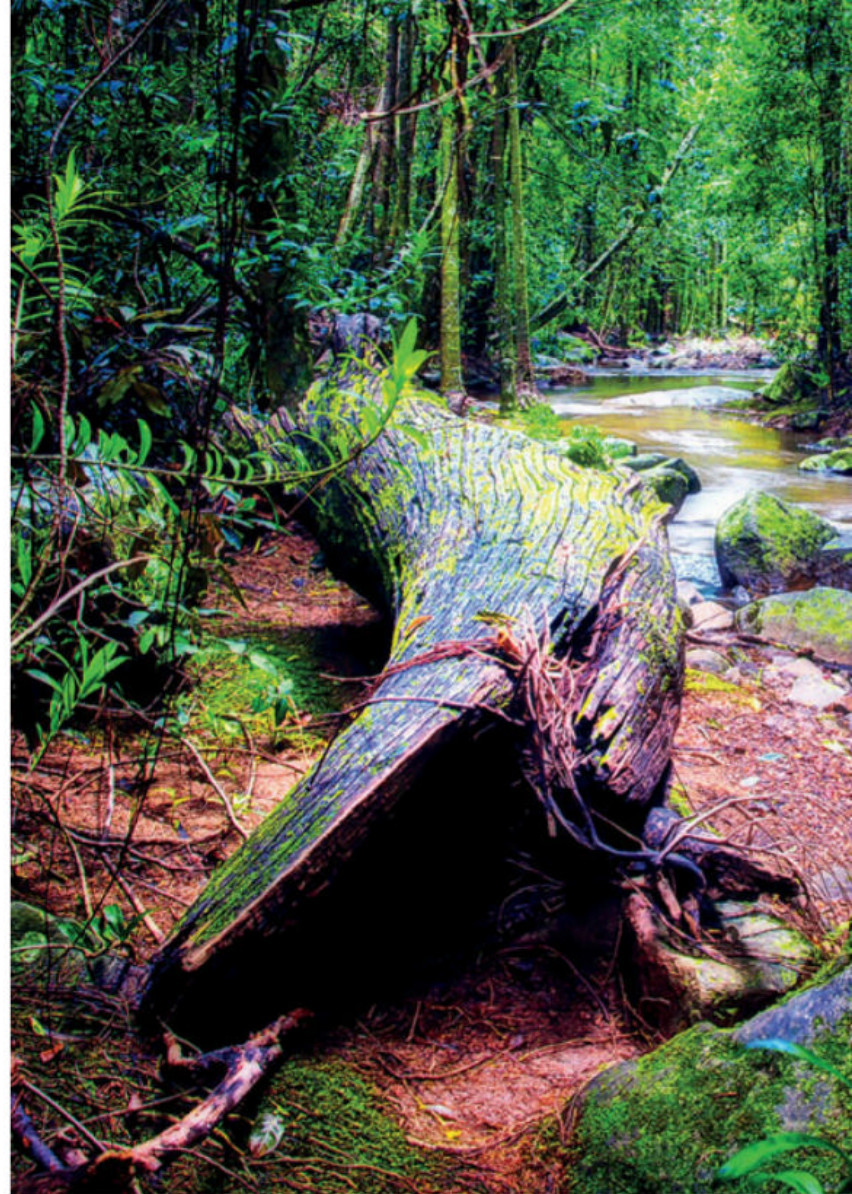
to places like Mimosa Rocks National Park, Tathra and Pambula. A campground at Hobart Beach is conveniently located in the middle of the trail. Walk it south to north to finish with the more secluded Bournda National Park.

wharftowharfwalk.com.

Dandenong Ranges Trail, Vic

Don't you love it when someone else does all the hard yards and plots out a great route for you? You won't find any slick signage or tourist brochures on this walk, however, local resident Jason Williams has planned and documented in great detail this 72km route winding through a region long worshipped for its towering mountain ash forests, lyrebirds and lush gullies of tree ferns, less than an hour from Melbourne. The region is popular with day-trippers, however, this route winds through peaceful sections and past trickling creeks, while also linking attractions such as the historic Puffing Billy train and William Ricketts Sanctuary which features 92 sculptures of First Nations people, and animals, carved into rocks and trees amid the forest. It takes 4-7 days to hike this one and although there aren't any campsites enroute, the trail passes through quaint villages like Emerald, Kallista and Olinda where you can grab a cosy cabin and a cream tea.

dandenongrangestrail.com.au.



Mt Anne Circuit, Tas

There's an otherworldly beauty and drama to southwest Tassie's highest peak, and climbing it is no mean feat. I visited Mt Anne once before, although wild weather deterred me from attempting it, but in light of its sections of tricky and exposed scrambling, I'd like to do it next time with expert guides. Trek Tasmania run a 5-day alpine traverse, looping around the mountain and scaling its 1,423m summit. The scenery is mind-boggling with sheer Jurassic-age dolerite cliffs, ancient Gondwanan flora, button grass plains and alpine tarns, along with epic views of Lake Pedder and the dramatic Western Arthurs mountain range. There are a few easy moments, such as walking between the bright green cushion plants of the Mt Eliza Plateau, but hikers also need to be prepared for some tough bits such as sidling around the exposed flank of Mt Lot or the tricky climb up the Notch. Adventure is guaranteed.

trektasmania.com.au.

Seven Peaks Walk, NSW

Lord Howe Island has long been a bucket list destination for me. It has that untouched Shangri-La kind of perfection that comes from being an isolated dollop in the ocean, a two-hour flight east of Sydney. David Attenborough called it "so extraordinary, it's unbelievable" and the five-day guided Seven Peaks Walk covers 45km of trail that showcases the island's amazing diversity. Walkers discover pristine beaches, palm forests, rugged sea cliffs and volcanic peaks. The hike up Mt Gower is a highlight, a challenging and sometimes exposed walk that rewards with mist forests, a bird rookery and epic views from its sheer sided rocky flanks. Day hikes are interspersed with snorkelling off perfect beaches, and every night hikers return to the comforts and fine food of Pinetrees Lodge. Heaven.

pinetrees.com.au

PHOTO: LUKE HANSON



9

Conondale Range Great Walk, Qld

I had my first taste of the Sunshine Coast's epic trails last year but I'd love to go back and tackle this 56km/4 day circuit walk in Conondale National Park. Typical of the region, the terrain is heavy on stunning rainforest, trickling streams, waterfalls and forested ridges, but since you need a 4WD for access, it's a little wilder than other trails. Booloumba Creek makes a stunning start with its deep crystal clear water overhung by vines and piccabeen palms – a perfect oasis for swimming. The trail alternates between deep gorges and the top of the range, pausing at delights like Booloumba Falls and Summer Falls. A short side trip leads to an impressive 3.7m egg-shaped sculpture hidden in the rainforest, made by hand-cut blocks of granite and topped with a strangler fig sapling that will, in time, wrap its tendrils around it. From atop Mt Allan, 360° views take in the whole of the Conondale Range and beyond.

parks.des.qld.gov.au.



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FEATURE
WISH LIST
WALKS

CAPTAIN'S PICK

Great Walks editor Brent McKean throws another five wish list walking destinations into the mix.

WORDS **BRENT MCKEAN**

Hedonistic Hiking – destination Europe

Hedonistic Hiking specialises in small group escorted hiking holidays in some of the most beautiful parts of Europe, with a touch of luxury thrown in. The main destination is Italy, but several tours cross over into neighbouring France, Austria and Slovenia. The tours are as much about gourmet food and fine wines as they are about the hiking. Lunch on most days is a delicious al fresco picnic, while restaurant dinners showcase the best regional cuisine and wines. Many itineraries include visits to cheesemakers, wine growers or truffle hunters and some also feature cooking classes.

The tours are fully-inclusive of accommodation in hand-picked hotels, all meals with fabulous wines, cultural excursions, transfers and any additional activities. The itineraries are graded so there is a holiday to suit all levels of fitness. Groups have a maximum of 16, usually made up of like-minded couples, friends and solo travellers.

The company was established in 2007 by husband and wife team Jackie and Mick

Parsons. They are highly experienced tour leaders and design, research and lead every tour themselves. They live in Italy for more than half the year, giving them the opportunity to explore the very best routes the regions have to offer.

hedonistichiking.com

Hedonistic Hiking – destination Victoria

When Jackie and Mick are not leading luxury walks in Europe, they offer a range of high-quality guided hikes in Victoria. These all-inclusive tours combine their signature blend of walking with fabulous food and boutique accommodation, and they work together to deliver an unforgettable hiking experience in some of Victoria's most stunning landscapes.

New six-night routes have been added along the Goldfields Track in Central Victoria and in the Grampians where two new itineraries showcase the best sections of the Grampians Peaks Trail, one of Australia's newest iconic long-distance walking tracks. These tours



Above: Hedonistic Hiking's Victorian Alps walk.

Opposite: Tunkalilla Beach, Southern Ocean Walk.

feature fine dining experiences at the Lake House in Daylesford and at the Royal Mail Hotel in Dunkeld. The South West Coast and Grampians tour also includes a private visit with a First Nation's guide to the UNESCO World Heritage site at Budj Bim. Other tours explore the beautiful High Country with hikes in the Victorian Alps, along with a six – day fully-escorted itinerary along the Great Ocean Walk, covering the full 100km from Apollo Bay to the Twelve Apostles. Good food and wine is an essential element of the tours and Mick, who is professionally trained, acts as private chef in the evenings on tours with lodge or home-style accommodation.

hedonistichiking.com

Life's An Adventure – destination Tasmania

Life's An Adventure's pack-free guided walks cover so many parts of Australia you're spoilt for choice but one of their favourite destinations is Tasmania. From Hobart, you can explore the Three Capes with its dramatic coastline of sea cliffs and eucalypt forests (see story pg 60). Also Bruny Island – with its towering cliffs, rich eucalypt forests and

white beaches – and Maria Island – with its abundant wildlife, spectacular scenery and rich colonial history – are a quick ferry ride from Hobart. And up north, you can get to the Bay of Fires – with its famous granite tors and squeaky clean beaches. In the centre they have five incredible walks – Cradle Mountain (3 days); Cradle Mountain and the Walls of Jerusalem (4 days); Lake St Claire and Cradle Mountain (6 days); Lake St Claire, Cradle Mountain and the Walls of Jerusalem (7 days) and Lake Pedder and South West Wilderness (3 days). Everyone of these walks offers breathtaking beauty and plenty of creature comforts.

lifesanadventure.com.au

Hidden Italy – destination Flinders Ranges

While Europe is off limits until 2022, our good friends at Hidden Italy have kept themselves busy coming up with similar gourmet, walking experiences in Australia, and one of their trips is the 7-day Adelaide + Flinders Ranges walking tour taking you into the heart of outback Australia. Start the tour with a night in a 4-star hotel in Adelaide's East

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For more information visit: surviveoutdoorslonger.com.au



Southern Ocean Walk – destination Fleurieu Peninsula

Speaking of South Australia, the Southern Ocean Walk is only 90 minutes from Adelaide but a world away from city life. It includes some of the most outstanding scenery of the iconic Heysen Trail with the Southern Ocean as your constant companion. From dense forests with prolific wildlife to sparkling beaches this rugged coastline never fails to inspire. The guided walk is a 4-day/3-night adventure showcasing the extraordinary diversity of the Fleurieu Peninsula coastline. This immersive experience continues off trail as your accommodation is located in the heart of Deep Creek Conservation Park. Sit back on the balcony with a pre-dinner drink and watch the local wildlife go about its business. Staying at this comfortable homestead each night means you'll only unpack once. This unique location also means transfers to and from the trail are short. Enjoy an invigorating foot bath and reflect on the day's discoveries while staff prepare dinner. The charm and secluded setting of our accommodation will soon have you settled into a blissful state of relaxation.

southernoceanwalk.com.au 

End and dinner at the city's most awarded Italian. The next morning, you drive north to spend four nights at an historic sheep station, overlooking spectacular Wilpena Pound. The tour includes four guided walks in the Ikara-Flinders Ranges NP. Along the way, local indigenous guides will introduce us to the history and culture the Adnyamathanha

people, you'll learn about the pioneering history of the region, visit an important rock art site and watch the colours of this amazing landscape change as the sun rises and sets each day. On the way back to Adelaide you stop for a delicious lunch in the vineyards of one the Clare Valley's finest wineries.

hiddenitaly.com.au

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Creek behind the hut.

GREAT
ALPINE WALKS
.....
SPION KOPJE,
VIC

ZEN AND THE ART OF BUSHWALKING

*Great Walks practises a bit of mindfulness
on a breathtaking High Country hike.*

.....
WORDS_ IAN TREVASKIS. PHOTOS_ IAN TREVASKIS AND NICOLE JEN.



THE original plan had been to hike out to Edmondson's Hut, spend the night there and then do a day walk to Spion Kopje before heading back to our cars. When we heard the road between Watchbed Creek and Falls Creek Village would be closed for a bike race on our planned day of return, we decided an extra day in the mountains wouldn't go astray and we'd be able to do a bit more exploring in this fabulous High Country region.

There are a number of options to reach Spion Kopje's summit. If you're after a gut-busting toil, take the Spion Kopje Fire Track that climbs steeply out of Howmans Gap. Another option is the much longer circuitous route along the Black Possum Spur Track from the Bogong Power Station. We were looking forward to a leisurely weekend's walking, so we chose the less arduous route by starting from Watchbed Creek and following the Big River Fire Track.

Four of us set out from Watchbed Creek, about 10 minutes by car from the Falls Creek Village, late on a Friday afternoon on a 'bluebird day' – perfectly clear skies and not a breath of wind. Our route involved a steady climb that wended its way through shimmering snow gums before emerging above the tree line at 'The Park', an expansive snow plain and a favourite playground of mine during the snow season. After passing the turn off leading to Fitzgerald and Kelly Hut we made a left turn and walked down the narrow bracken-infested track to Edmondson Hut and set up camp.

Spy hill

Edmondson Hut is a former cattleman's hut built by Jim Edmondson in the 1930s. He pre-cut the timber at his property in Tawonga and along with iron for the walls, chimney and roof, carted it up to the High Plains by pack horse. In 1971 the hut was donated to the Education Department and is now under the care of the Bogong Outdoor Centre.

We made an early start in the morning to walk the 8km to Spion Kopje. Despite the chill in the air, we soon warmed up as we hiked up and around the western slope of Mt Nelse (1,882m) with a spring in our steps now that we were only carrying small day packs. With Mount Nelse North (1,884m) a short stroll to the east, we discarded our packs and made our way to its summit to take in the views towards Mount Wills and Omeo. We then strolled across undulating ridgelines from Warby Corner towards Spion Kopje.

According to the 2008 book, *Cattlemen of the High Country: The Story of the Mountain Cattlemen of the Bogongs*, the Afrikaans name meaning 'spy hill' references the site of a battle in which Boer forces defeated the British in 1900. Following a bloody battle and the vanquishing of the Brits, the story goes that late in the afternoon the Boers vacated their strategic position to return to their farms to milk the cows! Not sure it's true, but it's a nice story anyway.

Perfect vistas

Near Spion Kopje we came across a wide channel of water leading to nowhere – the remains of an aqueduct excavated in the late 1950s as part of a planned extension to the Kiewa Valley Hydro Electricity Scheme. A couple of kays later and we were standing atop Spion Kopje with views all the way to the fire tower at Mount Hotham. To the north-west lay Bogong Village and Lake Guy, while Mount Bogong brooded to the north. The vistas were all the more remarkable because of the ridgelines and spurs marching away to the horizon, thickly spiked with dead trees from past bushfires, looking a lot like the stubble on a grizzled cattleman's chin.

At 1,841m elevation, Spion Kopje (pronounced *spee-on kop-yeh*, or *kee-op* depending on who you talk to) isn't the highest mountain in the Bogong High Plains. It doesn't loom large and ominously over the landscape like Victoria's big fella, Mount Bogong, and it lacks the stateliness and spectacularism of Mount Feathertop to the southwest. Despite being "less significant" and less well-known, it's well worth the walk to stand at the trig point and gaze across the panorama of the Great Dividing Range.

We had morning tea in the lee of a jumble of rocks below the trig marker, my gaze being repeatedly drawn back to the rugged peaks fanning out from Australia's most famous ridge – the Great Dividing Range. After a



Left: Edmondson Hut is a different sight in winter.

Far left: Big River Fire Track/Turn off onto Heathy Spur Track.

WALK NOTES | SPION KOPJE, VIC

Distance: 20.5km | **Time:** 2-3 days | **Grade:** medium



1. Watchbed Creek carpark to Edmondson Hut: 4.5km/2hr/medium

2. Edmondson Hut to Spion Kopje: 8km/2.5hr/easy

3. Edmondson Hut to Roper Lookout: 8km/2hr/easy



rest of the day was spent lounging around the hut, brewing endless cuppas and reading and chatting to the family group who had arrived to camp there for a few days. Discussions ranged from other huts we'd visited, tracks on the High Plains we had hiked, to what we were cooking for dinner, to comparing the qualities of our tents, cooking gear and other highly important stuff.

Connected to nature

With an extra day up our sleeves we decided on a hike across Heathy Spur to Roper Lookout, a return distance of around 16km. This is an area I am well acquainted with, but the many times I've spent on Heathy Spur I've usually been wearing skis instead of hike boots.

After leaving the hut we tramped up the narrow track and onto the Big River Fire Track, a wide 4WD maintenance track. Up here there are no trees, just sweeping plains of open grassland with large swathes of alpine daisies that can be quite stunning during the summer months. A short walk along this track brought us to the Heathy Spur Track.

As we ambled along the track, I was constantly visualising the snow-covered slopes where in winter we practise our telemark turns. Even though Falls Creek Village was a mere 15 minutes away, to be out here was to feel totally disconnected from civilisation, the air filled with a beautiful silence, occasionally interrupted by the trill of a Richard's pipit or the cry of a pied currawong.

I was reminded of the words of Christopher Ives in *Zen on the Trail: Hiking as Pilgrimage* when he says "...hiking can be a kind of spiritual pilgrimage – calming our minds, enhancing our sense of wonder, and deepening our connection to nature," and, "...as hikers we take leave of our daily lives: routines, work, stress. We separate from our normal roles and social obligations. On the trail, in a liminal state, most of our normal social markers have been stripped away as well, for we are all grunting under packs and sweating in similar clothes.'

My companions and I may not have believed we were on a pilgrimage, but those words certainly reflected how I felt as we traversed Heathy Spur in the early morning crispness,

NEED TO KNOW

The walk starts from beginning of the Big River Fire Track near Watchbed Creek, 5.5km east of Falls Creek Village on the Bogong High Plains Road. Water is easily accessible from a creek below the hut and if the 'tide's in' there is an opportunity for a bath of sorts. As with all excursions into alpine areas, make sure you carry appropriate wet weather gear. This is the walk you need to do in summer, just to marvel at the profusion of wildflowers swathed across the plains. Or do it in spring when the weather is a little milder. Maps: Bogong Alpine Area, 1st edition, 1:50000. More info: parks.vic.gov.au

leisurely stroll back across the ridgeline we stopped to soak up the sunshine at Warby Corner and had lunch. As I sat back on the grass supported by a convenient rock, I watched the white-throated needle-tails cutting through the air high overhead.

A type of swift, these migratory birds spend most of their time in the air feeding on small flying insects and are reputed to reach high speeds in horizontal flight. They usually feed in rising thermal currents associated with storm fronts and bushfires and are commonly seen moving with wind fronts. They held my attention for some time as I chewed on my sandwich, watching them dive and soar across the sky with their aerial acrobats.

After the swifts had flown on and we'd soaked up a bit more sunshine we headed back to the hut, ready for a refreshing, if somewhat cold dip in the nearby creek. The



Left: Alpine daisies.


Far left: Trig Point at Spion Kopje.

and I absorbed the simple beauty of nature all around us. The feeling of connectedness with the natural world may sound corny, but there is a certain truth to the fact that lacing up one's boots and heading into the mountains is a form of pilgrimage, whether we acknowledge it as such or not.

There and back again

Along our way we encountered a number of trail runners and day walkers, out early to make the most of the day. The track took us over some low ridges and down through snow gums so that soon we were looking over Rocky Valley Dam. We chose a spot just off the track and out of the steady wind that had sprung up and took a brief snack break before continuing. It wasn't long before we reached the information board and "Roper Lookout" sign at the eastern end of the Rocky Valley Dam wall. We followed the track for about 1.5 km beside the open channel of the aqueduct before climbing the short, somewhat steeper section, which ended at the small basalt knoll of Roper Lookout. While we ate lunch we were able to enjoy views down the Kiewa Valley, of Falls Creek Village and Mt McKay and the distant peak of Mount Feathertop.

We retraced our steps back to Edmondson Hut, arriving there a couple of hours later. The day had become quite cool with a freshening westerly wind blowing through the snow gums. It was time to adjourn to the hut, stoke up the fire and brew ourselves a well-deserved cuppa after a pleasant day's walk in this beautiful country.

Next day began with an early breakfast before we packed up tents, stuffed our gear into our packs, said farewell to our new-found friends and made the short walk back to the car. We mightn't have completed a gut-busting, multi-day hike in the wilderness, but as Christopher Ives says, "... *Emerging back at the trailhead, we feel satisfied, maybe even cleansed. We may feel vividly alive in our sore bodies. An hour later we may find ourselves bombarded by the fluorescent lights in a supermarket as we forage for munchies, and at that point we may realise for the first time how calm and quiet we became on the trail.*" 

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THIS MONTH'S WINNING PHOTO

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Torres del Paine NP, Chile

Genny May, Hornsby Heights NSW

Camera: Lumix G9

Genny: "Trekking the 'W' in Torres del Paine is dramatic, unpredictable, spectacular and one of my key bucket list achievements. After battling rain and gale force winds walking up the French Valley, the sun peaked through and the glacier emerged. The sound of cracking ice the soundtrack to our climb."



Meteora, Greece

Scott Wolgamot,

Camera: iPhone 5

Scott: "Meteora, Greece. Although you can ride a bus to many of the sites, it is far better to spend a day, or more, hiking the area to gain an appreciation of the difficulties they encountered in the quest for isolation."

Belgrave Heights, Vic

Inna Epshtein, Upwey, Vic

Camera: Sony A7 Mark 3

Inna: "This photo was taken at Birdsland Reserve in Belgrave Heights on a beautiful foggy morning. There are dogs, kids and wheelchair-friendly access for a walk around the lake. During lockdowns when we were only allowed to travel within a 5km radius from our house. It was blessing to have such a natural place to escape so close. I loved the atmosphere and pureness of mother nature."





Glass House Mountains, Qld

Angela van Bortel, Noosa Heads, Qld

Camera: iPhone XR

Angela: "This picture was taken in the July school holidays. I had a strong urge to go to the mountains that day. It was a rainy morning and my teen sons thought it be a terrible day for walking. Though the rain cleared up and we did the summit of Ngungen followed by the Tribogargan trailhead. It was stunning especially the latter as it had the most amazing crisp clean winter colours. On the way back in the car we heard we were going into lockdown the following day. So glad we had soaked up the mountains and I had followed my urge to go on that day regardless the weather timing."

(For another stunning Glass House Mountains shot see our Where Next column, pg4 – Ed)

Larapinta Trail, NT

John Millar, Port Fairy, Vic

Camera: N/A

John: "A small group from Port Fairy in SW Victoria did a 6-day walk on the Larapinta in mid May this year. Following the 2019 fires and then the wet summer this year the flowers were spectacular, as well as the scenery of course."



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A whale is spotted, with the Byron Bay Lighthouse in the background.

GETTY IMAGES

GREAT
COASTAL WALKS
BYRON BAY,
NSW

WALKING THE WHALE TRAIL

Byron Bay may be better known for its hipster than its hiking trails but this surf destination is the gateway to a humpback highway.

WORDS_ **PETA MURRAY**

PHOTOS_ **PETA MURRAY & BEN BOMAN**

THE other half is not what you'd call an avid hiker. It's not that he's adamantly averse to a stroll. Just that he has stringent criteria. He doesn't do hills, headwinds or any hint of having to retrace his steps and he demands highlights because, heaven knows, there's no hiking crime more heinous than humdrum.

I've obviously hitched my pack to the toughest of crowds but I'm quietly confident that the coastal walk between the northern NSW towns of Byron Bay and Ballina with the lure of whales and the promise of a pub will win him over.

We set off from Byron Surf Club, a stone's throw from town centre, the path hugging the dunes behind Main Beach and the sparse tree-line sharing glimpses of glittering ocean beyond.

From Clarke's Beach the track begins the gentle ascent up Lighthouse Road. A timber boardwalk unveils the rolling sets of world-famous surf break The Pass, the panorama taking in the length of Byron's beaches and the twin domes of Julian Rocks backdropped by the distant ranges and Wollumbin's distinctive peak.

Leaving the road, the trail dips to Cape Byron State Conservation Area where brush turkeys scratch surreptitiously in the scrub and koalas are sometimes spotted high in the rangy eucalypts.

Wending over to Wategos, another hotly-contested wave fringed by a sandy cove and some of the nation's



Top: Surveying Tallow Beach and the long walk ahead from the top of Cape Byron.

Above: A lone pelican stands sentinel before Ballina's northern breakwall.

most expensive real estate, it's a steep but short (or so I assure the other half) upward clamber to Australia's most easterly point crowned by Byron's 120-year-old white-washed lighthouse, the country's most powerful light station sending a signal fifty kilometres out to sea.

With a gentle north-easterly tickling our ears, we scan the vast expanse of ocean for misty spume or a distant displacement of white water, tell-tale signs of humpback whales on their annual east coast migration.

Wet and wild

From the lighthouse, we track across fenced clifftops falling sheer to the sea before shaded woodlands loop us a kilometre back down the western side of the hill and along the road to Cosy Corner tucked beneath the beam of Byron's historic light. Here at the northern end of Tallow Beach, named for the candle-bound cargo of a ship wrecked off the Cape in 1864, the ocean is a roiling tumble of green waves and spray sprinkled with seasoned surfers.

Half an hour's hiking along the packed sand of low tide takes us past one of NSW's smallest reserves, the tiny Arakwal National Park, to its southern boundary Tallow Creek, a waterway snaking behind the dunes which opens sporadically to the sea. With the national park home to over 120 species of bird, the creek is an important feeding ground for pelicans, egrets, little terns and beach stone-curlews.

The weather is changeable around the cape and a sudden squall scuds in from the east, dusting us in a light shower of rain and throwing up a cluster of the rainbows for which this region is known. The sun returns and the remaining four kilometres are walked between untamed ocean currents and stands of dense coastal heath featuring pandanus and banksia, the dunes gradually giving way to the village of Suffolk Park and its neighbouring Ti-Tree Lakes. Coloured by the coppery tannins leached from the surrounding trees, the lakes are said to have medicinal qualities and are regarded by the local Bundjalung people as a sacred women's site.

Broken days

After a night at Broken Head Holiday Park serenaded to sleep by the soothing sound of the waves, we are ready to tackle Broken Head Nature Reserve, a wind-whipped stand of forest scoring the headland across to Seven Mile Beach. Hiking through the reserve means taking the dirt road along the escarpment with snapshots of ocean gleaned through littoral rainforest peppered with palms and pines, the call of catbirds and wompoo pigeons and the occasional shy pademelon hiding in the undergrowth.

Host to a bevy of Byron Shire's prettiest beaches, the headland strings us high above the secluded sands of Kings, Brays and Whites. A visit to each of these coves down narrow tracks can easily add a couple of hours to your hike but makes for a worthy detour.

Winding down from Jews Point we arrive on the sands of Seven Mile which, despite its boast, is only 5.3 miles long, the misnomer generating glee in my walking companion as his cold beer gets a few clicks closer. Strolling south we are circled by a white-bellied sea eagle hovering on the ocean breeze while pied oyster catchers with their distinctive red beaks scurry away at our approach.

Beyond the dunes lie the brackish waters of Lake Ainsworth, another tea tree-infused freshwater lagoon which gains its name from farmer and early European settler to the area James Ainsworth. The seaside village of Lennox Head eventually appears, overshadowed by its eponymous hulking headland and Pat Morton Lookout, launching ground for hang-gliders on a breezy day. A shallow reef sits off the southern end of the beach, ideal for snorkelling at low tide while, further out, the point's renowned right-hand wave washes in over basalt rocks.

Whale of a trail

A night in Lennox complete with a visit to the local pub and the other half is all smiles for day three which sees us embark on the



**“A POD OF DOLPHINS
PLAY ON THE
OUTGOING TIDE”**

Above: The coastal path traces the dunes between Skennars Head and Ballina

most scenic section of the coastal track. Tracing the headland up a set of wooden stairs, we walk through scrubby heath before the panorama opens on a posse of padlocks, odes to love adorning the clifftop's wire fence.

Cradling the coastline, the trail sweeps across a grassy bluff where unbroken ocean views provide the perfect vantage point to spy whales. Eyes akimbo, spears of spume alert us to the passing parade of migrating humpbacks, an occasional tail flick or fin splash churning up the sea while a brahminy kite sails effortlessly on the zephyrs above.

The track brings us to the aptly named Boulder Beach where the stones rattle on a rising tide. Skirting a low-lying lagoon alive with the throaty chorus of frogs we reach the jutting chin of Iron Peg, another green eyrie overlooking a rock-laced surf break where dolphins and board riders skim the swell.


I studiously ignore my hiking buddy's grimace as we scramble up Skennars Head, the second steep ascent of the trail. Third of the grassy knolls, Skennars Head is also gateway to the coast recreational path, a paved track which threads the woodland behind the dunes and the pearly necklace of beaches studded south along the eastern shore.

Sharpes Beach, accessible by both sand or pathway, gives way to Flat Rock, a stony platform which drips into the sea and lays technical claim at low tide to being the easternmost point of Australia.

We pass through groves of paperbark, coastal cypress pines and a thick green carpet of pink-eared pigface as tiny blue-headed fairy-wrens flit silently through the branches, eastern whipbirds slice the air with their signature call and a shiny-skinned land mullet scrabbles for the safety of denser scrub.

The paved path eventually veers up to the road leaving a sandy bush trail which deposits us at the southern end of Angels Beach. The stark silhouette of Black Head looms, a site tarnished by the tragic massacre of Aboriginal tribes here in the 1850s. Home to indigenous clans for over 12 000 years, this country around East Ballina remains a significant place for First Nations people today.

Gaining the southern reaches of Shelly Beach's pebbled shore, we head over the rise to Lighthouse Beach and its nineteenth-century namesake, one of the oldest light stations in NSW, finally arriving at Ballina's northern break wall, a jumble of rocks and concrete blocks shepherding the Richmond River out to sea.

A pod of dolphins play on the outgoing tide and a whale casually breaches a few hundred metres off the break wall, a cetacean salute to the setting sun. I look over at the other half. He's not saying much but, judging by the expression of awe on his dial, I reckon his hiking criteria has just gone next level. 

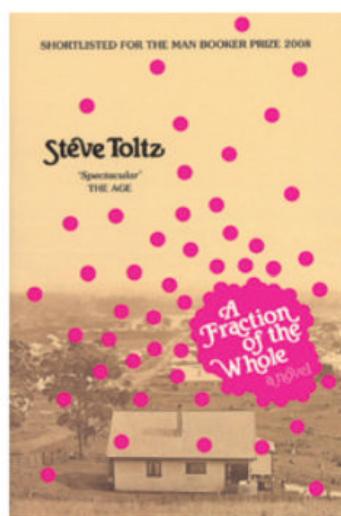
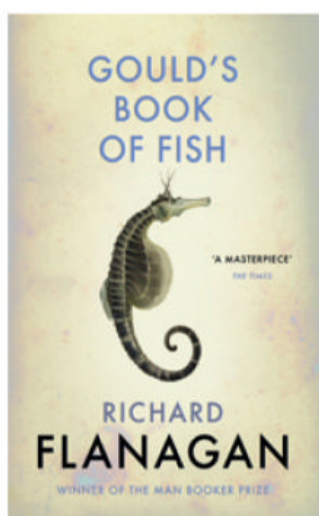
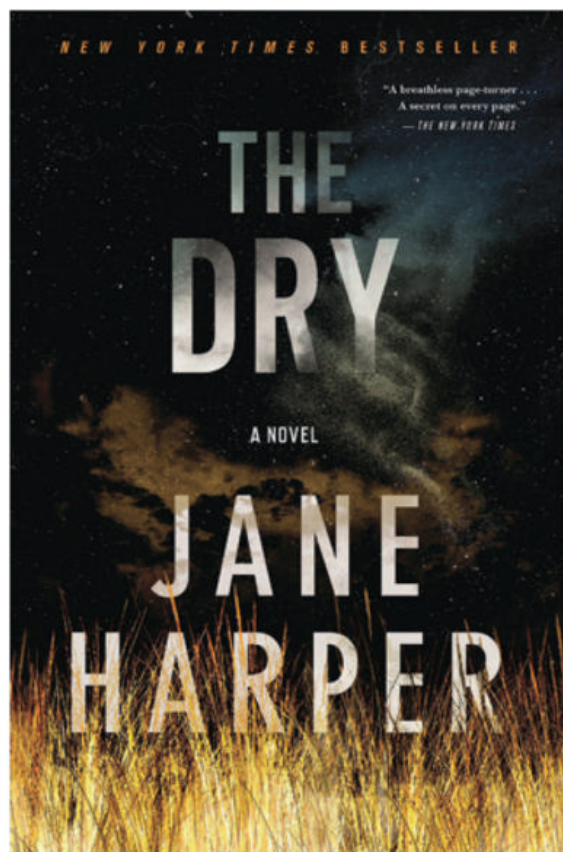
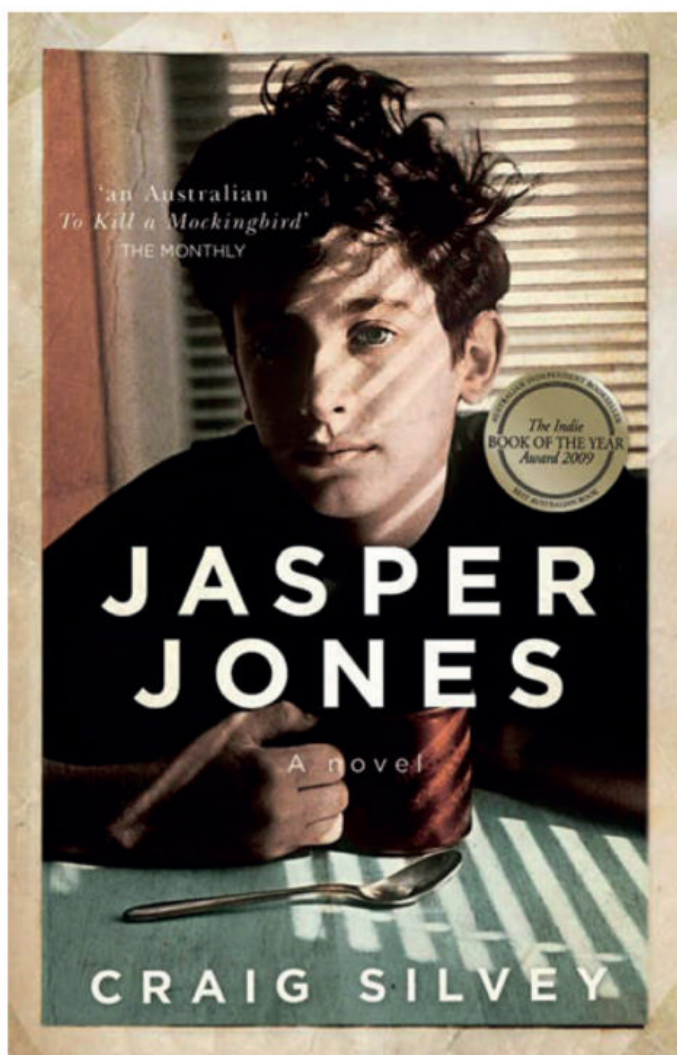
NEED TO KNOW

Check tide charts before commencing the hike. Tallow Beach and Seven Mile are best walked on or around a low tide. The section Lennox Head to Ballina can be walked on any tide as there are alternative paths behind the beaches. Sections of the hike are exposed so apply sunscreen and carry plenty of water. Pack the binoculars for whale watching May to November.

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“I couldn’t think of anything other than her and the components of her. For example, her red hair. But was I so primitive I let myself be bewitched by hair? I mean, really. Hair! It’s just hair! Everyone has it! She puts it up, she lets it down. So what? And why did all the other parts of her have me wheezing with delight? I mean, who hasn’t got a back, or a belly, or armpits? This whole finicky obsession serves to humiliate me even as I write it, sure, but I suppose it isn’t that abnormal. That’s what first love is all about. What happens is you meet a love object and immediately a hole inside you starts aching, the hole that is always there but you don’t notice until someone comes along, plugs it up, and then runs away with the plug.”

– *A Fraction of the Whole*, Steve Toltz

“With no one but blacks around him, other than his own son, Thornhill saw that their skins were not black, no more than his own was white. They were simply skins, with the same pores and hairs, the same shadings of colour as his own. If black skin was all there was to see, it was amazing how quickly it became the colour that skin was.”

– *The Secret River*, Kate Grenville

“Voss could always, if necessary, fail to understand. But wounds will wince, especially in the salt air. He was smiling and screwing up his eyes at the great theatre of light and water. Some pitied him. Some despised him for his funny appearance of a foreigner. None, he realised with a tremor of anger, was conscious of his strength. Mediocre, animal men never do guess at the power of rock or fire, until the last moment before those elements reduce them to – nothing. This, the palest, the most transparent of words, yet comes closest to being complete.”

– *Voss*, Patrick White

“He was tender with her. He wiped her eyelids with his handkerchief, not noticing how soiled it was. It was stained with ink, crumpled, stuck together. Her lids were large and tender and the handkerchief was stiff, not nearly soft enough. He moistened a corner in his mouth. He was painfully aware of the private softness of her skin, of how the eyes trembled beneath their coverings. He dried

the tears with an affection, a particularity, that had never been exercised before. It was a demonstration of 'nature.' He was a birth-wet foal rising to his feet."

— *Oscar and Lucinda*, Peter Carey

"That was the simple objective, being airborne, up longer, up higher, more casually and with more f**k off elegance than anyone else in the world. I never understood the rules or the science of it but I recognised the single-mindedness it took to match risk with nerve come what may. Some endeavours require a kind of egotism, a near autistic narrowness. Everything conspires against you – the habits of physics, the impulse to flee – and you're weighed down by every dollop of commonsense dished up. Everyone will tell you your goal is impossible, pointless, stupid, wasteful so you hang tough. You back yourself and only yourself. This idiot resolve is all you have."

— *Breath*, Tim Winton

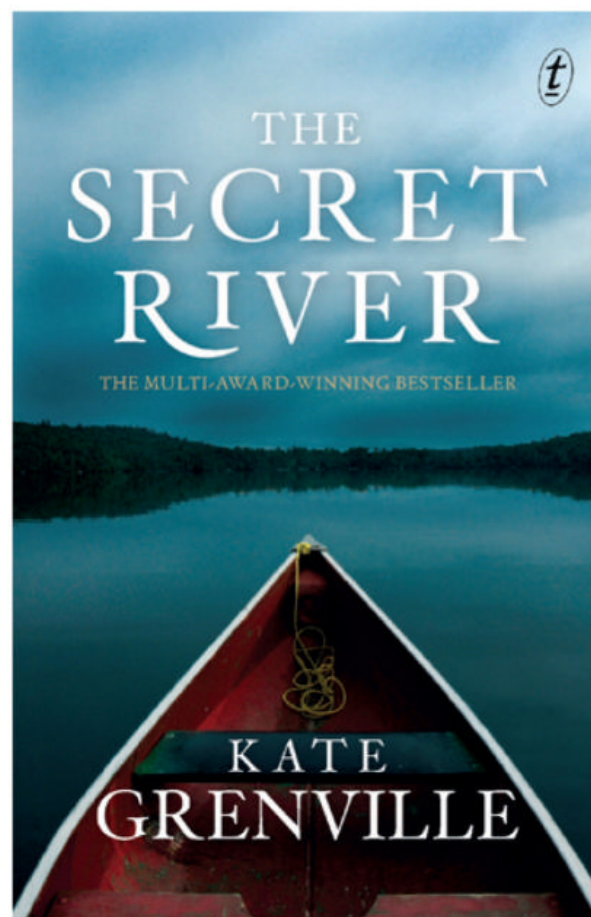
"I remembered only the good and loveable things about him, not the wretchedness he caused me, and the dope, and the resentments and silence and the half-crazy outbursts. I remembered his smell and the colour of his eyes and his head thrown back to laugh; these things were a second away, in time, but the others I dredged up dutifully, knowing that I must, for the sake of truth and sanity, try to keep a balance."

— *Monkey Grip*, Helen Garner

"Men's lives are not progressions, as conventionally rendered in history paintings, nor are they a series of facts that may be enumerated and in their proper order understood. Rather they are a series of transformations, some immediate and shocking, some so slow as to be imperceptible, yet so complete and horrifying that at the end of his life a man may search his memory in vain for a moment of correspondence between his self in his dotage and him in his youth."

— *Gould's Book of Fish: A Novel in Twelve Fish*, Richard Flanagan

"Well, see, I think it's that most people don't like that lonely feeling. People don't like looking up and feeling small or lost. That's



what I think prayer is all about. It doesn't matter which stories they believe in, they're all doing the same thing, kind of casting a line out to outer space, like there's something out there to connect to. It's like people make themselves part of something bigger that way, and maybe it makes them less afraid."

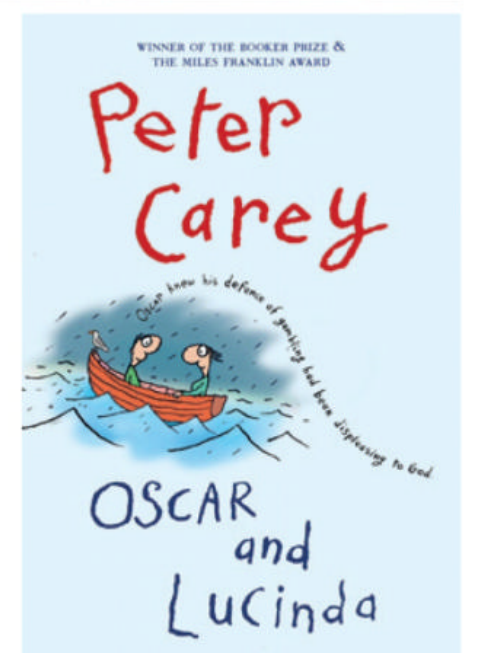
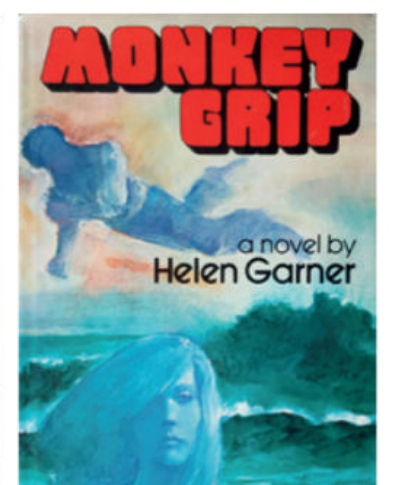
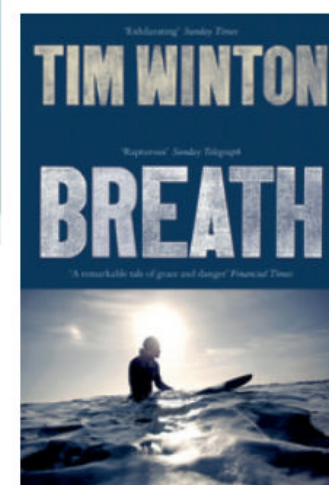
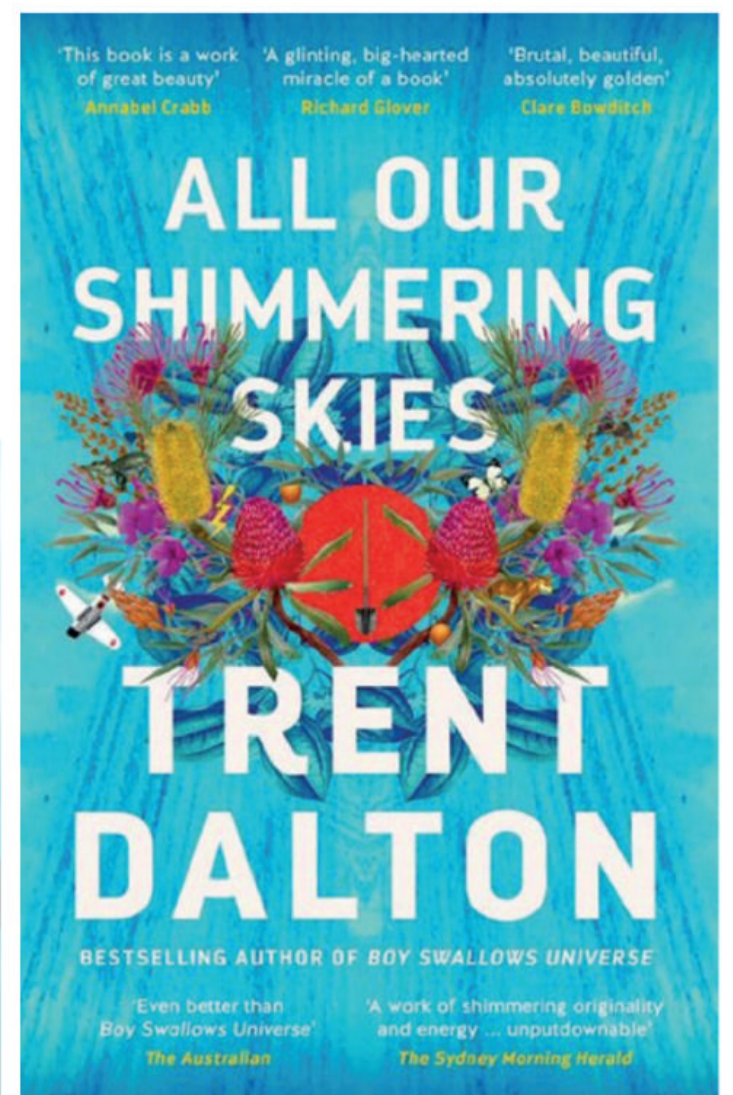
— *Jasper Jones*, Craig Silvey

"Hearts don't turn to stone, Molly," Greta says. "But they do turn. One day your heart is filled with nothing but love and then something gets inside and mixes in with all that love and sometimes that something is black and sometimes it's cold and feels just like stone because it's heavy, and sometimes it gets so heavy you can't carry it inside you no more."

— *All Our Shimmering Skies*, Trent Dalton

"Outside, washing hung still on the rotary line, bone dry and stiff from the sun. A child's scooter lay abandoned on the stepping-stone path. Just one human heart beat within a kilometre radius of the farm. So nothing reacted when, deep inside the house, the baby started crying."

— *The Dry*, Jane Harper



COLOURS OF AUSTRALIA

Check out some stunning photos from the August online photo comp.



Red Rocks

Heather McNiece: "A hiker makes their way along the contorted layers of rock in Hamersley Gorge, Karijini National Park."



Bay of Fires, Tas

Erika Smart: "Bay of Fires is such an appropriate name for this colourful part of Tasmania – fire in the sky and on the rocks."

On the beach

Rachel Kneubuhler: "You can find all sorts of little treasures when you go for a walk on the beach."



Darwin sunset joy

Sonya Bree: "A grandchild caught in the zen moment of yet another dazzling Top End sunset."





Kata Tjuta, NT

Gavin Kellett: "Central Australia is such a special place. This image was when my daughters were just young, with an adventurous spirit."

The Red Cliffs

Lisa Kerr: "Australia's natural beauty has many colours that blend together to create the Wow! effect."



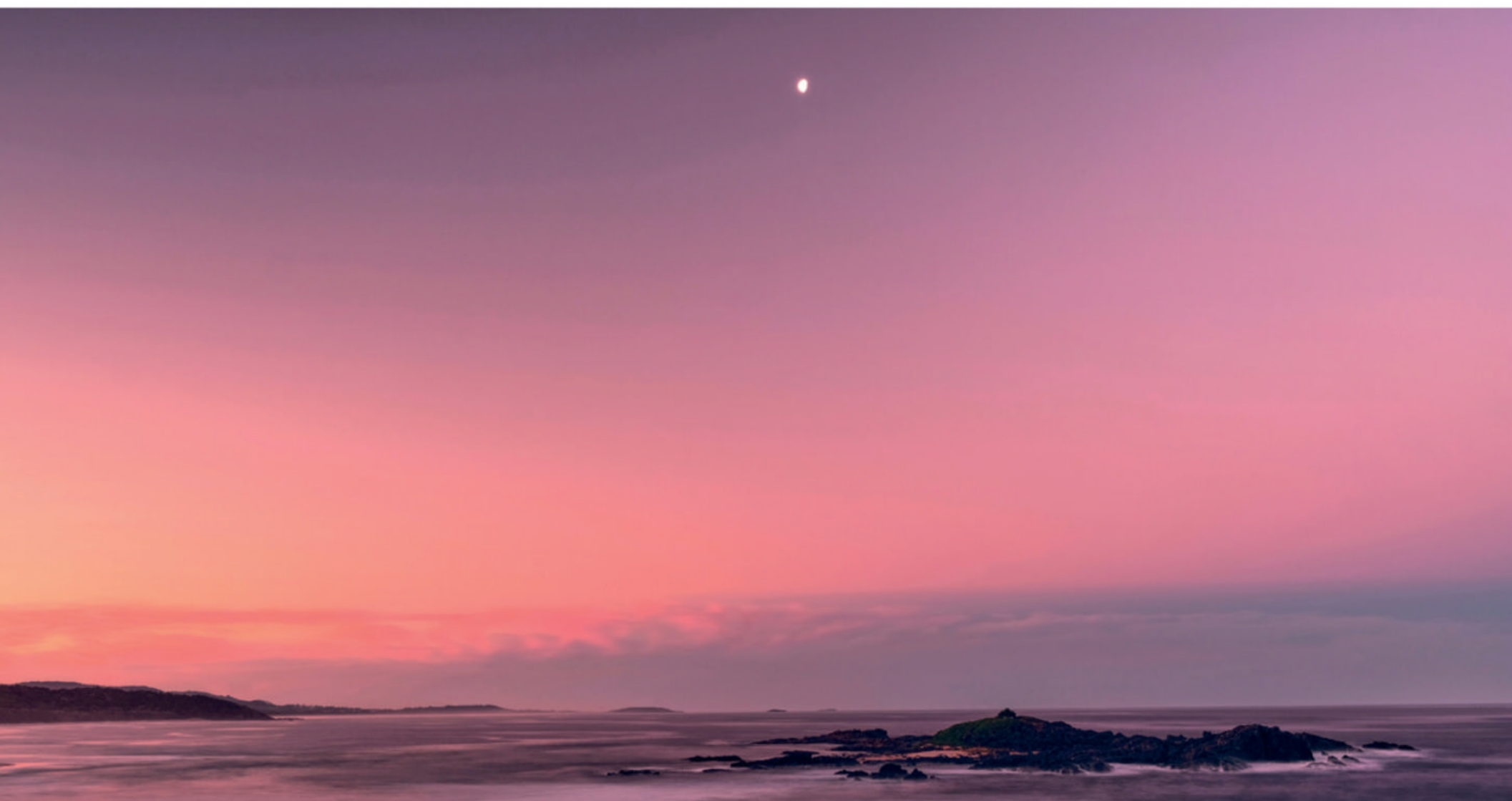
Lunchbreak in the snow!

David Matthews: "Quick lunch break whilst snowshoeing in Kosciuszko National Park above Rawson Pass on our way to Seamans Hut for a campout. Near white-out conditions leading up to Rawsons Pass with a breif respite the other side!"



Sunset over Sawtell, NSW

Ashley Strong: "There was a sense of satisfaction in the air with people setting up their picnics with food and drink to go, it seemed like this was the spot to forget about life's troubles."





Blue skies after the rain

Rachel Kneubuhler: "Even though the blue skies had returned after rain the bottlebrush flowers were still covered in droplets of water."

NEED TO KNOW

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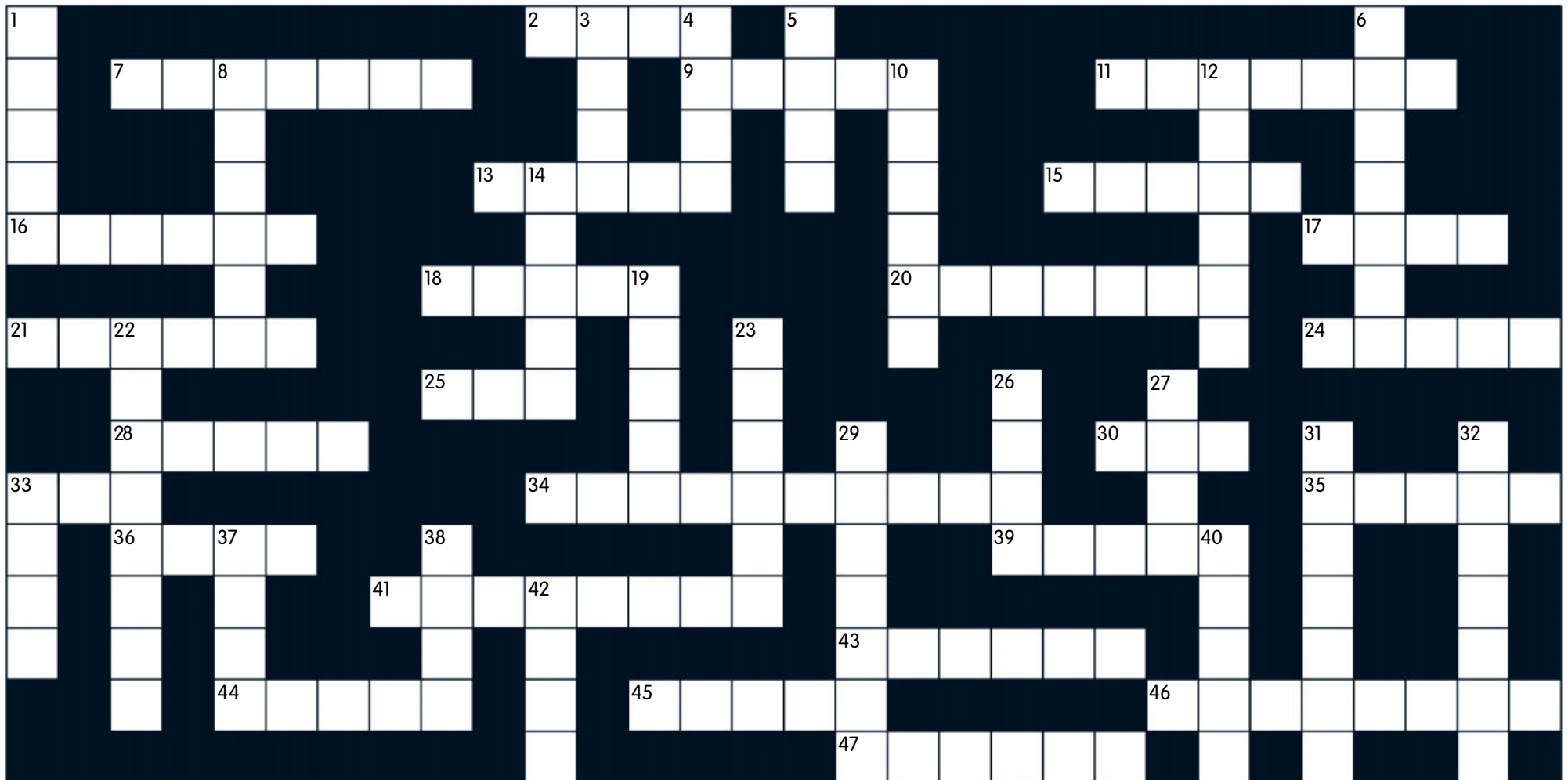
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WORD UP!

CROSSWORD_JASON FREEMAN

Across

2. ___ Rock is a curved rock formation near Hyden in WA, around 15m high and 110m long. (4)
7. The Blue Mountains are not technically mountains, but a dissected, uplifted ___. (7)
9. This SA peninsula sits between Spencer Gulf and Gulf St Vincent. (5)
11. The state boundaries of Qld, SA and NSW meet at ___ Corner. (7)
13. The world's biggest fish, the ___ Shark, is seasonally spotted at Ningaloo Reef, WA. (5)
15. Occasionally, during Sep/Oct each year, 'Morning ___' clouds can be seen in the Gulf of Carpentaria. (5)
16. The southernmost latitude where the Sun can be seen directly overhead during the December solstice, the ___ of Capricorn. (6)
17. The Great Dividing Range, also known as the ___ Australian Cordillera. (4)
18. Over 80% of Australians live within 100km of the ___. (5)
20. The geographic region that includes Australasia, Melanesia, Micronesia and Polynesia. (7)
21. This capital city is sited on the land of the Gadigal people. (6)

24. The southerly tip of mainland Australia is called South ___. (5)
25. Lake Argyle, in the eastern Kimberley region of WA, is primarily fed by the ___ River. (3)
28. The Heysen and Mawson Trails pass through the ___-Flinders Ranges NP. (5)
30. The Marree ___ is a 2.7km long geoglyph, located at Finnis Springs, 60km west of Marree, SA. (3)
33. ___ Lomond is a mountain and NP in NE Tasmania, known for downhill skiing. (3)
34. A great magazine! 5,5 (10)
35. The Figure ___ Pools are located in Sydney's Royal National Park, near Burning Palms Beach. (5)
36. NT's Melville and Bathurst Islands are collectively known as the ___ Islands. (4)
39. ___ Point in WA is the western-most prominence of mainland Australia. (5)
41. The Qld outback route passing through Winton, Hughenden and Richmond is known as Australia's ___ Trail. (8)
43. The ___ Pacific is a passenger train operating between Sydney and Perth. (6)
44. The Oodnadatta ___ is an unsealed 600km+ road in outback SA, running from Marree to Marla. (5)

45. The world's largest war memorial is actually a road, the Great ___ Road in Victoria. (5)
46. The Great ___ Desert, located in WA and SA, is Australia's largest desert. (8)
47. ___ Eylandt is the largest island in the Gulf of Carpentaria – 'big island' in old Dutch. (6)

Down

1. Over 1000km across, a bay on Australia's south coast, The Great Australian ___. (5)
3. ___ Creek Station is the world's largest working cattle station, near William Creek, SA. (4)
4. The Lake ___ Basin spans four states and is fed by waterways such as Cooper Creek. (4)
5. 70% of Australia's land mass is designated as the ___ zone. (4)
6. Australia is the only continent without an active ___. (7)
8. Another term for a montane ecosystem is the sub-___ zone. (6)
10. Lady ___ Island lies at the south end of the Great Barrier Reef. (6)
12. The longest continuous river in Australia, the ___ River. (6)
14. A sub-Antarctic island group, McDonald and ___ Islands. (5)
19. Near Cairns, Atherton and Mareeba are towns on the plateau known as Atherton ___lands. (5)

22. This rainforest in NE Queensland is thought to be the world's oldest. (8)
23. A common term for a summer afternoon breeze in lower WA, The Fremantle ___. (6)
26. A southern strip of water named after English explorer and physician, George ___. (4)
27. At 43°38'S, the bottom of Tasmania, South East ___. (4)
29. Mount ___ (1156 metres ASL) in NSW was once the centre of Tweed Volcano. (7)
31. Australia has ten ___, covering around 18% of the land mass. (7)
32. The Territory of Norfolk Island is comprised of Norfolk, Nepean & ___ Islands. (7)
33. The Great South Australian Coastal Upwelling System attracts the world's largest animal, the ___ whale. (4)
37. ___ MacDonnell National Park is located close to Alice Springs. (4)
38. Lake Hillier, located on Middle Island, WA, is permanently this colour. (4)
40. At over 1000km wide, the Nullarbor ___ derives its name from Latin – 'no tree'. (5)
42. The ___ mines of Coober Pedy in SA are the largest in the world for this mineral. (4)

Answers page 81.

GREAT COASTAL
WALKS

THREE CAPES
WALK, TAS

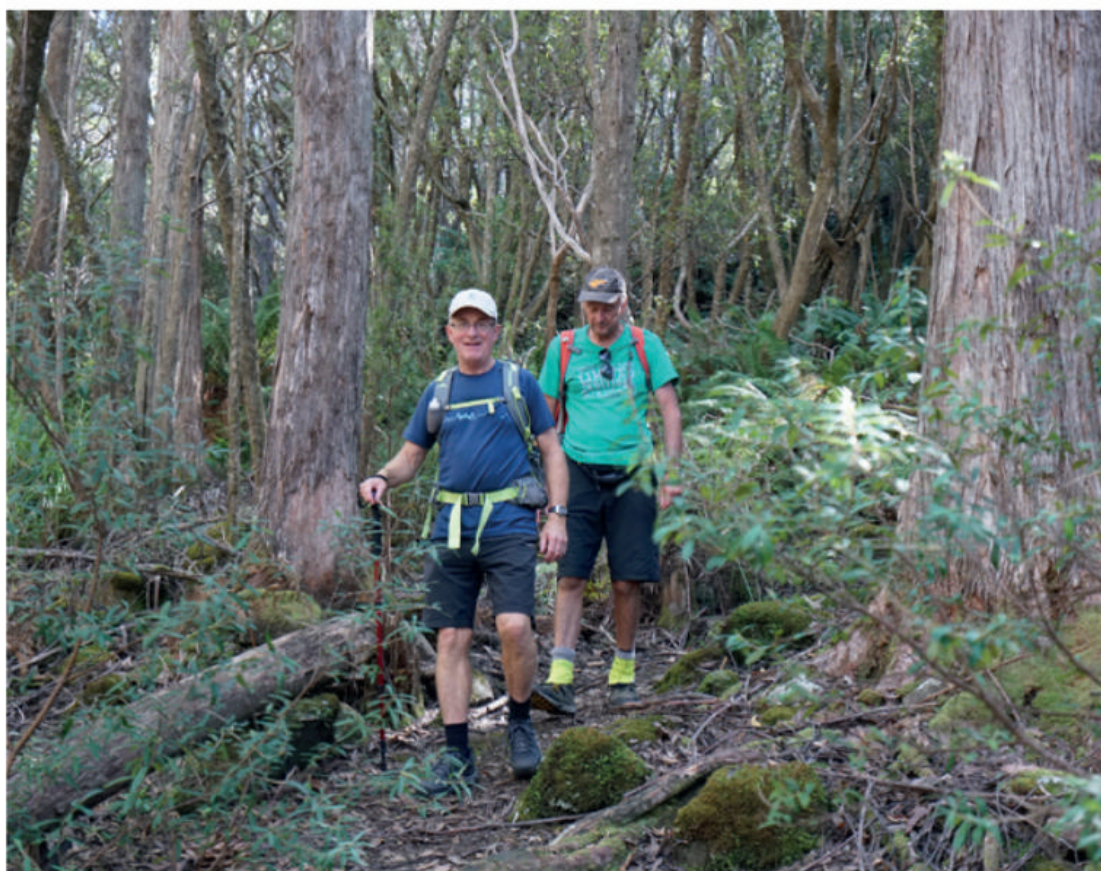
CAVES, COASTLINE & CONVICTS

On the Three Capes guided walk, *Great Walks* discovers a magnificent trail and the story of the outlaw who put it on the map.

WORDS AND PHOTOS **BRENT MCKEAN**

Guide Danny poses from a top viewing spot on Day 2.





THE first person to successfully swim the shark infested waters off the Tasman Peninsula was a bushranger named Martin Cash to escape the terrors of Port Arthur in 1840. Back then the penal colony was surrounded by high walls, armed guards, impenetrable bush, impossibly high sea cliffs and those uninviting waters, all making it escape proof. Well, almost.

I was introduced to Martin Cash by my Life's An Adventure guide Danny as we began our Three Capes walk. Danny's a local and knowing a whole lot about the state, loves telling stories about the characters who add so much colour to Tassie's history. Our Three Capes walk started off with a lovely bus ride from Hobart to the start of the walk in Tasman NP on the peninsula. This place is pretty special as it's home to over one third of Tasmania's recorded plant species including more than 60 that are threatened.

Our destination for the day was Cape Raoul. From the carpark the 14km return trail started along a quiet eucalypt forest, past flowing streams and over a couple of log bridges. We passed some interesting art installations – part of the official Three Capes Walk experience – including a wooden bench that wouldn't look out of place in *Game of Thrones*. After an hour the trail began to run along the edge of the rising peninsula offering stunning views of the mighty Tasman Sea, a taste of vistas to come.

After another good hour of moderate level walking the trail plateaued out onto an open track of banksia scrub. Two well-built platforms offered excellent views of Tasman Island, Bruny Island, the southern capes and Shipstern Bluff. It wasn't too windy but the exposed top is famous for its mighty gusts – some of the strongest recorded in



“THE TRAIL BEGAN TO RUN ALONG THE EDGE OF THE RISING PENINSULA OFFERING STUNNING VIEWS OF THE MIGHTY TASMAN,”

Australia. While I was snacking on my lunch and admiring the view Danny continued the story of Martin Cash.

A bullet in the bum

Martin was born in 1808 in County Wexford, Ireland. He worked as a farm boy there until he was convicted in 1827 of shooting a man. In Martin's defence he said he fired at the man through a window after he spotted him embracing Cash's mistress. Apparently the steel ball wounded his rival in the buttocks, and for that Cash was sent to Australia for seven years hard labour.

Cash worked in the NSW Hunter Valley for a landowner for all that time but trouble was never far away. After getting involved in cattle rustling he left for Van Diemen's Land, accompanied by a Miss Bessie Clifford, arriving in February 1837. Two years later he was convicted of larceny and again sentenced to seven years. From here things got interesting...

After getting enough of the views from Cape Raoul we returned down the long winding track and were back at the carpark in half the time. The day's walking was an

Clockwise from above:

Getting ready to head to Cape Hauy.

One of the many art installations along the walk.

Pretty flora lined much of the walk.

Heading towards Fortescue Bay.

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WALK NOTES | **THREE CAPES GUIDED WALK, TAS**

Time: 3 days | **Length:** 41km | **Grade:** moderate



Day 1: Cape Raoul, 14km

Day 2: Bay to Fortescue Bay, 17.5km

Day 3: Cape Hauy, 9km. Plus helicopter ride or scenic cruise option.

excellent introduction to what was to come and it was lovely getting to know my fellow travellers, a group of recently retired people from Christchurch who had formed their own bushwalking club. This was the club's first overseas walk.

Our guides drove us to our accommodation for the next two nights, the gorgeous Stewarts Bay Lodge where our luggage was waiting in our spacious rooms. Like everyone on the walk I was famished, and after a hot shower it was straight to Gabriel's Restaurant in the main dining area for a pre-dinner drink and a glorious a la carte meal.

Periscopes up

It's not every day you see a submarine on a bushwalk but the following morning one was clearly visible in Stewarts Bay. As my fellow hikers and I sipped our coffees on the lawn, staring at this curious sight we could see a team of Australian submariners staring back at us. After a filling breakfast and briefing from our guides we hopped back on the bus and headed to our next destination, the 17km walk from Waterfall Bay to Fortescue Bay. The sky was clear and there was little wind.

One of the nice things about Life's An Adventure's walking tours – well besides the fact they're pack-free – is there are normally two walking options a day – a longer, moderate walk and a shorter, less challenging one, for those wanting to take it easy. Four of the team took the latter option and by all accounts had a great day filled with short walks and a tour of Port Arthur.

Speaking of Port Arthur our mate Martin Cash was not having a good time there. Over the first three years of his sentence he escaped three times – including his infamous swim in shark infested waters. Once he evaded capture for nearly two years, but was returned to Port Arthur with an additional four years to his sentence. Soon afterwards, with two experienced bushmen he eluded two guards at Port Arthur. The three then pursued a bushranging career on foot, robbing inns and the houses of well-to-do settlers with seeming impunity, and without the use of unnecessary violence, thus earning them the reputation of 'gentlemen bushrangers'.

Sizzled on sassafras

The start of the days walk at Waterfall Bay took us straight to a lovely spot overlooking a gorgeous waterfall plunging 200m into the sea. As we wandered up the long winding stringybark forest slowly gaining elevation, guide Danny had plenty more stories to tell. Like the one about local members of the CWA (Country Women's Association) a long time ago making beer out of the sassafras

plant which grew abundantly where we were walking. Rumour has it sassafras beer contained certain amphetamine qualities which made it popular with the men!

Soon we were walking in thicker rainforest and every so often through the trees we'd get sweeping coastal views, but the best view was from Tatnells Hill (548m), our lunch spot. The panorama of the towering sea cliffs the area is famous for, surrounded by deep blue ocean, was breathtaking. We had a nice long break sipping tea, taking in the surrounds and listening to Danny talk more about Martin Cash.

During his time on the run, Cash had heard Bessie Clifford had deserted him for another and he risked a visit to Hobart Town to see her. He was captured and was tried for killing one of his pursuers. Some popular sympathy had been aroused for Cash and somehow he escaped the noose instead being given a further ten years prison, this time on Norfolk Island, where among other things he became a hat maker.

Over the next two hours the trail from Tatnells Hill wound its way down towards Fortescue Bay, which has to be one of the most pristine beaches I've ever seen. The water was

“RUMOUR HAS IT SASSAFRAS BEER CONTAINED CERTAIN AMPHETAMINE QUALITIES WHICH MADE IT POPULAR WITH THE MEN!”



Above: The path to Cape Hauy to well made.

Opposite: Swingbridge on the way to Fortescue Bay.

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“I’M A SUCKER FOR A CHOPPER RIDE AND I GOT TO SIT IN THE FRONT WITH THE PILOT”

crystal clear and there was no way I wasn’t going for a dip. Ok, yes it was brisk but ooohh so refreshing, the perfect way to end a perfect day. It was another gorgeous meal at Gabriel’s that evening, washed down with a lovely Tassie pinot. Those who took the longer walk had plenty to tell those who took the shorter tour and visa versa. Then it was off to bed. Sleepy head, tired legs.

View from the top

After breakfast on the final day we were driven back to Fortescue Bay to walk to Cape Haug (9km return). The well made path is part of the official Three Capes Track and you can see where all the money has gone. A lot of it is paved and the steps made out of local rock have been put together like a jigsaw. Parks Tasmania certainly had a vision of making this a world-class walk and by its popularity have succeeded.

The walk starts from the boat ramp end of the bay and I was reminded of Oz’s yellow

brick road; the way the path was laid out in front of me, curvy and twisting but never out of sight. Popping up onto a saddle we got our first views of our destination. After another hour of easy walking we came to the viewing platform just across from the exceptional rock formations of the Candlestick and Totem Pole, large columns of dolerite rocking out of the ocean. They’re just breathtaking – and what’s more amazing is people climb them! The Hippolytes, a large section of rock, also sits severed from the mainland just east of the platform. You can also see Cape Pillar, the final section on the official Three Capes Track walk so give yourself time to really take in the magnificence of this seascape.

Finally we said goodbye to this wonderful spot and returned the way we came to the carpark where we were taken to our final experience of the trip. Now Life’s An Adventure always prides itself on the ‘Wow’ factor and if you hadn’t been ‘Wow-ed’ enough then the helicopter ride we were about to go on would do it. I’m a sucker for a chopper

NEED TO KNOW

For more info on this pack-free guided walk visit lifesanadventure.com.au. To do the official Three Capes Walk independently visit threecapestack.com.au



ride and I got to sit in the front with the pilot as he primed up the engine and we lifted off. Quickly we gained altitude and from the air we could follow the trail of the official Three Capes Track from where hikers get off the boat from Port Arthur to the start of the walk.

The two public huts on the trail were visible as were the hikers who looked like slowly moving ants. We headed out to Tasman Island which features the highest operating lighthouse in Australia and marks the final turning point for yachts in the Sydney-Hobart race. The island is separated from Cape Pillar by the narrow Tasman Passage, which is less than 500m wide and was probably near where Martin Cash took his death-defying plunge.

And what happened to this larger-than-life outlaw? After doing his time on Norfolk, Cash returned to Tasmania with his new bride Mary Bennett. He worked as a gardener for a local policeman and was fully pardoned in May 1856. Cash passed away in his bed in Glenorchy, Tasmania, in 1877, one of the only bushrangers to die of old age. ⚙️



Above: Flying over Tasman Island.

Below: Heading to Cape Raoul.



TOP GEAR



SOL Emergency Bivvy with Rescue Whistle and Tinder Cord

The lightweight bivvy is a compact emergency blanket that weighs only 108g, fits easily in any backpack and is ready when the weather gets worse. The bivvy blanket reflects 90% of body heat back to you with the sealed seams and waterproof material. It traps warm air to prevent heat loss and keep out rain, wind and cold. The material is also ultra quiet and tear-resistant and will not shred to pieces if punctured. Included with the reflective bivvy is a tinder paracord drawstring for fire starting and a survival whistle to.

Weight: 108g

RRP: \$44.95

Website: multisportimports.com.au



Looking for some new outdoor gear to fill your backpack with? Look no further!



SOL Flat Pack Bowl & Strainer Set

Be ready for any campsite meal prep with the Flat Pack Bowls & Strainer Set. Each set includes one 1.5L bowl, one 2.5L bowl and a strainer for a total weight of just 595g. Heat-resistant TPR is suitable for food-use up to 60 degrees C. Sturdy sides and rim handles provide rigidity to prevent sloshing. BPA-Free. All three easily collapse and nest inside each other to be stored at the end of the day.

Weight: 595g **RRP:** \$41.95 **Website:** multisportimports.com.au



Macpac Heat Exchange Pot

Designed to disperse heat evenly, this pot can warm its contents faster and increase overall fuel efficiency. It has a capacity of 1 litre, weighs just 190g, and includes a convenient internal measurement guide and mesh carry bag for easy transport.

Weight: 190g

Macpac Club Price: \$48.99

Website: macpac.com.au

Macpac Solo Pot Set

Designed for the solo traveller, this durable pot set is abrasion and stick resistant. The lid can be used as a mug or frying pan, and the fold out handles can be locked in place. To save even more space, a standard diameter gas canister and micro stove can fit inside.

Weight: 229g

Macpac Club Price: \$27.97

Website: macpac.com.au



Macpac Duo Pot Set

Designed for two people in all conditions, the Duo Pot Set is durable as it is versatile. Both lids double as frying pans, its hard anodised body is scratch and stick resistant, and all the folding handles are coated to make using them easy. Pack your standard gas canister, micro stove and fire steel inside to maximise space.

Weight: 715g

Macpac Club Price: \$48.97

Website: macpac.com.au



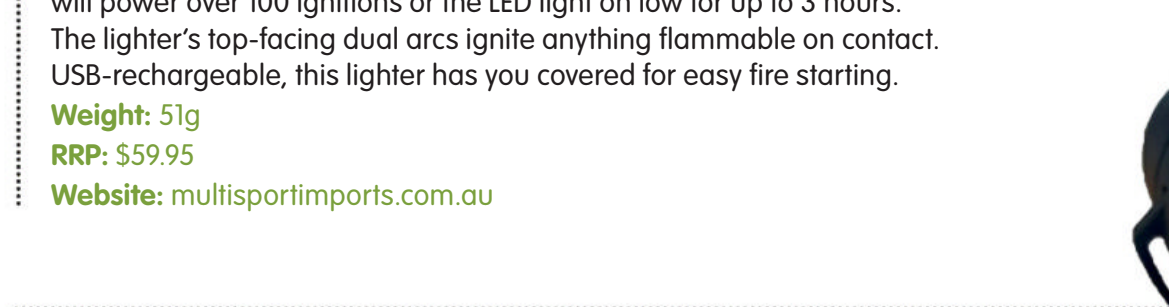
SOL Fire Lite Fuel-Free Lighter

This weatherproof electric lighter works in any conditions at any altitude and can start over 100 fires with the touch of a button. The plasma lighter comes with a built-in LED light and a tinder cord lanyard that can be used to light a stove or as utility paracord. A single charge will power over 100 ignitions or the LED light on low for up to 3 hours. The lighter's top-facing dual arcs ignite anything flammable on contact. USB-rechargeable, this lighter has you covered for easy fire starting.

Weight: 51g

RRP: \$59.95

Website: multisportimports.com.au



Zeiss Victory SF binoculars

If you're a birdspotter or a whalewatcher (for walks such as the Byron whale trail – pg46) you need an eagle eye – or better still a handy pair of binoculars. And with its compact size and powerful magnification, the Zeiss Victory SF binoculars are a good choice. The SF means 'sharp focus' and I was blown away by the sharpness and detail of anything I focussed on. As soon as I spotted what I was looking for the subject popped out like an image in 'portrait mode' on an iPhone. You have a wide field of vision allowing you to quickly scan the horizon whilst everything you see remains sharp.

Speaking of which, the focus wheel is perfectly positioned in the centre of the binoculars and it moves easily with one finger giving you the instant focus you need. I've also taken them into the bush for a bit of birdwatching and even in low light I was able to easily spot some beautiful birdlife.

It feels like you could hold the binoculars still for a long time and that's because of its ergonomics and balance, plus the outer covering is non-slip. Zeiss is famous for its lenses. You'll find them on mirrorless cameras and Nokia mobile phones so this is a company that knows what they're doing. If you are an avid nature watcher – looking out to sea or up a tree – the Zeiss Victory SF binoculars are a worthy investment. And I mean investment – these come with a premium price tag but what you get is probably one of the best pairs of binoculars you'll get your hands on. This is true craftsmanship that you don't see much of these days.

RRP: \$3667

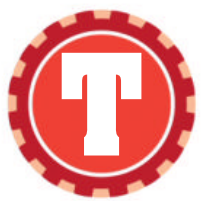
Website: osaaustralia.com.au

Review: Brent McKean





OLD RELIABLES



Great Walks takes a second look at a bunch of gear we've reviewed over the last 5-10 years.

WORDS AND PHOTOS **DAN SLATER**

IT'S not easy being a gear reviewer. Not only do you have to fit all your descriptions, thoughts and experiences, tech explanations, pros and cons, and final verdict into 250-odd words, but you rarely have the time to thoroughly test all the products under similar conditions to make a fair comparison. Imagine trying to accurately gauge the performance of 10 tents in a couple of weeks, with a full-time job and a print deadline looming! I do my best, but inevitably I'll subsequently discover things I would certainly have put in the review, had I but known. Well, now it's time to right that wrong! Here are some honest updates on products I reviewed for Great Walks between five and 10 years ago. Spoiler alert – if it lasted long enough for it to make this list, it was obviously a winner!

OR Helium II – Reviewed 2014

WHAT DAN SAID THEN: "The Helium II is unbeatable for weight, as long as you're aware of the limitations that come with that. It's a great emergency travel jacket and also perfect as mandatory kit in distance running or walking events."

WHAT DAN SAYS NOW: While I usually stick to my Theta AR for hiking adventures, I turn to the Helium for times when minimal weight is crucial. This is what saved me in the face of a sudden stinging rain while running around Easter Island in 2016, and also what I wore on my cycle circuit of the South Island the previous year. On that occasion, as noted in the original review, it couldn't cope with NZ's relentless barrage of rain and I sometimes got very wet. To be fair though, so did my mate, and all of our clothing, so I don't blame the Helium. I'm pretty sure Outdoor Research's product description used to claim it was for emergency use only, like a short flash shower, but it doesn't say that now. A couple of years ago I noticed the membrane inside the hood had started to delaminate, which is where it usually starts. It probably doesn't have much life left in it, so I'll probably save it for when I next go travelling.

CURRENT AVAILABILITY: Still available, and with increased abrasion resistance. Due the success of the jacket there are also rain pants and a longer version called the Helium Traveller.

RRP: \$249.95 **Phone:** (2) 9417 5755.

Email: sales@expeditionequipment.com.au

Arc'teryx Theta AR – Reviewed 2012

WHAT DAN SAID THEN: "I climbed Mt. Fuji in one of these on a day that rained so much my pack grew gills, and it's the best jacket I've ever worn. Sadly, it's priced accordingly."

WHAT DAN SAYS NOW: Ten years later and this jacket is still in my wardrobe, albeit semi-retired. I used it for pretty much every multi-day adventure until 2018, when it was usurped by a younger Arc'teryx model. It's been hiking, ice climbing and mountaineering, and remained waterproof throughout. Only recently has the three-layer structure begun to delaminate across the shoulders, although a few years ago, the hem and cuffs did start to detach, causing it to fray. Arc'teryx, true to their warranty, sent it back to Canada for a full repair, and it's been good ever since. I did ask why it couldn't have been repaired locally, but they wanted total control of the process to make sure it was done properly. Even though I hardly use it now, I can't bear to part with it. I'm thinking of having it upcycled into a bikepacking frame bag.

CURRENT AVAILABILITY: The Theta has been retired, but Arc's current top-of-the-range all-round hiking shell is the Beta AR.

RRP: \$919. **Website:** amersports.com.au





3

Scarpa ZG10 – Reviewed 2012

WHAT DAN SAID THEN: “They’ve never given me a single blister, and I’m looking forward to many happy miles together.”

WHAT DAN SAYS NOW: And oh, the miles we covered! It must have been well into four figures. These boots moulded deliciously around my feet and I held onto them far too long. They remained perfect until they met the Kokoda Track in 2018, where somewhere in the depths of the jungle, the soles began peeling off. The local porters really wanted to help by sewing the soles back on, but I refused as that would have compromised the Gore-Tex membrane. Fortunately they held on at the toe and heel and made it back home, where I glued them back together with Gear Aid Freesole (now called Aquaseal SR). The glue held, but the EVA foam in the midsole had disintegrated, and its absence somehow changed the internal volume of the boots. They were now too small, which I discovered to my discomfort on the UK Coast to Coast the following year. It was finally time to admit their demise, but again I couldn’t bear to lose them, so I turned them into novelty plant pots.



CURRENT AVAILABILITY: Scarpa don’t really have an equivalent model in the range anymore. The closest is probably the Khumbu GTX, although it’s a wider fit.

RRP: \$449 **Website:** outdooragencies.com.au

4

One Planet Goondie – Reviewed 2016

WHAT DAN SAID THEN: “Laughably easy to erect, displayed good stability in the wind and kept me dry, although some rain did fly in when the door was open. The Goondie may be simple but there’s a lot to be said for that if it works, and it does.”

WHAT DAN SAYS NOW: This has been our two-person hiking tent for the past five years. I admit, I have quite a few tents now, so if I’m solo, car camping or really have to watch my weight, I have other tents for those purposes, but I still have a soft spot for the Goondie. It’s seen a good amount of Australia’s hiking trails and waterways (as well as our living room during Easter 2020’s lockdown camping trip), and the 100D floor is still as solid as they day it left the factory. No sign of delamination on the fly, either. We were once almost crushed to death in the Goondie when a eucalypt suddenly shed a branch right above us. I like to believe the factory-installed force field deflected the branch and saved our lives, although I think they’ve discontinued that feature now.

CURRENT AVAILABILITY: There have been a few design tweaks in the intervening years but the Goondie is still current and smashing goals in Australia.

RRP: \$799. **Website:** oneplanet.com.au



Sea To Summit Spark II – Reviewed 2014

WHAT DAN SAID THEN: “STS have used the highest loft goose down available (850+), a YKK#3 zip and a 10D Pertex Quantum shell so thin it resembles tissue paper. You can actually use your smart phone through it! You just can’t argue with a sub 500g, 2°C bag that compresses to the size of a butternut squash.”

WHAT DAN SAYS NOW: The Spark II superseded my old Sea to Summit Micro III as my go-to hiking sleeping bag, and I’ve put it through some pretty rough conditions. I’ve used it on rock ledges under overhangs in the Blue Mountains, carried it backpacking through West Africa, and worse – lent it out to friends, but that white, 10D ‘tissue paper’ shell hasn’t ripped or stained yet. It’s quite remarkable. Paired with thermals where necessary, I can use this all year round (not including snow trips) and still stay toasty. The updated model gave it a longer zip, more internal room and redesigned the baffles, all of which were definite improvements, while still keeping it under 500g. Yep, the Spark series is still one of the most respected lightweight sleeping bags in the world, and with good reason.

CURRENT AVAILABILITY: The Spark II is widely available.
RRP: \$549. **Website:** seatosummitdistribution.com.au



Optimus Crux – Reviewed 2014

WHAT GRW SAID THEN: “Taking all factors into account, our testers decided that the speed, efficiency, weight, workmanship and superb packability of the Crux deserved to be awarded *Great Walks Best in Test!*”

WHAT DAN SAYS NOW: I still can’t get over the packability of this little guy – I love it! I’ve owned mine since before those Gear Awards and still there are only maybe one or two stoves on the market to touch it. I’m also continually impressed with its efficiency, and the amount of use I get out of a canister. I’ve had them develop rust spots before I can use them up. The one issue I have had is with one of the three arms – it’s become very stiff to unfold and refold. I used WD-40 on the joint once, which loosened it up temporarily, but it’s re-stiffened again since. Not a big deal, but the only negative thing I can think of to mention. I can’t imagine ever needing to replace this stove.

CURRENT AVAILABILITY: The Crux is widely available.
RRP: \$89. **Website:** outdooragencies.com.au

Carinthia Alpine Insulated Jacket – Reviewed 2014

WHAT DAN SAID THEN: “Some jackets are so obviously warm that your body temperature goes up 5°C just by looking at them. This is everything you could wish for in a cold weather jacket short of a fur-lined hood, although it costs only slightly less than the average annual income per capita in Bangladesh.”

WHAT DAN SAYS NOW: This is one of those items that I wish I used more because when I have done, I’ve loved it. There just isn’t enough opportunity in Australia – it’s too warm – so I mainly take it on overseas trips, and wear it at home in the depths of winter instead of putting the heating on. With such minimal use combined with the ruggedness of the face fabric,

the jacket still appears virtually brand new. It’s taken plenty of tumbles while snowboarding, been scraped up jagged faces in my inept attempts to ice climb, and spent plenty of time on the ground while I take photos from unusual angles. Solid. One of the inside pocket seams has separated, so I sometimes have to twist into an advanced yoga position to retrieve my head torch from its hidden depths, but apart from that I’ve had no problems whatsoever.

CURRENT AVAILABILITY: This model has sadly been discontinued, but its replacement, the more military-oriented MIG 4.0 jacket, is available instead.
RRP: \$549 **Website:** premierdefence.com.au



Aarn Peak Aspiration – Reviewed 2015

WHAT DAN SAID THEN: “If these pages were a schoolyard, Aarn packs would get bullied for looking weird and being too clever.”

WHAT DAN SAYS NOW: Yep, still using this baby, when I can get my hands on it! My wife has pretty much permanently requisitioned it, so I can only use it now when I’m adventuring without her. I love that the Balance Pockets act like removable extra volume. If I need maximum space, like on the GR20 in Corsica, I’ll strap them on, but for the Kokoda Track I left them at home. Durability-wise, it’s held up remarkably well for being such a lightweight unit. The base fabric copped a few holes in the Budawangs, when we were dragging it over rocks and through tight squeezes, but it’s not really designed for that so I can’t complain. The only other problem I’ve had is with the alloy stay used in the back panel. It kept popping out of its top bracket and poking up like an antenna. I sawed a length off and forced it back in but it still pops out. My wife does without it altogether and says it’s still the most comfortable pack she’s ever used. We’ve worked out a joint custody agreement now.

CURRENT AVAILABILITY: Updated in 2019 with a lighter, more breathable harness.

RRP: \$379-\$399. **Website:** backpackinglight.com.au



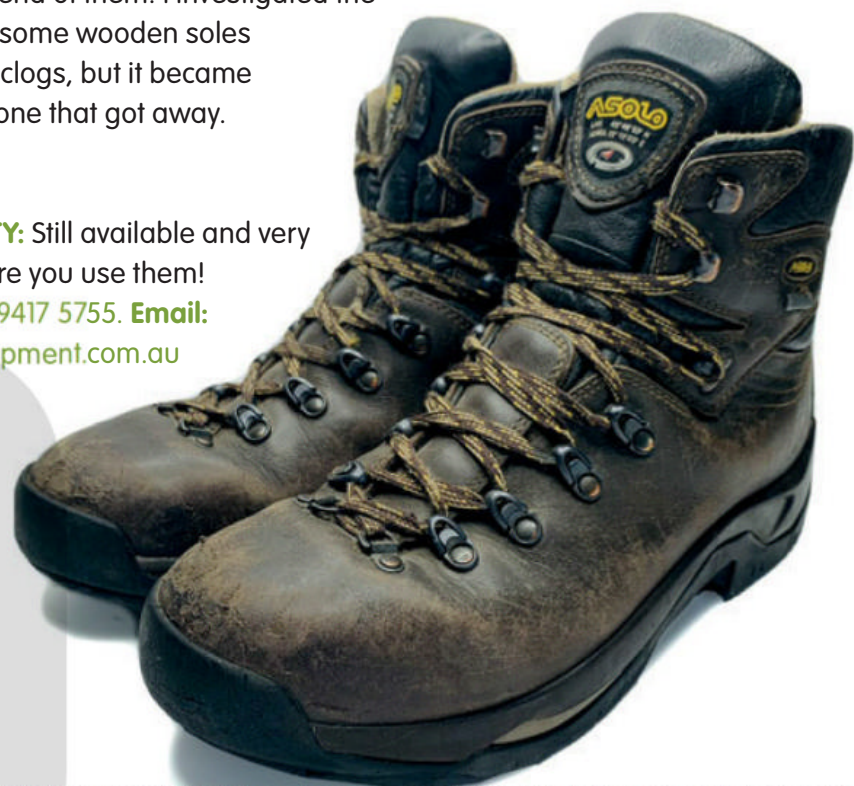
Asolo TPS 520 GV – Reviewed 2012

WHAT DAN SAID THEN: “High quality is immediately in evidence when strapping on the TPS 520s. Their seamless, one-piece, full grain upper thwarts points of weakness, hot spots and leakage. As the 2.6 mm leather wears in, it will mould around each individual foot to become an extension of same.”

WHAT DAN SAYS NOW: Oh, my poor TPS 520s. How I loved wearing those boots! Unfortunately, I also loved wearing my ZG10s, and they usually won out. I decided I’d save my Asolos for when the ZG10s bit the dust. What a mistake! I’ve since learned that the PU used in the midsoles is prone to disintegrating due to hydrolysis in certain climates, a problem exacerbated if they’re left unused in a cupboard for a couple of years. Constant use apparently prevents or slows this process. (This is valid for any boots by the way!) So, the first time I took them out for a three-day hike over Barrington Tops, they fell straight to pieces. I was gutted. Fortunately, I found a guy with some duct tape and got through the hike, but that was the end of them. I investigated the possibility of sourcing some wooden soles and turning them into clogs, but it became all too hard. This was one that got away. RIP TPS 520 GV.

CURRENT AVAILABILITY: Still available and very popular. Just make sure you use them!

RRP: \$499. **Phone:** (2) 9417 5755. **Email:** sales@expeditionequipment.com.au





One Planet Styx – Reviewed 2015

WHAT DAN SAID THEN: “Donning the Styx was a delight. If comfort is paramount and features secondary, and supporting Australian-made products important to you, the Styx should be perfect.”

WHAT DAN SAYS NOW: I still stand behind this pack (or in front of it, depending on your perspective) as the best large-volume pack for carrying heavy loads in comfort. The most extreme I’ve loaded it up was on a mountaineering trip in Aoraki / Mt. Cook National Park, NZ. I could barely move my legs under the weight, but my back and shoulders were still reasonably comfortable. I don’t think I’ve ever missed the little features that more

‘sophisticated’ packs have. It’s a canvas bag with pockets and a marvellous harness – job done. Oh, and I love the water bottle pockets. No reservoir for me when I’m in Styx land! My favourite anecdote about this pack is the time on the Great Ocean Walk when I woke in the night to find a fox trying to drag it out of the porch of the Dagger. I grabbed the hip belt and we had a brief tug-o-war. I won, but at the cost of fox-shaped tooth holes in the Styx lid. Scars of battle.

CURRENT AVAILABILITY: The main design update since review has been in the design of the front pocket, which is now a flap rather than a zip. Otherwise, business as usual.

RRP: \$579. **Website:** oneplanet.com.au



Nemo Dagger 2P– Reviewed 2016

WHAT DAN SAID THEN: “If you’re looking for the ‘magic’ tent – the super lightweight one with heaps of space that can withstand a hurricane – you can stop looking now; it doesn’t exist. However the Dagger looks to come close on paper.”

WHAT DAN SAYS NOW: Designers are still striving towards that ‘magic’ tent, but even five years later the Dagger has an impressive weight/space ratio (unless you’re comparing it with models in the wallet-traumatising Dyneema price bracket, that is). When my wife and I aren’t in the Goondie, we’re in the Dagger, most recently during our traverse of Tasmania’s Western Arthur range. It’s not as roomy, but it’s large enough to justify the weight saving, and while it hasn’t had as much use, it’s still held up strongly. Well, until she-who-shall-remain-nameless fell on it and snapped one of the poles, that is. Actually, the other problem was that the bungee cord running through the one-piece pole perished, which made erecting it feel a bit like playing a game of Pick-up Sticks, but that was easy to remedy on returning home. I prefer the Dagger to the lighter Nemo Hornet 2P, which does start to feel like a two-person coffin.

CURRENT AVAILABILITY: Still available.

RRP: \$799. **Website:** outdooragencies.com.au

Earth Sea Sky Vertical – Reviewed 2012

WHAT DAN SAID THEN: “It’s incredibly warm for something so thin (240g). On a recent trip to Nepal I wore it for three straight weeks and it kept me warm and dry throughout.”

WHAT DAN SAYS NOW: I loved that hooded fleece! I was so impressed with the Polartec Power Dry fabric that I bought another top with a half-zip and no hood (the ESS Velocity), which I’m wearing as I type this. I preferred the Vertical though, and wore it everywhere. Unfortunately, so did my wife, although she kindly fixed the hole she put in it (I’m still not sure how). The last I saw of poor Verty was in Patagonia, 2019. I must have accidentally left it in a hostel at the ends of the earth (literally – on Isla Navarino), or maybe one of my bunkmates admired it so much they nicked off with it. Either way, when I realised it was missing I called desperately from back in Ushuaia, but to no avail. I’m thinking of buying a replacement, and for someone with the amount of fleece tops I own, that’s really saying something! A stone cold classic.

CURRENT AVAILABILITY: Still current in Earth Sea Sky’s range, although I couldn’t find any Australian retailers.

RRP: \$189 NZD.

Website: earthseasky.co.nz





SNORE NO MORE

Dealing with snoring campers can be tricky especially if they're in the tent next to you.

WORDS_GREAT WALKS

A fuming mum has divided opinion on the internet after claiming people who snore should be banned from busy campsites. The mum made the claim after she said she was unable to sleep due to the loud fellow camper set up a few tents away. Complaining on the Mumsnet website, she unleashed on the noisy sleeper.

"Having finally managed to get to sleep on our mysteriously but persistently deflating air mattress, someone in the field next door wakes me up making a noise like a food processor being turned on and off," she wrote. "I have young kids in the tent with me and older kids in the tent text door so I can't wear ear plugs. It's a family campsite so it's not just me who won't be able to wear ear plugs."

"Just don't go camping near others if you snore. They must know they snore because they're not pitched up alone, so their party must all have come prepared with earplugs."

She asked if she was being unreasonable – and split opinion. Some said they understood her being annoyed.

"Agree with you. It's inconsiderate to inflict so much noise on others at night, not much of a

holiday for everyone who then has to deal with sleep deprivation."

Another person added: "Sending sympathy (I'd go poke them myself)."

Someone else said: "I've been camping loads of times and have heard multiple people snoring. If you're camping I think you have to accept it isn't going to be peaceful unfortunately."

We asked Great Walks readers what they thought about dealing with snoring campers...

"I DO REMEMBER being completely exhausted in a hut on the Milford Track after a long wet day. The guy in the next berth set up such an incredibly, loud and uneven snoring racket that I could hear it through earplugs. The whole hut was wide awake until one of his sons poked him. Five minutes later he was off again and then on until the miserable grey dawn. The whole hut was wide awake. If someone had smothered him a cheer would have gone up. If you snore terribly and you know it I'd be pretty careful about sleeping arrangements affecting other people." –

J DUVAL-SMITH

"IN JAPANESE GUEST houses, especially ones in close quarters with capsule like bed units, they have found a solution. They offer ear plugs for free. If you hate people, hike farther into the bush."

– **MIKE RHODES**

"I WAS MORE worried about the noises I think the possums were making, it sounded more like a wild pig."

– **IAN BONNER**

"I FEEL THE same way but with babies crying through the night in a closely packed campground."

– **KATELYN CROOKS**

"AS A SNORER I worry about this exact scenario. I guess offer ear plugs before retiring."

– **PETE BRYANT**

"I ALWAYS WEAR earplugs and a buff/headband whenever I'm doing hut share or close proximity camping."

– **AMANDA DEE**

"I'VE DONE A bit of hiking, but one night on the Larapinta Trail is etched in my brain for a 'snorer' that ruled them all! The next morning everyone was asking who it was... honestly like a freight train crashing through the campground repeatedly all night. Noise cancelling earphones wouldn't have helped. Luckily for me, they were going on the opposite direction!"

– **EM AVERY**

"IT KEEPS THE Yowies away!"

– **RUSTY RUSS**

"'BUSY' AND 'CAMPSITE' in the same sentence rings alarm bells. I love the campsites with not another soul in a 100km radius."

– **SEAN O'BRIEN**

"IF YOU'RE THAT precious, camping is probably not for you."

– **VANESSA MOTA GIL**

"TELL THE SNORER they are very loud, and advise them to get a health check. Most snorers don't know they snore so loudly. They may have sleep apnea. Then get some ear plugs and camp further away."

– **TIM COEN**

"I SNORE – if sharing accommodation with some one I tell them to bring ear plugs. And I carry some I can give to people if need be."

– **MICHELLE SHARPE**

"NOTHING A PILLOW smothering the face wouldn't fix..."

– **DAN WILLIAMSON** (Yeah not sure about that one Dan! – Ed) 🌀

JOIN US ONLINE



What's your biggest annoyance with fellow campers?

Tell us: editor@greatwalkscom.au or join the discussion at our Facebook page: www.facebook.com/GreatWalksMag





GRUB'S UP!

Great Walks offers a beginner's guide to making your own dehydrated meals.

WORDS AND PHOTOS **_SHANNON BRATTON**

DEHYDRATING food is not for everyone. It helps if you have a keen interest in cooking. There are plenty of products on the market now for those who do not have the time or inclination. After wearing out a small 5-tray dehydrator we settled for an eleven-tray Sedona Express Dehydrator which is great for big quantities. Rawblend is the distributor for Sedona dehydrators and their website (rawblend.com.au) is another great e-resource for nutritious raw food ideas and innovative recipes for dehydrating.

Menu planning, mostly involving dehydrated meals is challenging. It takes some trial and error to get it right. We are always changing and improving our menus to adjust to the type of hike, availability of food drops and keeping the food weight down to 500g per day for each of us. Recipes need to be nutritious enough to sustain the high energy demands, light enough to carry, shelf-life stable and with enough variety that we won't be gagging on it by the end. We usually carry one extra day's food for emergencies. Along with sharing recipes with other bushwalking friends, I get my inspiration and questions answered from Glen McAllister (backpackingchef.com).

As some flavour and thickening is lost during the dehydrating process, add extra spices into standard recipes and once dehydrated, add a teaspoon of corn flour to one cup of food. For best results, limit the use of salt, sugar, or fat while cooking. Add them after rehydrating. Tinned or frozen beans can be dehydrated. Dried beans are best cooked before dehydrating. If prepared in bulk, cooked beans can be dehydrated or frozen for use.

Cooking equipment is an important consideration. We use a Jetboil as it's an extremely efficient user of gas. A wide mouth 1L screw top Nalgene jar is used to rehydrate meals with boiling water. Using dehydrated food requires minimal equipment. A billy with a lid and a cozy is all you need if going lightweight.

Breakfast

We never tire of muesli. It is a great comfort food that can be made easily in the tent vestibule on cold, rainy mornings. It can be eaten with cold water or even dry. We take generous servings that can sustain you all day if things go south during the hike and meals aren't easily obtained. Extra calories are needed

“HAVING A HIGH ENERGY ‘POCKET’ SNACK IS A MUST FOR HIKE IN UNPREDICTABLE WEATHER”

for high energy demanding hikes, so muesli toasted with oils and sugar and added dried fruit is preferred to natural muesli. As I am lactose intolerant, I use coconut milk powder instead of milk powder.

Toasted muesli

Serves 20 (Enough for 2 people doing the Overland Track plus travel days.)

Combine 6 cups rolled oats, 1 cup bran flakes, 1 cup coconut flakes, 1 cup puffed brown rice, 2 cups mixed seeds and nuts.

Cook ½ cup or 180g honey, ½ cup brown sugar or apple sauce, ½ cup olive oil until dissolved. Mix syrup and muesli together. Bake 30 minutes at 150°C, stirring every 10 minutes. Cool to crisp. Add 1 cup chopped dried fruit (goji berries, apricots, uncrystallised ginger, dates are favourites). Add 300g coconut milk powder, 60g turmeric, 60g cinnamon, 200g yoghurt powder. Optional – 400g protein powder, psyllium.

Package into serving portions. To reduce plastic, we usually pack three days into one snap-lock bag. Serving size is approximately ⅔ cup, adjusted to your appetite. To serve, add boiling water to taste.

Morning tea and snacks

Having a high energy ‘pocket’ snack is a must for hikes in unpredictable weather. We carry morning tea in our raincoat pockets before setting out each day. If it is too unpleasant to stop, we whip it out, regain some energy and keep moving without needing to stop, open packs, or get wet or cold. ‘Carnarvon Bars’ are a hiking staple. We named these peanut butter muesli bars on a trip to Carnarvon Gorge and have made them ever since. There are endless recipes for energy bars, protein bars and muesli bars. Making your own eliminates individual wrappers that end up as rubbish to carry out. Dehydrating your homemade bars helps them keep longer and reduces some weight; every little saved weight helps. We make a batch and store them in the freezer ready to go.

The glace kiwi fruit is a real treat. A long process, but absolutely worth the effort. Fruit leathers are another quick easy snack. Mixtures of dried fruits, nuts, seeds, coconut and chocolate, aka ‘scroggin’, is wonderful, but sometimes heavy to include. We find the breakfast muesli suffices and save chocolate for dinner time. Nuts are good alternatives to the bars. Biscuits are always welcome, including historically proven worthy ANZAC biscuits, almond cookies, and yoghurt bites.

Fruit leathers

Fruit is best dehydrated in season when it's abundant and cheap and at optimum quality. When it's off peak or less desirable, cook or stew fruit (fresh, frozen, or canned) into a compote. Mix berries, dates, prunes, cinnamon, honey, chia seeds, orange and lemon zest and juice. Cool. Blitz in a food processor with yoghurt powder or almonds for extra protein. Dehydrating instructions are easily found on the internet.

Glace kiwi fruit

Make a sugar syrup with 1 cup sugar and 2 cups water. Boil, cool. Soak 1kg sliced fruit overnight (I don't peel the fruit, but you can if you don't like the texture). Remove fruit. Add another cup sugar to syrup. Re-boil. Cool. Re-soak fruit again overnight. Drain fruit.

Dehydrate on mesh sheets at 60°C for 6 to 10 hours. They will be tastier retaining some moisture, but shelf-life compromised, so I tend to dehydrate the longer time for multiday hikes. They can be stored in the fridge to prolong storage.



Scroggin mix, nuts and dark chocolate

Familiar to most trekkers. Any combinations of nuts, seeds, lollies, chocolate chips, yoghurt buttons, dried fruit that takes your fancy. Sugar coated chocolates such as M&Ms, prevent the chocolate from melting in extremely hot weather. Macadamia nuts and dates have loads of calories. Dry roasted almonds provided a protein boost.

Maggie Beer's ANZAC Biscuits

Maggie Beer adds Verjuice (juice of unripe grapes) and lemon zest to the traditional recipe and these biscuits are so delicious they're hard to ration. I wrap them in paper bags and vacuum seal for longevity when adding to delayed food drops.

Dehydrator almond cookies

Based on the original recipe @rawblend. Mix 2 cups almond meal; ¼ cup each: EVOO (extra virgin olive oil), honey, orange juice, chia seeds; zest of orange; ½ cup coconut flour; 2 teaspoons vanilla. Drop spoonfuls onto leather sheets or parchment paper.

Dehydrate at 60°C for 6-8 hours, flip after 4 hours, removing leather sheet. With a neutral



taste, these are gluten free, vegan and have no refined sugar. Serve with cheese or peanut butter or just on their own with a cuppa.

Yoghurt Bites, AKA Ray and Dawn's Coconut Kisses

These are incredibly sweet without any refined sugar. Mix 2 cups plain yoghurt, 2 tablespoons honey, 1 teaspoon vanilla or almond essence, 2 ½ cups shredded coconut, 8 pieces uncrystallised ginger. Drop spoonfuls onto dehydrator sheets.

Dehydrate on leather sheet at 60°C for 6-8 hours, flip after 4 hours, removing leather sheet.

Lunches

A repertoire of meals that can be easily managed in the middle of the day without unpacking the whole array of cookware adds to the variety. There are so many more options than peanut butter and crackers. Couscous is an instant winner to fill you up. Beef, Bean and Chilli and Unstuffed Peppers can be found at backpackingchef.com with numerous other quick meals. To have these for lunch, add boiling water to the meal at breakfast, so it will rehydrate by lunch time.

Above: Enjoying some homemade rehydrated food.

Above right: Load with fruit, set and forget.

Right: The dehydrator hard at work.





Clockwise from above:

Meals weighed and packaged into portions for travel or storage.

Coconut bananas on mesh tray ready to go into the dehydrator.

Dehydrated frozen mixed vegetables and cooked dehydrated carrots.

Another muesli bar goes into dehydrating



Crackers or wraps with toppings (peanut butter, salami, Parmesan, packet tuna or salmon) are an easy go-to. A whole chapter can be written on making beef jerky. A vegan option is Eggplant Jerky. (See rawblend.com.au/our-recipes) Day after day, it can get monotonous, so adding some hummus, dip or spread gives lunch a tasty kick. Fresh crunchy lentil sprouts are just delicious and a great morale boost to munch on something green and crisp and fresh after several days of dried food. You can start eating them in a couple of days after soaking overnight. Salami and Parmesan keep better out of the plastic and wrapped in beeswax paper. Peanut butter powder is available from the supermarkets. It rehydrates instantly and saves carrying a heavy jar. It has all the flavour of peanuts without any oil.

Corn and Bean Chili

Serves 6-8

Beans: dehydrate 6 cups cooked or tinned beans for 6 hours at 55°C until crisp and dry. Use any mixture of black-eyed, chickpeas, white beans, adzuki, navy, kidney. Include the crumbles and small bits that burst off as they will thicken the stew.

Chilli: cook 4 onions, 2 garlic cloves, 2 cups corn, 1 cup carrot, 1 cup celery, 800g tins diced tomatoes, 1 cup parsley. Cook until soft and reduced.

Dehydrate on leather sheets for 6 hours at 55°C.

Combine beans and chilli and portion into snap lock bags with 1 teaspoon corn flour per serve. Add dry garlic, onion flakes, oregano, chilli to taste.

Lentil Sprouts

We experimented with a variety of beans and lentils and found that French style (puy or green) lentils were the fastest to sprout and kept the longest out of the fridge. On longer multiday hikes we continually have a jar sprouting on the side of a pack.

Hummus, spreads and dips

Salsa and passata can be dehydrated straight from the jars. There are endless recipes for dips online (taste.com.au) beetroot; pistachio and bean; eggplant and chickpea; and carrot and tahini dips are the recipes I have used adding variety to my usual hummus. I make a double batch, eating half at home, dehydrating the remainder. Follow the recipe, keeping oil to a minimum for dehydrating. You can substitute fresh herbs, garlic, spice, onion with the dry equivalent amount if dehydrating recipe.

Dehydrate into a leather as you would a fruit leather. Once cool and dry, process into a powder. Package 1T per serve. Rehydrate with equivalent water until desired consistency.

Soups

There is nothing like a hot cup of tea or soup after camp is set up. Boil enough water to fill your cup and set the evening meal to hydrate. Miso soup is a great pick-me-up to replenish the energy spent during the day and recharge your batteries. Hearty soup recipes are abundant. In addition to already mentioned resources, *The Dehydrator Bible* by Jennifer MacKenzie, Jay Nutt and Don Mercer (Robert Rose 2015) that came with the Sedona dehydrator is a quick guide for how to dehydrate everything from apples to jerky and includes over 20 soup recipes that will tantalise your taste buds: curried cauliflower; apple, fennel and celery; carrot and ginger; leek and wild rice...this list continues. Homemade and dehydrated enables you to control salt content and spice up flavours to your liking. Making soups in bulk is not only penny saving but reduces package waste on individual wrapped serves.

Miso Soup

Serves 8-10

Dehydrate a whole packet of miso paste. Spread onto leather sheets, flip a few times during drying. It will take a very long time: 12-16 hours. Once dry and cool, blend into a powder. Stir fry a variety of vegetables in water until soft: cabbage, red cabbage, shallots, carrot, celery, mushrooms.

Dehydrate at 55°C for 8-12 hours. (vegetables can be dehydrated raw but will take longer to rehydrate.)

Package ½ tablespoon miso powder, ¼ cup vegetable mix, ¼ nori seaweed sheet per serve. Add 1 cup boiling water for instant soup.

Dinners

Cooking and dehydrating are a perfect marriage of science and art. Options for dinner meals are as many as the stars. Starting out with home dehydrating won't be as daunting if you begin slowly. At first, I only made two meals and alternated between these for every hike: chilli con carne and pumpkin red lentil curry. Now almost any home meal, especially if made in the slow cooker, is considered for taking on the trail – Dahl, chilli sin carne, Tuscan beans, Mediterranean lamb shanks, Nigella Lawson's beef in red wine sauce with star anise, to Jamie Oliver's spaghetti bolognese and more. When there is a hike coming up on the calendar, we have a meal for dinner, refrigerate the remainder to dehydrate the next day. The overnight rest enhances the flavours even more.

How much to take for each meal takes a little trial and error for personal appetites. The dried mass after dehydrating is impressively small and it's easy to over

cater. A general 'one size fits all' guide for a single serve dinner is 90g, containing ⅓ cup protein (e.g meat), ⅓ cup vegetable, ½ cup carbohydrate (e.g pasta) and 1 tablespoon seasonings (e.g cheese sauce) per serve.

If you are already a fan of renowned chef, Yotam Ottolenghi, you will know his delicious recipes with lentils, beans and pulses are not only nutritious but loaded with herbs and vegetables. They're also great for dehydrating. Remember to reduce the amount of oil and season with salt after rehydrating. Sometimes I add the equivalent of dried herbs in a recipe after dehydrating to boost the flavour. Package herbs into mini snap-lock bags, small Nalgene bottles or re use Tic-Tac containers. I leave out any cream and add powdered coconut milk powder after dehydrating.

Pasta, rice, barley and quinoa are best cooked first, then dehydrated. You won't save much weight or volume, however, the benefit will be in the reduced cooking time, therefore reducing the amount of gas used. We take a variety including pearl couscous and wild rice. Roasted beetroot and other root vegetables splashed with a little balsamic vinegar, dehydrate perfectly to add bulk and comfort to any meal. Dehydrated potato, pumpkin, sweet potato made into delicious leathers, bark or mash is always welcome and there are so many ways to make it more appetising by adding stocks or sauces.

Pumpkin Red Lentil Curry

Serves 6-8

Cook 2 onions, 2 cups red lentils, 2 tablespoons red curry paste, 2 tablespoons soy sauce, 6 cups pumpkin/sweet potato, 1kg frozen vegetables in water.

Dehydrate at 60°C on leather sheets for 10 hours. Add ½-1 cup coconut milk powder, 4 tablespoons corn flour, extra chilli flakes to taste.

Chilli Con Carne

Serves 6-8 with pasta, rice, or another accompaniment.

Mix 1 cup breadcrumbs (any type – GF, sourdough, wholegrain) into 1kg beef mince, refrigerate 30 minutes.

Cook 2 garlic cloves minced, 2 diced onions, add the mince and cook until brown. Add 2 tablespoons tomato paste, chilli/dried chilli to taste, cook few minutes. Add 700ml passata or tomato puree, 800g diced tinned tomatoes, 3 cups cooked kidney beans. Simmer for 60 minutes.

Dehydrate at 60°C for 10-12 hours, checking halfway and break up any clumps to ensure even dehydrating. Pack into portion sizes with 1 teaspoon corn flour per serve.

Potato and sweet potato bark.



Cheese Sauce

Serves 6

We take nutritional yeast flakes, dried Parmesan or one of these homemade 'cheese-like' sauces to sprinkle on meals. To serve on the trail, sprinkle dry onto the meal or make into a sauce by adding ⅓ – ½ cup 'cheese' powder mix to 1 cup water. Adjust seasoning quantities to your taste.


Mix 1 cup nutritional yeast flakes with: 1 teaspoon each sugar and salt; ½-1 tablespoon each garlic powder, onion powder and paprika, and ½-1 cup milk powder (any/combination of coconut, milk, yoghurt powder).

Season with one of the following options: 1 teaspoon mustard powder and ½ – 1 teaspoon black pepper; 2 teaspoons lemon pepper and ½ teaspoon red pepper flakes; 1 tablespoon turmeric, ¼ teaspoon cumin and ½ teaspoon chili flakes or 2 teaspoons each curry powder and coconut milk powder.

Add: for cashew cheese sauce: ½ – 1 cup cashews raw; 3 tablespoons flour (any type – plain, oat, GF); 2 tablespoons thickener (tapioca or corn flour or arrowroot).

For potato cheese sauce: 1½ cups instant potato flakes and 3 tablespoons quick oats

For vegan cheese sauce: ½ cup flour (or ⅓ cup flour + ¼ cup seed).

For gluten-free cheese sauce: ⅓ cup oat flour + 2 tablespoons each rice flour and tapioca. 

CROSSWORD ANSWERS P59

ACROSS: 2. Wave 7. Plateau 9. Yorke 11. Cameron 13. Whale 15. Glory 16. Tropic 17. East 18. Coast 20. Oceania 21. Sydney 24. Point 25. Ord 28. Ikara 30. Man 33. Ben 34. Great Walks 35. Eight 36. Tiwi 39. Steep 41. Dinosaur 43. Indian 44. Track 45. Ocean 46. Victoria 47. Groote **DOWN:** 1. Bight 3. Anna 4. Eyre 5. Arid 6. Volcano 8. Alpine 10. Elliot 12. Murray 14. Heard 19. Table 22. Daintree 23. Doctor 26. Bass 27. Cape 29. Warning 31. Deserts 32. Phillip 33. Blue 37. West 38. Pink 40. Plain 42. Opal



COOKING UP A STORM

Want to make the best burgers in the bush? Here's how.

WORDS AND PHOTOS_ **HARRY FISHER**

I have eaten more burgers in the bush that I care to admit. A classic double-cheeseburger is my go-to meal after a big day, when I have hardly any time and I really just want something hearty, quick and satisfying. There are a few fundamental rules that I have found make burger cooking pretty hard to mess up and improve the flavour of the final product.

1. Use quality beef mince, go to your butcher and ask for an 80/20 mix, that means 80 per cent lean beef, 20 per cent fat. If you're feeling extra fancy, ask them to use pork or bacon fat instead of beef fat. Also ask them to make it a medium grind.
2. If you want lots of beef, make more patties, don't make the patties thicker. A fat burger patty has far less flavour than two thin patties with lots of delicious, caramelised bits all over the edges. A patty should only be 80-100g of beef.

3. Salt the patties just before they hit the heat – you only need to salt one side.
4. Use quality buns and always toast the inside – it freshens them up and stops the sauce from soaking in.
5. Back to the patties – never use hamburger helper, egg, flour, vegetables or any other fillers. Keep them simple and pure.

Burgers

- Prep Time – 7 minutes
- Cooking Time – 7 minutes
- Serves 2

Old Faithful, The Cheeseburger: The aim of a cheeseburger is to nourish the soul, not the body. Its beauty is in its simplicity and as soon as too many things get added, it gets ruined (keep those veggies out of here!).

Two Fatty Beef Patties, Harry's Sauce, Lettuce, Cheese And Pickles On A Sesame Seed Brioche Roll:

The biggest thing with these burgers is, of course, the sauce – trying to nail that perfect combination of sweet, salty, vinegary and creamy is essential to the experience. There are two ways to do it and the first is the easy way. Simply buy the Heinz-brand Burger Sauce (the brand is important), add sesame oil and let it sit for ten minutes. The second way is to make a sauce from scratch – make it before you leave home and bring it in a container in your fridge.

Hungry Harry's Nopper: After 15 years of my wife, Sam, not eating her favourite fast-food burger (the Whopper), I decided to play around with different recipes to re-create that particular flavour and texture in the bush. She is very happy with the results.





- 1/2 a teaspoon of very finely diced raw white or brown onion
- 1 and 1/5 a tablespoon of American mustard
- 1/2 a tablespoon of BBQ sauce
- 1/2 a teaspoon of garlic powder
- 1/2 a teaspoon of paprika
- 1/2 a teaspoon of soy sauce

These cook up quickly, so doing the prep work beforehand is a must. Start by dicing the onion and lettuce, if using, and setting them aside. Have your pickles and sauces handy. If you're using the burger sauce, combine all the ingredients well and leave in the fridge for at least half an hour (ideally an hour) for the flavours to infuse properly.

For the Cheeseburger and Harry's Sauce burgers, shape four, thin patties using 80 to 100g of beef each. For the Nopper, you only need two patties. Grind some salt and pepper on one side. Heat up your pan, add the oil and drop in the patties. As soon as they start to sizzle and brown, squash them down with a flat utensil – I use the back of a BBQ scraper – and keep doing this every minute until one side is nicely browned.

Once the first side is browned and caramelised, flip it and place the slice of cheese on each patty while it continues to cook on high heat until the other side has browned.

While the second side is browning, put the buns over the grill or in the pan with the burger fat, sliced side down, to quickly toast them. It should only take about 30 seconds. Once everything is cooked, stack the burger in the following order;

For the Cheeseburger – bottom of bun, two patties with cheese, five or six slices of pickle, a squirt of mustard and another of ketchup, the diced, raw onion and finally the top layer of the bun.

For Harry's Sauce burger – bottom of the bun, layer of lettuce with burger sauce, two patties with cheese, pickles, lettuce with burger sauce, diced onion, top of the bun.

For Hungry Harry's Nopper – bottom of the bun, patty with cheese, pickles, ketchup, onion rings, tomatoes, lettuce, mayonnaise (a bit more mayo than ketchup) top bun.

Ingredients

Cheeseburger

- 2 brioche or potato buns
- 400g of high-fat beef mince
- Salt and pepper
- 1 tablespoon of rice bran oil
- 4 slices of American burger cheese
- 1/4 a white onion, diced
- 10-12 burger pickle slices
- Ketchup and American mustard

Harry's Sauce Burgers

- 2 sesame seed brioche or potato buns
- 400g of high-fat beef mince
- Salt and pepper
- 1 tablespoon of rice bran oil
- 4 slices of American burger cheese
- 1/4 a white onion, diced
- 16 burger pickle slices

- 2 tablespoons of burger sauce
- 1/4 a cup of sliced lettuce

Hungry Harry's Nopper

- 2 sesame seed brioche or potato buns
- 200g of high-fat beef mince
- Salt and pepper
- 1 tablespoon of rice bran oil
- 4 slices of American burger cheese
- 1 slice of white onion rings
- 2 slices of tomato
- 1/2 a cup of lettuce
- 10-12 burger pickle slices
- Ketchup and mayonnaise

Harry's Burger Sauce

- 1/2 a cup of mayonnaise
- 2 tablespoons of sweet pickle, finely diced
- 2 tablespoons of pickle juice

NEED TO KNOW

For more of Harry Fisher's campfire recipes get a copy of Fire To Fork. Click on exploringedenbooks.com, visit your local independent camping store or go to where good books are sold. Also find out more about Harry at firetofork.net



TAKE THE HIGH ROAD

Shrouded in historical beauty, the magnificent Scottish Highlands have been inspiring romantic writers and artists for centuries.



If you had to pick one landmark to represent the mystical beauty of the Isle of Skye, the iconic Old Man of Storr would be it. This spectacular 100m high free-standing rock is one of many massive rock features populating the green slopes of the Trotternish peninsula.





The Northern Lights seen from Glencoe Valley in the Highlands. Also known as the Aurora Borealis, the northern lights are a magical natural light display which are seen in the sky on rare occasions. The Highland regions of Sutherland and Caithness are prime areas for spotting the northern lights in Scotland. Along the northern coastline of Sutherland, you have the small villages of Durness, Tongue and Melvich which are known to be good places to see the lights.

The easiest route up to Ben Nevis – Great Britain's highest peak, begins at the visitor centre carpark, at Achintee on the east side of Glen Nevis. The track starts with a steep climb to the halfway lochan, or Lochan Meall an t-Suidhe, and then the ascent features snaking zig-zag paths up to the summit. At the top, there's a cairn marking the highest point and your reward on a clear day will be the incredible 360° panoramic vistas stretching as far as Northern Ireland.





This hike around Old Man of Storr is relentlessly uphill from the start, and you'll ascend around 300m to reach the towering Old Man itself. From this vantage point, you'll have vast, 180° views across the ocean, over the Isles of Rona and Raasay, and on to the Applecross peninsula on the mainland





Scotland's landscape is scattered with munros and mist-shrouded hills... But Ben Nevis (1345m) is the king of them all. In the north west Highlands, near the town of Fort William and part of the Grampian Mountain range, the famous peak attracts 125k walkers a year. Whether you're an avid ambler or you just love beautiful landscapes, bagging 'the Ben' is likely to feature near the top of your Scottish bucket list.

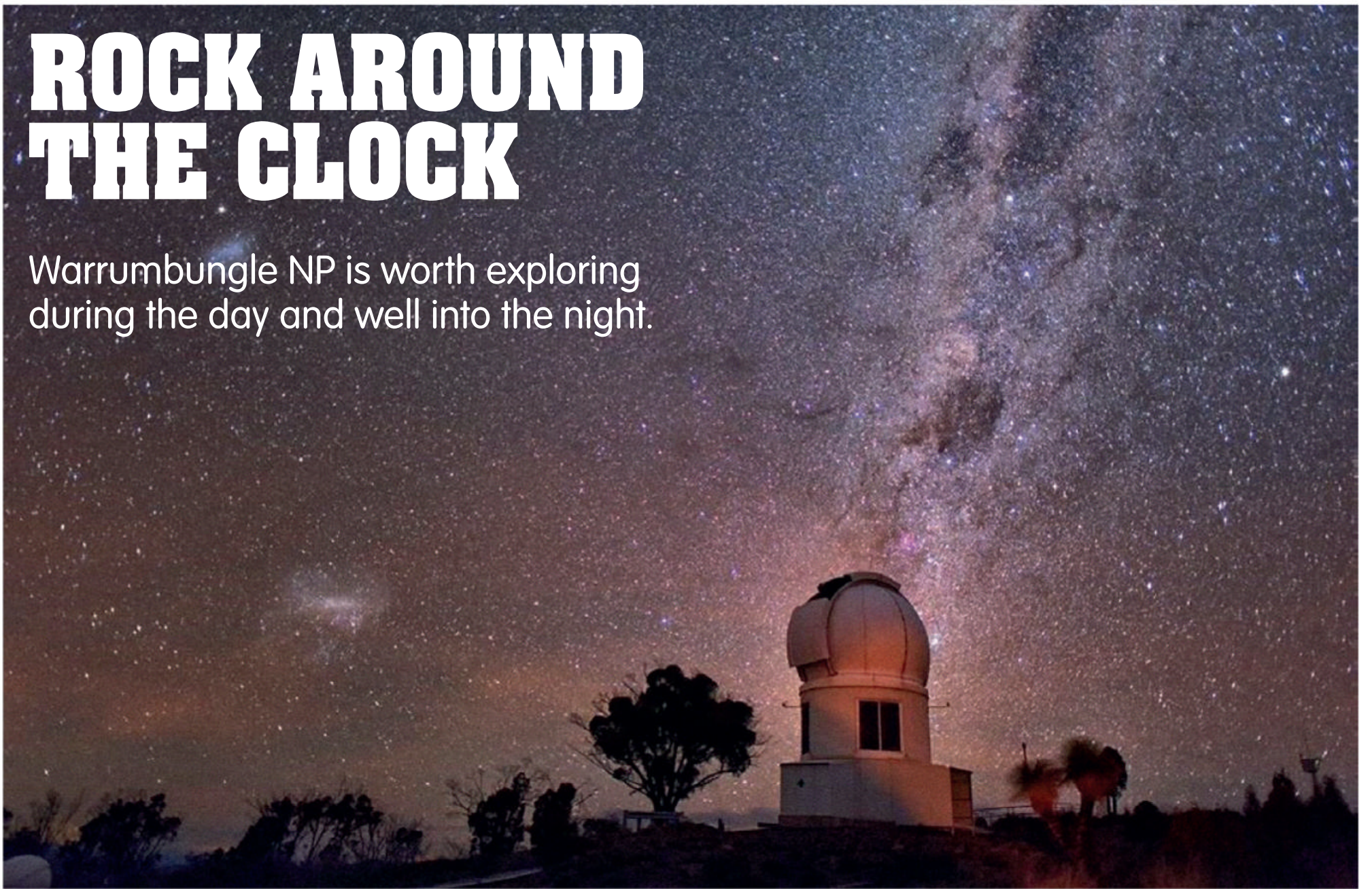
Hiking along a mountain path towards the summit of Ben Lawers from the top of Beinn Ghlas. Ben Lawers is one of the highest mountains in the southern part of the Scottish Highlands. Take a short walk along the ridge to the south east to see a fantastic lunar landscape with a crater containing the remains of a Victorian mapping expedition base. The remains are in the form of some dry stone building ruins sheltered by the craggy sides of the crater.

Need to know: [visitscotland.com](https://www.visitscotland.com)



ROCK AROUND THE CLOCK

Warrumbungle NP is worth exploring during the day and well into the night.



WORDS **JOELLE GLASS**

WARRUMBUNGE National Park near Coonabarabran in western NSW is Australia's only Dark Sky Park, making it the perfect spot for stargazing, amateur astronomy and camping under the starriest of skies. And during the day it's a bushwalker's paradise. The park's spectacular scenery is made up of domes, plugs, spires and sharp ridges sticking out of the hilly landscape. Volcanic activity stopped about 13 million years ago and erosion exposed some weirdly shaped formations, including the narrow and regularly photographed highlight, The Breadknife. We walked two trails: the Beloungery Split Rock Circuit and part of the Pincham Trail, which includes the famous Breadknife and Grand High Tops.

Beloungery Split Rock

The four-hour Beloungery Split Rock Circuit comes highly recommended as an introductory walk. Beloungery comes from the property Beloungerie, where the Blackman family lived until the late 1960s. The homestead was where Camp Blackman is located now. You will see why Split Rock came by its name. Near the top are stairs with a little gate, warning the walker

that a separate final climb to the summit should not be undertaken when wet. Chains and ladders that used to assist in the climb have been taken away.

The route up is fairly clearly marked rocks. Where water tends to seep down, the way up is indeed slippery. From the top you can see all the way around: The Breadknife, Siding Springs Observatory, Mount Exmouth and other domes, bluffs and spires. It is worth having a map with you to identify each of the sights. Continuing on, you walk past beautiful rock formations and rock shelters filled with animal droppings, which unfortunately are from goats rather than the rare brush-tailed rock wallaby. Past beautiful rocky outcrops, ancient grasstrees and a rocky plateau, the track goes steeply down into woody grassland back to the car park.

The Grand High Tops

The walk from Pincham carpark to the Grand High Tops takes you past The Breadknife on the way to a great lunch spot at the summit, Lughs Throne. The Pincham Trail boasts pink pavers. It almost seems as if you're walking towards a lookout with a shop around the corner, or a chairlift perhaps. As the pavers

**“A FEW BENDS
LATER THE
SCENERY
STARTS TO
UNFOLD.”**

Above: You can see why the Siding Springs Observatory was built there.

take you up higher and higher – so well laid that you are not likely to twist an ankle – you’ll find a welcome resting spot, Wilsons Rest. A few bends later the scenery starts to unfold. To the left is a towering Beloungery Spire (1057m) and over a saddle to the other side of the hill, there’s a view of Mount Exmouth. Then: stairs! They look solidly made, wide enough for two, with hardwood, steel cabling and a smooth stainless steel handrail on either side. They blend into

the landscape very well and help make sure the hill does not become eroded from over-use. The same must apply to the pink pavers. Better than bitumen because the pavers “breathe” so tree and shrub roots won’t be smothered. The stairs seem to go on forever, with the occasional viewing platform. The views do make up for the civilised paths, which understandably need to be there considering the amount of traffic they have to cope with.

Lugh was the Gaelic Sun God and master of all arts. He had a magic spear, which could roar and have fire flashing from it. When having lunch at Lughs Throne you will know why you made your way up here: the view includes Siding Springs Observatory on a distant hill to the right and weird rocky shapes



Above: The Warrumbungle’s old volcanic formations are evidence of its dramatic origins long ago.

in front with lone trees in impossible spots. The odd corella, galah and honeyeater fly past. Currawongs will wait for a share of your food. It was at Lughs Throne that I noticed that I had forgotten the topographical map that I had bought for the occasion. And my phone had run out of battery – no reception obviously – so we did not know what the time was either. At about two, we reluctantly headed back. There’s a good chance you will see wallabies and perhaps an echidna in beautiful dappled late afternoon sun before arriving at the car park at about 4:30pm, with sore calf muscles. ⚙️

Need to know: nationalparks.nsw.gov.au

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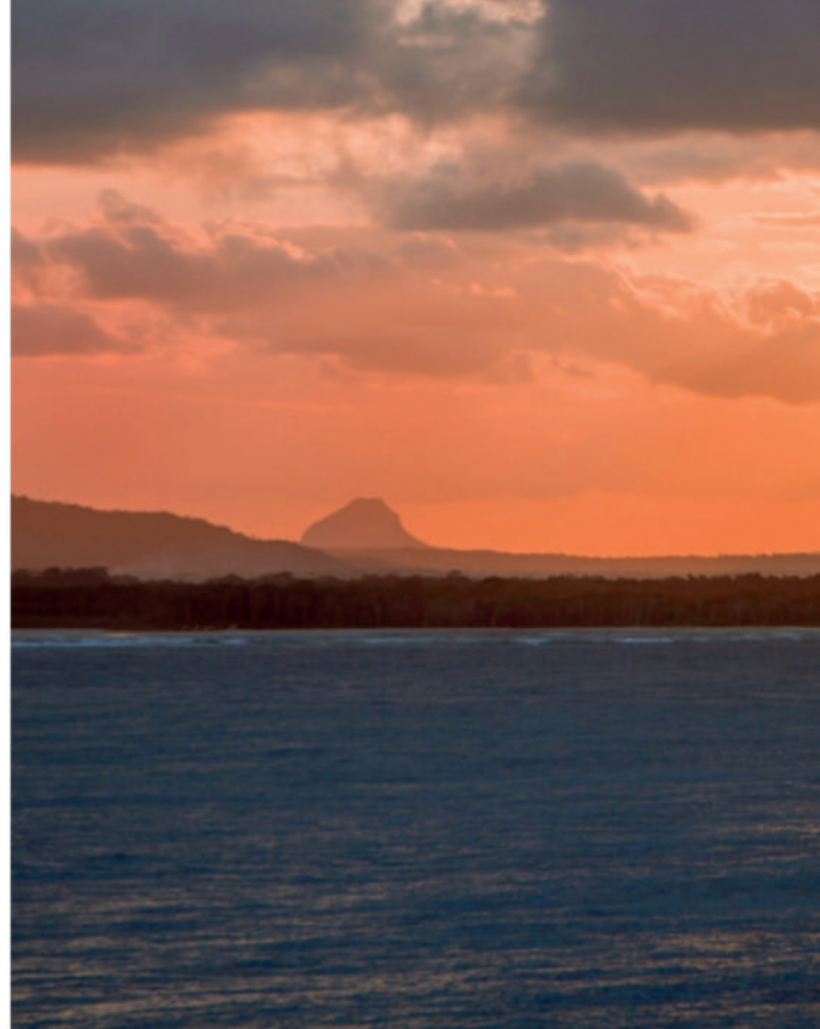
WALKING ON SUNSHINE

Great Walks takes in three coastal and forest hiking gems on QLD's Sunshine Coast.

WORDS AND PHOTOS_KARA MURPHY

The Coastal Walk moves along
the sand at Alexandria Bay
towards Sunshine Beach.





WANTING to avoid potential hotel quarantine, I've kept my wanderings within my home state for much of the past year. This has resulted in frequent trips to Queensland's beautiful Sunshine Coast, which begins just over an hour's drive north of my Brisbane home. While the area boasts many spectacular walks – up volcanic plugs, along the coast, around headlands, through rainforest, to waterfalls, and more – I've been travelling there with my young dog ... so the majority of my recent leg stretches have occurred on the excellent off-lead beaches. When my husband and I finally make plans to travel there without our pup, we're excited to embrace a few walking locations that are off limits with a dog in tow.

Coastal splendour

Our first goal is the 10.8km return Coastal Walk in Noosa NP. Following the shoreline between the day-use area in the park's popular Headland section and Sunshine Beach, to the southeast, the route travels over headlands and along Alexandria Bay. Keen for a teaser before the next morning's proper adventure, we set off from our Hastings St accommodation, the Mantra French Quarter, in the late afternoon, ambling along a 1km scenic seaside boardwalk to the starting point. En route, we pass pandanus, gum, and paperbark trees, Little Cove Beach, and lookouts back towards Noosa Heads and Laguna Bay.

As I approach the day-use area, the sweet smell of paperbark flowers fills the air. A few steps further on, interpretive signs acknowledge the Kabi Kabi people, the traditional custodians of Noosa, noting their spiritual connection to this land as well as areas 100km south and 150km north of here.

Perusing more signs, I learn a bit about the national park's history. Its first area was gazetted in 1939, protecting it from logging activities and the associated erosion risk. In the 1960s, the local council planned to build



Clockwise from left:

Views of Noosa, Mt Cooroora, and other mountains from the Headlands section of Noosa NP.

Views of the Obi Obi Valley from the Mapleton Falls lookout in Mapleton Falls NP.

The Wompoo circuit moves through a piccabeen palm grove in Mapleton Falls NP.

**“AS I APPROACH
THE DAY-USE AREA,
THE SWEET SMELL
OF PAPERBARK
FLOWERS FILLS
THE AIR,”**

a scenic road to connect Noosa Heads with Sunshine Beach. Fortunately, the community-based Noosa Parks Association (NPA), Queensland’s oldest community conservation organisation, was formed in 1962 to fight the proposed road, and the Coastal Walk was saved. The entire coastline between the walk’s two endpoints was finally protected as part of the national park in the 1980s. In addition to the Headland section, the 3,000ha park includes areas surrounding Lake Weyba, Peregian, and Coolum.

Setting off on a sealed part of the route, which extends 1.2km to the surf-driven surge of the Boiling Pot and on to Dolphin Point, I can only imagine how many park visitors have benefited from the NPA’s efforts. It’s wonderful to be here, surrounded by the sounds of pounding surf and birdsong – not vehicles – and pausing occasionally to gaze up towards eucalypt branches, scouting for koalas.

While others share this popular track, it doesn’t feel crowded this arvo. A few surfers haul their boards through a dim, eerie grove of paperbarks near Tea Tree Bay. Some visitors linger on beaches, taking in sunset views back towards Noosa Heads and Mt Cooroora beyond it, while at least a dozen surfers remain in the water, awaiting the perfect wave.



Morning magic

As lovely as sunset here is, the Coastal Walk truly reveals its magic in the morning. I reach the trailhead at sunrise, and am far from the first person here. Walkers share the trail, a healthy contingent of surfers are already navigating the waves, and at Dolphin Point, a family of four stares excitedly out towards the distant Cooloolooloo sand patch. I soon realise they’re actually focussed on the exuberant antics of a humpback whale, a species often spotted along this coastline between June and November as they cruise to and from their northern breeding grounds.

Between Dolphin Point and Hell’s Gates, 1.5km further on, the track is unsealed. As I skirt around Granite Bay on an exposed section, enjoying wide views over the bay, more and more walkers head towards me, back towards the day-use area. Reaching Hell’s Gates for sunrise is obviously a worthy pursuit, and I vow to set out earlier next time.

More like heaven

Though Hell’s Gates includes the danger of unfenced cliff edges, its name is fiercer than its vibe. This sandstone outcrop eroded over time and now has a distinctive gap and deep, narrow cove. From here, the views extend into its chasm as well as south over Alexandria Bay and north towards Cooloolooloo beaches. A magpie sings carols from a she-oak as the waves thunder below, and, in the distance, two whales cruise past, their blows visible.

From here, a track and steps lead 550m down to Alexandria Bay. The walk proceeds south along its 1.2km sandy beach, before joining a formed track and a sign that informs me I’m just 1km shy of Sunshine Beach. Ascending a stone path and steps up the headland, past bright yellow wildflowers, I’m rewarded with a sweeping southerly view over Sunshine Beach as an osprey soars overhead.

The track ends at the edge of an off-lead beach. While I’m grateful for the time I’ve

spent in this magnificent national park, the joy radiating off the dogs nearby makes me miss mine, and I'm a wee bit jealous of the people who live around here, that they can so easily embrace the area's dog-friendly and not-so-friendly aspects.

Note: You can make the Coastal Walk a shorter, one-way adventure by continuing 1.3km north along the public beach and catching a bus back to Noosa Heads from the bus stop on Duke St, near the Sunshine Beach Surf Lifesaving Club.

To falls and forest

After a healthy brekkie at a Hastings St café, we drive about 50 minutes southwest to the Blackhall Range and 1591ha Kondalilla NP. Our first hiking goal in this volcanically-formed, water-sculpted landscape is the 4.7km Kondalilla Falls circuit – a route that's possibly more populated than the Noosa walk on this late Friday morning. The park's name is an Aboriginal term for 'rushing waters', which describes a featured waterfall as it drops 90m from Skene Creek during the summer wet

season. As we're here in early spring, I expect more of a trickle than a heavy flow.

From the open, grassy day-use area, a track leads to a bridge over Picnic Creek. Ascending some steps and veering left, we follow an unsealed track through tall eucalypt forest with patches of wet sclerophyll forest, passing hoop pines, palms, ginger, lawyer vine and more, to the music of some of the 107 species of birds that have been sighted here.

At a patch of mighty grass trees, we descend more steeply via fenced steps. A short detour leads to a rockpool at the top of the falls; since we'll pass that point later, we continue down more steep steps to the falls lookout. As we do, I recall how the park's website says tracks here are closed during severe wet weather due to flooding risk and realise even moderate rain could deter my efforts here, as I'd be concerned about slipping.

Whatever its impact on track conditions, rain, of course, feeds the falls. Today, they appear tall and slender, cascading down dark rocks on the opposite side of the rainforest valley. After further descent, a 100m detour

through rainforest leads towards their base, while the main track crosses a bridge over the boulder-filled creek.

Before long, we pass a turn-off for another trail, which includes part of the 58.8km Sunshine Coast Hinterland Great Walk. This four-day walk begins a 9.1km amble south of here, at Baroon Pocket Dam, then covers the same route we've taken thus far up to the day-use area before proceeding to Route 23, back into another part of this park, and through 26ha Mapleton Falls and 10064ha Mapleton national parks. I've never set out on this Great Walk but would love to base myself on the range for a few days and attempt a couple of its longer sections.

Climbing past strangler figs, elk horns, sandpaper figs, and more, we reach a valley overlook and the rock pools – a serene place to rest (and heed the warning signs).

A gentle finale


At circuit's end, we drive 11km north to Mapleton Falls NP, home of the 1.3km Wompoo circuit. Named for the wompoo

“CLIMBING PAST STRANGLER FIGS, ELK HORNS, SANDPAPER FIGS, AND MORE, WE REACH A VALLEY OVERLOOK AND THE ROCK POOLS – A SERENE PLACE TO REST,”



fruit-dove, which calls from treetop feeding sites, this gentle walk meanders through rainforest and eucalypt forest. Following a brief descent into a piccabeen palm grove, the undulating track leads us past rosewood, tallowwood, prickly rasp fern, bracken fern, and more, as well as by a detour to a viewpoint over the Obi Obi valley.

The Wompoo is such a pleasant, easy finale to our day of Sunny Coast exploring that we return early the following morning. A roadside pathway covers the entire 5.2km from our cabin at Clouds Mapleton to the park; still, we drive, reaching the Mapleton Falls lookout as sunlight caresses parts of the valley below us. Pencil Creek waters spill over the escarpment, and birds – including, perhaps, the famous fruit-dove – overpower the rush of the falls, filling the air with raw, invigorating song that promises to play on during our stroll ahead.

Great Walks was a guest of Visit Noosa, Visit Sunshine Coast, and Clouds Mapleton 

Need to know: parks.des.qld.gov.au



Above: The rock pools along the Kondalilla Falls circuit in Kondalilla NP.

Below: Views over Sunshine Beach from the Coastal Walk.



WHEN NATURE CALLS

If you have to go to the loo in the bush – do the right thing.



WORDS BY **KATRINA
'KIT KAT' HEMINGWAY**

'Kit Kat' is a fundraiser and avid senior hiker who earned her trail name walking the Pacific Crest Trail in 2019 with type 1 diabetes.

IT'S a crappy subject, but who doesn't have a story? Might as well share your most embarrassing moments and have a laugh with your fellow hikers. There's nothing like toilet humour to build camaraderie on a walk. As long as you aren't the one stepping in it.

When nature calls remember to practice the Leave No Trace (LNT) principles. Check with local park authorities on the rules for your intended route, particularly in fragile wilderness environments. If you must carry out all waste, carry a WAG (waste alleviation and gelling) bag, the only biodegradable sealable two bag solution that encapsulates, deodorises, and breaks down waste with a NASA-developed gelling agent.

Or improvise. Do your business on greaseproof paper and slide into an opaque bag or scoop it up as you do with dog droppings. If desired, add baking soda to the bag to neutralise odour, then insert this bag in a smell-proof ziplock bag. Dispose in a bin when you reach town.

If park authorities allow pooping in the bush, select a site at least 60m or 70 paces away from the track, water sources and campsites. Consider digging a hole the night before. When nature calls me at 4.30am, I barely have time to put on my shoes and fight my way out of my tent. Of course, this strategy may backfire if a fellow hiker can't resist the sight of a freshly dug cat hole, but it might save you valuable time the next day.

You must dig a decent hole – at least 15cm deep x 10cm wide. Use a lightweight trowel to make the job easier. It can take time in compact and hard soil. On the Pacific Crest Trail (PCT) rangers carry large spades to rebury human waste in deeper holes. Be a good scout. Do it right from the start.

When it's time to make your deposit, grab a small tree in front of you, hang your derriere over a conveniently located log, or squat if your knees can take it. How you clean your bottom is up to you. If you are going ultralight, a smooth rock or leaves may suffice. Toilet paper works but remember to pack it out. I prefer moist wipes for a cleaner finish and avoiding butt chafe, but they are heavier. You can dry them out and rehydrate later, but I never bother.

Others may dismiss both wipe solutions in favour of a backpacking bidet. Squirting water over your nether regions for a clean finish is very efficient. You can buy specific water bottle attachments to create your mobile bidet, but you will need water.

**“YOU CAN BUY
WATER BOTTLE
ATTACHMENTS
TO CREATE YOUR
MOBILE BIDET”**

Once you've completed your business, return the dug-out soil to the hole, stomp over it, and then cover with leaf matter or loose rocks, as if you'd never been there. I often craft a cross with two sticks and lay it on top as a warning for other hikers. Before I return to camp, I always wash my hands with hand sanitiser.

What about No. 1s? For the girls, we have several options. There are antimicrobial pee cloths and many pee-like-a-man funnels. Practice using the funnels in the shower first to learn how to cup the devise snugly around a woman's urethral anatomy, recognise the letdown feeling, and pretend you're a man. Remember, when you pee standing up, always point the devise away from a head wind or you might end up dousing yourself. Yes, this method works, but ladies, what a palaver!

If your knees are fine, drop your shorts or pants, squat, pull your clothing out of the way towards your stomach and wee towards the ground. And if you hate those final drips ending in your underpants, unclip your antimicrobial 'Kula' pee cloth or dedicated bandanna from your pack, and wipe yourself, front to back, to prevent possible urinary infections. Easy, compared to No. 2s, isn't it? 🌀

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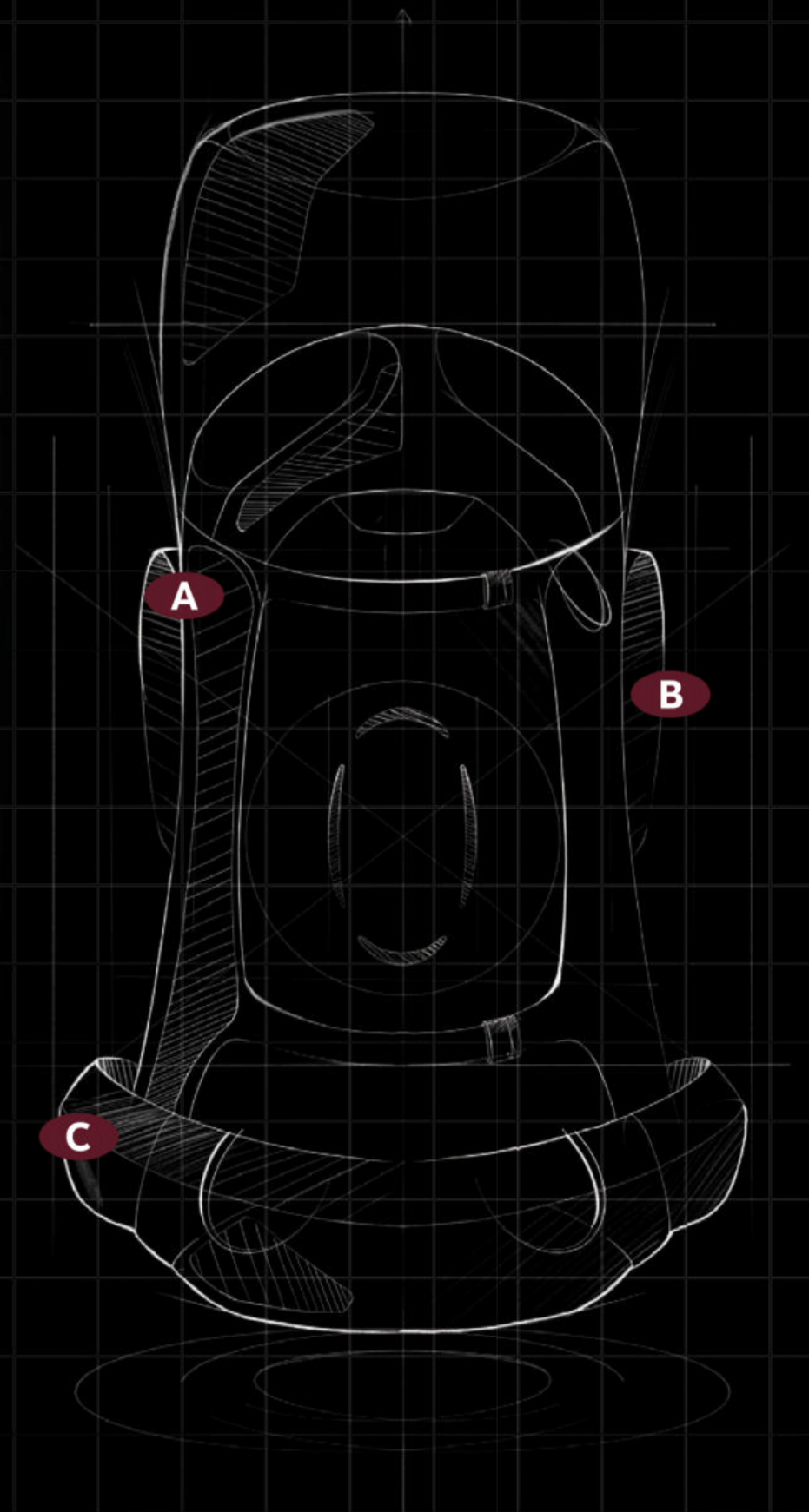


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