

August 2022

Bushwalk

Encouraging Elevation



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**Always Was
Always Will Be
Aboriginal Land**

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



Editor's Letter



Hi,

I hope that this edition of bushwalk finds you well this winter.

Every edition I learn something new. I am reminded not only about the variety of walking experiences we have access to but the broad ways in which people enjoy wild places. Some people relax, challenging themselves physically, and some make special trips to care for the land, making it better for others.

In this packed edition, I feel privileged to be able to read about Louise's effort in climbing all the Abels - a very impressive undertaking that I found inspiring. Then Tim takes us for a walk up Frenchmans Cap, one of those walks on most bushwalkers' bucket lists. Nicolas takes us on a tour of the Lofoten Islands, Norway, exploring dense forests, huge waterfalls and mountain peaks. Back in Australia, Ian guides us for a day in the aptly named and "gorgeous" Oxley Wild Rivers National Park, visiting massive waterfalls.

Enjoy the amazing photography from our photo competition winners. I get back the keyboard to help demystify good ways to build your Bushwalking Fitness, making it easier to prepare for longer walks. Knowing that mozzies are part of our landscape, annoying and also a potential serious health risk, Cameron helps us understand how to choose a mozzie repellent to best protect you. Finally, Sonya puts her cooking gear down and works with a team of like-minded people on K'gari to not only remove over a tonne of rubbish but also to get to know this special place better.

Happy walking and reading

Matt :)

Matt McClelland (aka Wildwalks)

matt@bushwalk.com

Cover image

Nitya on Federation
Robert Ham

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Editor
Matt McClelland
matt@bushwalk.com



Design manager
Eva Gomiscek
eva@wildwalks.com



Sub-editor
Stephen Lake
stephen@bushwalk.com

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

Declaration

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

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

Warning

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

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

Please consider joining a walking club or undertaking formal training in other ways to ensure you are well prepared for any activities you are planning. Please report any errors or omissions to the editor or in the forum at [Bushwalk magazine](http://bushwalk.com).

Climbing Abels

Text and photos
Louise Fairfax

An Abel is a Tasmanian mountain over 1100 metres in height with at least a 150 metre drop off on all sides. On 8 February 2022 Louise Fairfax became the third woman and twentieth person to climb all Abels. We asked Louise to write about her journey.



During the Western Arthurs traverse - a beautiful route
John Whiteley



Breeding them tough in Tassie



Three generations on top of Abel, Mount King William I. This was a snow climb. Gus was 8



Kirsten in front of the final section of Sharlands Peak

I adore mountains, big or not so, steep or less so, although I have to admit, the more shapely they are, the greater is my pleasure. I love the play of light as the shapes create shadows at the start and end of a day, and I love the kind of view you get from the top - the way you can see to eternity. And, perverse as it may seem to some, I revel in the physicality of the climb, whether we are thinking about getting to the base with my huge rucksack (often a task lasting five days) or the actual scramble to the top. A mountain that plays hard to get is all the more rewarding when you unveil her secrets.

Yes, I have completed all the Abels but that was never actually my quest. I have now climbed all the Wainwrights in the UK as well, and both journeys share a common pattern. Each had as its premise my love of mountains (I used to be paid to run up them all over the world, and was dubbed Mountain Made by *The Australian Runner* magazine), but, maybe amusingly, each began with the simple step of buying a book. Both books had information about each of the mountains, and route suggestions. Now, books have

indexes and this little mountain maid likes to tick mountains she has climbed, fungi she has seen, waterfalls she has bagged. One tick led to another and soon there were not many mountains left.

When that happened in England, that was a lot easier than in Tasmania. In the UK, I had left easy ones until last, so the only drama was my huge emotional response to the fact that I absolutely adore all those mountains and just couldn't believe I had climbed everything I could see, no matter where I was. The Brits threw me a party to commemorate.

Sharlands and Precipitous Bluff

In Tassie, with four to go I still had no sense that I would climb all the Abels, and thus no feeling of compulsion to do the impossible. The fourth mountain from the end was Sharlands Peak, somewhat near Frenchmans Cap. Every birthday, as part of my present, my first-born daughter, Kirsten, joins me on a mountain expedition of my choice, so last year I chose Sharlands as I hadn't yet done it. We had a glorious few days camping high and summiting together, relaxing in the wilderness surrounded by magnificence.



Louise on Precipitous Bluff

And now there were three. Trouble is, the three that remained were all doozies, so I still believed completion was a mission impossible, and it is rather demoralising to wish for that. I was content with what I had.

I had tried to reach PB (Precipitous Bluff) on six occasions, each time being blasted off the mountain by gales and/or blizzards, and once broke my wrist in a solo attempt. I had been quite near the base on the final time I got weathered out, and the trip back of many days through deep mud and scratchy scoparia was enough for my climbing partner of that trip and I to agree we would never do that route again (well, not past Pindars Peak). I thought that was it. I would finish my life with three to go. The other two left were Federation Peak, the idea of which scared me to death, and Camp Hill, which no sane person would do unless they needed to complete a list of Abels. It is scratchy and thick *in extremis*. I have no armour bequeathed to me by a knightly ancestor, and without that, who would endure the pain?

And so, with the final three being impossible (or intolerable), I didn't bother dreaming of completion. The fact that I did complete is due to my having extraordinarily nice friends. The first friend to help me was a guy I'd done several hard expeditions with, named Andrew. He suggested we attack PB from the base, having failed so spectacularly from above, and invited me to join him to see how this went.

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... a 7.5 kilometre stretch of freezing cold, waist-deep-in-places lagoon. Shudder.

This seemed a good idea, except for the fact that the base is guarded by a 7.5 kilometre stretch of freezing cold, waist-deep-in-places lagoon. Shudder. I feel the cold. What I didn't know in advance was that dragging sodden, triply heavy boots through such a

long distance was stunningly tiring. I am a fit person, but my glutes in particular ached and ached with this unfamiliar exercise.

“

The climb was easy – you just had to go steeply upwards from sea level for 1145 metres.

Be that as it may, and despite (predictably?) falling in the drink, we got there. The climb was easy – you just had to go steeply upwards from sea level for 1145 metres. I love doing that. I had the visible world to myself as I approached the cairn that would confirm that I had done it. I was filled with joy, possibly more by the amazing scenery from such a position than by the fact that I had earned

another tick. I sang “You raise me up” as I took the last twenty or so metres. Oh boy, what a view!!! And, perhaps unbelievably for those who know the Southern Ranges, the wind was not raging just now. It would start that game after Andrew arrived, before we left. I had imagined that I might have to crawl or even snake the last 500 metres or so, as I had had to do to get to some peaks in the UK, but no, I could sing and dance my way to the top.

“

I could sing and dance my way to the top.

Federation

Two to go. The next hurdle, one I felt was too big to jump, was Federation Peak, called by demanding people such as Sir Edmund Hillary “Australia’s only real mountain”. I couldn’t dream of completion when I had a 4 metre bar to jump.

Unbelievably, an email arrived from friends from the bushwalking forum, Alex and Nitya, saying that they were going to have an attempt on Feder and asking if I would like to join in. That’s akin to saying: “Hi Louise. I have a spare \$20,000 I feel like tossing away. Would you like it?”

So, I was going to have an attempt. *But*, I didn’t commit myself to summitting, and therefore the goal of completion was not yet prominent. *Don’t disappoint yourself by wanting what you can’t have, Louise.* All I really wanted from this trip was to sleep on Bechervaise Plateau. I thought that would be brilliant. And, well, I’d at least do a recce and go up Feds as far as I dared.

We pitched our tents on Bechervaise, had lunch and then D-hour arrived. Alex, Nitya, Andrew and a great guy from Victoria we met along the way, Rob, all packed their daypacks and set out. Like a robot I did the same. Still no hopes of summitting.

“Alex. I can’t do *that*. You guys go on without me”, I proclaimed when faced with going over an edge with a clear 500 metres below me.



Returning along the beach after climbing Precipitous Bluff

We hadn't even started the climb proper yet! How could I do the climb when the approach freaked me out? I am the luckiest person imaginable. Alex didn't accept my kind offer to withdraw, but gently informed me that this was reputed to be possibly the worst moment in the whole climb. Could I see that I could do any of it? Yes, I could do the first maybe 20 metres. We went there and, yes, I could go further. I could keep taking steps, and that I did. The shocking danger was now behind us, and all we were doing at this point was climb. I was no longer afraid. We got to The Ledge, and I concentrated hard on not looking down and keeping totally focussed on a world reduced to my physical body and not much more. I did *not* look down at the sheer, seemingly infinite drop (now 600 metres). We all know if you let go or slip, you die.

Soon enough, Alex, who had been kind enough to go last, just behind me, was telling me I had done the hard work. I could just

saunter from here to the summit. I was dazed. I couldn't believe this was reality and not a dream. I'm good at dreaming. Pinch. Nope, that hurt. Here I was. Little Louise Fairfax standing on an impossible piece of this planet that didn't accommodate the likes of me. And I wasn't one scrap scared of going down. What I had to conquer was me, not a mountain, and by dint of standing there, I had done that.

Camp Hill

Camp Hill remained, and at last I could realistically entertain the goal of completion. The trouble with Camp Hill is that *nobody* who is sane wants to go back if they've already been, and the only people who haven't climbed it, don't want to, and for a good reason. I thought I'd have to do it solo, which would have been no fun. However, Andrew came to the rescue, and then I got an email from a girl we had passed on the way out from Feder, who knew me mostly through





Rita on the evening before we climbed Camp Hill

the web, Rita. Nitya had jokingly told her she should join me to go to Camp, and possibly not knowing exactly what she was in for, she said she'd come. It was so bad we laughed as we snaked our way under the relentless mass of scoparia bushes. It seemed belly wriggling was the only way through this mess. But we did it, and what the scrub threw at us to repel us, the weather made up for by flanking the adventure with two sunsets of pure magic. Rita and I sat on the summit of Rocky Hill, which we had camped on (despite its name it is an Abel with a view to die for), photographing the sunset and just enjoying

being in the moment on such a wonderful, remote part of the world.

Mission complete. In the final stage, it had become a goal, and now I had done it, the third woman and twentieth person. It took ten years of expeditions and fabulous adventures in the wilderness. However, I am very aware that I did so only because I have amazing friends who jollied me back into action after I stopped doing anything much following the death of my husband, who issued the above invitations, and made completing such fun. Thank you, kind friends.

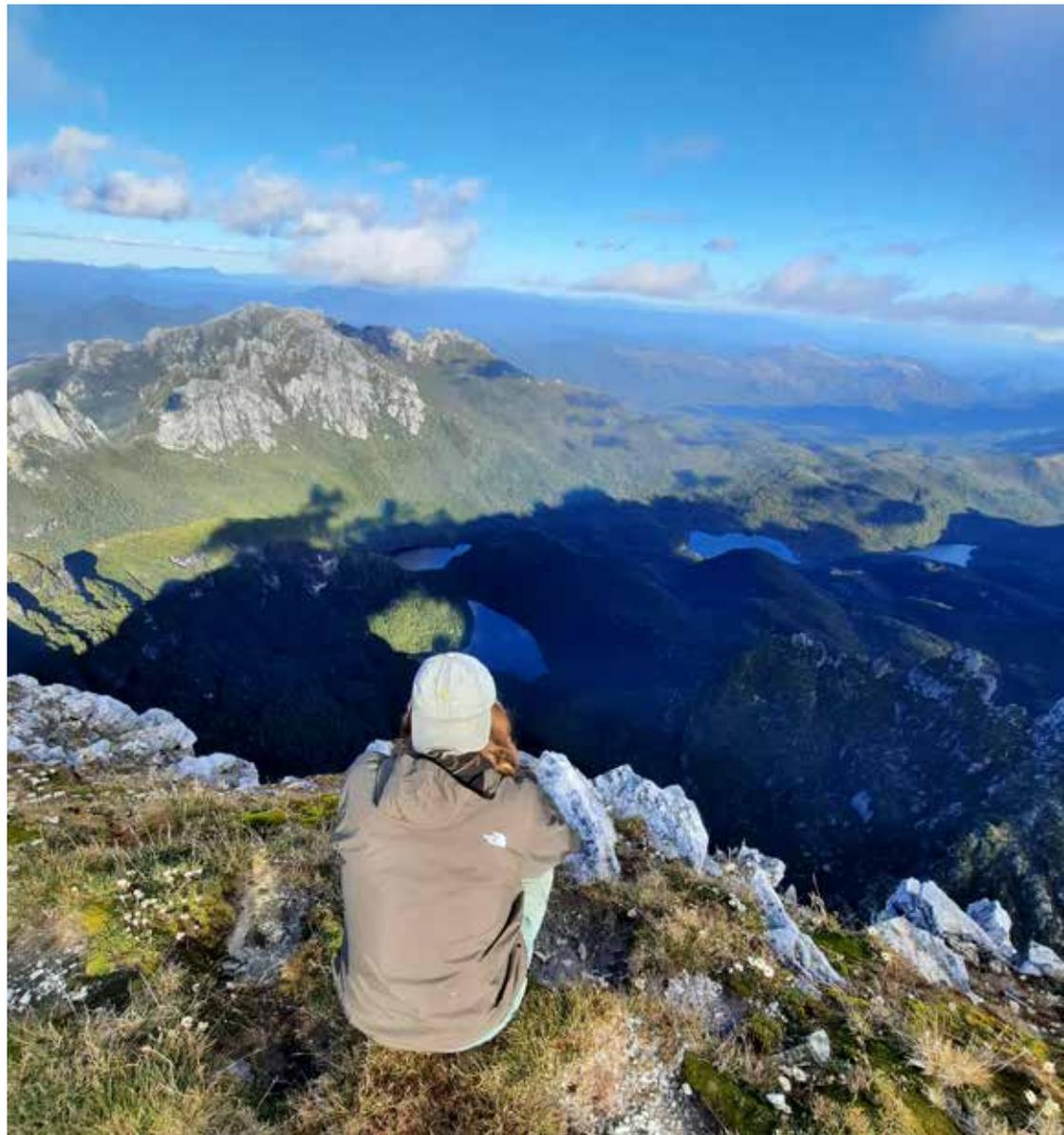
Louise has represented Australia at world level in five different sports, winning many international golds, and has held a world record. Her Australian Masters record in Athletics has stood for 20 years. In 2012, recovering from six years of viral illness, and with a husband who was deteriorating rapidly

from Parkinson's Disease, she took to the mountains with Bruce, to do this while his health held out. He died before she finished her Abel journey. Her favourite things in life are spending time with her family, pitching her tent on top of a mountain and being under way in the wilderness.

Frenchmans Cap Tasmania

Text and photos
Tim Goble

Frenchmans Cap is one of those iconic walks that would or should be somewhere on every hiker's "must do" list. It is definitely a "journey not the destination" type of walk with spectacular and varied scenery over the entire 50 kilometres. It's a walk in, walk out hike but walking in reverse gives you plenty of unseen beautiful scenery, or at least scenery from a different angle.



Frenchmans Cap summit



Lake Vera camping



Rare stillness at Lake Vera

Frenchmans Cap has the reputation of being a tough, challenging walk, particularly the last push to the summit. Having said that, the weather will often close in, making a summit push inadvisable and dangerous.

We were lucky enough to have perfect weather all the way.

The guides say to allow 3-5 days for this walk. We met a few people that did it in two and a couple that ran it in a day, but it is definitely worth taking the extra time to relax, enjoy the view and "smell the roses". We took four days to complete, which was plenty of time to do it comfortably and have a look around.

Day 1: Car park to Lake Vera, 15 km

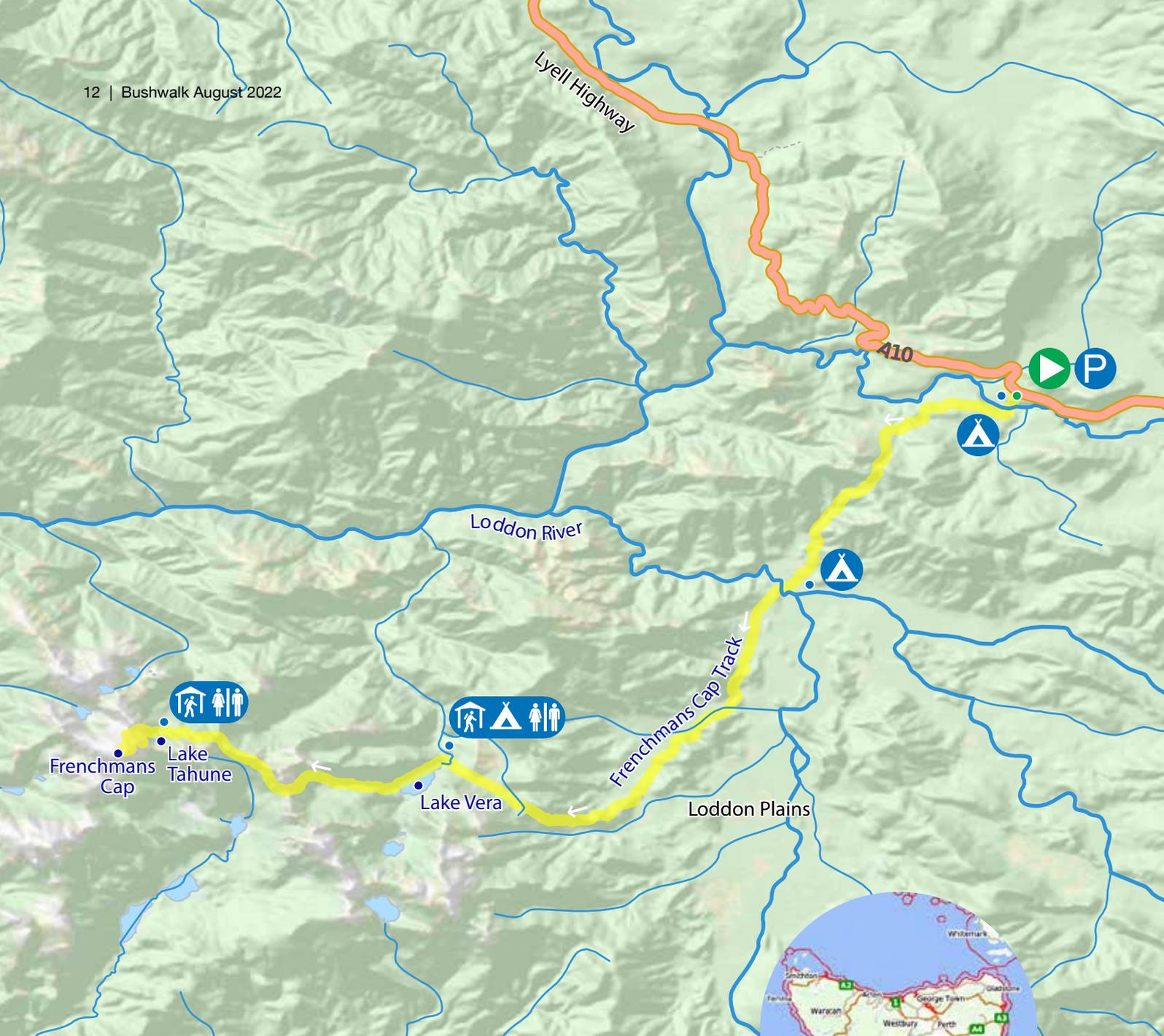
Start at the car park - which was surprisingly empty - and cross the suspension bridge over the beautiful Franklin River. It must have been challenging and cold to wade across during the early days.

A gentle climb up beside a gorgeous creek gives rise to an amazing glimpse of Frenchmans Cap.

Following this was a walk through button grass and over the Loddon Plains. Realignment and upgrading of the track now make this trip easier as opposed to struggling through knee deep and often thigh deep mud of yesteryear. Thanks, Dick Smith, for the funding! After some more scenic walking, we arrived at the mighty Loddon River for lunch. A relatively simple traverse brought us down to Lake Vera where we spent the night. There is a hut here, but we decided to pitch tents nearby.

Day 2: Lake Vera, Frenchmans, Lake Tahune, 8 km

A beautiful walk through temperate rainforest. We were clambering over old tree roots, through magical and mythical creeks, and waterfalls. You expect Frodo to jump out at any minute. Although this day is only about seven kilometres, it can take quite a while to navigate. Another climb brought us to Barron Pass, which has one of the best views of the walk. Make sure you spend a bit of time here to take it all in. We arrived at Lake Tahune just after lunch, and given the weather was clear, we decided to summit Frenchmans that



Frenchmans Cap



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



Main track, side trip, alternate route



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



Lake, river, waterfall or creek



Start of the walk



Hut



Campsite



Toilet



Parking

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

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

afternoon. Again it's only a few kilometres, but the ascent is over 400 metres. There are lots of false tops and quite a bit of rock scrambling to reach the summit. The view from the top on a clear day was absolutely spectacular.

We clambered down and reached the Lake Tahune campsite around 6 pm. Again there is an amazing hut there (hydropower provides lights, heating and phone charging). Still, we decided to camp again - especially given we had carried tents all that way!

Back to the car park

The next two days were the same as the first two days, but reverse. It was a bit easier on the legs as it was mainly downhill.

I would definitely recommend this walk to anyone with moderate to experienced hiking skills. It seems like Tas National Parks want people to book in now to limit numbers and also to be COVID safe. Also makes sure you have a bed in one of those huts if required.

Have fun!



The sodden Loddon is now mainly duckboards

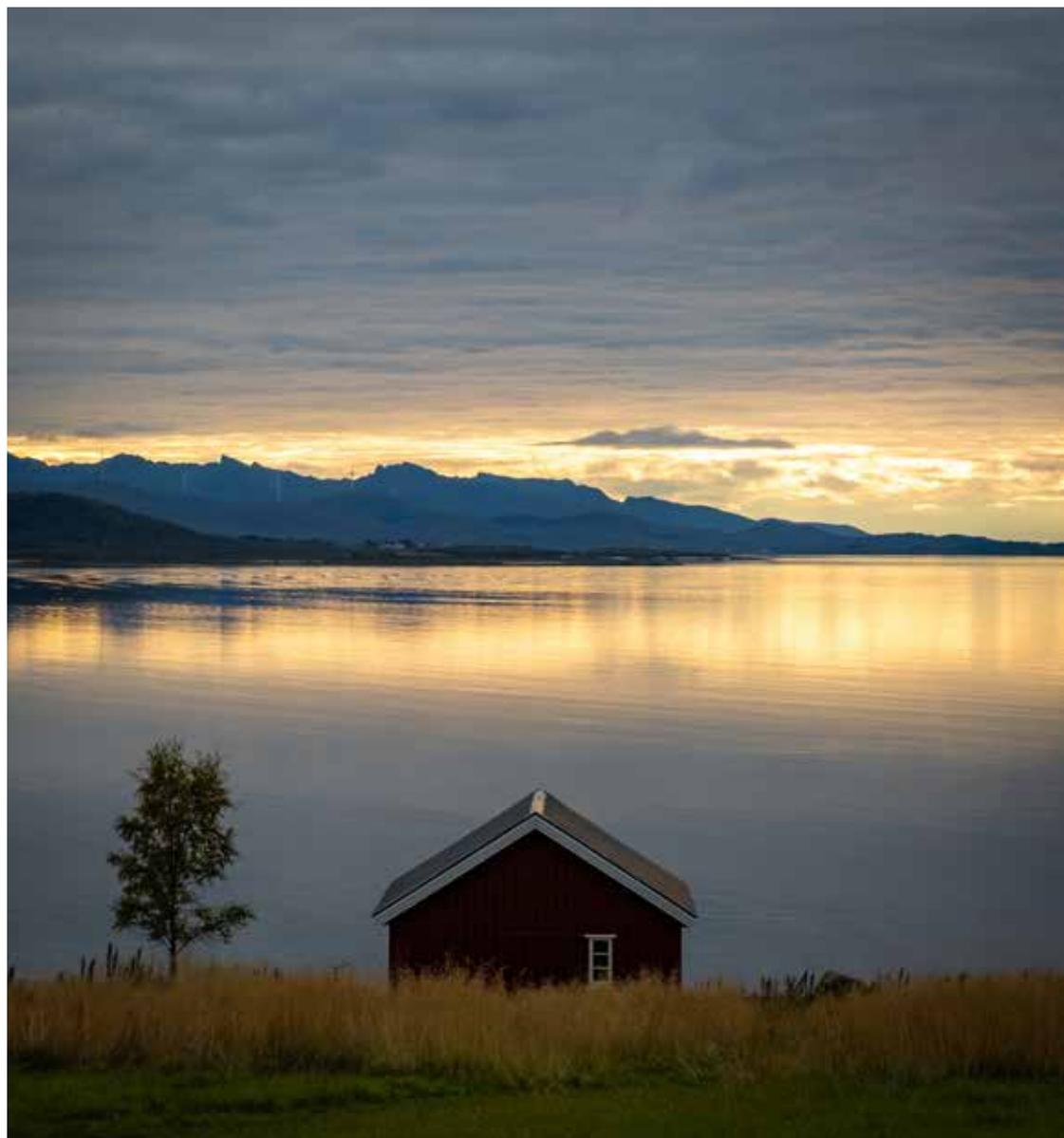


This is the most technical part of the climb

Lofoten Islands Norway

Text and photos
Nicolas Bertin

After travelling to Yellowstone and Colorado back in 2018, I hadn't done any big trips outside France. I had one trip to the French and Italian Alps in 2019, then another one in the French Alps in 2020 due to COVID restrictions. In 2021 we had the opportunity to travel properly again. I could see some friends from Sweden, so I decided to add a solo trip to the Lofoten Islands and Lapland before that. The itinerary would start in Luleå via Stockholm. Then I would rent a car, see a bit of Sweden, spend about two weeks in the Lofoten islands, and go back to Luleå. This was in September.



Boat hut at sunset near Sortland



Lakes near Jokkmokk



Muddusfallet in Muddus National Park

A bad start, Jokkmokk and Muddus

The first part of the journey wasn't easy: Scandinavian Airlines was a nightmare. My initial flight plan was Paris-Goteborg-Luleå. They first changed Goteborg for Stockholm, and then the day before it was cancelled at 10 pm. They added a layover to Copenhagen instead. Then my third flight to Luleå from Stockholm was cancelled: they couldn't shut the doors upon boarding the plane. This meant I landed in Luleå at 11 pm. Luckily the hotel I was staying at was open late. But the rest of the trip would be pretty smooth.

The first real travelling part brought me to [Jokkmokk](#), a small town with everything you need, nearby some national parks. Something to be said for Sweden and Norway compared to my last trip in 2015: there's now 4G absolutely everywhere, even on the most remote of roads (this is [Lapland](#)). The only way you can escape it is by hiking deep. So navigation is super easy. September in Lapland means it's already autumn: yellowing leaves (which would be fully orange by the end of the trip), cool when not freezing temperatures in the morning. It also means very few tourists. Since there are lakes everywhere, I first went for a bit of photography.



Hike near Kvikkjokk

My first actual hike was in [Muddus National Park](#) towards big waterfalls. Hiking in Swedish forests is very relaxing, but you seldom get good views until you are at the waterfalls themselves. The great views were on the next day, near Kvikkjokk and the mountains of [Sarek National Park](#), some of the highest mountains in Sweden (1900-2100 metres). Since I had to cope with the rain (this region is very wet), I only went for a short half-day hike. But it was still gorgeous. 360 degree views and a real arctic landscape. The silence was deafening, as there aren't many animals up there.

Norway

After three days in Sweden, it was time to enter Norway. There was a check for my vaccine pass at a roadblock a few kilometres after the border, but that was expected. As usual, Norway was stunning. Every road is so scenic you want to stop all the time. I first stopped near a town called Evenskjer. It wasn't the Lofoten islands yet, but the landscape was similar: gigantic cliffs, lakes everywhere, and mountains that rise above the sea level to around 1200 metres. At first, I was worried about all the rain, but the weather kept changing all the time. I had never seen



View of Møysalen national park from the road

so many rainbows in my life. I explored a lake nearby, but it was too wet and fogged in. I didn't bring high shoes, so I got soaked pretty quickly. But the next day, I found an astonishing hike towards the top of some awe-inspiring cliffs North of Kasfjord. I learnt that there are tons of little hikes like this. You simply climb up 100 to 300 metres and get stunning views of other islands, the Norwegian Sea, and fishing villages. The ominous bad weather made it all the more impressive.

It was now time to drive to the [Lofoten Islands](#) themselves, to a stunning AirBnB that I had rented right by a fjord. Prices for AirBnB weren't too high, not as high as I remembered them. You could rent a house with a stunning view for about 80 € (A\$120) per night. The eye-watering cost would be the fuel though: 2 € (A\$3) per litre, that stings, especially when Hertz gives you a massive Volvo SUV instead of a small economical car. But it was truly worth it: the roads are some of the most scenic I've ever seen. Green



Rainbow near Tjeldsund Bridge

mountains with cascading waterfalls that seem prehistoric. Fishing villages are hugging a wind-battered coast as if they'd been here for millennia. Towering mountains a quarter the size of those in European Alps, but just as impressive because all of their height is right there, as the roads are at sea level. But I was especially stunned by all the tunnels and bridges that connect these islands. It is so easy to travel here, in this seemingly hostile landscape.

I was lucky to see it in September though. One of the Airbnb owners told me July-August is completely clogged up and unpleasant. But here, apart from some bustling viewpoint car parks in the most touristy areas like Reine, I was free to go where I wanted, not thinking about getting up early to have a spot at a car park. Remember to take cash at the start of the most famous hikes: the car parks are almost always 5 or 10 €, and you need cash. You can only pay online with a Norwegian bank account, but I'm guessing this will change in the next few years.

All the fishing villages are stunning: [Reine](#), [Hamnøy](#), [Å](#). There are small hikes towards viewpoints everywhere, but you can decide to drive and enjoy the views. There are few enough roads that you can drive all the B roads and enjoy yourselves. There are many hidden gems on those roads. And again, the light was changing all the time. I had blue

skies, battering storms, rainbows, fog, drizzle, everything but snow. And due to the warming effects of the Gulf Stream, this is a much more pleasant climate than Sweden.

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Green mountains with cascading waterfalls that seem prehistoric.

Many of you may already know the famous view of this fishing village of the Lofoten, Hamnøy. However, if you look for it while you're there like I did, you most likely won't find it. It is actually a view from a one-way concrete bridge. This famous picture leads you to believe the fishing huts face the battering waves of the ocean: they don't. They face a tranquil inlet and that concrete bridge. The road behind the huts isn't really pretty, and you also need the perfect angle so that you don't get some ugly white huts or a car park in the frame. This is the type of location I'm not very fond of. If you look at the picture taken at sunrise, it is beautiful though. But the way it makes you feel isn't how you will feel when you're there. There are many more stunning places in the Lofoten than this. And you will see many photographers simply waiting on that bridge for the perfect light. I can't imagine the competition in summer on that spot.



Hike up Munkebu hut, near Sørvågen



Famous fishing huts in Hamnøy

That day I decided to take my first actual hike of the trip. I walked about five hours towards the island's centre, not that much elevation gain (I think about 600-700 metres), but really deep in those mountains. Hiking books warn about the mud, and rightly so. It is extremely muddy. Bogs are everywhere, and signage is sometimes fairly poor. Those used to Tasmania will think it's a piece of cake, but it wasn't with my low cut hiking shoes. There are also quite a few sections with chains to help you climb slick rocks, and in the wet, those sections feel a bit uneasy. But the views towards the sea are gorgeous. The lakes are gorgeous, the waterfalls are gorgeous ...

These being islands, there are great white sand beaches too, and some people even surf here. When you go back to your Airbnb in the evening, you're in awe of that gorgeous golden hour that seems to last for so long in the North.

A must-stop in the Lofoten is the perfectly preserved fishing village of [Nusfjord](#). You need to pay a steep 10 € (A\$15) to visit it in July and August, but it was free in September, with no crowds. You can take a trip in a fishing boat or simply explore the village and the surrounding walks. Again, I recommend taking all the side roads and exploring those



Nappskaret viewpoint

tiny villages. You may find a secret beach, a lovely lighthouse. I was also stunned by the wooden churches or the lawn cemeteries you see here and there. It's a perfect landscape for contemplation, although, with that weather, it usually must be done from a café or the inside of your car. We shall also talk about food: although you will find nice restaurants, cooking at home is more budget-friendly. That may not be as easy as you'd think. There are very few fruits and veggies here. Finding a

good tomato is nearly impossible, and you pay a premium for bad ones. So expect a lot of frozen food, rice and pasta.

Svolvær

I then switched to another Airbnb on the island, in the "big" city of Svolvær. Although the islands look small on the map, you cannot simply take one central accommodation and explore the lot. You need at least two different locations, or even three if you want to explore the Vesterålen islands as well as I did. The



View from a mountain pass on Austvågøya

part of the Lofoten near Svolvær seems a bit less spectacular. The islands are more extensive, so it feels a bit less wild. It takes longer to get to hikes, like an hour, but you still find incredible viewpoints after short climbs. I never get tired of those amazing views. It's always steep, but each time worth it.

My last hike in the true Lofoten would be another easy but stunning hike. Blue skies this time and a panoramic view that really stunned me. It was probably then that I realized this is one of the most beautiful trips I had ever done. Even in New Zealand, I didn't get views

like this. At least not such a massive reward for minimal walking. I've visited Southern Norway before, with the fjords and the lakes, but this is even better. And it was far from being over ...

The Vesterålen islands are more extensive and slightly more developed than the Lofoten (bigger towns). But there are places that are just as wild, and I rented a house with another stunning view, with a nice wood stove. There are plenty of these tiny houses to rent, with a lovely homely feel. The mountains on this archipelago felt more prominent, more Alpine.



Vesterålen islands

So the views went even further than on the Lofoten; only the cute fishing villages were missing. By that time of the trip, autumn was at its peak too. The forest was mostly orange. It was truly magical, especially on that nice hike towards a round hut.

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... I realized this is one of the most beautiful trips I had ever done.

While the Lofoten were mostly car touring paradise, the Vesterålen were hiking paradise. Plenty of small summits to ascend, with huge rewards. Much less mud than in the Lofoten, which was a big plus. I did a hike on a rocky outcrop surrounded by cliffs, which was both amazing and scary, and then an easy summit that gets you to a true alpine setting. It would have been a shame to skip these islands and only focus on the Lofoten. They are just as spectacular and much, much less crowded. I used the Rother hiking book for the Lofoten, which has hikes for the Vesterålen as well. This book is a must-have if you intend on hiking there. I skipped the scariest and most

difficult hikes because the weather was too unpredictable.

Back to Sweden

I then reluctantly drove back to Sweden for the last two days of my trip. I stayed in Kiruna, a mining town for one of the biggest miners in the world. Luckily the town isn't too big, and the area to visit around here, the [Abisko National Park](#), still feels wild. First of all, you can't miss Torneträsk Lake. The road follows the coast of this massive deep blue lake, with a gorgeous mountainous background, with some snow already there in September. You can explore the lake's shores on foot, especially at the mouth of the river Abiskojøkka. Here is also where I saw my first wild reindeer, jumping and eating on the side of the road. It's a very sunny part of Sweden and also the driest, due to the rain shadow provided by the mountain range between Norway and Sweden. Hiking here was nothing but open views and orange trees all around, with a superb backdrop. If you want, you can buy some moose and reindeer meat nearby, and there's a reconstitution of a traditional Saami village (the indigenous people of Lapland).



View of Torneträsk lake from Björkliden

Overall it was an amazing and unforgettable trip. Sweden is beautiful, especially around Abisko, but Norway is just too good. I would land directly in the Lofoten if I had to do it again, even though the flights are more expensive. I would also bring high shoes and proper gaiters to do more serious hiking. It's a

must-do for any traveller, but it has to be done in shoulder season. Everyone told me summer was too crowded. I didn't see any auroras, though. I had only one night of clear skies, and they didn't appear that night. To see them, you need clear skies and solar activity, which usually happens in winter.



Road bend on the E10 following the shore of Torneträsk lake



“

Nicolas is a physicist working in medical research. He's lived in Melbourne for three years and fell in love with mountain hiking in Tasmania and the High Country. After that, he was lucky to live in Grenoble for a few years, exploring the Alps and developing a passion for landscape photography. Now that he's in Paris, he tries to explore other countries on holidays, and has had the luck to visit some majestic places such as Québec, Utah, Colorado or Scandinavia.

A day of the senses

Text and photos
Ian Smith

Wollomombi Gorge is near Armidale NSW, about 540 kilometres north of Sydney. It features Australia's second-longest drop waterfall and is a part of [Oxley Wild Rivers National Park](#).



Ruin on the road to Wollomombi Falls



Dangars Falls Brush tailed rock wallaby at Dangars Falls

It was raining ... again or still, take your pick. I'd parked at the end of a short dirt road where the Armidale Tree Group had their headquarters. It was quiet but muddy and the rain, light now, was consistent. Not a good day for shooting birds, more your day for waterfalls. Thus it came to pass that I headed out for Wollomombi, arguably Australia's most spectacular gorge.

As I did I reflected on what I'd heard the night before. Don Hitchcock, for 40 years the husband of the erudite president Maria, goes bushwalking – a lot. Like me, he mostly goes alone, not being able to find willing accomplices. The stories he told of his years in the bush were fascinating. Like the time a python literally dropped out of a tree onto his head and shoulders. Fortunately it didn't see him as food and Don, wisely, remained calm.

I learned that for every 100 metres you descend into the gorges you can add one degree of temperature. I learned that the "island" separating Chandler and Wollomombi gorges isn't actually an island but a ridge and that years ago the University Climbing Club were out there taking photos on the end of the ridge just before they packed up and moved on. Thirty seconds later the section where they'd been collapsed into the gorge below.

Whether there was a mass purchase of lottery tickets and fresh underwear the next day isn't recorded.

I learned about the stinging tree, whose leaves I've had personal experience with. Apparently a Queenslander was chopping one down with an axe and the tree fell on him. He died, not as a result of the impact but of the massive amounts of poisonous barbs that enveloped him as a result. The word "agony" seems inadequate in such a case.

I learned that a lyre bird, the world's greatest mimic, used to whistle a flute solo from Vivaldi that a wood worker from England used to play every afternoon. I learned that when he goes walking, Don uses the minimalist approach to the point where he manufactures his own gear. If you buy a "lightweight" tent from a retailer it weighs 1.2-1.6 kilograms. Don makes his own and it weighs in at 450 grams, 600 grams with the pole. He imports his fabric from America.



However, the piece de resistance was when Don climbed down beside Dangars Falls at the start of a multi-day hike. His first night was beneath the cliffs on a rock-strewn area. No sooner had he set up his tent on his lilo (the only time he has ever used it) when the rocks started to fall. Turns out they were coming from feral goats on high. The torrent continued until one smashed a hole in his tent. So terrified was he that he clasped his EPIRB next to his chest with the thought that if some rocks came and trapped his legs he could still set his beacon off. Needless to say, there was no sleep that night.

The start

As the motorhome splashed along the Gwydir Highway my sense of anticipation rose, especially when we crossed the farm streams running a banker where there had hardly been any water for the previous decade. At least their dams would be full, something that hadn't happened for a long time according to

the ABC local radio I was listening to. They specifically mentioned that the Wollomombi area had missed most of the recent rain and that the dams there still weren't yet full. They must have been the only ones in the entire eastern Australia region that weren't.

The small causeway just after the turnoff even had water over it, something I had never seen before. It augured well.

I was a tad surprised to see an early model Mitsubishi campervan already in attendance with the occupiers having breakfast in the covered picnic area. It was real "Gorillas in the mist" type stuff.

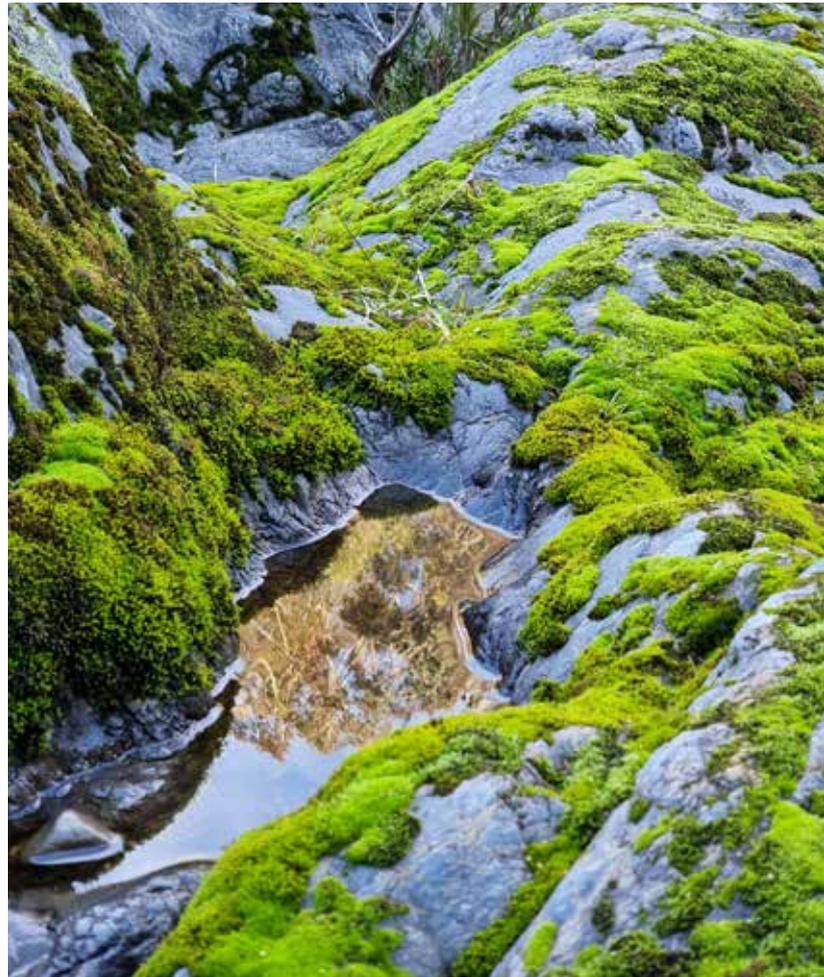
I opted for a nap before heading out, and by then the rain had eased to almost nothing but the fog was still intense; though I noticed that over the 10 minutes I took to get ready, visibility had doubled to about 200 metres, so I took a punt and headed out.



Wollomombi Falls - Lace lichen (Spanish Moss)



Chandler Gorge



At Wollomombi Falls

No sooner had I alighted than I heard a reverberating crash in the forest. How many times had I seen fallen trees and wondered if they made a racket when they fell. I had a first hand answer now, and it was awesome as the heavy branches wrought havoc amongst nearby vegetation, though all invisible to me.

The trail to the Wollomombi

Off along the trail I trod, through the lace lichen covered trees whose twisted trunks lent a ghost-like quality to the experience. Choughs scattered before me as I walked further, their squawking the only noise I could hear above the almighty roar of Wollomombi. It was simply an unforgettable sensory experience to hear one of the great waterfalls of Australia so close yet be unable to see it.

The mist closed in again as I neared the lookout so I fiddled around taking atmospheric shots of the vegetation that clung in desperation to the cliffs, eking an existence out of the sparse soils that lay upon the top

of rock remnants. A small flock of thorn bills cheekily bounced around the branches beside me while all around the dogwood displayed its beautiful yellow hues.

“

... the might of Wollomombi revealed in all its glory ...

turned around to pack my camera away and there, right before me, was the might of Wollomombi revealed in all its glory, framed by the drifting fog. The water furiously threw itself down the cliff face in ever-changing patterns of foamy maelstroms. Wave upon wave alternatively advanced and retreated, seemingly reaching for some kind of freedom in an epic display of nature's might, sending out wispy furls like moist sunspots. The raging waters of the river were the dark brown colour



Beardy Waters

of the soils they carried seaward from the plains above.

The jagged spur that splits the Wollomombi and Chandler gorges stood like a sentinel over the scene, parting the two great conflicts

until they could be managed more easily downstream.

The afternoon before I'd spent in much more tranquil surroundings, surveying the limpid ponds of Beardy Waters and watching the



Fan tailed cuckoo



Dogwood (*Jacksonia scorparia*)



Wollomombi Falls

many types of dragonflies darting around to the symphony of a few birds that chirruped in the background. The bleach white cumuli were reflected in the ponds but all too soon they became cumulonimbus and an ominous grey band descended from the west. It had dumped its load overnight and that led to the rushing waters of today.

The afternoon

I had lunch back at HQ and set out again, this time with a National Parks and Wildlife Service worker Matt. He was going to see if the bridge across the Wollomombi was still there. It was, but it was in trouble as the raging waters tried desperately to remove it. A couple of other tourists contemplated the torrent in awe, an emotion we were all feeling I suspect.



Wollomombi River in flood

A little further down it made normally pleasant rapids a seething maelstrom with swirling, crashing volumes of brown sludge cascading onwards, drawn inevitably by gravity's force.

To the side there were a few rivulets whose paths I'd noted before but never seen running. Today they were happily gurgling through the forest, painting a more benign picture than that into which they flowed. Tiny wildflowers sought sunlight here and there, a somewhat futile exercise on an overcast day like this.

“

Here was a wide splendidly panoramic valley made for bushwalking ...

I thought of the contrast also to two days previous when I'd walked up to Clarence Gorge, a place below where the mighty Clarence River is joined by the Nymboida and where it plunges a few metres over up to four waterfalls depending on how much water is flowing at the time. Here was exactly the type of place where all those small rivers like the Wollomombi end up after they've finished their life in the New England area. Here was

a wide splendidly panoramic valley made for bushwalking and bird watching unlike one of Australia's most awesome canyons, Chandler Gorge, where I now stood.

At day's end I raced off to a friend of mine, Frank Low, a noted landscape photographer of the New England area and he insisted on going to see for himself the next day so we saw Wollomombi again but it wasn't as atmospheric, the mist having abandoned the gorge. We did, however, visit nearby Bakers Creek Falls where there's seldom a decent flow and found it in gushing form.

This lookout has a tragic history, for three men were murdered here a couple of decades ago for no apparent reason by a group of three men who had murdered a pregnant girl at Dalby and went on to hold two children hostage at a farmhouse before they were eventually captured. A bouquet of flowers is maintained at the lookout.

It's hard not to think about that as you view the raging river and note the delicate wildflowers in late spring bloom around you but all too soon it was time to leave.

I started counting the days to when I can return to the natural wonders of New England.



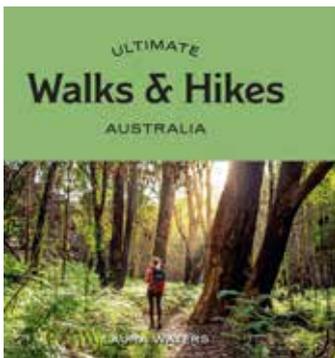
Bakers Creek Falls panorama

In the News

New four-day walk in NSW

The 46 kilometre long [Dorrigo Escarpment Great Walk](#) is planned to be constructed in Gondwana rainforest, along with new huts, campsites and suspension bridges.

Ultimate walks & hikes Australia book



An award winning author Laura Waters has hiked thousands of kilometres in all Australian states and territories, and has written Ultimate Walks & Hikes: Australia. The book will be released on 5

October but it's available for [pre-order](#) now.

Miniature replicas of mountain huts

Jamie Baldock from Quoiba near Devonport has a delightful hobby. He is building [mini copies](#) of Tasmanian mountain huts.

Bundian Way walk getting funding

The proposed [Bundian Way](#) walking track will go from Twofold Bay to Mount Kosciuszko. A submission on behalf of Thaua, Bidewal and Monaro/Ngarigo Traditional Custodians was sent to the NSW Heritage Council seeking the delisting of the entire Bundian Way. The NSW government has reserved [\\$7.2 million for the development](#) of this walk.

UNESCO and Aboriginal concerns about proposed Tasmanian WHA developments

UNESCO has urged the Tasmanian government "to avoid any development" at the [World Heritage Area](#) before the "plan for a comprehensive cultural assessment is implemented". The proposed huts on the [South Coast Track](#) are also causing concern.

Win against Chinese-owned MMG mine tailings dam approval

The Bob Brown Foundation Federal Court bid to [derail plans for a controversial tailings dam](#) inside the takayna/Tarkine rainforest in Tasmania's north-west was successful. Bob Brown said that "This is a huge decision for the environment."

Northern Australian beaches inundated Asian plastic waste

On [page 52](#) Sonya discusses removing waste from K'gari. The problem is more [widespread](#).

Falls Hotham walk designer appointed

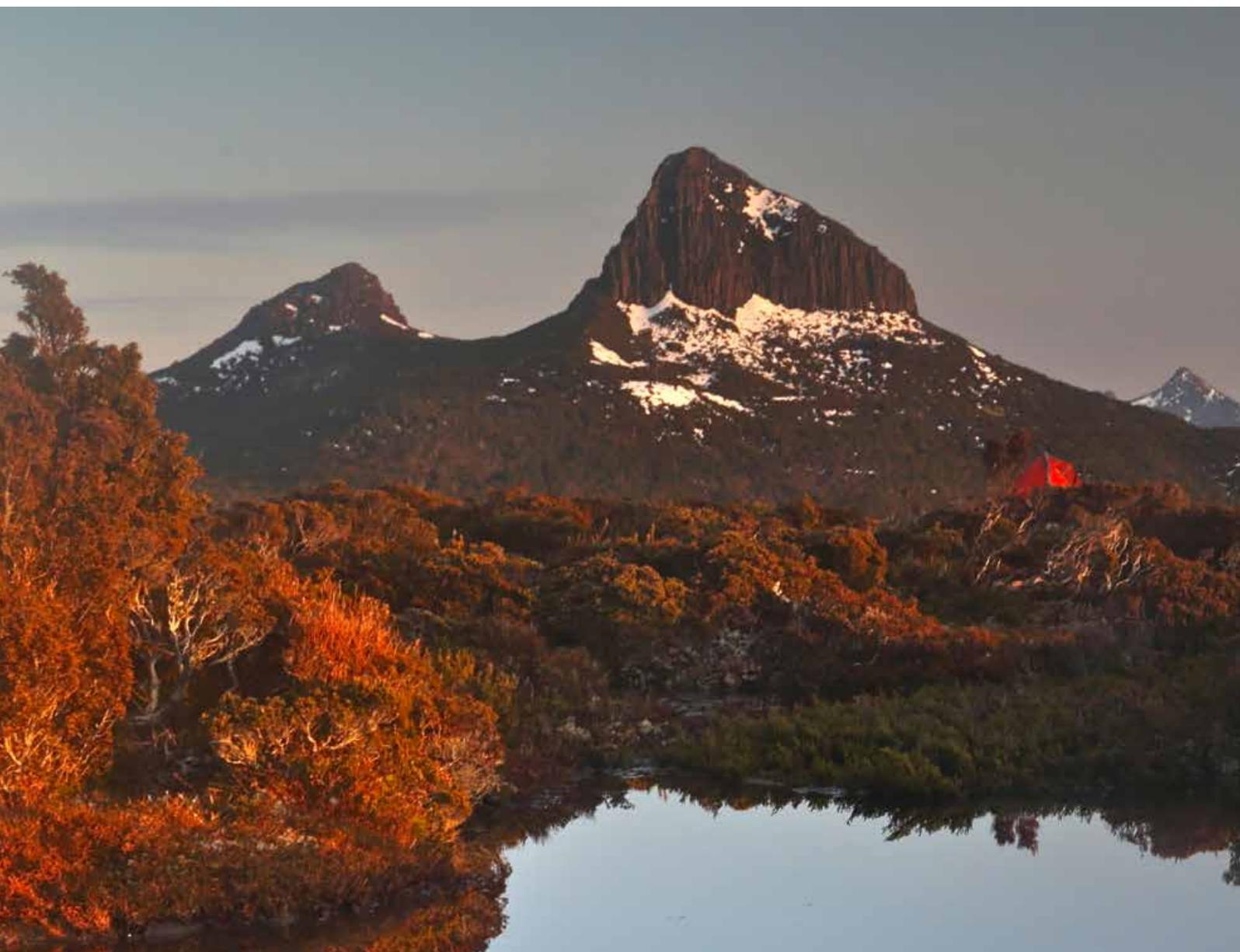
[K2LD Architects](#) have been appointed to create designs for the Falls to Hotham Alpine Crossing. The walk continues to be contentious.

Climate change is arriving

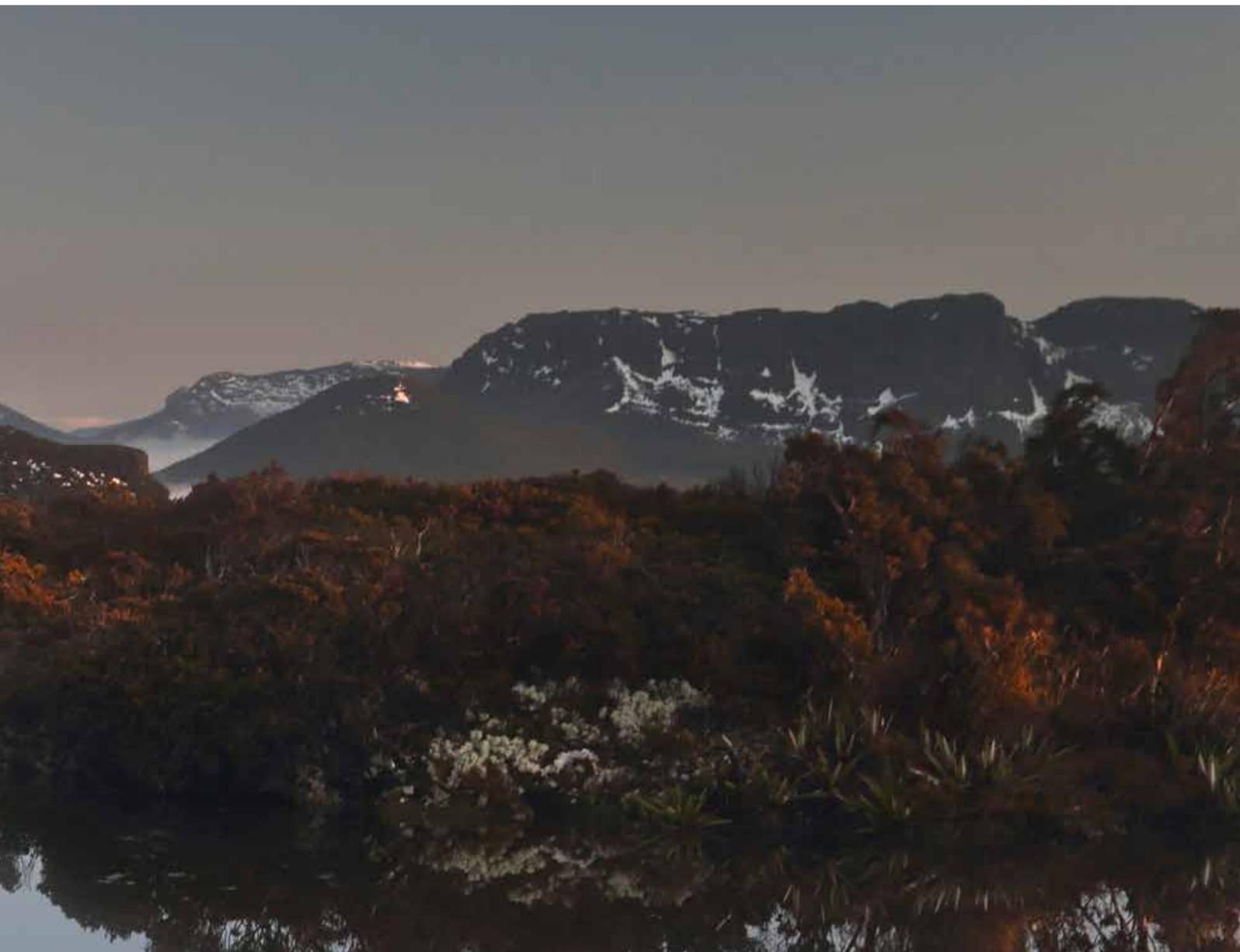
Glaciers in the Swiss Alps are on track to record their highest loss of mass in at least 60 years, [new data shows](#).

Photo Gallery

Photos
Bushwalk.com photographers



Check this and
other entries at
Bushwalk.com
Photo competitions



Peace on high
Louise Fairfax

Landscapes

August 2021

Winner
Winter blues
North-north-west

Dove Lake from Crater Peak is a familiar view, but less so the clear skies and blue waters in winter. Sometimes you get lucky.



The Abyss
Ribuck



Lockdown compliant stroll
John Walker



Deep view
Brian Eglinton

Non-landscapes

August 2021

Winner
Red Spider Grevillea
Crollsurf

I bought a telephoto lens to try my hand at bird photography and discovered it works really well photographing flowers.



Waxlip Orchid
(*Glossodia major*)
John Walker



Hanging around
Brian Eglinton



Something old,
something new
North-north-west

Tasmania

August 2021

Winner
Iced delights
North-north-west

Mount Field's circuit over Rodway, past The Watcher, down through Newdegate Pass and back via Tarn Shelf is rightly lauded as one of Tasmania's - indeed, Australia's - top day walks. It's been a favourite of mine for at least 45 years. Every visit, something new reveals itself and different perspectives are found. You just have to be careful about where you step when finding them; still, what's a little icy water in the boots compared to being there on such a day?



Other States

August 2021

Winner
The Pyramid
Ribuck

We picked our way up the gorge for an hour, then turned the final corner and saw this majestic pyramid. On the right, we were turned back by a cliff. After dropping down to the left we found a navigable ramp to the top. We nicknamed this place Felicitous Gorge due to our good fortune in finding the ramp - and because Felicity went up it first.



Now I remember where we parked!
John Walker



Second Falls
Brian Eglinton

Landscapes

September 2021

Winner
Jackson Creek Track
North-north-west

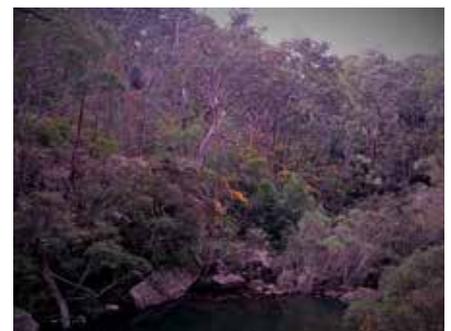
A route that had been bumped from the top of the To Do list for years was finally knocked off early last spring with little snow but with plenty of meltwater around. It turned out to be cold, wet, a little overgrown and absolutely beautiful.



Sunset, Narrawallee Inlet
landsmith



Mount Chambers Gorge
Brian Eglinton



Wattle Gully
John Walker

Non-landscapes September 2021

Winner
My safe place
Graham51



Satin bowerbird
landsmith



Perfect timing
North-north-west



Ring Necked Parrot
Brian Eglinton

Tasmania

September 2021

Winner
Winter in the Walls
Dylan Colson

I've wanted to go and explore the Walls with a solid amount of snow cover for a while. On this trip I decided to go out to Pool of Siloam for sunrise looking at King Davids Peak and this was the view I had. It was hard work in deep snow to get there but I'm happy with the result.



Staring into the Abyss
North-north-west

Other States

September 2021

Winner
On the Warden Head Loop at Ulladulla
landsmith

Warden Head at Ulladulla has a lighthouse area visited by many, but the significant cliff and rock shelf with its abundant rock pools below is a haven for nature lovers. Nearby is South Pacific Heathland Reserve, another treasure best visited in spring or summer when the wildflowers are in profusion.



On Iralbo Peak
Brian Eglinton



My lockdown forest
John Walker



Late light at Gosnells Creek
Osik

Bushwalking Fitness

Text
Matt McClelland

If you are new to bushwalking or haven't hit the track much lately (yeah, yeah, COVID), then you are probably wondering if you're fit enough to tackle a bushwalk, let alone an overnigher.

Some comfort. You don't need to be buff to hit the track, but the fitter and more prepared you are, the more you will enjoy it and the while reducing the risk from injury. Of course, fitness takes time to build, so don't try to rush it. Fitness is best built by doing what you need your fitness for, so walking is a great way to get fit for walking.





Most articles on track fitness talk about hitting the gym and doing a wide range of complicated exercises. There may be a place for the gym, but let's face it, people have been walking this Earth very effectively for tens of thousands of years, well before the idea of gyms was considered. The best way to get fit for walking is by walking. Yes, there are some things we can do to help build that fitness more efficiently, to recover from injury, but whatever you do, it needs to be motivating. Doing something is way better than a fancy plan that is not implemented.

What is fitness?

You would think it would be easy to define, but gee wiz, it can get complicated. For the sake of this article, let's think of fitness more as medical people do - "one's ability to execute daily activities (bushwalking) with optimal performance, endurance and strength with the management of disease, fatigue, and stress."

Too often is fitness defined very narrowly - focused on cardio or specific muscle strength. But there is no point in having a very powerful engine if your tyres are flat and linkages are rusty.

If we were to take this article to its full extent, then fitness could be defined more like "able to fulfil a particular role or task". This would cover a much broader range of requirements, including skills, funding, knowledge, and nutrition. These are obviously important to undertaking any walk, but the article would soon turn into a novel.

So for the sake of this article, let's think about preparing our bodies for a big walk, being able to enjoy walking efficiently while reducing the risk of significant injury.

Know your fitness and goals

Start by thinking about where you are at and where you want to get to. Consider your past injuries, activity levels, nutrition, motivation, budget (time and money), medication and illnesses. Once you know your starting point you can set realistic goals. What areas of fitness will you need to work on to achieve those goals? How much time and money are you willing to invest? If you have any significant medical issues or a number of minor ones, consider speaking to your GP or an Exercise Physiologist/Physio to get a personal plan. An hour appointment can save you significant setbacks.

I am not suggesting you need to overthink this stuff. Your plan will depend on your goals and your starting point. If you have sat on a couch for the last year and are planning a two month bushwalk through rough terrain, then clearly more planning (and training) is needed than someone who walks regularly and plans an easy overnight walk.

Your goal is key, and your plan is just the tool that gets you to your goal. The plan should and will change. Stay flexible. If your plan is not motivating or working for you - change it! The first plan will not be the optimal one for you. As you learn more about yourself, your body, your goal and your motivation, you will be able to improve your plan. Are you a social person? Make sure your plan involves friends or groups. Is life a bit unpredictable for you? Maybe skip groups and plan activities that can be easily changed, like parking further from work or getting off the bus a bit earlier.

What kind of fitness do I need?

There are a few key areas of fitness that will help you enjoy your walks. Rest assured that most walks do not require a very high level of fitness, but the fitter you are, the less you will need to worry about your body on the track. This fitness can only be built with time. Doing targeted exercises a couple of times a week should strengthen your body to the levels needed for an overnight walk without feeling exhausted. The main areas of focus include:

- Agility (ability to traverse uneven ground)
- Back and core
- Shoulder and upper back
- Feet/ankles (muscle and skin)
- Leg strength
- Cardio
- Psychological strength (ability to just keep going)



Agility

Agility is often overlooked in training but is really important. Think mountain goats - the ability to move across rough terrain with greater ease. We spend so much time on smooth flat surfaces; agility is a skill easily lost. Start on surfaces where you know you won't trip or fall, and build up to more uneven terrain over time. Don't try improving agility and core at the same time; this will end in tears. Maybe try taking turns standing on one foot when waiting in a queue. When you feel safe, start avoiding smooth surfaces like footpaths and build up roughness over time.



- Walk on soft sandy beaches or grass.
- Stand on one foot. When you feel confident, try picking up something from the floor or seeing how far you can reach out with your other foot.
- Walk along narrow beams that require balance (like a line on the floor, road gutter edge, or low logs at the park).
- Step over things - gutters, logs, low barriers, even just clutter! Nearer to the big walk, try this with your pack on.
- If balance and agility continue to be a challenge, maybe try out some walking poles.
- Jump! Start with something easy for you, even if this is simply bouncing from foot to foot. Jump between marks on the ground and build up to short jumps between rocks.

Agility on track will improve with strength, but a lot of it is learned. It is your brain deciding where and what angle to place the foot to get stability and flow, like learning to balance on a bike. It takes a lot of focus at first, but then soon we don't even think about it. It's hard to remember that you needed to learn

it. Walking becomes much more enjoyable when agility becomes subconscious. Practise deliberately, often and safely, and it will become subconscious.

Back and core (also shoulder and upper back)

Strong back and core muscles will help you make the walk with a backpack more comfortable and easier to do. The goal is not rock-hard abs, rather improving control and coordination will take your walking much further. Walking in a pool is a great way to start. The water supports your body but provides lots of resistance. When you feel a bit stronger, put on a pack and go walking. Build up your pack weight slowly (maybe about three kilograms a week. Think water bottles - you can empty them if needed).

- Walk in water, at least waist-deep - forwards, backwards, as fast as comfortable.
- Start adding weight to your pack by re-using soft drink bottles filled with water.
- Find a nearby walk with lots of stairs - walk up and down while keeping good posture.
- Do your regular food shop using your hiking pack and walk home.
- Walk to work/school/bus stop carrying your pack.

Walk deliberately, holding good posture. If you find it too hard to maintain a good posture comfortably, lose some pack weight or some distance and keep practising. Carrying weight



Strong back and core muscles will help you make the walk with a backpack more comfortable and easier to do.

alone does not build the core - you need to be able to stabilise your core with the weight. People talk about setting your tummy muscles - this is not as easy as it sounds and is worth getting some guidance from a professional. Otherwise, focus on a good posture and build up the pack weight slowly.

Feet and ankles

Your feet are your contact with the ground. Strong feet and ankles give a strong foundation for walking. But your feet also tell your body what's happening with the ground beneath you (known as proprioception). If you've ever sprained or broken an ankle, this is something you will want to build up slowly but surely (see the section on agility). Build up time on your feet - standing and walking, especially on uneven surfaces.

Consider minimalist shoes if your feet are already strong and only where comfortable. Maybe just start by walking around the home for five minutes barefoot. Be careful not to cause a foot injury (stepping on glass etc.). Time with minimal shoes will help make your skin tougher.

Finally, get plenty of time walking in the socks and footwear you plan to use on the track. New shoes are a nightmare on the track, and shoes that haven't been worn for some time can delaminate after a few days. Toughen your feet for your footwear, and if you start to develop a hot spot, stop and manage it don't let it turn into a blister.



Heel raises help strengthen your calf muscles. Do a heel raise by standing with your feet about shoulder width apart then slowly raising your heels off the floor,

keeping your knees straight, hold for about six seconds, then slowly lower your heels back down. Hold onto something sturdy to help balance.

Legs and cardio

These two go hand-in-hand when we're training for a walk. You might focus more on the strength at times and other times on the cardio (think: puffing). If you have any conditions that affect your heart, lungs or legs, then professional guidance is strongly recommended.

- Do a few heel raises whenever possible (in the kitchen, in the elevator or waiting in a queue - be sure you have support as needed). Be sure to lower your heels slowly - can you stop halfway? Practice holding it for a few seconds, or even rise up on just one foot. Build up the number you can do.
- Walk on sandy beaches.
- Walk around barefoot or with minimally-supportive shoes, being sure they still fit well, so you don't trip!
- Try walking with wet socks and footwear at times. Make the most of puddles, but be sure to dry everything thoroughly afterwards.

As a general rule, start small and build up gradually. Aim for "moderate intensity" - you should be able to talk but not sing! Do not



The biggest mistake we make is trying to do too much too soon ...

rush this, it's a hare and tortoise game. The biggest mistake we make is trying to do too much too soon, bringing on injuries and taking the joy out of it. Try to make your training fun, a chance to spend time with friends and in nature.



Lunges help strengthen your many big muscles in your legs and lower back. Do a lunge by standing with your feet about

shoulder width apart then step forward longer than normal. Your foot should land and stay flat on the ground. Your heel (behind you) will rise off of the ground as you bend your knees to about 90 degrees. Keep your body upright with good posture. Then, push back with your front leg to return.

- Walk on land or in a pool (sandy beaches and rivers are great too).
- Sit to stand (stand up from a seat, trying not to use your hands).
- Lunges (but do them correctly).
- Step climbing (up and down).

As your fitness improves, try picking up the pace or talking as you go to improve things further. Think about the highest hill you will climb on your planned walk. Practice a similar height gain near home - you might need to yo-yo your local hill a few times.

Psychological strength

Long-distance walking is more enjoyable with better head space. Yes, psychological strength is really a part of fitness. I know most talk is on muscle fitness, but the right headspace makes a profound difference to performance. Most of us think we are strong mentally; after all, it's just a walk. Much of our resilience comes from the people around us, but developing grit is also helpful. You can develop grit by learning to enjoy more extreme conditions, like being comfortable in rain, colder weather and wind. Learn to use your rain gear and practise using it. Being diligent

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You can develop grit by learning to enjoy more extreme conditions, like being comfortable in rain, colder weather and wind.

with your training is a great way to start. Don't create a crazy schedule - be realistic and then stick at it. And when it is possible, train with your walking buddies. Some exercises that will help you build your mental strength and prepare you for different types of situations are:

- Get out on some longer day walks before doing some overnight walks.
- Don't skip the days when it's raining or it's cold - use it to train yourself up.
- Practise walking in uncomfortable conditions, such as with wet socks, boots and pants.

- Even try eating lunch in a cold shower with your rain gear.
- Pitch your tent under a sprinkler at night.

Walking poles

There are lots of interesting programs that use poles for building fitness. When it comes to bushwalking with poles, they are generally intended to make walking easier and safer. Using poles well takes good technique and practice. Poles can lead to severe injury and may make walking harder. Hand, wrist and shoulder injuries are not uncommon, let alone the occasional impalement. Do your research into how to use your poles. Think about hand grip, straps, height, placement and when to apply pressure in different situations. If you are going to use poles, then learn how to use them and practise training your body and brain, similar to agility training.

- Learn how to set your pole height, grip and placement (for different terrain).
- Walk with your poles often, deliberately practising the correct use.



Pace yourself

The best advice when it comes to building fitness is to pace yourself. Building muscle strength literally requires the breaking of tiny fibres, which your body then rebuilds stronger. All kinds of fitness need to be built up, and they can't be rushed. This stuff takes time, so plan to make it fun. Pace your training around what is enjoyable and part of your day-to-day routines. Maybe park further and further from work. Instead of a big shop once a week, do a few small ones and carry your supplies home in your overnight pack. Better still, gather your friends and hit the local bushwalking tracks, even if that means starting on smooth and flat tracks. Build it up over time, and if you enjoy it, you are more likely to stick to it.

Part of pacing is not to do intense exercises every day. Give your body time to heal. If you've had a big hard day, give your body a day or two to heal and grow. Be deliberate in your training. This is part of the reason a plan is so helpful.

- Have a plan with weekly goals.
- Each week, check your progress.
- Tweak the plan to match your life, motivation levels and fitness goals.

No pain, no gain?

We have all heard the saying "No pain, no gain". Is it true? Not really. Forget what the gym junkies tell you - you are planning for a bushwalk, not a bodybuilding competition.

“

... you are planning for a bushwalk, not a bodybuilding competition.

Low-level soreness is usually okay, but pushing through a "pain barrier" will usually make things worse - much worse. If you are with a trained health professional, there are times for pain, but it is usually not a healthy way to approach building fitness for most people.

Pain is (usually) a very helpful thing. Hang on, didn't I just say the pain was bad? Pain is your body's way of shouting that something

is wrong and compelling you to stop causing damage. It is an engine warning light that can not and should not be ignored. Pain is a good thing as it warns us of damage so we can adjust to reduce further damage. Pain tells us that something was too much.

Listen to pain

Responding to pain is really important to healthy bodies, just ask someone with leprosy - most of their deformities are due to a lack of pain sensation leading to horrific overuse. People with chronic pain are the exception to this rule. Their engine warning light is stuck on even when there is nothing causing damage. People with chronic pain will benefit from professional support to train effectively and reduce risks.

Pain often comes from things like big tears, breaks, heart muscle injury or other really nasty things that need urgent medical attention. The build-up of lactic acid, cramping and muscle fatigue can also cause significant pain.

However, soreness tends to come from things such as mild inflammation or micro-tears in muscle or other tissue. Microtrauma sounds bad, but it is actually what triggers growth and strengthening, rebuilding with more individual muscle fibres. It also helps build callous on the skin. Soreness is common if you start doing something new or return after a longer break. The soreness will usually ease once you rest for a while.

I know this all sounds subjective. Err on the side of caution. If you think you might be doing damage then back off. You can't unscramble an egg - pace yourself.

Delayed onset muscle soreness

As the name suggests, delayed onset muscle soreness (DOMS) is a generalised soreness (or stiffness) that lasts for a few days and can take a few days to start after more intense

exercise. DOMS is usually made worse from exercises that cause your body to contract muscles whilst your movement lengthens the same muscle, such as running downhill or walking downhill with a heavier load.

DOMS is caused by the release of enzymes that actually help repair tears in muscle fibres.

Your body will fix DOMS in a few days. Also, DOMS is a kind of cure; it is a result of your body's healing. DOMS is not a sign of poor fitness, it is just a sign of specific muscles doing more than they are used to. Muscles are very specific. This is a big part of why the best training for walking is walking.

If your DOMS is mild, you can do gentle exercises and stretches. Otherwise, let it pass before you start to build up your fitness training again. It seems that pacing and not rushing is the key.

DOMS

People will tell you DOMS is a build-up of lactic acid, but that is something very different. Lactic acid actually builds up quickly when your muscles don't get enough oxygen and goes away within a few hours with rest. DOMS last for days and starts well after this.

But let's be clear, DOMS is not the goal. If the DOMS impacts your day-to-day activity, it is too much. In fact, significant or lasting soreness can actually work against you. A little soreness is to be expected, but more is definitely not better.

When you hit the track

Rarely are we as fit as we want to be when we hit the track, life happens. If you can plan the first day or two of your adventure to settle in and help build fitness, that is great. Try to plan shorter days and fewer hills at the start of your journey. If you have a longer walk planned, then consider rest days each week and maybe two in the first week. Don't use this as an excuse not to train but just consider how you pace your preparation and trip. After all, this is meant to be fun.

At the end of the day, bushwalking is meant to be enjoyable, and it is so much better if the preparation is too. Don't feel the need to hit the gym unless you have specific injuries that require it. Instead, get out and do what you enjoy with a plan to build your fitness to meet your goal. Build all areas of your fitness. It is not all about cardio or core. If you need advice, book time with a health professional and avoid the well-meaning (and buff) gym junkie's advice. Hit the track, take care, pace yourself and have fun.



How to Choose a Mozzie Repellent

Text
Cameron Webb

Mosquitoes are an inevitable part of the Australian summer. And this year, with COVID a consideration, we might be spending more time outdoors than usual.





Supermarkets and pharmacies are stocked with a wide range of insect repellents including aerosols, creams, gels, sprays, roll-ons and wipes. There are even wristbands, fabric sprays, coils, sticks, plug-in devices and smartphone apps.

But not all products that purport to protect us from mosquito bites are equal.

So, how do you choose and use a repellent to best protect you and your family from mosquito bites?

The key ingredients

Health authorities [around Australia](#) recommend using insect repellents that you apply directly to exposed skin to prevent mosquito bites and reduce the risk of [mosquito-borne diseases](#).

All insect repellents sold in Australia must be registered with the Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority (APVMA), which checks that products are safe and effective.

Despite the wide range of formulations available, there are only a small number of active ingredients registered for use. So any insect repellent on the shelves in Australia will contain at least one of these ingredients.

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... there are only a small number of active ingredients registered for use.

Diethyltoulamide (DEET) is one of the [most widely used and recommended](#) repellents across the world. It [effectively prevents mosquito bites](#) and has repeatedly been shown to have [minimal adverse side effects](#) if used as directed.

DEET formulations in Australia are available in a range of concentrations, as low as 10% through to “heavy duty” or “tropical strength” products that may be as high as 80%.

Picaridin is a common ingredient in local mosquito repellent formulations and [effectively reduces mosquito bites](#). Like DEET, it has been [assessed as safe to use](#). Most formulations in Australia have concentrations of less than 20%.

Oil of lemon eucalyptus is increasingly common in mosquito repellents. The chemical, p-menthane-3,8-diol, is derived from the leaves of the lemon-scented gum *Corymbia citriodora*.

This ingredient is a byproduct of the distillation process, not an essential oil extracted from the leaves of the plant. This is important, as this product is a much more effective repellent than [essential oils](#) (we'll get to these alternatives shortly).

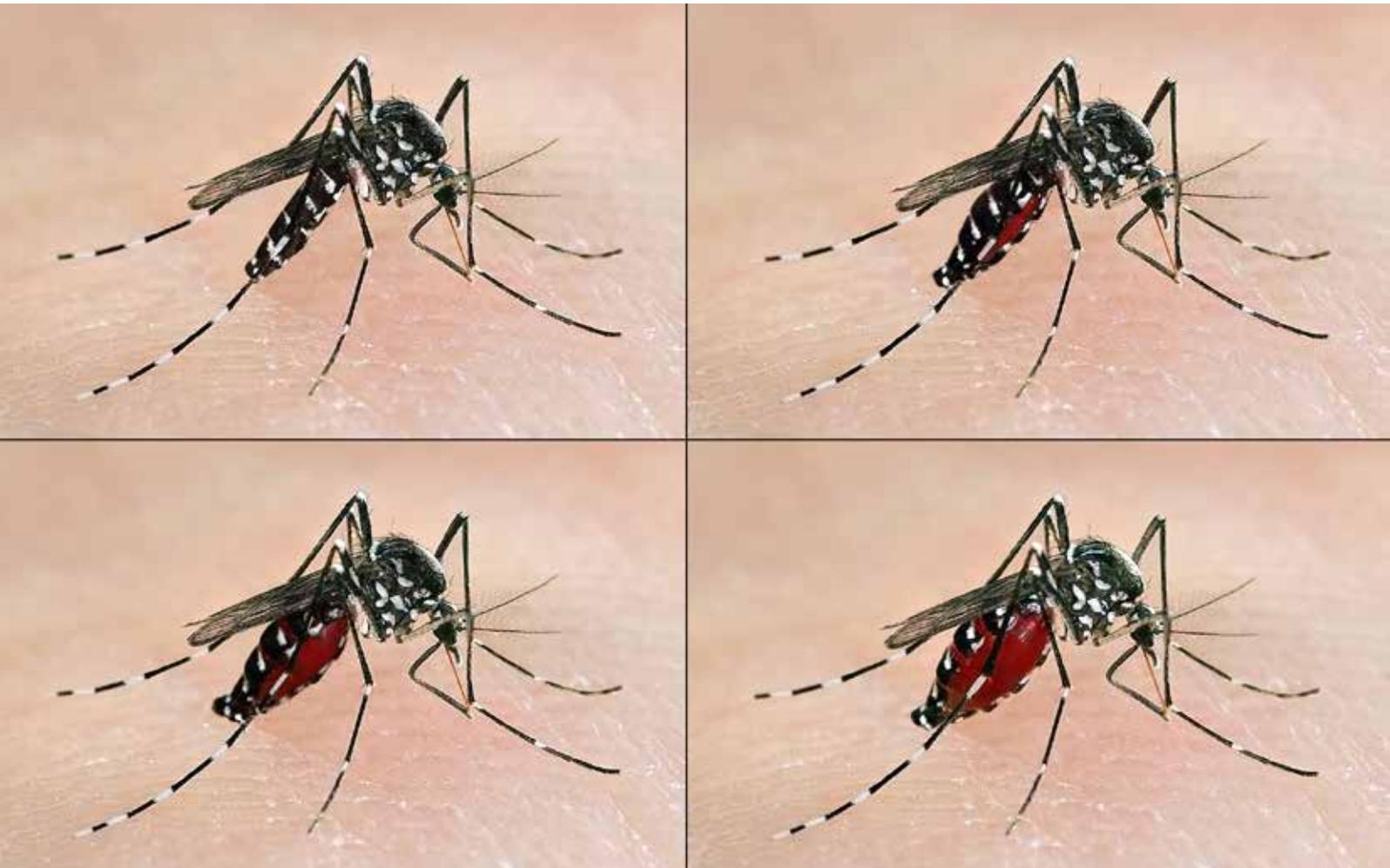
Formulations containing oil of lemon eucalyptus [provide comparable protection](#) to DEET-based repellents.

The active ingredient in the repellent will be listed on the packaging, along with the concentration.

Any insect repellent that contains these products should provide protection against biting mosquitoes. But the stronger the formulation, the longer the protection will last.

“ Any insect repellent that contains these products should provide protection against biting mosquitoes.

If you're only outside for a couple of hours, say, in the backyard, there's really no need for a high-concentration formulation. But if you're going for a long bushwalk or fishing trip, pick a high-concentration product (regardless of the active ingredient).



Tiger mosquito (*Aedes albopictus*) having a blood meal

How you use it matters too

A dab here and there, or spraying repellent into the air around you, as you might a perfume, won't provide much protection.

These products need to be applied thinly and evenly to all exposed areas of skin. Think of repellents as camouflaging us from mosquitoes on the lookout for blood.

While an aerosol or pump spray may allow for application direct from the container, you'll need to rub creams, roll-ons and gels into your skin.



That doesn't necessarily mean one is better than the other. But when choosing a formulation, think about which one you feel you'll be able to apply thoroughly most easily.

What about "natural" alternatives?

Some "natural" formulations that contain tea tree oil and other plant-based active ingredients have APVMA registration. Products sold at local markets or online may not be registered.

Notably, products that contain plant-based repellents [generally don't provide long-lasting protection](#) from mosquito bites.

If you prefer to use products [containing tea-tree oil](#) or other botanical repellents, you need to be prepared to reapply much more frequently than with DEET, picaridin or oil of lemon eucalyptus formulations.

And avoid making up your own insect repellents from essential oils. Without the checks in place associated with APVMA-registered repellents, there may be a greater risk of [adverse skin reactions](#).

Can anything else help?

There's no evidence mosquito-repellent [wristbands](#) or [smartphone apps](#) will protect you from mosquito bites.

A range of [candles](#), [coils](#), [sticks](#), [plug-in and fan devices](#) and [insecticide-treated clothing](#) offer varying assistance in reducing mosquito bites. But unfortunately, none of these provides complete protection and are always best combined with topical mosquito repellents.

Some people perceive so-called "chemical" repellents as [posing a risk to our health](#). But, in most instances, they can be safely applied to anyone over 12 months of age. (For babies, it's best to provide physical protection, such as covering the stroller with a mosquito net.)

It's also often said these traditional repellents are unpleasant to use. But even though the active ingredients haven't changed much, the cosmetic constituents of insect repellents have greatly improved in recent years.

To get you through summer, choose a repellent formulation registered with APVMA. Pick whichever one you find easiest to spread over the skin to provide complete cover. And always check the instructions on the label.

Cameron Webb

Clinical Associate Professor and Principal Hospital Scientist, University of Sydney

This article first appeared in [The Conversation](#) on 24 December 2020.

K'gari History and Clean Up

Text and photos
Sonya Muhlsimmer

This article will reference the Butchulla people from the Great Sandy National Park, K'gari, (otherwise known as Fraser Island) in Queensland. Firstly, I would like to acknowledge and pay my respect to the first custodians of their land, I respect the teachings of the elders past, present and emerging.





Lake McKenzie

Aboriginal history

The Butchulla people have been around for possibly 50,000 years and they are the traditional owners of K’gari, which is pronounced gurri meaning Paradise. For over 5000 years they have lived there and abided by three simple laws:

- What is good for the land comes first.
- Do not take or touch anything that does not belong to you.
- If you have plenty, you must share.

K’gari is a story told about the legend of a princess from the Dreamtime. This princess spirit, called K’gari, fell so in love when helping create the land and sea that she begged to lay here to rest forever. It is said that her many lakes were created so that she could always look back up to the heavens and remember where she came from, her thick flora created to clothe her and the animals to keep her company. Then, when paradise was complete, Yindingie, the creator spirit created the Butchulla people to protect K’gari forever. [Introducing K’gari aka Fraser Island.](#)

Fraser Island

Fast forward time to 1849 when white man ventured the seas, they decided to name this paradise in recognition of Eliza Fraser. She was a shipwreck survivor, looked after by

the Butchulla people when stranded on the island. Her stories, well most probably lies, that she told of what she endured when she arrived back in Sydney ultimately led to the massacre of the Butchulla people. According to her [biography](#) she was described by the people she knew as a most profane, artful and wicked woman.

What an absolute tragedy to the traditional owners of the land, the Butchulla people. I do not ever want to use the name Fraser Island again.

World Heritage Area

Fast forward, further in time to 1992 and K’gari was listed as a World Heritage Area. Then in 2017, the [Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service](#) renamed it to its traditional name, K’Gari, rightfully so.

K’gari is located around four hours north from Brisbane. The island is about 126 kilometres long and about 22 kilometres wide. The island lies on volcanic bedrock and has been accumulating for about 750,000 years. It is the largest sand island in the world, stretching over 1840 square kilometres. It has more sand than the Sahara Desert and the island is growing by approximately 40 to 50 centimetres in the east each year. Wow

hey, oh and it has around 100 or so fresh water lakes and they are pristine. In fact, Boorangoora, otherwise known as Lake McKenzie was so special to the Butchulla people that they did not swim in it. They only used it for drinking water. This is also the only island where a rain forest grows in the sand.

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There were 28 of us and we managed to pick up 1222.5 kilograms of rubbish off the shore ...

There are some trees, *Syncarpia hillii* over 1000 years old and growing up to 50 metres high. According to [Wikipedia](#), there are around 25 to 50 mammal species, dingoes, 74 reptile species, 350 different species of birds and in terms of fauna there are more than 865 species of plants that grow on the island. It is a very special place as it holds an important

part of the preservation of the Great Barrier Reef. There would be no Great Barrier Reef if it were not for K'gari as the island prevents the sand from washing further up the coast and smothering the reef. This is a very important island indeed and oh so beautiful.

Clean up

I recently spent three days at K'gari on a mission to rid the island of rubbish. Okay not all of the island or all the rubbish, but some at least. [K'gari Fraser Island Adventures](#) teamed up with [Zero Co Australia](#) and held a beach clean-up weekend. There were 28 of us and we managed to pick up 1222.5 kilograms of rubbish off the shore, excluding the two pontoons that were too big to move. Well that is a pittance amount of rubbish in comparison to what they picked up off the shore after the floods in Brisbane, which was 14 tonnes of rubbish. I know right, it is unbelievable the amount of rubbish that washed up. As the way the currents move, in a strong offshore current northward along the coast, K'gari seem to collect a lot of rubbish from all over the world and every day more rubbish washes up.



The rubbish collected from a very short period of time on the first day



Sorting out the micro plastic, there was so much of it

Day one

I was picked up at the Sunshine Coast airport by Mark on Friday morning at 8.30 in a minibus. After a few stops to pick up other shareholders, we eventually ended up at Hannah and Mark's house, formalities were done, there were 28 of us in total and then we were off on our way in four-wheel drives. It was raining a lot; according to Elders Weather we got 40.6 mm of rain for the day. Before we knew it, we were at the barge at Inskip Point waiting to cross over onto K'gari. The ferry only took about 30 minutes, if that and then we were off, cruising down the highway, I mean beach. It really is like a highway with all the other four-wheel drives. After passing a few dingoes, stopping to pick up a few handfuls of rubbish we were at our accommodation, the [Beachcamp](#), Eco Retreat, Eurong, home for the next

two nights. It was glamping at its best as it was a big tent with bunk beds, I shared with five other people. You could have upgraded to a cabin, but I was happy in a tent. After a bite of lunch, deciding which bed

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It was amazing on how much rubbish we picked up in such a short time.

to sleep in, we were off to the shore to pick up rubbish, according to World Weather Online, the wind was up to 22 km/h and the gust was up to 32 km/h with 7 mm of rain. It was a wild

experience. After about an hour or two we headed back to the retreat, had hot showers and dumped all the waste we collected onto a tarp on the floor. It was amazing on how much rubbish we picked up in such a short time.

Day two

Luckily the weather cleared up a bit, and after breakfast we were out the door. The day consisted of driving north for a few kilometres and picking up rubbish. Again it was astounding how much rubbish washes up. What angered, upset, disgusted and surprised me, and what I feared, was the amount of small plastic bits that were everywhere. They had to come from a larger vessel and it was gut-wrenching to see and to think how much [microplastic](#) there is floating out there in our oceans. Some people in the group found the whole experience overwhelming and so upsetting. No wonder it is getting into our blood. If you have not heard about that, read [Microplastics found in human blood for first time](#).

The day was not all about picking up plastic however. We found a message in a bottle, quite a sweet message too, about someone in the middle of the ocean, writing this. And whoever finds the bottle, tell his love he is missing her. Well, I think we are going to respond with something along the lines of stop throwing rubbish out in the ocean. Back to our adventure, we drove up to Eli Creek, had a float down the creek and had an amazing lunch served to us.

Then it was up the beach to the SS Maheno. The Maheno has an interesting history. Built in 1905, she was on regular routes to and from Sydney and Auckland, then she became a hospital ship in Europe in World War One. Then in 1935 she was decommissioned and on her way to Japan when a cyclonic storm came through and she washed up on the beach where she stayed. As the tide was coming in we had to get back to camp. Dinner was served, a fire was lit, stories were told then it was off to bed not long after. It is hard work picking up plastic.



Day three

The day was about sorting and weighing plastics, off to Boorangoora then unfortunately home. The following is not the real tally, however a lot of the weighing and sorting had been done when I took a note of what type of rubbish we had collected.

Rubbish type	Weight kilograms
HDPE	332
Landfill	406
rope	129
recyclable	158
PET	36.5

and more to come.

What we found so many of was straws, tooth brushes, glow sticks, shoes, plastic drink bottles, balloons still on string and lots of that flimsy soft plastic, which I think could have come from those plastic shopping bags. There was so much of everything really, considering it came from the ocean. The real tally was a collection of 1222.5 kilograms of rubbish, enough HDPE plastic for over 400 new forever Zero Co bottles. Awesome work everyone. After the sorting we packed up and headed off to Boorangoora. Wow, what a beautiful spot this is. Boorangoora is a perched lake, 1200 metres long, 930 metres wide and the sands that surround the lake are pure white silica. After a swim we headed off to Central Station, a camping area along Wanggoolba creek in the rainforest, and we walked in the absolutely beautiful rainforest, had lunch and it was time to go home.

You can make a difference

What a wild weekend, it is sickening to see that amount of waste in such a small area and knowing what we picked up is just a drop in the ocean really. It was good to be a part of something that can and will make a difference, I can feel a revolution coming on. I encourage everyone to go visit K'gari and get behind Hannah and Mark at K'gari Adventures for a weekend of a beach clean-up. I am telling you to get behind Mike and support the cause he is doing with Zero Co, get your own forever

bottles and do your bit to rid the planet of single use plastic, the planet will thank you and who know the bottles could become a family heirloom some day!

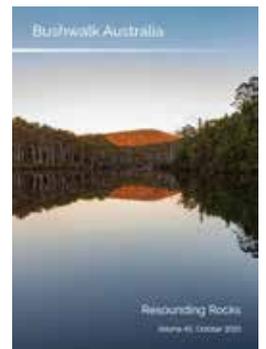
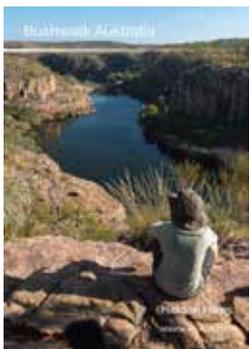
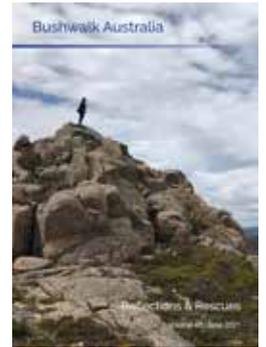
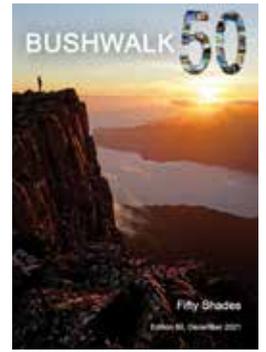
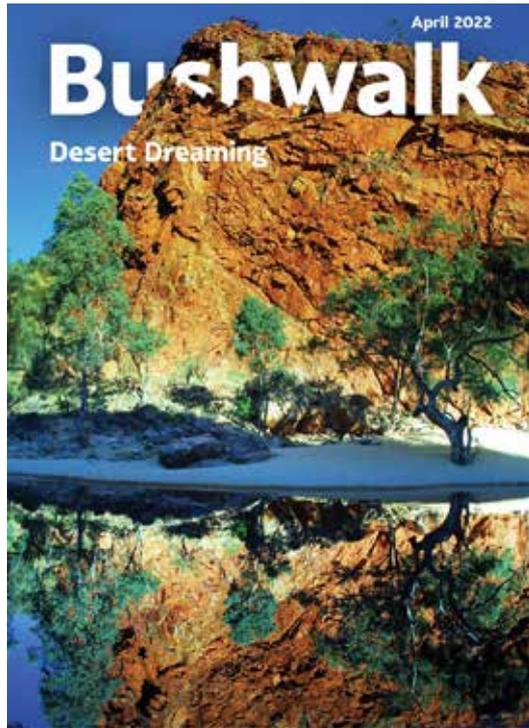
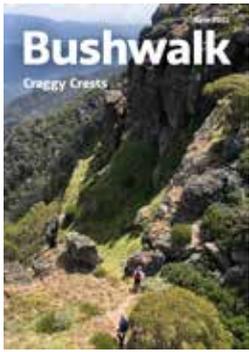
K'gari Adventures and Zero Co

So a bit about the companies now. K'gari Adventures run quite a few tours and the Eco Beach Clean-up is one of them. K'gari Adventures is run by Hannah and Mark who have been running these tours for about 10 years. They are living by the first law of K'gari, What is good for the land must come first. They work closely with the Butchulla community and ZeroCo to enable living by the law. They provide awesome adventures with pick up and drop off available from Brisbane, Noosa and other destinations, all food and accommodation is catered for, and they clean up the beaches.



I encourage everyone to go visit K'gari and get behind Hannah and Mark at K'gari Adventures for a weekend of a beach clean-up.

Zero Co is a start-up company, which was founded in 2019 by Mike Smith, with the aid of a bunch of crowd funders, me being one of them. Their mission is to untrash the planet by stopping the production of new single-use plastic and cleaning up the planet, a very audacious mission to say the least. Zero Co uses plastic rubbish pulled out of the ocean, beaches and landfill to create forever bottles and refillable pouches of home cleaning and self-care products. Last year they opened the platform and invited their customers to become a shareholder in the company, in which I did. Recently they invited their shareholders along to K'gari, in conjunction with K'gari Adventures to see the real issue with our own eyes the perils of plastic waste washing up on the shores. And of course, that is why I went.



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