

Walk 04. THE BIG WALK, MT BUFFALO National Park

Saturday and Sunday, AWTGS:4 11km, 4-5 hours 1,000m ascent, One Way

One of Mt Buffalo's challenging walks, this track climbs the plateau from the park entrance to the Gorge Day Visitor area. Expansive views are revealed as walkers traverse through different geographic and vegetation layers, eventually arriving above the snow level on the exposed granite to the popular Gorge Viewing platforms and Mt Buffalo Chalet.

Notes:

Formed track in most parts, 4wd track, rocky sections, steps, involves crossing busy roads, loose rocks in sections. Sturdy footwear and poles recommended if you use them. Allow time for car shuffle.

Getting To The Start

Take the Great Alpine Road (B500) from Wangaratta. At the big (and only) roundabout on the B500 at Porepunkah turn west onto the Mt Buffalo Road (C535). Eurobin Picnic Area is on the right at the entrance to the National Park. Wangaratta to Eurobin Picnic area, Mt Buffalo 1hr, (79km), toilets and picnic area are available at Eurobin Creek picnic area

WALK DESCRIPTION

Start from the trail head sign at the north end of the picnic area, shortly after crossing Eurobin Creek on a swing bridge built in 1998 for the Park's Centenary. Over the creek the track becomes quite steep climbing 370 metres, initially through tall moist and then drier foothill forest of mainly peppermint eucalypts with a Hop Bitter-pea understorey. After 2 kilometres, a 4WD track is reached, turn left and continue uphill for 700 metres to meet the main road at Eurobin Point, elevation 680 metres.

The hardest part is over! While resting, notice the sandstone rock in the cutting. This forms when sand is compressed by the massive weight of rock on top of it. Continue up the main road for 100 metres and cross over back onto the track. Follow this gentle spur, as it ascends west towards the Mount Buffalo Tourist Road. cross over the road to pick up the trail on the opposite side.

The trail now passes through an open montane forest of majestic Candlebark Gums and a Bracken Fern understorey. Look out for the shy Swamp Wallaby and listen to the abundant birdlife here, especially Grey Fantails and Thornbills. Cross the main road again, continuing past an old gravel pit reaching the road once more, turn left then 100 metres up to Mackey's Lookout. At 920 metres elevation there is a clear view of the Australian Alps. The forest has given way to granite slabs which form Mount Buffalo. Beyond here take care on the track. It is wet and slippery. This section was part of the original track up Mount Buffalo called the 'Zig Zag'. Follow the orange arrow track markers and take care not to cut corners.

Take a short 100 metre side trip to Marriott's Lookout for amazing views into the Gorge past Queen Victoria Pinnacle. Back on the track and again the bush soon changes. At 1150 metres, and near the snowline, Alpine Ash, often called 'Woollybutt', is common with a shrubby understorey of peas and grevilleas.

Continue along the trail to Manfields Junction, the highest part of the trail 1350 metres. From here consider a side trip to Manfields Lookout or Reeds Lookout, both about 500 metres. From Reeds continue on a loop returning further along back onto The Big Walk.

There are two options from here to the finish. Turn right and follow the Gorge Heritage Walk looping back onto the main track or proceed straight on, either way is a similar distance. Wilkinson's Lookout is 300 metres to the left with breathtaking views from the 330 metres North Wall. Along the main track Pulpit Rock also has fine views of the sheer walls with climbers often clinging to them. Crystal Brook has carved out the Gorge over 360 million years. Proceed over the bridge turning left and continue past The Oval Picnic Area. The Heritage Walk plaques will bring to life the pioneering days of the area as seen through the eyes of Guide Alice. Gorge View Lookout provides a different vantage point into the depths far below.

Continue along the trail to the Gorge Day Visitor Area. There are toilets, picnic tables and a shelter nearby.