

Canyoning Near Sydney

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Canyoning

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INTRODUCTION

This guide is a compilation of all of the canyon track notes on the Canyoning Near Sydney - OZultimate.com Canyoning website [<http://ozultimate.com/canyoning>]. The main advantage of a printed guide is that it gives you something compact to take with you out in the bush. The printed guide will only be updated infrequently, but the website will continue to receive regular updates. It is worthwhile checking back to the website for updates before you plan to do a particular canyon.

If you have any feedback, comments or corrections, you can send them to website@ozultimate.com

DISCLAIMER

Rope sports are dangerous. Mistakes can be fatal. The information in this guide is based on my own opinion, experiences and research. I have no formal qualifications in the field.

The information is not formal instruction, nor is it any substitute for formal instruction. You certainly should not trust your life to anything that you read in these pages. You could die. People

who rely on you could die. You should at very least do your own research and testing, get formal instruction and/or read appropriate literature.

While I don't want to turn you off canyoning, I can't stress enough the need for safety. People can and do die canyoning, and most of the fatal accidents in recent years have been directly or indirectly the result of human error. Make sure you know what you are doing, and what the risks are.

TRACK NOTES

The track notes in this guide are for use by appropriately qualified and experienced people.

While it may seem that canyons are timeless places, changing only slowly over thousands of years, this is incorrect. Destructive flash floods flow through many canyons every few years, washing rocks and logs through and trees away. Many belay points are off chockstones, logs and trees, and track notes can become incorrect. Slings are likewise easily damaged and may be removed by other parties. Swims fill up with sand and shallow sections deepen, requiring cold swims.

The track notes are at best a guide, an indication of the canyon at the time they were written or updated. They can become rapidly outdated. They are no substitute for appropriate experience. Parties that venture into these canyons need to be prepared for changed conditions. It is no use complaining when you are in the canyon that a particular belay point has gone, your ropes are too short, or that you didn't bring sling for an anchor.

The canyon track notes are roughly listed from north to south, and then from east to west.

PUBLISHING TRACK NOTES

Publishing track notes and making route information public is a divisive topic in the local canyoning community. There is a range of views from the publishing of little or no information to that of making just about everything public.

Publishing has some benefits. It allows a greater number of people access to the canyons. Hopefully some of those people will be motivated to help protect the canyons, and the environment in which they are found.

However, there is a price to publishing notes. With information comes visitation. Tracks form to popular canyons. Erosion occurs. Have a look at the Claustral exit track if you need evidence of this. The canyons themselves are relatively hardy places, but the environment around is sometimes less so. Track notes for canyons in the wilderness areas have an impact on the values of the wilderness areas themselves.

There is a significant amount of track and route information in this guide. In publishing it, my position has been not to add to the information that is already publically available. Where there is significant information already available, you will probably find relatively detailed track notes. Where information is sparse or non-existent, there will probably not be track notes in this guide.

I hope that this balances the desire of people for information with the need to minimise impact in less well known areas and to allow opportunities for other people to rediscover new canyons for themselves. By the time you have visited most of the canyons that have published route information, you will most likely have sufficient experience to venture further afield and look for other canyons. There are certainly a lot of them out there.

I should also note that the NPWS view is:

Don't publicise "new" canyons or those in wilderness areas to preserve opportunities for discovery and to minimise impacts.

Track notes for some canyons in wilderness areas have been published in this guide. However, most of those canyons were well known prior to the declaration of the Wollemi Wilderness. In particular, there is nothing published in this guide relating to canyons in the Northern Wollemi area. This includes anywhere north of the Wolgan-Capertee divide, including Glen Davis, the Coorongooba area, or the lesser known regions north of those.

MAP REFERENCES

Short version

AMG - grid references used on old series NSW 1:25000 maps

MGA - grid references used on new series NSW 1:25000 maps (the ones with the photo on the back)

Skip to the conversion method if you don't want to read the long version

Long version

The map references on the pages in this site are prefixed by either **AMG** or **MGA**. These refer to the two coordinate systems on the 1:25000 series maps used by bushwalkers in NSW. These maps are now produced by the Department of Lands, formerly LPI - Land and Property Information, formerly LIC (Land Information Centre), and before that CMA (Commonwealth Mapping Authority), which are the names you will probably see printed on your maps.

A coordinate system translates geographic coordinates (eg latitude/longitude) to cartesian coordinates (X/Y or Eastings/Northings). **AMG** refers to the Australian Map Grid 1966/1984, which was used to produce all of the old series maps. **MGA** refers to the Map Grid of Australia 1994, which is being used to produce the new series maps (with photo map on the back).

The two different map grids are based on different datums. A **datum** is the mathematical model of the earth, and the map grid is a projection of this into cartesian coordinates. The Australian Map Grid is based on a Universal Transverse Mercator projection of the Australian Geodetic Datum 1966 (AGD66). The Map Grid of Australia 1994 is based on a Universal Transverse Mercator projection of the Geocentric Datum of Australia 1994 (GDA94). The advantage of using the new datum is that it is what is used for the GPS (Global Positioning System), and hence is more compatible worldwide.

There is a difference between the two datums which means that co-ordinates based on a projection of one datum need to be converted before they can be used in the other. Luckily, for bushwalking purposes, a reasonably simple conversion will suffice for most purposes.

Converting grid references

If you have a 6-figure grid reference from an old series map but are using a new series map (ie converting AMG to MGA) then

- increase the eastings by 1 and the northings by 2; or equally

- add 1 to the first 3 digits and 2 to the second 3 digits

If you have a 6-figure grid reference from a new series map but are using an old series map (ie converting MGA to AMG) then

- decrease the eastings by 1 and the northings by 2; or equally
- subtract 1 from the first 3 digits and 2 from the second 3 digits

As an example, AMG553874 becomes MGA554876.

You will find that the new series maps have both coordinate systems printed on the sides, the AMG coordinates in blue, and the MGA ones in black. For this reason, most coordinates in the guide are still in AMG. The Mt Wilson and Katoomba maps have been updated now for many years, so those use MGA coordinates.

GPS

If you are using a GPS, switching between the two is fairly easy. The settings can usually be found in the GPS under Setup → Units or something similar. First make sure the grid is set to UTM/UPS, rather than latitude/longitude. Then select the appropriate map datum.

For old maps, select AGD66 (Aust Geod 66).

For new maps, select WGS 84 (World Geodetic Survey 1984). GDA94 is essentially the same as WGS 84.

EXPLANATORY NOTES

Difficulty

Rating canyons for difficulty is tricky. Canyons are changeable environments and can be quite different from visit to visit. Conditions under which you visit a canyon also play a big part. After rain, the rock may be slippery making for awkward scrambling, waterfalls may be more dangerous to abseil and swims longer or pools deeper. If you are not familiar with a canyon, you should wait until conditions are favourable to visit it. The difficulty ratings are at best a guide, and you should use your judgement when deciding whether you are qualified to do a certain canyon.

The main factors included in a difficulty rating are: number/difficulty of abseils, amount/exposure of scrambling, navigation to/from the canyon including some factor for length (but see **Time** below), how wet the canyon is.

- Easy - a canyon involving mostly walking, swimming or easier scrambling. Likely to have tracks in and out. Abseils if any are few and fairly straightforward. Note that even an easy canyon will probably be challenging for people who have done little scrambling.
- Medium - a canyon usually involving abseiling. Some of the following difficulty factors will be present: tricky or awkward abseils, exposed scrambling, difficult navigation to or from the canyon, long day.
- Hard - as for Medium, but more difficulty factors will be present and in greater quantities.

Quality ratings

- Many of my canyon track notes have a rating out of 10 for the canyon. Before people jump up and down and complain about me rating canyons and asking what the ratings are about, read below. And then if you still have a problem you can email me.
- The canyon ratings are completely subjective, based on how much I enjoyed a particular canyon, the quality of canyon, the length of the canyon and probably a bunch of other factors peculiar to me. Note the words I and me. So if you think I've rated your favorite canyon as a 1, 2 or 3, well that's what I thought of it. If you want your say, start your own web site!
- The canyon ratings are out of 10. Even the crappiest canyon gets a 1. If something gets a 0, then it's not a canyon (in my opinion again of course).
- Ratings are predominantly for sandstone slot canyons. I'm not so interested in comparing other sorts of canyons.
- Most of the well known canyons will probably get between 7 and 10. They tend to be well known for a reason.
- There's nothing fixed about the ratings. I can and do change my mind after revisiting.
- Note that a 3 or 4 doesn't mean a bad canyon, just not one I'll be racing back to visit too soon.

Times

Times are estimated based on a moderately experienced party of around 4-5 canyoners, including a couple of experienced leaders.

A small, very experienced and fast moving party may cut as much as half the time off the estimates, while a larger party, or a party with a number of inexperienced canyoners, could take up to twice the time. Any canyon that involves a long day should be avoided with a large or somewhat inexperienced party, particularly if there are many abseils.

Descriptive times used are:

- A few hours - 2-3 hours
- A short day - 4-5 hours
- One day - 6-7 hours
- A long day - 8+ hours
- Two days, three days etc

Wetsuits

Whether to take wetsuits or not can be a difficult decision. A lot of canyons near Sydney do not have long swims, so wetsuits are not always needed. They are heavy and bulky, and often end up being more trouble than they are worth. However, there may be times when you wish you had them. If in doubt, it is usually better to take them and not need them, than to not have them and need them.

Descriptives used are:

- No - parties should not need wetsuits. Typically canyons with waist deep wades or less

- Not required - with appropriate care, most parties will be able to do without wetsuits. Typically canyons with some short chest deep wades and possibly a swim
- Optional - small, fast moving parties will probably be able to make do without wetsuits but larger or slower moving parties are advised to take them. Typically canyons with longer deep wades and possible short swims
- Recommended - most parties should take wetsuits. Typically canyons with longer swims as well as wades
- Lilos - both wetsuits and lilos are recommended. Typically canyons with many long deep pools

Further reading

Many of the track notes have a brief paragraph or so on the history of the canyon. I have not footnoted these, but sources for this information include:

- Back from the Brink, Andy Macqueen
- The Golden Years, David Noble [http://www.subw.org.au/archives/POR/Golden_Years.html]
- South Wolgan Exploratory Canyoning - Part 1, David Noble [<http://www.david-noble.net/canyoning/wolgan/wolgancanyons.html>]
- South Wolgan Exploratory Canyoning - Part 2, David Noble [<http://www.david-noble.net/canyoning/wolgan/wolgancanyons2.html>]

- Journal of the Kameruka Bushwalking Club

and these are worth seeking out for further reading

NEWNES PLATEAU & SOUTH WOLGAN FIRE TRAILS

The Newnes Plateau and South Wolgan area is riddled with fire trails, and the first time you head out there it is easy to get lost. Most destinations are reached via the Bungleboori Picnic Area, and there are a couple of ways to get there. The shortest by distance is via the Newnes Forest Rd, which runs between the Zig Zag railway at Clarence, and the Glowworm Tunnel Rd. It deteriorates after rain and with the impact of 4wd vehicles, logging trucks and mining trucks. The other route is via Lithgow, and then up State Mine Gully Rd, which becomes the Glowworm Tunnel Rd. This is nearly twice as long, but not much slower, as the road condition is generally more consistent, particularly after rain.

The routes listed below are generally suitable for 2wd cars with plenty of clearance. Low clearance vehicles may have difficulty on some roads, particularly to the Natural Bridge and Deep Pass.

Zig Zag to Bungleboori Picnic Area via Newnes Forest Rd

- 0.0 Turn off Bells Line of Road at Zig Zag railway turnoff. Head right, cross the railway tracks, and keep right as you head up the hill
- 4.8 At a sharp left hand bend the Upper Wollangambe fire trail turns off to the right.
- 8.8 Turn right at the junction with the Glowworm Tunnel Rd.
- 11.1 You reach the Bungleboori Picnic Area on your right.

Zig Zag to Bungleboori Picnic Area via Lithgow

- 0.0 From Zig Zag, continue along Bells Line of Road (actually the Chifley Hwy at this point) into Lithgow. Turn right at the traffic lights at Bridge St and then right again into Inch St immediately after you cross the railway tracks. Turn left into Atkinson St, just after a right hand bend. After crossing a level crossing and a bridge, this becomes a dirt road (State Mine Gully Rd) as it heads steeply up a hill, and then becomes the Glowworm Tunnel Rd.

- 15.5 Pass a junction with the Newnes Forest Rd on your right

- 17.8 You reach the Bungleboori Picnic Area on your right.

Bungleboori Picnic Area to Waratah Ridge car park (Hole-in-the-Wall car park)

- 0.0 From Bungleboori Picnic area continue straight ahead
- 3.1 Turn right at Waratah Ridge Rd (signposted)
- 7.1 Turn right at Two Trees Rd intersection (signposted)
- 9.1 Keep right at a Y intersection
- 10.1 Keep straight ahead at a 3-way intersection
- 10.7 You reach the Waratah Ridge car park

Bungleboori Picnic Area to Galah Mountain car park (Rocky Creek car park)

- 0.0 From Bungleboori Picnic area continue straight ahead
- 3.0 Keep straight ahead at Waratah Ridge Rd (signposted)
- 13.4 Turn right at Galah Mountain Rd (signposted), as the double fire trail ends
- 13.7 Pass Barcoo Swamp camping area on your right
- 13.8 Veer left at a Y intersection
- 18.5 Turn right at a locked gate (the starting point for a number of canyons such as Surefire and Heart Attack)
- 18.8 Pass a locked gate on your left (the starting point for a number of canyons such as Breakfast Creek, Closet, Galah etc)
- 19.9 Reach the Galah Mountain car park

Bungleboori Picnic Area to Old Coach Road car park

- 0.0 From Bungleboori Picnic area continue straight ahead
- 3.0 Keep straight ahead at Waratah Ridge Rd (signposted)
- 13.4 Keep straight ahead at Galah Mountain Rd (signposted), as the double fire trail ends
- 17.9 Turn right at a Y-intersection on to the Old Coach Road.
- 22.0 Reach the Old Coach Road car park on your right.

Bungleboori Picnic Area to Glowworm Tunnel car park

- 0.0 From Bungleboori Picnic area continue straight ahead
- 3.0 Keep straight ahead at Waratah Ridge Rd (signposted)
- 13.4 Keep straight ahead at Galah Mountain Rd (signposted), as the double fire trail ends
- 17.9 Keep straight ahead at a Y-intersection (Old Coach Road)
- 24.6 Reach the Glowworm Tunnel car park

Bungleboori Picnic Area to Deep Pass

- 0.0 From Bungleboori Picnic area continue straight ahead
- 3.1 Pass Waratah Ridge Rd (signposted) on your right
- 9.4 Turn right at the end of the pine plantation into Boundary East Forest Rd. This is just after the double road starts, and a large cleared area runs along side the road for the next 4km
- 10.0 Turn left at the second intersection at a large clearing
- 10.5 Veer right at a Y-intersection
- 12.6 Keep straight ahead as a fire trail turns off to the right
- 13.1 Turn right at a Y-intersection. A sign points left to Mt Cameron, right to Deep Pass.
- 14.0 Keep straight ahead as a fire trail turns to the right. A sign points straight ahead to Deep Pass.
- 14.1 Keep straight ahead where a road heads left
- 15.2 Reach the Deep Pass car park

Bungleboori Picnic Area to Natural Bridge

- 0.0 From Bungleboori Picnic area continue straight ahead
- 3.1 Pass Waratah Ridge Rd (signposted) on your right
- 9.4 Turn right at the end of the pine plantation into Boundary East Forest Rd. This is just after the double road starts, and a large cleared area runs along side the road for the next 4km
- 10.0 Turn left at the second intersection at a large clearing
- 10.5 Veer right at a Y-intersection
- 12.6 Keep straight ahead as a fire trail turns off to the right
- 13.1 Turn right at a Y-intersection. A sign points left to Mt Cameron, right to Deep Pass. Note that while you can take the Mt Cameron trail at this point, it crosses Dinner Gully, a 60m descent and ascent, and it is better (particularly if you have a 2wd car) to take this detour.
- 14.0 Keep straight ahead as a fire trail turns to the right. A sign points straight ahead to Deep Pass.

- 14.1 Turn left on to a fire trail.
- 15.5 Turn right as you rejoin the Mt Cameron fire trail. This is just after a steep rocky downhill, the most difficult section of the route.
- 16.4 Pass the park boundary sign. A closed fire trail branches off to your right.
- 16.8 Reach the Natural Bridge car park. There are a couple of steep water bars in this last section, and 2wd cars are likely to bottom out on these. You can park in a number of places before the actual car park.

CANYON AREAS

NEWNES

The Wolgan River has many canyon tributaries, located on the tops to the north of Newnes and on Island Mountain to the south of Newnes. There are also canyon tributaries further downstream below Rocky Creek. The most commonly visited ones are close to Newnes itself. Devils Pinch Canyon, Newnes (Starlight) Canyon and Pipeline Canyon are all excellent canyons, and are fairly easily accessible.

Newnes is about 3h drive from Sydney. To get to Newnes, follow the Great Western Highway to Lithgow. Stay on the Highway past Lithgow and take the Mudgee turnoff on the left about 8km past the traffic lights at Lithgow. 4km further on at Wallerawang, take the signposted turnoff to the right to Newnes. About 500m further on, keep going straight ahead (where the road veers left) in the town of Lidsdale. This road is bitumen for about 12km to the bottom of Wolgan Gap, although narrow and winding toward the end. From there it is gravel and dirt for the last 23km to Newnes. There is a kiosk/information centre in the old hotel on the left, and the main campsite is 1km further on. The only services at Newnes are a small kiosk which has no refrigeration and is only open on the weekends. The nearest food and petrol is in Lidsdale.

Newnes (Starlight) Canyon

Difficulty: M

Quality: 10/10

Time: One day

Wetsuits: Not required

Date last checked: 2010-01-02

Newnes Canyon (often known as Starlight Canyon) is an impressive canyon in the Wolgan Valley. It has a long, dark tunnel lit by glowworms, known as the Amazing Wallaby Tunnel. It was probably first discovered in 1963 by an SUBW party, but not explored fully until much later.

Entry

From the main campground at Newnes, follow the track along the left bank of the river for 2km to the bottom of the Pipeline Track to Glen Davis (signposted). Climb up to the top of the hill on the track. A sign points to a good lookout about 100m walk to the south. Continue along the main track to the watershed, where there is a National Parks sign about Starlight Canyon.

Follow the Starlight Canyon track off to the right, up and around the small hill to the east. The track then heads north-east, then swings back to the east before petering out along the saddle around AMG458277. Head N then NE down the ridge, and abseil about 15m into the creek at AMG464282. The creek can also be entered higher up without abseiling.

Notes

The canyon starts at AMG464282. There is a 25m abseil into a large cavern. The tunnel section follows. The tunnel can fill up with water and/or debris, so the first person down must go all the way through the tunnel to the end before you pull your ropes from the abseil. There can be a couple of short drops in the tunnel, though the water is usually only knee deep. Numerous parties have run into trouble by pulling their ropes before checking the tunnel. If the tunnel is blocked, it is possible to scramble over the top of the canyon and abseil down below the tunnel.

After the tunnel finishes, there is an excellent section of canyon before a creek junction with another canyon coming in from the side (Upside-Down Canyon). Continue down the pretty creek for 800m to a 15m drop. This can be abseiled or bypassed on the left with some effort. Another creek comes in from the left (Fireball Canyon). Descend down the steep creek or on the banks either side to the Wolgan River.

Exit

Cross the Wolgan and pick up the fire trail on the other side, and head right to get back to the campground, about a 6km walk.

Comments

An excellent canyon. The tunnel and glowworms are spectacular, and once the tunnel opens up there is an outstanding section of canyon.

One 50m rope (not shorter) is sufficient for up to three abseils. While the canyon is often dry, the tunnel can fill with water and make things very difficult. This is why it is very important for the first abseiler to check the condition of the tunnel before pulling the ropes.

Torches need to be carried as the tunnel is pitch black.

Devils Pinch Canyon

Difficulty: M

Quality: 9/10

Time: One day

Wetsuits: Optional

Date last checked: 2004-04-12

Devils Pinch Canyon is an excellent canyon on the north side of the Wolgan River downstream from Newnes. It has two constrictions, and the lower one is long and impressive. Its name comes from the proximity of the canyon to the Devils Pinch on the Wolgan.

Entry

From the main campground at Newnes, follow the track along the left bank of the river for 2km to the bottom of the Pipeline Track to Glen Davis (signposted). Climb up to the top of the hill on the track. A sign points to a good lookout about 100m walk to the south. Continue along the main track to the watershed, where there is a National Parks sign about Starlight Canyon.

Follow the Starlight Canyon track off to the right, up and around the small hill to the east. The track then heads north-east, then swings back to the east. At this point continue south down a scrubby ridge into the saddle at AMG454274 (Mt Morgan). Drop east into the creek, ideally just to the right of the gully that joins around that point.

Notes

The first section of the canyon starts shortly after. We climbed along a ledge to the right and did a 26m abseil on 2 ropes into a shallow pool. A 60m rope reaches. This avoids a series of tricky shorter abseils. A 5m climb down a groove follows - it may be possible to abseil this on the same rope, but the pull down becomes difficult.

Soon after the canyon opens out for several hundred metres. Following this are a number of short climbs into pools. There are a couple of swims, but depending on water depth, you may be largely able to avoid them by judicious scrambling and bridging.

Shortly you reach a spectacular 15m overhanging abseil. The bottom section of the canyon is narrow, high and awesome. At the end of the canyon you can scramble down the left hand side of the gully to the Wolgan River, or do a 50m abseil in a couple of stages down the big waterfall first.

Exit

Cross the river and walk upstream for about 400m until you reach the track from Newnes, which you can follow back.

Comments

An outstanding canyon. The bottom section is both interesting and sustained.

You may be able to stay relatively dry if you are careful.

One 60m rope is sufficient for at least two abseils.

Pipeline Canyon

Difficulty: M

Quality: 8/10

Time: One day

Wetsuits: Optional

Date last checked: 2008-11-01

Pipeline Canyon is a very good canyon just off the Pipeline Track between Newnes and Glen Davis. It features two sections of canyon, though most parties miss out on the upper constriction and only visit the lower constriction.

Entry

From the main campground at Newnes, follow the track along the left bank of the river for 2km to the bottom of the Pipeline Track to Glen Davis (signposted). Climb up to the top of the hill on the track. A sign points to a good lookout about 100m walk to the south. Continue along the main track to the watershed, where there is a National Parks sign about Starlight Canyon.

There are a couple of entry points you can use.

Follow the Starlight Canyon track off to the right, up and around the small hill to the east. From the saddle at AMG448275 (Mt Morgan), head straight down, tending left towards a cliff. There is a bit

of a scramble on small trees to get down the bottom of the hill. Walk down the creek to the first canyon section.

A shorter route in (distance-wise) drops into the tributary to the right of the Pipeline track, about 200m before you reach the watershed. There are four abseils up to 10m before you reach the main creek, although a couple may be bypassed by careful scrambling. Note that this way in misses the first canyon section, and joins the main creek just as the second canyon section starts.

Notes

The first section of the canyon is not far. This has a couple of easy climb downs, but no abseils, and is dry. The creek then opens up for a while before the next canyon section.

The second section starts with a short climb down, and some bridging to avoid pools, otherwise a short swim. The tributary mentioned above enters almost straight away. Not far on there is a 10m abseil into a pool, and then a 6m abseil down a log. A long flat section of canyon follows, with a few wades, and just as the canyon starts to open out a bit, there is another abseil.

This is about 15m, followed by a 4m drop. These can be combined with a 50m rope. There is another short swim, or traverse around the side of the pool. Then there is another 4m drop, with a tricky overhung start, before the final abseil, also with a slightly tricky start. This is about 10m down to the end of the canyon.

Exit

Head right under the cliffs on a somewhat exposed track, until you hit the Pipeline Track, which you can follow back to camp.

Comments

An excellent canyon. The top sections is nice and worth a visit, and the bottom section is quite sustained.

One 50m rope is sufficient for about six abseils. A couple of the abseils have tricky starts.

With judicious bridging and traversing you can probably get away with wades just over waist deep. However, there are a few narrow sections that are silted up at the moment which could become swims at other times.

Firefly Canyon

Difficulty: M

Quality: 6/10

Time: A long day

Wetsuits: Optional

Date last checked: 2009-12-31

Firefly Canyon is a good canyon on the north side of the Wolgan Valley not far from Newnes. It has a number of short abseils and swims.

The first known visit was by Tom Williams and Dave Noble in 1979. They found spikes and ladders leading up into the creek from the bottom and so may not have been the first.

Entry

From the main campground, walk back 300m towards the hotel, and cross the Wolgan River at the ford. Turn left and follow the road to the locked gate, and from there through the refinery ruins to an abandoned mine shaft just across the creek at AMG446257. Head up the gully keeping toward the cliff line on your left. Scramble up a log up the waterfall at the top of the first cliff line. Head up to the next cliffline and traverse around to the right of the main gully at the top. About 50m past the waterfall, scramble up some boulders against the cliff and from the top, chimney up to the next level through a narrow cleft. A step across a narrow chasm allows you to reach the top of the cliffline, and from there you can head up to the top of the ridge. Descend into the tributary on the other side. A few drops need to be negotiated to reach the main creek at AMG450245. Good route finding may obviate the need to use rope.

Notes

It is about 1.5km of creek walking before the canyon starts at about AMG460254. There is a 5m climb down logs, or abseil, followed by a 7m abseil down a waterfall into a pool, with a short wade or swim. Watch the rope doesn't get caught in the left hand crack. A couple more slides and a log slide follow before another abseil. This is 7m from a tree on the left, and a dry finish, or 5m from a chockstone on the left into water. Then there is a 10m abseil with the anchor around a chockstone a further 5m back across a pool that needs a short swim. Looking Glass Canyon then enters on the right. Below here, the canyon starts to open out and there is a 4m abseil into a pool, or traverse up and left for a 10m abseil from a tree to avoid the pool. Finally there is an 8m abseil from a tree on the right.

Exit

There is one more cliffline to pass. Either traverse left and walk down the ridge to the left of the gully, or do an 18m abseil beside a waterfall before heading down the creek. Once at the road at the bottom, follow it back to the ford where you started.

Comments

Getting to the canyon is quite tricky, as the passes through the cliffines are either difficult to negotiate or find.

SOUTH WOLGAN

The South Wolgan area covers the tributaries of Rocky Creek, Deanes Creek and Annie Rowan Creek, and a few smaller tributaries of the Wolgan River. The most popular canyons are probably Twister Canyon and Rocky Creek Canyon, as they can be done without abseiling, and Tiger Snake Canyon, which can be visited all year round. Rocky Creek in particular is spectacular, with a long dark constriction that is almost as long as that of Claustal Canyon. Other good canyons in the area include Surefire Canyon and Galah Canyon.

Tiger Snake Canyon

Difficulty: EM

Quality: 8/10

Time: One day

Wetsuits: No

Date last checked: 2007-10-27

Tiger Snake Canyon is a narrow, twisting tributary of Deanes Creek, in the South Wolgan area. It features two constrictions. The lower is deep, dark and spectacular, and was discovered on a joint SUBW - Ramblers trip in September 1977. The upper constriction was discovered later on a Ramblers trip. Some of the first party were trapped by a tiger snake in the chamber below the keyhole and the rest of the party were forced to throw clothes on it to allow them escape. Tiger Snake is particularly popular as a winter trip as it is a relatively dry trip.

Entry

See **Newnes Plateau and South Wolgan Fire Trails** for information on how to drive to the starting point. From the Old Coach Road car park, head along the fire trail to the east. After about 200m it turns roughly north and follows the ridge for about 3km. Near the end it turns into a foot track, and slides off the east side of the ridge down to the start of the creek at AMG438208 (Ben Bullen). Note that a faint track comes in from the right a couple of hundred metres down the hill - this is the exit track. Following the creek for about 200m brings you to the start of the canyon

Notes

The first abseil/downclimb is only 5m but is very tricky and awkward due to the narrowness of the crack, and how quickly it descends. Abseiling by just sliding down in the crack is possible, but you are likely to grate yourself. Climbing is usually the best option and is quite straightforward if you bridge out some way, as there are good footholds. There is also a high anchor on top of the pagoda to the right.

Then there is a 2m climb down into a shallow pool. It is possible but risky to climb around the pool to the left to avoid getting your feet wet altogether..

The next drop is from dodgy looking logs across the canyon. The ring that used to be in the wall has been removed. It is an easy 5m drop into a pool. Alternatively this can be bridged fairly high, with a bit of scrambling.

A squeeze through a narrow crack follows, then a 3m abseil from a tree, or downclimb the roots. This brings you out on to a wide ledge with a 17m drop. The abseil is very easy from a sling around a tree - there is a 10m overhang.

A relatively easy walk downstream follows, for about 500m, to the bottom section of canyon.

There is a 6m abseil over a small chockstone from slings around a large rock. The chockstone has been worn away and the rope will almost certainly get stuck in the groove on the right in the pulldown. It is difficult for the last person to manoeuvre the rope over to the left on abseil - they may need to stop and use prussik loops to adjust. Alternatively you may be able to position a log so that the rope runs more to the left.

There are no more abseils, but a few easy scrambles in the dark to the end.

Rather than do the 6m abseil, the majority of parties go over the top on ledges above the left of the canyon, as the abseil from there is better. After a short distance you will see a bridge of rocks over the canyon. There is an obvious sling there, or cross over and follow the canyon further down on a narrow ledge to the right for about 10m to another set of slings. These both give about a 25m drop, and come down near the middle of the bottom section. You can then scramble upstream to see the top of this section.

Exit

Once the canyon opens up, continue down the creek over boulders and follow the cliff along to the right.

It is an easy scramble up the first obvious spot to your right, about 200m from where the canyon ends. From here head up the hill and right along a track below the next line of cliffs. This crosses a few small gullies and then heads up through another small line of cliffs. At the top, climb a pagoda to the right and continue generally west and up until you reach the track you came in on at about AMG436207

Comments

Tiger Snake Canyon is an excellent trip, and a very popular one even in winter as there are no swims, and the deepest wade is usually no more than knee deep. You can keep your feet dry, but it is somewhat risky. There are a number of abseils if desired, although apparently the entire top section (including the last big drop) can be scrambled. However, avoiding the big drop involves an exposed scramble and is not recommended (unless you don't have a rope!).

Tiger Snake is a good canyon in all weather as the creek is very small. It is also a good canyon for novices as the walk in is relatively short and the canyon is not technically that difficult. The constrictions are very good. The lower one is particularly notable for how deep, dark and narrow it is.

The lower constriction was discovered in September 1977 by a joint Sydney Uni Bushwalkers/Ramblers party. They explored it from below, and were trapped in the canyon by an angry tiger snake. The top section was discovered later by a Ramblers party doing the canyon from the top.

The Dry Canyon

Difficulty: E

Quality: 8/10

Time: A few hours

Wetsuits: No

Date last checked: 2007-05-12

The Dry Canyon, also known as Wolgan View Canyon and Nobles Canyon, is an excellent walk-through canyon on the west side of the Glowworm Tunnel Road. It consists of three constrictions of increasing length. The lower constriction is superb - long and deep.

Entry

See **Newnes Plateau & South Wolgan Fire Trails** for information on how to get to the Bungleboori Picnic Area.

Drive along the Glowworm Tunnel Rd to AMG407164 (Cullen Bullen), about 22km from the Bungleboori Picnic Area, and around 4km past the Old Coach Road turn off. There is a small parking area with a barrier. Follow the track down to a camping area. Turn right and follow the track in to the top of the dry creek bed, and then follow the creek down to where the canyon starts.

Notes

There are two sections of canyon. The first starts at about AMG402165, and is attractive, but short and not very deep. More walking brings you to the lower constriction. This is quite spectacular, as it is deep, dark and reasonably sustained.

Exit

Retrace your route back to the car

Comments

This is a VERY EASY canyon, and a good one to show people who are probably never going to make it to more difficult ones. It is also a nice bushwalk.

It is quite interesting to climb around above the south of the canyon and have a look down the slot from above. Also, if you continue around to the right after the end of the canyon, some excellent views of the Carne Creek and Wolgan Valleys can be had, although a little scrambling may be required.

Surefire Canyon

Difficulty: M

Quality: 9/10

Time: A long day

Wetsuits: Optional

Date last checked: 2008-01-12

Surefire Canyon is an excellent canyon in the lower reaches of Rocky Creek. It involves a number of short, tricky abseils and a long, impressive constriction. It was named after a Tom Williams comment that he knew of a "surefire canyon". The attempt on that trip was aborted due to rain and other problems. It was first descended by Tom Williams, Dave Noble, Ted Daniels and Tony Haigh in October 1976.

Entry

See **Newnes Plateau & South Wolgan Fire Trails** for information on how to drive to the starting point.

From the start of the Deanes Lookout track at the locked gate at AMG462141, follow the fire trail N for about 1.8km to a junction. Keep left, and follow the trail for another 3km to a large clearing, where another track joins from the SE. An old fire trail heads along the ridge to the NE, leaving from just north of the clearing, although its starting point is very vague. It becomes clearer fairly quickly, and it is easy enough to just aim to intersect the ridge to pick up the trail. The trail swings around to the east and finishes around AMG471198. Head E down the ridge into the creek. It is possible to get down without abseiling. The canyon begins shortly downstream.

Notes

The canyon starts with a 12m drop from a tree on the right, followed by a hand over hand or 4m abseil. A tricky 10m abseil over a chockstone is next, and then a section of classic winding canyon. Finally there is a 10m drop through logs from a massive log jam. Consider your choice of anchor carefully. There is a short awkward climb down and then a short wade or swim, and then note the exit canyon that comes in on your left at this point. Continue downstream through a magnificent sustained slot, until the canyon opens out about 300m later at a large cave.

Exit

The exit is quite tricky, and involves a few exposed moves.

To exit head up the exit canyon for about 100m until you can see some tree roots hanging down on the right. You can climb here, or about 30m further up there is a slab you can scramble up. Head up to a groove, where a sling hangs down. Climb the groove with the help of the sling, and scramble on to the ledge to the right. From there, climb trees to get up the next two sets of ledges, and scramble up the scree slope to the upper cliff line. You can use some form of belay to climb the trees.

Once at the upper cliff line, traverse along under the cliff to the W and continue up the creek eventually getting back to the fire trail. Follow the fire trail S back to the car.

Comments

Surefire is a great canyon with an impressive constriction. The round trip is about 20km, so it is a longish day. Mountain bikes are possible although the legality of their use is questionable. Another option is to camp out on the ridge and do some other canyons as part of a weekend. Wetsuits are not really required.

Heart Attack Canyon

Difficulty: MH

Quality: 7/10

Time: A long day

Wetsuits: Optional

Date last checked: 2010-03-28

Heart Attack Canyon is a good canyon in the lower reaches of Rocky Creek. It starts with an impressive 40m abseil into the canyon and continues for some way.

It was first identified on an NPA bushwalk led by Ted Daniels in 1974, and subsequently descended in January 1976. It received its name as the party was woken on the steps of the Bell Cafe by someone looking for a phone to call for help for a heart attack victim.

Entry

See **Newnes Plateau & South Wolgan Fire Trails** for information on how to drive to the starting point.

From the locked gate at the start of the Deanes Lookout track at the locked gate at AMG462141 (Rock Hill), follow the fire trail N for about 1.8km to a junction. Turn right on to rough fire trail crossed by many logs and fallen trees. Follow this for 2.2km to another junction at AMG466178 (Mount Morgan). Head NE along this fire trail. Despite what the old edition of the Mount Morgan map says, the fire trail actually heads E and then SE from Murrays Mount at AMG471184, and not N. Follow the trail to the end and then make your way down into the creek, possibly with an abseil.

An alternative route leaves the fire trail at a large log about 300m past Murrays Mount, and heads N along a ridge, E down to a saddle and up to a hill, before heading down the creek that joins Heart Attack Brook at AMG485186. On the right of the creek you can do a 40m abseil down the main cliffline. 50m+ ropes are recommended to get enough angle on the pull down. Because of the length of the abseil, most parties will probably find this slower.

Either way, head down the creek to the start of the canyon.

Notes

The canyon starts with a spectacular 35m abseil at AMG485189. This can be done from various places but the big chockstone 20m downstream provides an easy pull down. The side canyon 150m downstream on the left can also be used for shorter drops to enter. After this the canyon opens out into an excellent gorge for a while before narrowing. There are a number of tricky climb downs. There is a final tricky 9m abseil near the end. There are a number of wades up to about waist deep.

Exit

After the canyon ends, head downstream for a few hundred metres to the next gully on the left at AMG484196. This provides an easy exit back to the tops.

Comments

Heart Attack is a good canyon, but with a long walk in and out. It is a fairly long day with around 16km of walking. Mountain bikes are possible though the legality of their use is questionable. If used, you would be better to continue along the Deanes Lookout track to the clearing. Wetsuits are not really required.

Galah Canyon

Difficulty: MH

Quality: 8/10

Time: A long day

Wetsuits: Optional

Date last checked: 2009-03-15

Galah Canyon is an excellent canyon in the lower reaches of Rocky Creek. It features a number of interesting abseils and a magnificent cathedral-like chamber at the end. It was discovered by Ted Daniels and Chris Cosgrove on a joint NPA-SUBW trip in 1977 and named due to its proximity to Galah Mountain.

Entry

See **Newnes Plateau & South Wolgan Fire Trails** for information on how to drive to the starting point. From the locked gate at the end of the Rocky Creek exit track at AMG466141, head N along the fire trail, staying on the fire trail when the Rocky Creek exit track turns off to the right. At the end of the trail at about AMG476167, head NE along the ridge for 500m and then E and then SE to the bend in the creek at AMG483170. There is a short section of attractive canyon with a couple of deep wades in the top of the creek, including a short drop that you could leave a handline on to get back up on your way out, if you exit that way. A relatively easy creek walk follows before the main canyon starts at about AMG489175.

Notes

There are a couple of options for the first drop. Best is probably to scramble down the small gully on the left and abseil about 20m from a tree at the bottom. Be careful of loose rocks. Alternatively abseil a bit over 30m from the obvious gum tree just left of the creek. There is a rebelay point after about 12m on the far side of the big chockstone, but it is quite tricky to get to.

Then there is an awkward 5m abseil, followed by a slide or abseil down a log. A slightly dodgy slide into knee deep water follows, or bridge down the tricky waterfall on the right. Then there is a 7m abseil over a chockstone, and a drop of about 3m that can be scrambled. The final abseil is

about 5m but the sling is about 4m back, and the waterfall is very slippery. There is a bit more canyon, and a possible wade or short swim before it opens out near Rocky Creek.

Exit

Once the canyon opens out, traverse around under the main cliff for about 200m until you are well above Rocky Creek. Just past a short exposed section across a slab, look up to the right for (hopefully) a rope hanging down from a tree. This climb of about 6m leads to a steep ramp and gully that takes you up through the cliff line. Continue around to the point and then head up to the top line of cliffs, and follow it along until it rejoins the creek. Continue up the creek and either exit where you dropped in at the start, or earlier at an amphitheatre on the right.

Alternatively you could walk upstream on Rocky Creek to one of the other exits.

Comments

Galah is a beautiful canyon with a challenging exit. Wetsuits are not really required with a bit of scrambling skill.

Thunderstorm Canyon

Difficulty: MH

Quality: 2/10

Time: A long day

Wetsuits: Not required

Date last checked: 2005-03-15

Thunderstorm Canyon is more of a gorge than a canyon. It starts with an impressive 40m abseil but then opens out a bit shortly afterwards.

It was discovered in November 1977 on a joint SUBW-Ramblers trip, and was named as there was a thunderstorm as the party was rigging the first abseil.

Entry

Thunderstorm Canyon is most obviously done from the Mt Cameron Track. However, it is probably an easier and more worthwhile day to do it from Closet Canyon, on the other side of Rocky Creek.

From the junction of Closet Canyon and Rocky Creek, head downstream for 200m to the next creek on the right, which is the creek with Thunderstorm in it. Climb the point to the south. There is a tape near the bottom to get up the first bit. The rest has the odd tricky bit, but it is not particularly exposed until the last pitch, which is very exposed. Head up to the next cliffline, and along to the left under the cliffs. Watch the gullies on your side and the other side and drop down to the creek at AMG500162. The first abseil is only a short distance downstream.

Notes

The main abseil is 40m. The pulldown can be difficult, and it is possible for the last person to re-rig at a lower tree. Then there is a short abseil or climb down. The canyon opens out and it is an easy walk back to the Rocky Creek junction.

Exit

As for Closet Canyon.

Closet Canyon

Difficulty: M

Quality: 5/10

Time: One day

Wetsuits: Optional

Date last checked: 2004-12-29

Closet Canyon is a good canyon in the middle reaches of Rocky Creek. It has two relatively short constrictions, the second starting with an awesome looking Mt Hay-style 40m abseil down a waterfall.

Entry

See **Newnes Plateau & South Wolgan Fire Trails** for information on how to drive to the starting point.

From the locked gate at the end of the Rocky Creek exit track at AMG466141, head N along the fire trail. Take the right turn after about 1km on to a track (the Rocky Creek exit track). After a further 500m head N then NE along the ridge to the 1014 point. Continue NE for another 700m, before heading E and then N on the minor ridge, and drop into the creek at AMG488164.

Notes

You quickly reach the first drop of about 10m, which can be scrambled on the right, or abseiled. There is a bit of a walk down the creek to where the canyon proper starts.

Scramble around to the left on tree roots and down to the first abseil. The first drop is 15m into a deep pool. Very good bridging can avoid a short (5m) swim for the first abseiler. Subsequent abseilers can be pulled across on the rope. The next drop is about 3m, into another deep pool. This can also be bridged high to avoid a short swim, but is reachy and quite dodgy. The top section of canyon ends not far after.

There is some walking and scrambling down the creek to get to the next section of canyon. There are two main drops in the creek. The first can be easily scrambled on the left. The second can be scrambled on either side but both options are a bit dodgy and you would probably be better abseiling from tapes on the left (maybe 12m). Scramble down to the main drop, which is 40m from tapes around a chockstone. From here it is a short walk/scramble down to Rocky Creek.

Exit

Head upstream on Rocky Creek for 400m to the next gully on the same side, and climb up the right hand side of the gully. At the top, scramble up on tree roots, and head straight up to the next line of cliffs. Head right under the cliffs all the way out to the nose, where there is an easy, obvious gully that takes you through the top line of cliffs. Make your way back to the car the same way as you came in.

Comments

A reasonable canyon, but some tricky navigation to get to it. With some effort and skill you can stay about knee deep dry, otherwise you have a couple of short swims.

Breakfast Creek Canyon

Difficulty: EM

Quality: 5/10

Time: One day

Wetsuits: Optional

Date last checked: 2005-10-02

Breakfast Creek Canyon is a good canyon tributary of Rocky Creek. There are several abseils in quite a dark constriction, though the canyon section is not particularly long. The first party thought that the area needed a Breakfast Creek.

Entry

See **Newnes Plateau & South Wolgan Fire Trails** for information on how to drive to the starting point.

From the locked gate at the end of the Rocky Creek exit track at AMG466141, head N along the fire trail. Take the right turn after about 1km on to a track (the Rocky Creek exit track). After a further 500m you may pass a faint track heading NE, and about 100m further the track forks, one part going straight ahead and the other veering right. The right one is the Rocky Creek exit track. Continue straight ahead. Soon after the track heads downhill and starts to swing to the N. As it starts to climb again is a good point to turn off the track and follow the gully downhill. Continuing down the gully you eventually reach a 10m drop.

Notes

The drop on to the halfway ledge is about 10m. Traverse right for about 100m until you can walk down into the creek. Some people abseil down the rest of the waterfall.

Some creek bashing follows, before you reach a slide down a slippery waterfall. This can be carefully climbed down on the right, and takes you into a large cave (St Paul's Cathedral). There is some more creek bashing before you reach the canyon proper, and the main drop, down a waterfall with a couple of ledges. This is about 27m from the top anchor, or about 24m from the anchor on the first ledge. A 60m will reach from the top. The pull down is tricky as it is very difficult to avoid the rope jamming in the logs on the second ledge. Also watch out for the rope catching in the crack below the first ledge. The canyon itself follows, clambering down a narrow crack. Then there is a 4m drop down a log, followed by 6m down a waterfall. It is a short scramble out to Rocky Creek from there.

Exit

Walk upstream on Rocky Creek for about an hour. There is a track on one side or the other for much of this distance. There is a spectacular canyon coming in from the left after about 500m. Exit via the Rocky Creek exit. This is at the bend in the creek at AMG485141. Climb the gully, keeping to the left where it splits. Near the top it is blocked by an overhang. Scramble left and up the rock face (easy, but exposed - you may want to belay people if they are not confident). Then follow the track back to where you turned off on the way in, and thence back to the car.

Comments

Breakfast Creek Canyon is a pleasant trip, though the canyon section while impressive, is fairly short. There are some wades to waist deep in the canyon and in Rocky Creek, but typically no swims. Many parties can probably do without wetsuits.

Coachwood Canyon

Difficulty: EM

Quality: 4/10

Time: One day

Wetsuits: Not required

Date last checked: 2007-10-28

Coachwood Canyon is a pleasant but fairly open canyon flowing into Rocky Creek. The coachwood forest higher up in the creek is impressive, and the abseils are interesting.

Entry

See **Newnes Plateau & South Wolgan Fire Trails** for information on how to drive to the starting point.

From the Rocky Creek carpark, follow a very faint track N, then NE, before it swings E along the ridge towards the 973 point. Head NE down into the creek, trying to avoid cliff lines. Many entry points exist - we have managed to scramble as far downstream as AMG480139 - but higher up it will be easier to get down to the creek.

Notes

If you follow the entry directions you should come in just below a 35m waterfall. If you come in above the waterfall you will need to abseil. The first drop is 25m to a ledge, and then the next drop of 10m can be abseiled or scrambled to the left.

Follow the attractive creek for some way. This involves a couple of scrambles after the creek drops through boulders.

Eventually you hit the canyon proper. From an anchor above a pool, you can scramble around the 4m drop to the right if desired, to an 8m drop with a tricky start due to the angle of the rope. This requires about 40m of rope as the first drop is set back. Then scramble through a hole, and from inside there is a 6m drop down a waterfall into a shallow pool. Alternative anchors exist that don't go down the falls, but you can avoid getting wet if your technique is good. Finally a 12m drop from a thread on the right, or tree on the left, gets you to Rocky Creek.

Exit

Downstream to the normal Rocky Creek exit, or upstream to the Rocky Creek climbing exit, or through Rocky Creek. Upstream is highly recommended, but you should bring wetsuits or warm clothing as you will almost certainly have a few cold swims.

Comments

Coachwood Canyon is a nice trip, with an impressive coachwood forest in the upper part of the creek. The canyon itself is of lower quality, with a few nice abseils. For a good summer trip, it is worth taking wetsuits and exiting by reversing Rocky Creek. Otherwise, if you scramble around the pool above the two part abseil then you shouldn't need wetsuits at all.

Rocky Creek Canyon

Difficulty: E

Quality: 10/10

Time: A short day

Wetsuits: Recommended

Date last checked: 2008-01-13

Rocky Creek Canyon is a long, dark and spectacular canyon in the South Wolgan area. It has no abseils and is thus popular with beginners.

It was discovered on a joint SUBW - UNSWBWC trip in 1976 by Dave Noble and Bob Sault. There is a short upper constriction with an abseil known as Sheepdip Canyon, but most parties only do the lower constriction.

Entry

See **Newnes Plateau & South Wolgan Fire Trails** for information on how to drive to the starting point.

From the Rocky Creek carpark, continue down the main fire trail to the SE. At the end of the trail, a foot track continues down into a gully. Once at the creek, follow the track downstream for about 700m to a creek junction. There are a couple of steep sections, and you may want to take a short rope in case a fixed rope is not there. The canyon starts here at the junction.

Notes

There is a climb down a hole to start. This can also be jumped, but the pool needs to be checked as there are ledges. There are a couple more climb downs in the first section before the canyon opens out a little. There are also a number of swims in this section.

Then the main constriction starts with a slide. This is particularly spectacular, similar to Claustral and the Grand Canyon. The canyon ends at the Budgary Creek junction. There are usually a few swims, including a longish one near the end.

Exit

There are a few options to exit.

The most common is to continue downstream for 1km to a sharp right hand bend, and climb the gully on the left. Once you break through the cliffs, climb on to the slab on the left and up the slab. This is technically easy but exposed. However, you may want to take a 30m rope to belay people if they are not confident. Follow the ridge back to the fire trail, and turn left on the fire trail to get back to the Galah Mountain Road. Turn left down the road to get back to the car park.

There is a climbing exit opposite the Budgary Creek junction - you may wish to take climbing hardware for protection. Climb a slab for a few metres, and head left along the narrow ledge. At the end of the ledge, climb up (exposed) a couple of metres on to another ledge. Walk along the ledge for 100m or so until you get to a slab. There may be a fixed rope hanging down, otherwise it is a difficult climb of about 5m up the slab. You may be able to lasso the tree. Head up the ridge through another cliffline, and pick up the Coachwood Canyon track as you get closer to Galah Mountain. Contour around this side of Galah Mountain to get back to the cars.

You can also reverse the canyon, although one of the climb downs can be quite difficult if there is a lot of water.

Twister Canyon

Difficulty: E

Quality: 5/10

Time: A few hours

Wetsuits: Recommended

Date last checked: 2008-01-13

Twister Canyon is a short but enjoyable tributary of Rocky Creek. While not being particularly spectacular, it features numerous jumps and slides. It was discovered by Dave Noble (NPWS). Twister is often incorrectly known as Sheep Dip Canyon, which is the name given to the short upper constriction of Rocky Creek itself. Twister is best combined as a day trip with Rocky Creek due to its short length.

Entry

See **Newnes Plateau & South Wolgan Fire Trails** for information on how to drive to the starting point.

From the Rocky Creek carpark, continue down the main fire trail to the SE. After about 100m, turn off to the right on a track which heads down the hill into the creek. Turn left and follow the track downstream along the creek for about 10mins until you reach the canyon.

Notes

Twister is basically a series of jumps and slides into cold pools. Check the depth of the water before doing the jumps. All of the jumps can be climbed down, although a couple (including the last) are tricky. The last jump is a couple of metres into a small pool - but the pool is very deep. For many of the jumps, you can climb up higher on tree roots if you are so inclined. After the last jump, there is a hand over hand down a 5m waterfall that usually has a fixed line on it. Take a 10m rope or length of tape just in case the fixed line is not there.

Exit

Continue down the creek to the next creek junction. Cross on a log, and turn left (this is the Rocky Creek entry track). Follow the track up the creek until it climbs out and joins the fire trail, which you can follow back to the car.

Much better, however, is to turn right at the creek junction and continue downstream to Rocky Creek.

Deep Pass Canyon

Difficulty: E

Quality: 5/10

Time: A few hours

Wetsuits: No

Date last checked: 2007-11-16

Deep Pass Canyon is a pleasant canyon in the upper reaches of Nayook Creek, near Deep Pass clearing. It is popular due to its easy access and the fact that it can be done without swimming or abseiling.

Entry

See **Newnes Plateau & South Wolgan Fire Trails** for information on how to drive to the starting point. From the parking area at Deep Pass, head down the fire trail until you reach the bottom of the hill. Just before you cross the creek, turn right onto a track and follow it up into the canyon.

Notes

There are quite a few drops with fixed ropes (many somewhat dodgy, so be careful) to climb up through the canyon. Getting near the top of the canyon, there is a large pool that you need to traverse on the right. This is tricky to do without slipping in, and you will get quite wet if you do slip. On the far side of the pool is a dodgy setup of logs and ropes that will get you across the last section ... if it doesn't break. If you can negotiate all of this then you can stay dry above the knees at normal water levels. There is a bit more canyon before the creek opens out.

Exit

Once the creek opens out, head up the slope to the right. Cut across the ridge until you hit the fire trail you walked in on. Alternatively, reverse the canyon and exit up the road.

Comments

A nice little canyon with a few challenging bits to keep dry, a couple of good spots for jump ins, and some good constricted sections. I would be a bit cautious about doing it in winter, as there is plenty of potential getting wet. Of course, it is possible to simply reverse the canyon if you reach a tricky section, to avoid a swim.

River Caves Canyon

Difficulty: E

Quality: 7/10

Time: A few hours

Wetsuits: No

Date last checked: 2005-01-11

The River Caves is a short but spectacular canyon in the upper reaches of Budgery Creek. It has no abseils, and the water in the canyon is knee-deep at its deepest, so can be done as a bushwalk. It is good in late spring as there is often a profusion of wildflowers about.

Entry

Park at the Natural Bridge car park. See **Newnes Plateau & South Wolgan Fire Trails** for information on how to drive to the starting point. From the locked gate at the Natural Bridge car park, walk along the fire trail to the Natural Bridge, which is just an obvious saddle. Head left down the hill and follow the creek. Just over a km of walking brings you to the main creek junction. Head left, and the canyon starts about 50m upstream.

Notes

There are no abseils in the canyon, but you will probably get wet up to your knees (you can get wetter if you want). The canyon has a few short sections, with a wide stream bed under high narrow walls.

Exit

The canyon ends at the creek junction. Turn left, and after about 150m, head left up a steep gully through a break in the cliffs. At the top of the cliffs, head up to the ridge, and then up along the ridge back to the fire trail. Left on the fire trail brings you back to your car.

BUNGLEBOORI

Many of the tributaries of the north branch (Dingo Creek) and the south branch of Bungleboori Creek have sections of canyon in them. The best ones include Crikey Canyon, Luna Park Canyon, Banks Canyon and Hole-in-the-Wall Canyon. Dingo Creek also has an impressive canyon section downstream from the Hole-in-the-Wall junction. The canyons are typically drier than those to the south and east, with short wades and the occasional swim.

WOLLANGAMBE

The Wollangambe River flows north of Mt Wilson, a small hamlet off Bells Line of Road. Major tributaries of the Wollangambe include Bowens Creek, Dumbano Creek and Yarramun Creek. Both the Wollangambe River and the major tributaries flow roughly west to east, and contain long sections of relatively flat canyons, with mostly small waterfalls. Many of the minor tributaries of these creeks are canyons also. The most commonly visited ones are close to Mt Wilson itself. The best of these include Whungee Wheengee Canyon, Upper Bowens Creek South Canyon and Lower Bowens Creek North Canyon. Other popular ones include Geronimo Canyon and Why-Don't-We-Do-It-In-The-Road? Canyon.

Waterfall of Moss Canyon

Difficulty: MH

Quality: 3/10

Time: One day

Wetsuits: Not required

Date last checked: 2009-01-17

Waterfall of Moss Canyon is more of a chasm than a canyon. It flows into the Wollangambe River near the Big Bend, down a very green waterfall - the Waterfall of Moss. It is a pleasant trip, but not the best canyon in the vicinity. It is a good choice for a trip for a cooler day or near the ends of the season as there are no swims except in the Wollangambe itself.

Entry

From Cathedral Reserve, follow the track that reaches the Wollangambe at the Big Bend. This starts by heading north up the hill from the NW corner of Cathedral Reserve. After passing through a gate, continue up the hill on the fire trail, before heading left, and left again at junctions. At the next intersection take the right branch to the north, down the ridge. When you reach a large clearing the fire trail ends, however, you should notice a track leaving to the left just before the fire trail enters the clearing. Following this track. It shortly crosses a barbed wire fence. Be careful at this point, as there is a slightly hidden fork in the track. Take the right fork, which heads along the left side of the ridge following the barbed wire fence for a short way. If you take the left fork, you'll drop quickly off the side of the ridge, and probably end up in **Why Don't We Do It In The Road? (Serendipity) Canyon**.

From there the track continues down the ridge, with a little bit of scrambling down to the Wollangambe.

Swim across the Wollangambe and climb up the gully on the other side. There is a climb of about 3m which hopefully has a fixed line hanging down. Once above this climb head left and around along a ledge above the Wollangambe. The track shortly heads up to the main cliff line.

If you head left at this point, a vague track goes for some distance around the base of the cliff line until it reaches a creek crossing. This is in fact the top of the 4th abseil, so you could use this as an early entry/exit if you wanted.

Otherwise head right, and up through a break in the cliffs and up the ridge. Drift off the left side of the ridge and into the creek at about AMG569926.

Notes

The first drop is about 8m from a slightly dodgy tree, overhung a bit at the bottom. The second is also about 8m from a tree, with an overhang near the top. This abseil could probably be scrambled on the left without a lot of difficulty. The third abseil is about 20m in a couple of stages. There is a tricky overhang at the start, and then it goes through an arch and over another overhang near the bottom. We did it on a 60m rope, but a 50m would reach comfortably, and possibly a 40m (but don't quote me!). The next abseil is only about 8m again, but with the anchor set back, it's about 16m. This brings you into the main creek.

The fifth abseil is from a tree, down between two angled rock faces to an overhang - about 6m. This is somewhat tricky. The next is from an tree anchor a long way back, over a chockstone and then an overhang. The abseil is only about 10m, but it is about 7m to the anchor. The seventh is down a narrow 10m slot from a chockstone near the edge. The last is 8m down the Waterfall of Moss, although the anchor is at least 8m back.

All but the last abseil have overhung sections, and the overhung sections are rarely easy. A lot of the abseils also have potentially tricky pull downs, so it is important that the last person down sets the rope to minimise any difficulty.

Exit

Swim down the river for about 200m to the point where you reached the Wollangambe on the way in, and follow the track back out.

Comments

Waterfall of Moss is a nice trip but not a great canyon. Most of the abseils have overhung starts so it is not a good choice for beginners.

Whungee Wheengee Canyon

Difficulty: MH

Quality: 9/10

Time: A long day

Wetsuits: Recommended

Date last checked: 2010-01-23

Whungee Wheengee Canyon is an excellent canyon on the north side of the Wollangambe River. It features two main constrictions of high quality, a few short abseils and depending on water levels, a couple of duck unders. The usual exit is to continue down the Wollangambe through one of its more impressive sections.

The canyon was named so as to be confusing with Wheengee Whungee Creek at Kanangra.

Entry

Follow the **Wollangambe Lower Tourist Section (Wollangambe 2)** entrance track down to the river. Cross and climb the gully on the opposite side on a track, climbing up on to the ridge on the left. Once up on the flat part of the ridge the track becomes obvious. At about AMG555923 (Wollangambe map) the track veers off the right side of the ridge, and down into a dry gully that leads to a cliff over the main creek at AMG558927. There are slings around a tree for a 14m abseil, or if your rope is too short, head right for about 30m to a smaller drop. The canyon starts only a short way downstream.

Notes

Entry into the canyon proper is tricky. Easiest is to continue on a ledge down the right side for a short way, then cross over to the left for a little before an awkward scramble. There are other ways. Abseiling is always an option.

There are several potential duck unders, though mostly there is a gap between the water and the roof. They are usually in dark sections. There are a number of cold swims, although the longest is about 30m.

There are a few tricky little climb downs - however, abseiling can be avoided at this point with good route finding and technique. One climb down above a pool has two fixed slings that may be difficult to find in the dark - these can be used to swing across to a crack that you can climb down.

The canyon opens out at a creek junction, then shortly after there is a 9m abseil, with a short swim, followed by 6m abseil. These used to be tricky, but there are currently bolts in place that make the starts easier. One final tricky pair of jump downs, or abseil, then there is a long spectacular section of canyon all the way to the Wollangambe.

Exit

At the Wollangambe, swim downstream for about 1km to the exit as for **Wollangambe Lower Tourist Section (Wollangambe 2)**.

Comments

Whungee Wheengee is an excellent canyon, quite sustained and challenging. It is also dark and the water is usually very cold. Look out for glowworms in the dark sections.

There are numerous tricky climb downs and climb arounds that can make this a tough day if your scrambling skills are a bit weak. You may need to do more than the two abseils if this is the case. A leader who is familiar with the canyon can help considerably in terms of time.

The walk in is reasonably long, and the canyon itself can also take a long time. Quite a few swims, up to 30m in the canyon proper. Longer swims in the Wollangambe. Wetsuits are recommended.

Water Dragon Canyon

Difficulty: M

Quality: 6/10

Time: One day

Wetsuits: Recommended

Date last checked: 2003-03-21

Water Dragon Canyon is a very good canyon on the north side of the Wollangambe River. It is infrequently visited from the top as almost all of its impressive constriction can be visited by walking up the canyon from the Wollangambe. Nevertheless, the constriction is long and well worth the trip.

Water Dragon Canyon is also known as Kelvinator Canyon, due to the temperature differential between it and the Wollangambe River.

Entry

Follow the **Wollangambe Lower Tourist Section (Wollangambe 2)** entrance track down to the river. Cross and climb the gully on the opposite side, tending left at the bottom. Once up on the flat part of the ridge, continue for about 200m and then drop off to the left, just as the track starts to go up to a small knoll. You may be able to find a track, but otherwise head straight off the side of the ridge. You should drop in to a gully, which eventually flows into the main creek.

The canyon starts with an abseil about 400m downstream. You shouldn't need wetsuits or harnesses before then.

Notes

The first abseil can be done from anchors at the top, but the pull down is probably easier if you climb down a few metres. The drop is only about 6m. The second abseil is not far after. You can climb down a crack using a handline (about 4m), swim across a pool and rig the abseil from a log jammed in a crack on the other side. The abseil is about 12m from this anchor. It makes for a tricky start to the abseil, but the pull down is easy.

Then there is 200m of very good canyon to the junction with the Wollangambe.

Exit

At the Wollangambe, swim downstream for 500m to where you crossed before.

Geronimo Canyon

Difficulty: M

Quality: 6/10

Time: One day

Wetsuits: Recommended

Date last checked: 2009-02-08

Geronimo Canyon is a very good canyon tributary of the Wollangambe River. It has a long and relatively sustained constriction, punctuated by a number of abseils. Its name comes from the third abseil which was jumped by Glen Robinson ("Geronimo!").

Entry

Park at the fire station at Mt Wilson, and follow the main tourist track towards the Wollangambe. At about 2km a track branches left below a large (10m) sandstone outcrop, which you should follow. This contours around a gully eventually dropping in to a small steep saddle. Head left off the saddle to reach the Wollangambe at AMG542913 (Wollangambe). Cross the river, walk up to the cliff and traverse around to the left until you can easily walk up. At the top of the ridge, you should be on a track that start west and curves around to the north following the ridge. Just after a

high point the track begins to fade - drop off the west side and scramble down to meet the creek at the junction at AMG538920. The canyon starts soon after.

Notes

The first abseil is a slightly awkward 7m from a tree - watch your head as the gap is narrow. Immediately this is followed by a 7m abseil from a pile of logs - needs a long sling to avoid a crack.

The next abseil is 7m using a large rock as anchor, and a long sling. This has a tricky start. Try to keep the rope out of the crack for the pulldown. The abseil can also be jumped ("Geronimo!") if you have checked the water depth. Note that the water is usually not much more than person depth, so be very careful

The last abseil is about 14m from a close tree or 12m from one further along. To get to the anchor requires a scramble along a narrow ledge to the left. Alternatively this could be done in two 7m abseils, the first from where the scramble starts.

Exit

It is a short walk from here back to the Wollangambe and then head downstream. You will soon get back to the point where you crossed the Wollangambe, and you can exit from here.

Comments

Geronimo is a nice canyon, relatively sustained but without being particularly deep or dark. It could be done in less than half a day by an experienced party, so a bit of a wander up the Wollangambe is worthwhile. There are a few cold swims, although none particularly long. Wetsuits are advisable for most parties.

Upper Wollangambe Canyon

Difficulty: M

Quality: 8/10

Time: Two days

Wetsuits: Lilos

Date last checked: 2008-02-23

The Wollangambe River has sections of canyon over much of its length. This section lies above the usual tourist sections, and is much rougher, with little in the way of tracks. However, it is possibly the best section of the Wollangambe River, and an excellent canyon. The notes are more vague than usual, as the canyon is in the Wollangambe Wilderness and parties need to be more self reliant.

Entry

There are a variety of options for getting to the canyon.

If you only have a 2WD car, then one option is to walk in from Bell to Wollangambe Crater. This is about 8km, and around 3h if you know the way, mostly on some form of track.

If you have 4WD cars, then you can probably drive along the Dumbano Fire Trail to the locked gate at AMG497949 (Wollangambe). Walk to the end of the road, scramble down to the left and walk down the river to Wollangambe Crater.

These involve leaving a car at Mt Wilson. From Wollangambe Crater, the river is slow going to where the canyon starts around AMG523912.

Another possibility is to start at Mt Wilson, cross and follow the ridge as per Geronimo Canyon, and keep heading around to where you can get down through the cliffines upstream of the start.

Notes

The canyon begins with a long pool at AMG523912. There are many long pools, and high narrow walled sections. Lilos are a good idea. There are numerous large boulder chokes which take some time to negotiate.

Exit

Exit up the Geronimo track, which leaves the river at AMG542913, and leads back to the fire station at Mt Wilson.

Wollangambe Canyon - Upper Tourist Section

Difficulty: E

Quality: 5/10

Time: One day

Wetsuits: Lilos

Date last checked: 2005-12-24

The Wollangambe River passes through numerous sections of canyon on its way to the Colo River. The two most popular sections lie below Mt Wilson, and are excellent lilo trips on a summer day. The notes below describe the upper tourist section, often called Wollangambe 1.

Entry

Park at the fire station at Mt Wilson, and follow the fire trail around behind the fire station. Turn left on to another fire trail at the T-junction after 200m. Past the top of the hill, the main trail swings right and then crosses another fire trail. There is a "Wollangambe River" sign at the head of a foot track opposite that you should follow. At about 2km a track branches left below a large (10m) sandstone outcrop. Avoid this and continue past another sandstone pagoda on your left. As you near the river, the track swings sharply left. Head upstream along the cliffs above a gully for 200m until you can climb down a steep corner on tree roots into the gully. Follow this down to the river at AMG545912.

Notes

Follow the river downstream. There are many long deep pools, so lilos and wetsuits are advisable. There are a number of points early on where you can climb up the cliffs on the side of the canyon for jumps to about 8m. Check the depth carefully. Further down there are a few large boulder scrambles to negotiate. There are no abseils.

It is worth having a look up Water Dragon Canyon which comes in on the left at AMG554913. It is cold and dark, but spectacular.

Exit

The usual exit is found at a beach (AMG559914) just upstream from where a large log bridges the canyon about 7m above the river. Climb up the right hand side of the gully, and then up rocks and

tree roots (a bit exposed). Follow the track back to a fire trail. Turn right and follow this back to the "Wollangambe River" sign and from there back to your car.

Alternatively continue downstream past a 2m scramble or jump (be careful if you jump) to the sharp left hand bend at AMG562914 and climb up to the right. This track joins up with the other track above before it hits the fire trail.

Wollangambe Canyon - Lower Tourist Section

Difficulty: E

Quality: 6/10

Time: One day

Wetsuits: Lilos

Date last checked: 2003-03-22

The Wollangambe River passes through numerous sections of canyon on its way to the Colo River. The two most popular sections lie below Mt Wilson, and are excellent lilo trips on a summer day. The notes below describe the lower tourist section, often called Wollangambe 2. There are several side canyons in this section which are well worth investigating from the bottom.

Entry

From Cathedral Reserve at Mt Wilson, head along the fire trail that leaves to the west. After about 1.2km, this forks, and you veer right down a hill. At the top of a long hill, turn on to a track that branches to the right. Follow this roughly north for 1.5km down to the river at AMG559914 (Wollangambe map). Avoid taking a minor right fork to **Why Don't We Do It In The Road? Canyon (Serendipity Canyon)** after about 400m. There is an exposed scramble down tree roots just before you get to the river.

Notes

The canyon is pleasant and high walled, although never particularly narrow. Most of the canyon involves swimming or liloing, with generally short walks in between. There are only a couple of long swimming sections.

Not far from the start is a tricky 2m scramble down, or jump. Be careful if you jump, as there are only a couple of safe spots to land.

After another 200m or so, you pass **Why Don't We Do It In The Road? Canyon** at AMG564914. This is worth having a look up if you have time. If not, another 700m further on you pass **Whungee Wheengee Canyon** at AMG567917. This is well worth a visit from the bottom. It is possible to scramble quite some way up, but even the bottom 100m or so is superb.

You also pass **Waterfall of Moss** at AMG569923, but as the last abseil is close to the end, you can't see much of the canyon.

Exit

The exit is at the big bend on the map at AMG571923. Watch for **Waterfall of Moss Canyon** coming in on the left. About 200m past this, and just past a big bouldery block up, you will see a beach on the right, and a gully on both sides. Head right up the gully, and up to the ridge. The track is fairly obvious up to when it turns into a fire trail at AMG571908. Once on the fire trail, follow it back to a grassy clearing. Turn right at the clearing, and then left after about 200m at a junction.

Take the right branch at the next two intersections that are close together, and follow the track down the hill, through a gate and back to Cathedral Reserve.

Bell Creek Canyon

Difficulty: M

Quality: 10/10

Time: One day

Wetsuits: Lilos

Date last checked: 2008-12-13

Bell Creek Canyon is a beautiful canyon, with a long dark lower constriction. Most parties enter via a hand-over-hand into a side canyon known as Belfry Canyon, which is a good canyon in its own right.

Entry

From the Fire Station at Mt Wilson, head west along the fire trail towards Du Faurs Lookout, and turn left after about 300m through a gate to the left. Follow this fire trail until it heads downhill and veers left. Take the foot track that continues straight ahead. When you reach the saddle at MGA537885 (Mount Wilson), turn right and follow the track down into a creek. Towards the end, climb to the right out of the creek and do a short hand-over-hand (10m rope may be needed) down a slab to get down to Du Faur Creek.

Cross the creek, climb up on to a ledge and traverse to the right along the ledge until you can climb up. Head up the ridge to the top of the big hill (more scrambling may be required).

Head W or NW into a creek - the NW one has a couple of very short canyon sections and needs a 10m handline. Both of these lead into a larger creek, which also has a canyon in it. This starts with a log slide which again needs a 10m handline. It is quite spectacular in its own right. Finally you reach Bell Creek proper.

Notes

There are a number of canyon sections, the first being the longest and most spectacular. It has quite a number of chilly swims, including one of about 200m. There are some more canyon sections interspersed with creek walking.

About 300m after the Du Faur Creek junction, the creek starts to drop through boulders, and then flattens out. This last section is the trickiest, as there is a fair bit of scrub, and the creek bed is covered with large slippery rocks. Bell Creek then flows into the Wollangambe River, which is much the same, although you can walk along the left hand bank quite easily. About 200m after the junction, the river turns a sharp left hand bend. There is a large sandy beach on the left, and the exit track starts directly across the river.

Exit

The track heads up to the top of the saddle, and turns right. It contours round the gully and then heads steadily up, reaching the main ridge, and the entry track to the Tourist Section of the Wollangambe, between two pagodas. Turn right and follow the track up, crossing a fire trail, and joining another fire trail. When you reach the road, turn right back to the Fire Station where you left your car.

Comments

A very good canyon. Navigation is reasonably straightforward, although there is an exposed scramble to get out of Du Faur Creek. The canyon is very cold, and wet suits are recommended, and a thermal top underneath is probably not a bad idea. Some people use lilos to keep a little warmer. These are best inflated after the boulder scrambling in the main canyon. Otherwise there would be a lot of lilo hauling involved. There are some tricky down climbs in the canyon, and some drops in the entry canyons may need a handline. You shouldn't need abseiling gear.

Bell Creek Complete Canyon

Difficulty: M

Quality: 10/10

Time: Two days

Wetsuits: Lilos

Date last checked: 2008-12-13

While the lower section of Bell Creek is well known, an excellent overnight trip can be had by entering the creek high up and following it all the way down to Mt Wilson. The upper section of the creek has a number of stretches of canyon which are spectacular in their own right. The notes given are briefer as parties need to be more self reliant.

Entry

Leave a car at the Fire Station at Mt Wilson and drive to Watertrough Hill on Bells Line of Road. Head ENE to the first 1019 knoll, and then north along the ridge. Find a way into the creek near the creek junction at MGA503896.

Notes

The canyon starts at the junction at MGA507895. There are numerous narrow sections, mostly involving swims. Some are quite long. A large chockstone at one point requires a bit of a duckunder, or if the water level is high, a tricky climb over.

There is a camp cave opposite the creek junction at MGA525901 which is a good spot to stay the night. This is the usual entry point for the lower section of Bell Creek.

Continue downstream through the large boulder scramble to the spectacular lower canyon section and on to the junction with Du Faur Creek.

Exit

At the Du Faur Creek junction, continue downstream to the Wollangambe and out to the saddle at the sharp bend at MGA543914 or head up Du Faur Creek and up Joes Canyon at MGA543906.

Comments

An outstanding canyon. The upper sections are narrow with plenty of liloing, though the canyon walls are not particularly high near the beginning. With an early start, it is feasible to do the whole of Bell Creek as a day trip, though you would not want to take lilos in this case. There are also some exit points to the south, back on to the ridge, which you can then follow back to Bells Line of Road. This makes it feasible to do shorter sections.

The bottom section is superb, though very cold. After the camp cave, lilos are more hindrance than help until you reach the main canyon section.

Some parties will find a handline useful, but abseiling gear is not required.

Some would argue that this is not really Bell Creek Complete, as there are canyon sections higher in the headwaters.

Du Faur Creek Canyon

Difficulty: E

Quality: 6/10

Time: One day

Wetsuits: Lilos

Date last checked: 2007-12-02

Du Faur Creek Canyon (also known as Clatterteeth Canyon) is a tributary of Bell Creek, a little way above where that creek flows into the Wollangambe River. It has some long lilo pools. It was discovered by a party from Sydney Bush Walkers led by Ross Wyborn.

Entry

From the Fire Station at Mt Wilson, head west along the fire trail towards Du Faur Lookout, and turn left after about 300m through a gate to the left (not marked private property). Follow this fire trail for almost 2km until it heads downhill and veers left at MGA542886. Take the foot track that continues straight ahead. When you reach the saddle at MGA537885 (Mount Wilson), turn left and follow the track down into a creek. You can avoid getting your feet wet until you reach the junction with a much larger creek. This creek (October Creek) leads into Du Faur Creek after about 800m. The first canyon section is about 200m before the junction with Du Faur Creek. There are a couple more long canyon sections with swims before the alternative entry below comes in.

Alternatively, turn right at the saddle and follow the track down the creek. Not far from the end scramble up right on to the ridge and do a 10m hand-over-hand from a large gum tree near the junction to regain the creek. This misses out on some very good sections of canyon. You may also need a 10m rope in case a fixed line is not there.

Notes

There are quite a number of canyon sections, interspersed with creek walking. The canyon sections are of good quality, but never really sustained. The creek walking is for the most part easy and relatively scrub free, and the surrounds are delightful.

We took a lilo, but never inflated it. If you are a competent swimmer I would recommend doing without the lilo. There are just too many sections where it is useless, and needs to be dragged. However, you need to take sufficient thermal layers to keep you warm, and also some other flotation (eg dry bag), as some of the pools are quite long.

About 300m after the Bell Creek junction, the creek starts to drop through boulders, and then flattens out. This last section is the trickiest, as there is a fair bit of scrub, and the creek bed is covered with large slippery rocks. Bell Creek then flows into the Wollangambe River, which is much the same, although you can walk along the left hand bank quite easily. About 200m after the junction, the river turns a sharp left hand bend. There is a large sandy beach on the left, and the exit track starts directly across the river.

Exit

The track heads up to the top of the saddle, and turns right. It contours round the gully and then heads steadily up, reaching the main ridge, and the entry track to the Tourist Section of the Wollangambe between two pagodas. Turn right and follow the track up, crossing a fire trail, and joining another fire trail. When you reach the road, turn right back to the Fire Station where you left your car.

Why Don't We Do It In The Road? Canyon

Difficulty: EM

Quality: 4/10

Time: One day (less if you take the upstream exit)

Wetsuits: Recommended

Date last checked: 2007-03-31

Why Don't We Do It In The Road? Canyon, often known as Serendipity Canyon, is a relatively short canyon on the south side of the Wollangambe. It is popular because of its easy access, relatively large number of abseils, and the fact that it can be done fairly safely in inclement weather. It was named by Tony Norman, a Beatles fan, who was in one of the first parties to visit the upper section of the creek. It is commonly known as Serendipity Canyon, an alternate name given by Glen Robinson. The lower part of the creek was well known to parties visiting the Wollangambe.

Entry

Park at Cathedral Reserve at Mt Wilson. If you intend to go upstream to exit, you could park at the fire station at Mt Wilson, as the walk in/out is much the same distance, but possibly a bit easier. Either way, follow the main fire trail to where the **Wollangambe Lower Tourist Section (Wollangambe 2)** entrance track turns off. Follow this track for about 1km to a fork where the track to WDWDIITR veers off to the right. A couple of hundred metres after here there is another fork. Left goes to an exit (see below), so take the right fork. This winds around and down to the start of the canyon.

Notes

There are a few options at the start of the canyon. One is to cross the creek and abseil 14m in two stages down the right of the waterfall. Be wary of the two sharp stumps pointing up from the halfway ledge. A 30m rope just reaches here. Then there is a scramble off a ledge on the right, and abseil about 3m.

Alternatively you can bypass both abseils on the left and drop in a little further down. However, it seems a slight waste to do it this way.

Almost immediately there is a 10m drop into the creek proper from a tree on the right. From there there is a reasonable creek walk of around 45min to the main canyon section.

The first drop is around 8m down a waterfall. Aim to stay to the right, particularly if there is a lot of water. It is not too far to the second drop. You can abseil from tapes around a tree a couple of metres further back, or jump about 4m. Someone will need to check the depth first. The last drop is an easy abseil or a tricky jump. You need to know where the ledges are underwater, and unfortunately they are under the easier jumping zones. It requires jumping rather close to a wall.

It is then a short scramble to the end of the canyon.

Exit

There are a number of options for exit. You can go downstream, in which case proceed as for **Wollangambe Lower Tourist Section (Wollangambe 2)**. Lilos are a good idea as this is a reasonably long option.

If you go upstream the easiest way out is from a ledge to the left, about 100m upstream, just as the canyon bends to the left. A path leads up the obvious gully and then up the ridge, where it joins back to the entrance track not far down from the fire trail. It is also possible to traverse left along ledges (a little exposed) to this exit from the end of WDWDIITR if the water level in the Wollangambe is too high for wading upstream.

Alternatively you can go further upstream to the normal exit track from the **Upper Tourist Section (Wollangambe 1)**. There is a somewhat tricky climb up of about 2m before you reach the exit beach. The exit is just after you pass under a log bridging the canyon.

Comments

A nice canyon, although rather short, and with a longish but pleasant creek walk between abseils. It is better (but incorrectly) known as Serendipity Canyon, so I have tried to give its original name here.

Lower Bowens Creek North Canyon

Difficulty: M

Quality: 8/10

Time: One day

Wetsuits: Recommended

Date last checked: 2010-02-27

The lower canyon section of Bowens Creek North certainly offers plenty of "bang for your buck". The walks in and out are relatively short, and the canyon section is a good length compared to many others, though it is fairly quick to traverse as the two abseils are near the beginning.

Entry

From Mt Wilson, drive out towards Wynnes Rocks, and park opposite the fire trail that branches off to the east about halfway out along the Wynnes Lookout Road (MGA559883, Mt Wilson map). Walk along the fire trail, keeping right where it forks after about 800m. Pass through a gate, pass a hill on your right, and as the next gully starts to appear, turn right at a large anthill (MGA576884) and head down into the gully. There are a couple of sizeable drops in the gully that need to be skirted or sidled. Turn left at Bowens Creek and walk down the creek to the start of the canyon.

Notes

There are a couple of drops in the creek before the main canyon starts. Good route finding can avoid the need for a rope. The second can be avoided by traversing right and climbing down a tree, although there are a couple of sets of tapes. It can also be jumped - check the depth first.

The first actual abseil is from ropes around a bollard on a slippery ledge up to the right. It is a little tricky to get to the anchor. A safety line is advisable. The abseil is about 12m into the water, or about 8m to a ledge from where you could jump. Alternatively, abseil about 8m directly down the waterfall. The second abseil is about 12m from tapes around a tree up to the right, into a pool.

Some further climb downs and swims follow before this section of canyon ends at the junction with Bowens Creek South Branch.

Exit

From the junction with the South Branch, you can see a small gully coming in from the left about 50m downstream. Climb out here and follow a rough track up the gully. There may be a couple of fixed lines here on difficult sections, otherwise someone may need to scramble up and drop one down. At the bottom cliff line head left until you reach a break in the cliffs. Scramble up here. A track largely follows the ridge back up to the fire trail you walked in on at MGA580885. From here it is a 2.5km walk back to the car.

Comments

The lower section of Bowens Creek North is very good, deep, and quite spectacular. It appears to get a lot less traffic than some of the other canyons around Mt Wilson, though it is far more impressive than say Why Don't We Do It In The Road? or Waterfall of Moss.

Jamieson's abseil lengths are misleading and possibly dangerous. Taking just a 20m rope is asking for trouble.

There are several swims up to 20m or so and some deep wades.

Bowens Creek North Canyon

Difficulty: M

Quality: 8/10

Time: A long day

Wetsuits: Recommended

Date last checked: 2003-01-11

Most parties just visit the lower canyon section of Bowens Creek North Branch. While the lower section is the best, there are also good canyon sections in the upper part of the creek. A good long day trip starts high in the headwaters and continues to the junction with the South Branch.

Entry

Leave a car near the start of the fire trail on the left as you drive out along Wynnes Lookout Rd, at Mt Wilson at MGA559883 (Mt Wilson map). Drive the other car to the bottom of the main hill before Mt Wilson, at about MGA551885. Head ESE into the creek. The creek slowly becomes canyoniferous before you finally reach a section of canyon.

Notes

There are about 5 sections of canyon in the creek before you reach the junction with the South Branch. Three of these are in the first couple of kilometres. The creek walking between these sections is pleasant and relatively easy. There are a couple of drops in these sections where a 10m hand line is useful, and there are a reasonable number of other scrambles and climb downs. If you are prepared to swim there is a bit less scrambling. There are a number of deep wades, but the swims can largely be avoided.

The creek then opens out into a scrubby section, before another short section of canyon. Then there is a considerable walk to get to the final section of canyon. The creek begins to drop more sharply and there are quite a number of scrambles down bouldery sections, which takes additional time.

There are a couple of drops in the creek before the main canyon starts. Good route finding can avoid the need for a rope. The second can be avoided by traversing right and climbing down a tree, although there are a couple of sets of tapes. It can also be jumped - check the depth first.

The first actual abseil is from ropes around a bollard on a slippery ledge up to the right. It is a little tricky to get to the anchor. A safety line is advisable. The abseil is about 12m into the water, or about 8m to a ledge from where you could jump. Alternatively, abseil about 8m directly down the waterfall. The second abseil is about 12m from tapes around a tree up to the right, into a pool. Some further climb downs and swims follow before this section of canyon ends at the junction with Bowens Creek South Branch.

Exit

From the junction with the South Branch, you can see a small gully coming in from the left about 50m downstream. Climb out here and follow a rough track up the gully. There may be a couple of fixed lines here on difficult sections, otherwise someone may need to scramble up and drop one down. At the bottom cliff line head left until you reach a break in the cliffs. Scramble up here. A track largely follows the ridge back up to the fire trail you walked in on at MGA580885. From here it is a 2.5km walk back to the car.

Comments

The top section is a nice canyon, but not especially spectacular. There are a few quite narrow sections, and a couple of fun slides. The very bottom section is very good, deep, although not particularly dark or narrow, and very green. If you are running short of time, it is possible to exit to the left at various placing, including around MGA563868 or up the entry track for the lower section, at the creek junction at MGA578878. The lower section is described separately.

Jamieson's abseil lengths are misleading and possibly dangerous. Taking just a 20m rope is asking for trouble.

There are several swims up to 20m or so and some deep wades.

Upper Bowens Creek South Canyon

Difficulty: EM

Quality: 10/10

Time: One day

Wetsuits: Optional

Date last checked: 2009-11-01

There are a number of sections of canyon in both north and south branches of Bowens Creek. These notes describe the most commonly visited section of Bowens Creek South Canyon, the upper section.

Entry

If you want to avoid a 3km road walk, park a car near the start of the fire trail at Range Hill on the Bells Line of Road. The best spot is the open area on the side of the road about 200m E of start of the fire trail.

Then drive to Pierces Pass and park the other car at the top parking area. Walk N along the road to the top of the hill and then NE along the ridge. There is a reasonably well defined pad that keeps to the main ridge line. After a little over 1km the ridge starts to drop. At the pagodas there are a

number of spots you can scramble to the right down into the creek. The easiest is the obvious gully you can see about 100m further on from the top of the first pagoda, getting into the creek at about MGA543842. Some creek walking and a bit of scrambling follows to a 10m drop. This can easily be traversed to the right, or abseiled if you feel like it. The canyon proper is reached shortly after.

Notes

The first drop is about 8m from tapes from one of a number of trees on the right. However, it can be also be slid in two stages by climbing down under the chockstone. Both drops are into about waist deep water. The anchor for the next drop is from tapes around a tree about 8m back. A long sling is required, otherwise the total drop is about 20m all up. The canyon narrows immediately. The junction with another canyon (Corkscrew Canyon according to Jamieson) coming in from the left is then reached. This is well worth a side trip to explore.

Continuing on there is a nice section of canyon, until it opens out into a lovely coachwood and sassafras forest. The creek meanders for some way before dropping through boulders and then into the bottom canyon section.

There are quite a few tricky scrambles and drops in this section, including one down a log. A rope can be used, although all of the drops can be climbed down or around. This section of canyon opens out a little at the junction with Range Ck (Hobnail Canyon according to Jamieson). It is a good side trip to see the bottom section of Hobnail Canyon. This section of canyon finishes at the junction with the next creek on the left, Ferny Cave Creek.

Exit

Continue down the creek until you reach the next tributary coming in from the left. Opposite this you will see a steep bank, but climbable. There are logs at the bottom to help with the first section. Follow this up to the next cliffline. Follow the cliffline around to the right to a point where it bends sharply left into small gully. This can be climbed through a narrow hole (or over the top - somewhat exposed). Go up to the next line of cliffs and right on a track. Scramble up the cliffs at an obvious point (the track stops traversing under the cliffs). A rope is often found hanging down here. Follow the track up to the fire trail. Follow the fire trail back to where you left the car, or walk back along Bells Line of Road.

Comments

Upper Bowens Creek South Canyon is an excellent canyon. The lower constriction is dark and twisting, and quite sustained. The side trips to Corkscrew Canyon and Hobnail Canyon are both worthwhile.

A 40m rope is needed for the abseils. The abseils are relatively easy, though some parties may need to do additional abseiling as there are some drops where the route down is not obvious. If you drop off the entry ridge to the left instead of the right, you can come down Corkscrew Canyon which does not require any abseils.

Experienced parties should be able to negotiate the canyon with only one swim and a few wades at normal water levels. Wetsuits are optional, but may be advisable for less experienced parties.

NORTH GROSE

The North Grose canyons lie on the south side of Bells Line of Road, west of the Explorers Range (Mt Banks). They are mostly lower quality canyons, in small creeks, and as a result are typically

fairly dry. Their main attraction is their proximity to Sydney and easy access. Dargans Creek Canyon, though not technically flowing into the Grose, is probably the best quality canyon. Yileen Canyon and Dalpura Canyon are also pleasant outings.

Yileen Canyon

Difficulty: M

Quality: 5/10

Time: One day

Wetsuits: Optional

Date last checked: 2006-02-19

Yileen Canyon is one of the better canyons on the south side of Bells Line of Road. It features couple of short, pleasant sections of canyon, finishing with an abseil of up to 60m into the Grose Valley. The name comes from an aboriginal word for dream.

Entry

Ideally, leave a car at the bottom picnic area at Pierces Pass. If not, you have a 3.5km walk back up to the top car park, and then along Bell's Line of Road at the end. Alternatively you can try and hitch a lift.

Drive to the Mt Wilson turnoff and leave the car there. Walk back east to the top of the hill, and SSW on a fire trail. After 800m, the fire trail swings around to the W, and a small track branches off south. Take this track, which swings SW after about 100m, and follow it off the end of the ridge (with the 1006 point on the Mt Wilson map). It then heads S between the two tributaries of the W branch of Yileen Gully, and joins the creek near that junction.

Notes

There are some canyon sections in the creek, before a 4m slide down a chute. With some difficulty, this can be scrambled down, and the pool at the bottom avoided.

The next drop is about 6m also into a pool. You can avoid this again with some difficulty by scrambling up above the canyon to the left and abseiling off a tree slightly downstream, and quite a way up the slope. A nice canyon section follows, with a final drop of about 10m (but the anchor is a long way back) before the canyon opens out.

Follow the creek down through boulders to the big drop. This can be done in a couple of stages, about 40m down to a huge boulder, and then 12m from a small tree on the right to the ground. Or combine into one abseil if the ropes reach.

There has apparently been a landslip recently that may make it difficult to do the final abseil in two pitches, so it is advisable to take 60m ropes just in case.

Exit

Head left under the cliff, down into Pierces Creek, and climb up the other side until you hit the Pierces Pass track (it's like a highway so you can't miss it). Turn left and follow the track back up to the car park where you left a car.

Comments

A nice canyon, possibly the best of the North Grose canyons, but not particularly deep or sustained. The last abseil is spectacular.

With some care and skill, it may be possible to avoid the swim, and just get away with a chest deep wade.

Wotta Canyon

Difficulty: EM

Quality: 2/10

Time: A short day

Wetsuits: Optional

Date last checked: 2003-11-22

Wotta Canyon is a short canyon tributary of Birribang Brook. It features several abseils through a fairly low quality section of canyon, with a couple of deep wades or short swims.

Entry

Park at the Mt Wilson turn off on Bells Line of Rd, and walk back along the Bell Rd to the top of the hill to the east. Follow the fire trail south and drop into the creek down one of the spurs, aiming for MGA519842. There is a rough track down the spur to the east. Following the creek for a short distance brings you to the start of the canyon.

Notes

The canyon starts with a 4m drop from slings around a slightly dodgy tree into a waist deep pool. Then a 5m wade through chest deep water to the start of the next abseil. This is about 10m, from an even more dodgy set up, a rope sling around a couple of tree ferns. Safer is to do the first two drops as one using the original slings, although you probably need about a 50m rope. Then the third abseil is about 7m, but the anchor is high on a tree some 10m back from the drop, so you'll probably need at least 40m of rope. The start is tricky as the abseil is completely overhung, and the anchor a long way back.

Exit

That's pretty much it for the canyon. Walk down the creek to the junction with Birrabang Brook, and then exit up Birrabang. You can climb out in a number of places between MGA517852 and MGA519852. Climb the spur to the north and find the track that leads back to Bell's Line of Road.

Alternatively, scramble on the left hand side of the first main gully on the right after the canyon section finishes, and from there up to the ridge.

Comments

Not a particularly good canyon, so I won't be rushing back. The canyon itself is short and not particularly good quality. Apart from the abseils, the exit up Birrabang Canyon was probably the best bit.

With a fairly fast moving party, a good day might be to go down Wotta, exit out of Birrabang on to Dalpura Ridge, go through Better Offer and finally exit up Birrabang. None of these are long, so it wouldn't be hard to do. Also, all of the canyons are relatively dry, so you can get away without wetsuits (and possibly do in winter). It may require a bit of ingenuity, but you can get away with a short chest deep wade in Wotta, a short waist deep wade in Better Offer and nothing deeper than knees in Birrabang.

Another option if you take the early exit might be to do Yileen, which is off the other side of the ridge you originally walk in on. You probably need a car at Pierces Pass for this option.

Better Offer Canyon

Difficulty: EM

Quality: 3/10

Time: A short day

Wetsuits: No

Date last checked: 2008-02-09

Better Offer Canyon is a pleasant trip, though not a great canyon. It features a number of interesting abseils and can usually be done without getting much more than waist deep, making it a good trip for cooler weather. The canyon sections are intermittent and not of high quality. It is also known as Magnifying Glass Canyon.

Entry

Drive about 2km past the Mt Wilson turn-off on the Bells Line of Road, and park just before the overtaking lane starts. Follow the fire trail that starts at the bush regeneration sign. It heads east briefly at first, and then roughly south along Dalpura ridge. A track used to continue all the way to Birrabang Brook, but since the fires of 2006, the bush has regenerated, and the track is faint in some places and non-existent in others. Cross over the 1025 point and keep to the east side of the ridge. The ridge soon descends and opens out, and you should shortly reach a large rock pagoda. If you look west, you should see another rock pagoda about 150m away in the creek, off to the right side of the ridge. Head for this. The creek goes over a small waterfall at this point, which you can abseil, or possibly scramble.

Notes

The first drop at the small waterfall is only about 2m from the bottom, but it is a dodgy scramble. Better is to abseil from slings about 5m further up the left bank. The next drop goes down a sloping crack, and then down into an ankle deep pool, about 14m all up. A slippery slide follows and a rope for a hand over hand is advisable. A short canyon section follows, starting with a slippery 6m abseil into a waist deep pool. It finishes with a final 6m drop into a pool that can be climbed down if dry, or abseiled if wet.

The final two abseils are one after the other. The first is quite long, and can be abseiled straight down the falls, or from a tree on a ledge to the left. Either way it is about 23m. The last is about 8m (or 2m for the minimum drop), but the anchor is about 8m back making the start quite tricky. Maybe a more convenient anchor can be found.

Exit

The creek then starts to drop down through boulders. Follow it downstream for about 200m and then veer left across the slope trending lower. Keep below the lower cliff line to avoid a very narrow ledge just below the top cliff line.

Continue traversing around under the bottom cliff line until you reach Birrabang Brook. Head upstream, and then up the first major gully on the left. From the top head up Dalpura Ridge to the pagoda where you turned off earlier and thence back to the car.

Birrabang Canyon

Difficulty: E

Quality: 1/10

Time: A short day

Wetsuits: No

Date last checked: 2003-11-03

Birrabang Brook is a nice creek, but has only a very small section of canyon. Nevertheless it gets a reasonable amount of visitors as it has no abseils and no swims, making for more of a bushwalk than a canyon.

Entry

Driving west along Bells Line of Road, park 1.3km past the Mt Wilson turnoff, where a couple of green posts block the start of an old fire trail. The trail is clear and easy to follow down the ridge. It begins to descend steeply toward the creek, and near the bottom it splits in two. The left path is better trodden, although it is a short abseil down a slippery rock, or a scramble around the left to get into the creek at MGA518852 (Mt Wilson). The canyon begins less than 200m downstream from here. Apparently the right path is an easier route (<http://www.geocities.com/wcieslik/canyon28.htm>) although I have not tried it.

Notes

The trip is relatively dry - with scrambling you can avoid getting wet much past your knees at normal water levels.

The creek is quite enclosed early on, with many overhangs. There are quite a number of shallow pools to be waded through. Some deeper pools emerge and there are a few required scrambles to avoid getting wet - one easy one up to the right above a waist deep pool, one harder one along the left for about 10m above a chest deep pool. Then a scramble up the left to avoid a 3m abseil. The abseil goes into the most canyonlike section - it is worth checking it out from below although it involves a swim to enjoy fully.

The rest is relatively straightforward, although occasional scrambling may be required.

Exit

The exit gully on the right at MGA508843 is fairly obvious as you can clearly see the sky up it. There is a faint track which leads up to the ridge, and from there you can follow the ridge back to the road and it is about 800m back to the car.

Dalpura Canyon

Difficulty: E

Quality: 4/10

Time: A short day

Wetsuits: Not required

Date last checked: 2008-11-29

Dalpura is a relatively short canyon on the north side of the Grose Valley. It has one short abseil and it is usually easy to avoid swimming. The canyon is pleasant but not particularly spectacular. Access is quite easy making it a short day.

Entry

Drive about 2.8km past the Mt Wilson turn off on Bells Line of Rd, and park at the start of a fire trail (not marked on the map) just after the safety barrier ends at MGA505864. Walk along the fire trail for about 50m, and look for a track to the left down the ridge. Follow this down to the creek. The canyon starts around MGA502856.

Notes

There is a short canyoniferous section, with a deepish pool that can be avoided. After a bit of a creek bash, the main canyon starts with a 4m overhung abseil from slings around a rock. This finishes on a ledge, and you can either swim or sidle the pool. Some more canyon sections follow, one with a potential drop of about 3m. Depending on the log situation you may be able to descend this directly. Otherwise scramble on the right, or alternatively handline or abseil it. The end of the canyon is reached with an 8m waterfall.

By traversing right you can continue along the cliffline to ledges with excellent views of the Grose Valley.

Exit

From the final waterfall, the exit track heads up to the right, to the cliffline. Traverse under the cliff line until it ends and up on to the ridge. Follow the ridge back to where you can get up through the cliffs. Join up with the fire trail on Jinki Ridge and back to the car.

Comments

A nice canyon, and an excellent creek, with a fair bit of variety. It only has a couple of dark sections. An easy canyon to do.

You can usually avoid swimming, and there are only one or two wades to chest deep. Most parties should be able to do without wetsuits.

Jungaburra Canyon

Difficulty: EM

Quality: 1/10

Time: A short day

Wetsuits: No

Date last checked: 2009-10-16

Jungaburra Brook is a pleasant creek, but barely a canyon. It consists of two very short sections of canyon separated by a reasonable section of creek walking.

Entry

Drive just past Watertrough Hill on Bells Line of Road and park at the open area on the left. Walk through a gate on a fire trail heading west, past the first turn off to the right, and take the second turn off to the right that leads down the obvious ridge. Near the bottom of the ridge drop off to the left and into the creek.

Notes

It is a short walk to the first short section of canyon. A short swim through a deep pool near the end of this section can be avoided by a tricky climb around on the right.

There is a pleasant creek walk to the lower section of canyon. It looks quite impressive, but ends very quickly. There is a drop of about 4m that can be negotiated with a hand over hand or abseil on either the left or the right, though anchor points close by are difficult to find. A longer rope may be advisable. There are no swims, and probably not even a wade.

Exit

There are a variety of options for exiting. Continue down to the creek at GDA482859.

One is to climb up this creek, heading up to the cliffline, and climbing out on to the narrow ridge on the right. This ridge can be followed back to a track at GDA487871, which can be taken back to the road.

Another is to continue around under the cliffs to the Colliery. From there you can walk up the road, or up Kamarah Gully. There is a waterfall in Kamarah Gully, and you will need to climb out on the left or right before this.

Comments

Many parties miss the upper section of canyon, which has a tricky climb around to avoid a deep pool. There is one short drop, which is easiest to abseil, but can be hand-over-handed. There are some shallow wades at normal water levels.

Koombanda Canyon

Difficulty: EM

Quality: 4/10

Time: A short day

Wetsuits: Optional

Date last checked: 2005-10-01

Koombanda Canyon is a short pleasant canyon flowing in to the Grose River from the north near Bell. It features a couple of short abseils and a couple of chilly swims.

Entry

Heading west on Bells Line of Road, pull off left on a fire trail just before the road crosses the railway line. This is not marked on the map, but follows the rail line. Follow this for about 1.7km and park in a clearing. Contour around the hill (the 1085 point on the map) keeping north of the major tributary, and drop in to the tributary that joins the main creek at MGA473872 (Mt Wilson). There is plenty of scrub getting into the trib. Follow the trib down to the main creek and walk down a gully just to the left of the drop (there are tapes in a tree to the right, but quite unnecessary). Head down the creek for several hundred metres to the start of the canyon.

Notes

The first abseil is only about 5m, and then there is a swim of about 20m. The second abseil is shortly after. This is about 15m from a very long sling from a tree high up on the right hand side into a deep dark cleft. You finish in waist deep water. Other anchors are possible. The final abseil is only about 3m, followed by a 15m swim. This can probably be jumped if you check for rocks.

Exit

Continue down the creek until you reach a bridge, at the old colliery. Follow the road back up the hill, and turn right just before you cross the rail line to head back to your car. If you had a second car you could drop it at the colliery if you wanted to save the walk.

Alternatively you can head up Kamarah Gully and on to Koombanda Ridge, and thence back to the road. If you take this exit, you could leave a second car on the Bell Rd.

Dargans Creek Canyon

Difficulty: E

Quality: 6/10

Time: A few hours

Wetsuits: Recommended

Date last checked: 2010-01-04

Dargans Creek Canyon is a very good canyon in the Clarence area which can be done without abseiling. It is quite long and dark and has an interesting exit up spikes in a tree.

Entry

Driving west along Bells Line of Road, turn left just before the road goes over the railway bridge between Bell and Clarence. Drive along the dirt road alongside the railway until you reach a locked gate after about 600m. Turn left, and then right after about 100m. Follow this road for another 900m until you reach a large clearing. Park here.

Follow the track east over and down the hill to the bottom carpark, and then turn right on a rutted out 4wd track down to the dam. Just before you reach the dam look for a faint track on your right that leads to an old set of iron steps. These lead directly down to a large rock amphitheatre and the creek itself.

If you can't find them, scramble down into the dry creek bed below the dam and follow it through the climbing area to the right. Below the climbing area you should find yourself in the same amphitheatre.

Notes

Follow the creek downstream. The creek slowly takes on a canyoniferous look. Sometimes the walking is easier in the creek, but mostly there will be a track on the bank. After some way, the creek drops into a canyon. There are a few climb downs, but they are not particularly difficult. There are no abseils, but wetsuits are useful as there are a few short swims. As the canyon begins to open out, you will see a small waterfall coming in from the right. There may be a rope hanging down and/or a log to climb up.

Exit

The exit first goes up the waterfall. There is usually a handline hanging down or a log that can be climbed. If there is neither then you may need to find a log and get someone up to the top. A handline is then useful to get the rest up. On top of the waterfall there is a tree with spikes that leads up to the next ledge. The ledge is somewhat exposed, although there are currently ropes to hang on to. From there a track heads first west, then up to the top of the ridge. It then turns into a 4wd track which leads back to the clearing where you parked.

If you have beginners in the group you may want to belay them up the waterfall or spiked tree. The results of a fall, particularly from the tree or the ledge that it leads to, can be nasty.

It is also possible to reverse the canyon, or to continue down the main creek. The latter option needs a long car shuffle.

Comments

Dargans Creek is an excellent introductory canyon as it has a reasonably sustained constriction, although it is not especially deep, nor is the whole canyon very long. The exit can be a little tricky, although not if everyone is confident. The dam makes an excellent swimming spot, and if it is a hot day you will probably find that most of the traffic in the car park is for swimming, not canyoning. The wall on the far side of the dam makes interesting climbing, and the results of a fall are generally just a loud splash. We took the wrong tracks from the car park and ended up at the top dam. We swam down from there - about 500m - to the bottom dam. There are quite a number of good spots to climb up and jump in.

CARMARTHEN LABYRINTH

The Carmarthen Labyrinth is one of the most spectacular areas for canyons, boasting the classics of Claustral, Ranon and Thunder Canyons, all joining in Thunder Gorge. They all feature long, deep and dark constrictions, and their proximity to Mt Tomah means they are wetter than most. Claustral is the most popular of the three as it does not require a car shuffle. The lesser known Burumin Canyon (Explorers Brook) and King Georges Brook Canyon also have long canyon sections.

Claustral Canyon

Difficulty: M

Quality: 10/10

Time: A long day

Wetsuits: Recommended

Date last checked: 2010-03-13

Claustral Canyon is one of the most impressive canyons around. Three abseils through the dark Black Hole of Calcutta are followed by 700m of high quality canyon.

It was discovered by SUBW parties in the early 1960s but the waterfalls were first descended by a Kameruka Bushwalking Club party in 1963, after placing a bolt on the blocked up keyhole.

Entry

Driving along Bells Line of Road, about 800m past the Mount Tomah Botanic Gardens, turn left at a picnic area. Follow this to the end and park next to the microwave tower. The track leaves from a stile over the fence at the end. Head along the track for about 800m to a fork. Take the right branch down the hill, and then left onto a foot track at the National Park sign. Head down the hill, turning right at a very small saddle (before the main Camels Saddle). The track goes steeply downhill until you reach the creek.

Notes

A track can be followed alongside the creek for some way. There are a couple of canyon-like sections in here. You can put wetsuits on when you start getting your feet wet, or wait until the first swim.

A short swim or deep wade starts the excitement. There is a climb down or jump in (only if the water is very high) of about 4m with a swim. Not long after is another short (2m) jump in, and another swim.

Then you reach the abseils. A short scramble leads down to the first of these, 10m, through a hole. There is a convenient ledge to unclip on - a 17m rope reaches this. After a swim across the pool, the second abseil follows, also 10m, from a ring bolt up high on the right. The first two abseils can be combined with a 50m rope, but the pulldown may be difficult. The third (about 15m) also goes through a hole (the Keyhole, unless the hole is blocked, in which case you have to swim across the pool and go over the top). All of the abseils have ledges that you can detach the rope from before getting wet. A short swim follows, and then a wade, through a deep dark section, to the junction with Ranon Brook.

700m of high quality canyon brings you to the Thunder Gorge junction. If you have time it is worth visiting Thunder Canyon from the bottom.

The creek opens out for about 500m before narrowing again. There are some tricky climb downs in the next section. There are also two longer climb downs of about 5m each, which usually have fixed ropes in place. The first climb down you would be better off abseiling. The second is easier, but is dangerous in high water, and should be abseiled on the right hand side in those conditions. In between the climb downs is the Tunnel Swim, which can sometimes be a wade, but is usually a long cold swim up to 50m through a dark tunnel.

About 50m past the second climb down, Rainbow Ravine is a reasonably obvious sloping waterfall that comes in on your left, as the creek bends right. A further 50m past this there is a final 20m swim to the exit gully. Many parties miss this exit and end up being benighted in the canyon, so be careful.

Exit

Scramble up the exit gully for about 20m and then traverse left under the cliff to Rainbow Ravine. Head up Rainbow Ravine. There are a few tricky scrambles, and some wades (for those who carry dry socks or shoes).

Where the gully splits higher up, head to the left. At the top there are two more tricky scrambles, the first up a log. The second can be made easy by stepping to the right and using the side of a good handhold for the left hand. It is possible to avoid the top scrambles by traversing around to the next gully to the right.

From there follow the obvious track up to the Camels Hump, down to the saddle and up the other side and then along to the car park.

Comments

An excellent canyon, or series of canyon sections. The part between Ranon Brook and Thunder is absolutely superb, similar to Rocky Creek. There is a significant amount of scrambling in the canyon, and out the exit, which should not be underestimated. Keep this in mind if you are taking beginners.

If you have a large group it is wise to bring three ropes of appropriate lengths and send an experienced abseiler down to rig them all. Otherwise it can be quite cold waiting between abseils.

Ranon Canyon

Difficulty: M

Quality: 10/10

Time: A long day

Wetsuits: Recommended

Date last checked: 2009-11-28

Ranon Canyon is an excellent trip, as it shares some of the best parts of Claustral Canyon and also of Thunder Gorge. It can be a good way of avoiding some of the congestion of Claustral, although it requires a car shuffle or road bash.

It was first descended by a Kameruka Bushwalking Club party consisting of Barry Dunnett and Dave Lambert in 1962.

Entry

There are a couple of ways of entering Ranon Canyon. Either way, leave a car at the **Claustral** carpark at Mt Tomah South.

The shorter way is via Mistake Ravine (this is "Ranon Canyon" in the Jamieson guide). Drive west along Bells Line of Rd to MGA578850 and park at a grassy open area just past the top of the hill. Walk down the scrubby ridge to the SW. Scramble into the creek at MGA578847. A short way down the creek there are three short drops. These can be abseiled, handlined or climbed. Then there is a reasonable section of canyon to the junction with Ranon Brook. The creek walk is nice and flat, with very green ferns lining the walls, but the canyon is fairly open.

The longer way is to enter Ranon Brook higher up (this is "Ranon Brook Canyon" in the Jamieson guide). It is quite nice, but rather than a separate canyon, I would view it simply as a different way into the system. I wouldn't bother doing it as a canyon in it's own right. Drive west along Bells Line of Rd to just N of the 888 point, and head down the ridge to the ESE aiming to drop into the creek near the junction at MGA579841. There is a short canyon section just before the junction with Mistake Ravine. It starts with a 9m abseil, then a 5m abseil or hand line, a 15m drop in a couple of stages, and a 4m jump, climb down or abseil. There are a couple of other tricky climb downs. There are pools after most of the abseils, but they can be avoided with some difficulty if you want to keep your top half dry.

Notes

From the junction of Mistake Ravine and Ranon Brook, there is a bit of walking to the first abseil, about 6m into a waist deep pool. Then follows a short section of canyon, another short drop, and then another abseil. This is about 6m, and the log that used to be there is now gone. The abseils are both a bit awkward - overhung with chockstones. It is a bit further to the main drop. There are two primary ways to get down.

The first is to traverse along ledges to the right to some slings from a tree. This is quite a long direct drop - about 30m. A full 60m rope should reach but I wouldn't advise shorter.

More exciting is to scramble down logs into a cavern to the left. There are two abseils, going down four waterfalls, with pools after the first and third. The first is a 15m abseil from a large

chockstone, down the first two sections of the falls to another chamber. Finally a 20m abseil down another two sections, also from a large chockstone. Both of these abseils involve a short swim across the pool between the falls.

Either way brings you out into Claustral Brook, about 100m downstream from the Black Hole of Calcutta.

700m of high quality canyon brings you to the Thunder Gorge junction. If you have time it is worth visiting Thunder Canyon from the bottom.

The creek opens out for about 500m before narrowing again. There are some tricky climb downs in the next section. There are also two longer climb downs of about 5m each, which usually have fixed ropes in place. The first climb down you would be better off abseiling. The second is easier, but is dangerous in high water, and should be abseiled on the right hand side in those conditions. In between the climb downs is the Tunnel Swim, which can sometimes be a wade, but is usually a long cold swim up to 50m through a dark tunnel.

About 50m past the second climb down, Rainbow Ravine is a reasonably obvious sloping waterfall that comes in on your left, as the creek bends right. A further 50m past this there is a final 20m swim to the exit gully. Many parties miss this exit and end up being benighted in the canyon, so be careful.

Exit

Scramble up the exit gully for about 20m and then traverse left under the cliff to Rainbow Ravine. Head up Rainbow Ravine. There are a few tricky scrambles, and some wades (for those who carry dry socks or shoes).

Where the gully splits higher up, head to the left. At the top there are two more tricky scrambles, the first up a log. The second can be made easy by stepping to the right and using the side of a good handhold for the left hand. It is possible to avoid the top scrambles by traversing around to the next gully to the right.

From there follow the obvious track up to the Camels Hump, down to the saddle and up the other side and then along to the car park.

Comments

A very nice way into the Claustral system. The main abseil down the falls is spectacular, although the upper sections are less so. The creek walk is nice, but it is not a great canyon until you get below the main abseil.

As usual, the section below the abseil is awesome.

There are a few short swims in Ranon itself, but only at the final set of abseils. There are about three longer swims in Claustral, but they were not too cold.

Thunder Canyon

Difficulty: M

Quality: 8/10

Time: One day

Wetsuits: Recommended

Date last checked: 2003-01-17

Thunder Canyon was the first of the impressive Carmarthen canyons to be discovered. It was first descended in 1960 by an SUBW party of Colin Oloman, Gerry O'Byrne and Dick Donaghey, as part of a trip from Mt Charles on the Bell Road to Leura. The discovery gave a major boost to the exploration of sandstone canyons in the Blue Mountains.

Thunder Canyon these days tends to be overshadowed by its tributaries Claustral and Ranon, as it both requires a car shuffle, and the best parts of the canyon can be visited from the bottom.

Entry

Leave a car at the Claustral carpark at Mt Tomah South. Drive west along Bells Line of Rd to Mt Charles, and park at an open area on the right hand side just after the top of the hill. Walk down Lightning Ridge to where it starts to drop steeply. We headed south a little early and ended up doing some hairy scrambling down ledges with a final handline into the creek at MGA584825. A little further east looks like an easy abseil followed by an easy slope into the creek. This may be what Jamieson recommends.

Alternatively, David Noble's guide recommends dropping into the creek further upstream. Given the amount of scrub at the bottom of the ridge, this may be worth investigating.

Notes

There is about 300m to the start of the canyon. There are a few options for the abseils. We did 20m from a tree down the falls to the left, and then 8m down the next section. Alternatively you could scramble down to the right and do about 20m from a tree.

There is a very good section of high narrow canyon from here to the Claustral junction, about 300m long.

The creek opens out for about 500m before narrowing again. There are some tricky climb downs in the next section. There are also two longer climb downs of about 5m each, which usually have fixed ropes in place. The first climb down you would be better off abseiling. The second is easier, but is dangerous in high water, and should be abseiled on the right hand side in those conditions. In between the climb downs is the Tunnel Swim, which can sometimes be a wade, but is usually a long cold swim up to 50m through a dark tunnel.

About 50m past the second climb down, Rainbow Ravine is a reasonably obvious sloping waterfall that comes in on your left, as the creek bends right. A further 50m past this there is a final 20m swim to the exit gully. Many parties miss this exit and end up being benighted in the canyon, so be careful.

Exit

Scramble up the exit gully for about 20m and then traverse left under the cliff to Rainbow Ravine. Head up Rainbow Ravine. There are a few tricky scrambles, and some wades (for those who carry dry socks or shoes).

Where the gully splits higher up, head to the left. At the top there are two more tricky scrambles, the first up a log. The second can be made easy by stepping to the right and using the side of a good handhold for the left hand. It is possible to avoid the top scrambles by traversing around to the next gully to the right.

From there follow the obvious track up to the Camels Hump, down to the saddle and up the other side and then along to the car park.

Comments

The canyon is very good but also very short given the walk in. It is probably worth going up Claustral some way to have a look at the main canyon section there.

There are only one or two short swims in Thunder. There are about three longer swims in Thunder Gorge below the Claustral junction.

SOUTH GROSE

The South Grose region sports a variety of canyons, from the short but spectacular Mt Hay Canyon, to the long, impressive Grand Canyon, as well as pretty creeks but less exciting canyons such as Crayfish Creek Canyon. Most of the South Grose Canyons are wet, though not all require swimming. The Grand Canyon is the pick of the canyons in the area for quality. Other good canyons include Arethusa Canyon, Fortress Canyon and Mt Hay Canyon.

Fortress Canyon

Difficulty: E

Quality: 5/10

Time: A short day

Wetsuits: Recommended

Date last checked: 2010-01-09

Fortress Canyon is a nice canyon, though not particularly deep or dark. It is best visited in warm weather as there are a number of long swims. The lunch spot at the end of the canyon is a highlight, looking across to Lockley Pylon at the top of the cliffs above Govett Gorge. The walk out also has superb views.

Entry

Driving west along the Great Western Highway, take the main exit to Leura. Turn right at the roundabout, and then right at the first street. Head down the hill and turn left at the roundabout. The road does a couple of sharp bends after 700m, and becomes unsealed. Continue for another 6km to a parking area at MGA555726. Park your car here.

Walk west along the fire trail. Ignore a turn off to the left after 600m. At a clearing after 1.5km, turn right on to another, more overgrown, fire trail. When this comes to an end after 100m, continue on a foot track down the left of the ridge and into the creek. Continue along the creek. Eventually you need to start wading, and this is probably a good spot to put wetsuits on if you are using them.

Notes

There are a number of sections of canyon. The first very short section starts with a short climb down or careful jump, and a 20m swim at about MGA553747.

After opening out for some distance, the second section starts with a 2m jump at around MGA546750, and several swims.

The abseil is shortly into a third section of canyon. This is about 6m. It can be jumped, but the depth is usually only about 2m, and there are rocks that need to be avoided.

There more swimming to the end of the canyon. Just past the end of the canyon, Fortress Creek goes over the cliff into Govett Gorge in a 70m waterfall, which is a spectacular spot to have lunch.

Exit

Head back from the edge of the cliff about 50m and look for a track up the gully to the south west. This leads up to the Fortress, and then back along Fortress Ridge until you rejoin the fire trail you started in on.

Comments

A 20m rope is sufficient for the abseil. Wetsuits are advisable for most parties.

Grand Canyon

Difficulty: EM

Quality: 9/10

Time: A few hours

Wetsuits: Optional

Date last checked: 2009-12-05

The Grand Canyon is a beautiful canyon, with a long, sustained constriction. It is very popular because of its easy access. It was one of the first canyons to be visited by Europeans. The track along the rim was built in 1906 and opened in 1907.

It is a good day when combined with Jugglers Canyon. You can aim to stay relatively dry (one compulsory 30m swim) or otherwise take wetsuits.

Entry

Turn on to Evans Lookout Road and park at the car park for Neates Glen, after about 3km. Follow the track down the hill and into the creek. After about 1.5km the track goes through a tunnel. A few hundred metres further on the canyon starts.

If you are coming from Jugglers Canyon, avoid the Pilcher Track and continue up the main Grand Canyon track for about 15 minutes. It is fairly obvious when you are coming from this direction where the canyon starts.

Notes

About 50m downstream from the first main falls into the canyon the NPWS has installed a bombproof anchor with three bolts and two rings. The abseil is about 17m and somewhat overhung at the edge. Once in the canyon, good route finding and a bit of scrambling can help you avoid all but the last 30m swim. The scrambling can be quite tricky, and some people will probably get wet. The rest of the canyon is no more than waist deep. The 30m swim is just after a sharp right hand bend, near the end of the canyon.

Exit

The exit is relatively obvious. You reach a pair of signs just before a side creek comes in from the right, one to Neates Glen and one to Evans Lookout. Either follow the main track back to Neates Glen and the car, or if you have come from Jugglers Canyon, immediately after you cross the side creek, the Pilcher Track (very faint) heads up to the right.

Comments

The tree mentioned as the abseil anchor in Jamieson's guide fell down a number of years ago. The abseil is now 17m.

Mt Hay Canyon

Difficulty: MH

Quality: 6/10

Time: One day (more if exiting via Blue Gum Forest)

Wetsuits: Recommended

Date last checked: 2007-10-14

Mt Hay Canyon, often known as Butterbox Canyon, is a short but spectacular canyon on the southern edge of the Grose Valley. The main drop is quite awesome, and can be difficult and dangerous in high water, but the main constriction ends soon afterwards. Most parties exit via a short but exposed rock climbing pass that was popularised (and possibly discovered), by Tom Williams in 1977.

The canyon was first descended by a party from the Sydney Technical College Bushwalking Club (now UNSW Outdoors Club) in 1954. Early parties used to exit via the Blue Gum Forest and the Lockley Pylon track, making for a long day. Until the early 1960s it was a particularly long day as the fire trail to Mt Hay was only put in around then.

Entry

Drive to the end of the Mt Hay Rd at MGA590758 (Katoomba). Drop W into the small creek and follow it down. The first cliffline can be avoided on the right with an easy climb down. There are 4 short drops up to 15m in the creek itself, but the second and fourth can be scrambled around to the right.

Once in the main creek (Rocky Points Creek), there is a bit of scrambling, one place where a rope can be used to hand over hand or abseil, and a 20m swim before the canyon proper starts.

Notes

The first drop is about 9m from a tree on the right, or jump into the pool (check depth). Scramble down to the main drop. The main drop can be done in two stages - the first about 20m from ring bolts to a large chockstone, and then another 20m from bolts above the chockstone to the bottom. The first person down should be a good abseiler, as getting on to the chockstone can be difficult. It is useful to have two ropes so that not everyone needs to crowd onto the chockstone. You should clip on while you are on the chockstone. The pulldown is easier if you abseil the second pitch behind the chockstone, although this may be tricky in high water. In fact, this whole section can be tricky in high water.

Then there is an abseil/downclimb of about 4m, followed by a 2m jump, and then the canyon opens out. The next drop looks high, but can be scrambled on the left via a series of ledges. There are also slings on the right. A few hundred metres further downstream there is a final 12m abseil from a tree on the right.

Exit

There are several options for exiting.

The non-climbing exit involves following the creek down to the Grose River, walking upstream on the Grose to the Blue Gum Forest, and then up the Lockley Pylon Track back to the Pinnacles. Then there is a road walk back to the car.

Alternatively, there are a number of climbing exits. The most commonly used one is as follows.

Follow the cliff line around to the right for several hundred metres until you can get up to a wide ledge. Follow the ledge back to the right (exposed), through a cave, to the start of the climb. The climb has 5 fixed hangers and a ring bolt, and while not too hard, the holds are dusty and climbing without proper shoes is tricky. It is also quite exposed.

At the top, head around to the right to a steep gully that leads to the top of the cliffs. Head up to the left from there until you can find your way back to the car.

Jugglers Canyon

Difficulty: EM

Quality: 4/10

Time: A few hours

Wetsuits: No

Date last checked: 2009-12-05

Jugglers Canyon is a short but pleasant canyon near the Grand Canyon at Medlow Bath. The canyon itself is not of great quality, but it is not bad. Look back up after you finish the final abseil. The walls there are very high and spectacular. Luckily the walks in and out are pretty short too. There are no swims, so it can be done in winter.

It is definitely worth doing the Grand Canyon as well, if you are up for the swim. Even doing both of them is a relatively short day.

It was discovered in 1993 by a SUBW party consisting of Stephen Bray, Louise De Beuzeville (the juggler) and Justin Blows.

Entry

Driving along the Great Western Highway, turn right at the lights on the railway bridge at Medlow Bath. Turn left into Rutland Rd, about 1km further on. If you reset your trip meter here, then:

Stay right at 2.4km as you pass a sealed road on the left

Veer left at 3.4km at the airport

Turn left at 4.2km onto a narrow track - at electricity tower No 20

Park at 4.4km at a fork in the track

The Pilcher Track is the one that heads off to the right. Follow this for several hundred metres and it passes under power lines and becomes a single track. After about 200m further, you will see a large tree with a hole burnt by fire in the trunk. Turn right here onto a faint track, which leads you down to the creek.

Notes

A vague track follows one side or the other of the creek for most of the way to the main abseils. A 4m waterfall is reached early on, and can be scrambled or optionally hand-over-handed. More creek walking follows before the canyon section near the end.

First is a 9m drop into a pool, from a sling around a high branch. Veer right (facing downstream) at the bottom onto narrow ledges if you want to avoid wading/swimming. Next is an 5m drop down a waterfall, or 8m from a tree on the left. Then there is a climb down under a big log wedged in the creek, or otherwise extend the previous abseil. The final abseil is about 20m, from a small tree

along ledges to the left. It has a very awkward start. Alternatively, do another climb down the main creek, and abseil 12m down the waterfall, again veering right at the bottom to stay dry.

Exit

Walk down the creek for about 100m to Greaves Creek. Cross Greaves Creek and scramble up the other side until you get on the tourist track. Turn left and follow the track upstream. Avoid a turnoff to Evans Lookout, and continue towards Neates Glen, criss-crossing the main creek several times. Immediately after crossing a small side creek you will find more signs to Neates Glen and Evans Lookout. This is the end of the main canyon section of the Grand Canyon. The Pilcher Track (fairly faint) starts immediately back across the side creek from the signposts, just under the power lines. If you are ascending a steep series of steps on the Grand Canyon track you've gone too far. The Pilcher Track climbs steeply up the cliffline, then heads up the side of the gully (Juggler) that you have just descended, and back to your car.

Comments

The Pilcher Track is not correctly marked on the map. The fire trail marked on the map in fact forks about 200m down (this is where you park), and heads at about 45 degrees towards the power lines. Once under the power lines, it turns generally north, running closer to the creek than the one marked.

Hat Hill Canyon

Difficulty: E

Quality: 7/10

Time: A short day

Wetsuits: Optional

Date last checked: 2010-03-19

Hat Hill Canyon is a good canyon in Hat Hill Creek, north of Blackheath. It has been known for many years. Up until mid 2008 the Blackheath Sewage Treatment Plant was releasing treated effluent into the creek, so the canyon was not often done. The closure of the plant should increase the water quality in the creek.

Hat Hill Canyon consists of three distinct sections, separated by pleasant creek walking. No abseils are required, though there are a few short swims.

Entry

Drive along Hat Hill Road to where it becomes dirt, and turn left in to Godson Ave, just next to Mt Booralee. Turn right at the intersection at MGA509774 and park in the first pull in bay on the left. About 10m past this, walk down a fire trail on the left. Ignore a foot track to the left at a cairn after 150m - this leads to the climbing area of Atlantis in the upper part of the creek. Continue down the fire trail until it peters out at a burnt out car, and then keep walking down the ridge and into the creek.

Follow the creek down to where the first section of canyon starts at the creek junction at MGA512783.

Notes

The first section of canyon is impressive, but short, ending shortly after the junction with the next side creek on the right. There is a short swim and some wading. The side creek also has a short section of canyon.

The second section of canyon begins around MGA513786. There is a short, awkward drop into a deep dark section with some swimming. The canyon section ends a little way before the major tributary on the left. This tributary has some canyon in it as well.

The third and most impressive section begins at around MGA513795 and continues intermittently to where the creek opens out at MGA513801. There is some wading to about waist deep. The major side tributary on the right has a double arch in the rock at the waterfall, and is well worth a look.

Exit

To exit, retrace your steps back through the lower section of canyon, and exit up either the gully to the north at MGA514795, or to the south east at the creek junction at MGA513793. Walk up to Bald Head Ridge and back along the track that goes over Hat Hill to the road. It is about 1.5km back along roads to your car.

It is also possible to abseil Hat Hill Falls and descend to the Grose. However, this would make the trip into a longish day for little extra gain. There is also a little known tricky pass, Lews Pass, which bypasses Hat Hill Falls on the left.

Comments

Hat Hill Canyon is well worth a visit. The lower constriction is of high quality, and access is easy.

Crayfish Creek Canyon

Difficulty: E

Quality: 3/10

Time: A short day

Wetsuits: No

Date last checked: 2009-03-28

Crayfish Creek lies off Burramoko Ridge north of Blackheath. It has a very short but pretty section of canyon, and is otherwise a pleasant creek walk. It can typically be done with no more than a couple of waist deep wades.

Entry

Drive through Blackheath and turn right into Ridgewell Rd, which is the second street after Hat Hill Rd (Perrys Lookdown). Ridgewell Rd immediately becomes dirt, but can be driven along for 2.xkm to a locked gate.

Park here and walk along the fire trail to GDA503792, just before Burramoko Hill, and head west down the ridge, and then NW into the creek at the creek junction.

Notes

The short canyon section starts at GDA497798. There are no abseils or swims, though a waist deep wade needs to be negotiated.

Exit

The canyon soon opens out and it is pleasant creek walking from here to the side gully at GDA502804. Head up this, then up the first gully on the left. An awkward scramble is needed to get up over chockstones, then climb out on to the ridge and follow it east to the road.

Alternatively, the canyon can be reversed and the same ridge taken out as you walked in on.

JAMISON VALLEY

Empress Canyon is the only well-known canyon on the south side of the main Blue Mountains ridge. Given its quality, it is perhaps surprising that there are no others. There are certainly a few short slots, and some of these can be seen from walks such as the National Pass (Den Fenella for example) and Prince Henry Cliff Walk.

Empress Canyon

Difficulty: E

Quality: 6/10

Time: A few hours

Wetsuits: Recommended

Date last checked: 2010-03-21

Empress Canyon is a short but very impressive canyon in Valley-of-the-Waters Creek near Wentworth Falls. It is very popular, particularly with commercial groups, due to its easy access, sustained constriction, and number of jumps and swims. It finishes with a spectacular 30m abseil down a large waterfall into a pool in front of the tourists.

Entry

From the Conservation Hut at Wentworth Falls, follow the National Pass track, and signs to Valley of the Waters. At a T-junction just below a few sets of steep metal stairs, a sign to the National Pass track points left and a sign to the Nature Track points right. Head along the Nature Track, which follows along side the creek on the right. Continue past Lilians Bridge (where you can look down into the canyon) staying on the right until you reach a ford across Valley of the Waters Creek. This is the start of the canyon. There is also an upper section that is worth having a look at some time.

Notes

The canyon narrows immediately. There are a number of tricky climb downs and an optional jump. If you have less confident people in your group you may wish to use a handline. There are also quite a number of short but cold swims. The canyon is quite short, and after about half an hour you find yourself at the top of the abseil.

There are chains on both sides, as well as clip in points for safety. Both sides have overhung starts. The left side is typically a little easier as it does not go straight down the waterfall. The left side drops 15m or more to some slippery ledges, or 28m to the pool at the bottom. The right side has drops 28m straight down the waterfall to a pool at the bottom.

Exit

Follow the track up to where it rejoins the entry track and from there back to the carpark.

Comments

A short but attractive little canyon with very easy access. A good beginner's trip, although the abseil is overhung from whichever side you start. Wetsuits may be useful, particularly if your party is large or inexperienced. A fast moving party on a warm day can probably make do without.

KANANGRA

The Kanangra canyons are quite a different experience from the canyons of the northern Blue Mountains. The rock is typically quartzite and related rocks, rather than sandstone, and the rocks are significantly more slippery as a result. The waterfalls are much bigger, the exposure is greater, and the canyons are more open. In most cases the canyons do not have a true slot, although Kanangra and Danae Brook do have slot sections. Dione Dell is a relatively easy canyon, and popular as it doesn't require swimming.

Davies Canyon

Difficulty: H

Quality: NA

Time: Two days

Wetsuits: Not required

Date last checked: 2002-12-26

Davies Canyon lies in Sally Camp Creek upstream from its junction from Whalania Creek. It is more of a bushwalk with abseiling, through an impressive gorge. Like most of the Kanangra canyons, route finding often involves moving about on scree slopes above large drops.

Entry

Park at the locked gate at the start of the fire trail between King Pin and Queen Pin (AMG286398) on the Kanangra Road. Walk along the fire trail to Thurat Trig. Head down Thurat Ridge. There is a track that follows the ridge but it is difficult to pick up. At about AMG329415 head N then NW down the spur to reach Sally Camp Creek. The canyon starts shortly after.

Alternatively you can walk in from the Whalania Fire Road and Nioka Ridge.

Notes

A few hundred metres after the canyon begins you reach the first abseil. We abseiled 50m down the right hand side of the falls, from an exposed narrow nose of rock that juts out. This can be done in two 25m stages if desired. Alternatively there were also slings around a tree on a slope to the left side of the falls. This looked slightly longer, and you were likely to end up in a pool.

About 250m further on you reach the second abseil. We abseiled 50m from a tree to the left of the falls, into a shallow pool.

The next main drop we scrambled down ledges, passing packs, to the right of the top of the chute and around to a large open platform. We abseiled 20m from slings around a tree to a very slippery rock and narrow ledge. A tricky 2m climb down followed. Finally a 15m drop from dodgy bolts to a pool which we had to then swim across.

Then followed some creek walking to a smaller fall (about 10m). We scrambled along a dirt bank to the right and down a slope. A short drop at the bottom required a 2m abseil into knee deep water.

Some more creek walking got us to another small fall. Scrambling along a steep dirt slope to the right brought us to an exposed set of slings above a 15m drop, which we abseiled.

After another 100m walking we reached the next main drop. We abseiled 20m from slings to the left of the falls to a small ledge. Then 50m into a pool. Traverse left (facing downstream) if you want to avoid a swim.

The creek then drops into a narrow slot. We scrambled along a slightly exposed dirt bank as the creek dropped away below us. Finally we reached a set of slings above a 50m drop onto slippery ledges and abseiled. It is probably possible to swim and abseil down the creek itself if desired.

We scrambled down a few ledges on the left side, and then crossed over as we reached another small set of falls. We scrambled right along a dirt bank, and put a rope around a tree for a 10m abseil as the scrambling became a bit exposed.

Another few hundred metres of walking brought us to the Whalania Ck junction.

Exit

Walk up Mt Paralyser (logbook at summit), back along Thurat Ridge and follow the fire trail back to the car. Mt Paralyser is extremely steep, particularly between the 800m-1100m contours where much of the walking is at a gradient of nearly 1:1. It may be easier to contour around to the northern buttress once you reach a reasonable height.

Danae Brook Canyon

Difficulty: H

Quality: 9/10

Time: A very long day

Wetsuits: Recommended

Date last checked: 2010-02-20

Danae Brook Canyon is a spectacular and challenging trip through the most slot-like of the big Kanangra canyons. It is typically done as a day trip, but it needs a small, efficient and fast moving party to avoid being benighted. It can be difficult and dangerous in high water and it is not advisable to do it after rain. A very early start is needed, and torches should be carried.

Wetsuits, helmets and spray jackets are recommended, as there are several swims, and you will get very wet in a number of the waterfalls.

Entry

Leave a car at Kanangra Walls and drive the other either to the Mount Thurat Fire Trail (2.5km back from Kanangra Walls) or to the King Pin Fire Trail (3km north of Boyd River Campground). Walk along the fire trail to the ridge between Danae Brook and Kanangra Creek, and head down the ridge and into the creek, trying to avoid the scrub. Walk down the creek to the first waterfall at MGA327375 (Kanangra). You should be here before 9am.

Notes

The first waterfall can be abseiled (28-30m) from a tree on the left, or scrambled on the left. The next drop (27-28m) is abseiled from a tree on the left, into the slot.

The third drop (28m) has a tricky start. The anchor is at your feet, but there is a single bolt that can be used to aid down to an easier start. It is best abseiled behind the small chockstone lower down to avoid rope jams.

The next three abseils are the highlight, and all are difficult in high water. The fourth abseil ("Waterfall Abseil") (27m) goes straight down the waterfall. There is a lower anchor that can be used in low water. The next abseil ("Danae Direct") (31m) goes down a hole, with anchors again at your feet. Alternatively scramble on the left along a ledge to a tree for a 31m drop. There is then a short scramble. A narrow ledge with pitons anchoring a safety line leads to a double bolt anchor for a 20m abseil (the "Slippery Log Abseil", though the slippery log is no longer there). This goes down a chute and you are forced into the flow near the bottom.

The seventh abseil (15m) is an easy one from pitons on a ledge on the left. Then there are four short (5m) abseils or hand over hands, some of which may be climbable in low water. The last of these leads to the final major abseil (28-30m), from bolts on a ledge on the left.

From the far side of the pool, climb over the small knoll and down to a tree for a 12m abseil into the boulder chute. There is then a long period of scrambling down the steep boulder chute. Abseiling can generally be avoided by good route finding. Near the bottom of the chute there is a 15m abseil from two pitons on the right side of a pool. The boulder chute can take a couple of hours to negotiate.

Continue rock hopping down the creek to the major junction with Kanangra Creek.

Exit

The easiest route out is straight up the steep ridge south of the junction to the Kilpatrick Causeway (short scramble may be needed at the top). Then follow the walking track back to Kanangra Walls. The track is difficult to follow on the tops in the dark.

Other routes include walking up Kanangra Creek to Murdering Gully and exiting as for Kalang Falls or Kanangra Main, or over Thurat Spires (abseiling required).

Kanangra Main Canyon

Difficulty: H

Quality: NA

Time: One long day

Wetsuits: Recommended

Date last checked: 2009-03-21

Kanangra Main is a spectacular trip through one of the steeper gorges of Kanangra-Boyd. It starts with several pitches of abseiling beside a 150m waterfall and continues down numerous smaller falls, mostly in the 40m range.

Kanangra Main is a serious undertaking, especially in wet weather. The quartzite rock becomes extremely slippery and scrambling is much more difficult. In high water, some of the abseils become quite dangerous. All party members need to be experienced abseilers, and it is advisable to have done some of the less difficult Kanangra canyons previously so that the slippery rock and scrambling is familiar.

Entry

From the car park at Kanangra Walls, walk back up the road 600m. Take a track to the right that leads down across Kanangra Brook and up around the right side of Kittani Top. As you near an obvious head, the track forks. Take the left one, which becomes vague, following the top of Kittani Rim around to above the top falls. Head down to the point to the right of the falls to where you can see a small waterfall just before it flows over the edge. Scramble down a short exposed gully and left to ledges below the first waterfall, where you will find the first set of anchors.

Notes

The first three abseils go down the main face to the right of the falls. There are a number of options for anchors depending on your rope lengths.

The first abseil is from bolts and slings, and is about 52m to a small ledge. If you only have 50m ropes, there is a ledge about 10m from the top with bolts and slings that can be used as a rebelay point for a shorter abseil.

The second abseil, also from bolts and slings, is about 40m to a ledge between a large pinnacle and the main face.

The third abseil is about 48m into a pool. There is an alternative anchor off small trees about 15m down from the top. If you want to avoid the pool it is possible to traverse right (facing out) on the rope along a narrow ledge about 8m above the water to another anchor point for an 8m abseil. This may make it more difficult for subsequent abseilers, and for the pull down. There is also an anchor about 10m up from the pool that goes straight down the falls.

The fourth abseil is 25m from the right hand side of the pool, into another pool. There is also an anchor on the left hand side. From the bottom of this abseil, it is possible to escape up the gully to the side.

It is a short walk to the fifth abseil, which can be done from anchors on either side of the falls. It is about 47m, finishing on the right hand side.

A scramble/swim and short walk leads to the next drop, which involves an abseil of 12m or possible scramble down to the large chockstone. From the chockstone, it is a 9m abseil from bolts on top, or continue from the previous abseil down through the hole - pull down might be difficult. Alternatively, do a 7m jump from the top of the chockstone. The water is not particularly deep, so be careful.

Another short walk leads to the next big drop, which is done in three parts. Abseil about 15m from slings on the left across the falls to a set of bolts and slings on the right. Then abseil about 40m down the right of the falls to a big greasy ledge. From the ledge, there is a 17m abseil from a somewhat dodgy setup involving a piton and bollard.

A short walk again gets to the next abseil, which goes from slings and bolts on the left, about 45m down a slippery waterfall. An alternative anchor can be found around the big boulder on the right, which can avoid the pool/waterfall.

Another scramble or swim gets you to the next waterfall. This can be scrambled around on the left, though someone has set up an anchor on a tree fern(!?).

The next waterfall is abseiled from slings around a tree on ledges on the left. It goes straight down into the pool. There may be a drier route if you scramble further left.

The final waterfall can also be scrambled around on the left.

Exit

From here it is about 40 minutes of rockhopping and scrambling down to Murdering Gully. Climb Murdering Gully, and then up spurs on the left when the gully gets steep and overgrown. Traverse right near the top to reach the saddle between the walls.

BUNGONIA

The canyons around Bungonia are somewhat similar to Kanangra. The main slot canyon in Bungonia Creek is limestone, and can be walked through. However the abseiling canyons are a mix of quartzite and other rocks. The canyons are open, more like gorges, with large waterfalls. Bungonia Creek and Jerrara Creek can be easily accessed from the campground and are popular. Spring Creek used to be a popular trip, but it is closed because of loose rock. Long Gully is open, although NPWS advises against trips there for the same reason.

Bungonia Creek Canyon

Difficulty: M

Quality: NA

Time: A long day (less if you take the quick exit)

Wetsuits: Optional

Date last checked: 2005-02-12

Though the Bungonia area is famous for its limestone caves, Bungonia Creek Canyon and the other canyons cut through quartzite and similar rock. The creek is fairly open and in comparison to the northern Blue Mountains canyons it would be better described as a gorge. The abseils are all fairly large, particularly the 70m drop down Bungonia Falls.

Entry

From the campground at Bungonia, follow the Yellow Track for about 10 minutes down to Bungonia Creek, and from there walk down the creek for about 500m to the first drop. This is labelled Bungonia Falls on the topo, but is probably incorrect.

Notes

The first waterfall is about 35m, from a long sling around a tree on the left hand side (and a 60m rope won't reach). You may be able to land on a very small ledge to belay, but there is a 30m swim across a pool straight away. About 50m further down there is a short drop. You can either scramble down the slippery slope to the edge, and jump left, or climb up to the right to slings around a tree and abseil 12m into the water. Some more easy scrambles and a few shorter swims follow, until you reach the big drop (probably the real Bungonia Falls).

At this point you have a number of options, depending on your ropes:

Climb around the right to a large gum tree with tapes, and abseil 60m to the bottom of the falls (and it is the full 60m - the ropes will be off the ground with no weight on them). If you only have 50m ropes, you can re-rig from a dodgy looking sling off a small casuarina on the last ledge before the bottom. It is also possible to climb down.

Abseil about 25m from tapes around a large casuarina on the left hand side down to a bolt anchor and smaller casuarinas, and re-rig for another 45m abseil.

Scramble down on the left hand side to slings around a lower casuarina and and abseil 60m to the base of the falls.

At this point you can take exit (2) below (the "quick exit" in Jamieson).

Otherwise, you soon reach the junction with Jerrara Creek. A little way below this is another large drop. It is possible to scramble around this drop to the left. Otherwise, there are a couple of options. Scramble or abseil down a few metres to a large casuarina on the left, and abseil 45m to another ledge above or into a pool depending on whether the pool is full or empty. There are also slings on the right hand side, but with the pool empty it may be difficult to get out.

There is one more big drop but it is easily scrambled on the left. Continue down exit (1). There are a lot of large boulders in the creek, which makes the going quite slow until the creek swings east.

Exit

There are a couple of options to exit:

1. Walk down Bungonia Creek to Breton Creek and the Red Track, and exit up this. Note that Breton Creek flows down a narrow slot at the bottom, so keep an eye out for it. Then walk back along the Green Track, or via the roads, back to the campground
2. Scramble up the steep slope on your left about 50m downstream from the pool just after crossing the pool after the abseil, heading right a little. After a short climb you reach a lookout/anchor point for an abseil into the pool below Jerrara Falls. Continue climbing up to the top of Jerrara Falls. This is largely scree and quite exposed, particularly near the top, and a rope belay is probably a good idea. Then climb the knife edge ridge to your left. This is very exposed, on scree and poor rock, and is quite dangerous. The rock can also get very hot in the afternoon sun and be painful to hold. There are limited opportunities to set up safety lines or belays.

Comments

Bungonia Creek has a few swims, some of them long. However, being an open canyon the water in summer is fairly warm, and wetsuits are optional.

Jerrara Creek Canyon

Difficulty: MH

Quality: NA

Time: A long day

Wetsuits: Optional

Date last checked: 2009-12-27

Jerrara Creek flows in to Bungonia Creek, and Jerrara Creek Canyon is similar to Bungonia Creek Canyon. Though the Bungonia area is famous for its limestone caves, the canyons cut through quartzite and similar rock. The abseil down Jerrara Falls is around 80m in total, off some interesting anchors.

Entry

From the far side of the campground, follow the Yellow Track down to Bungonia Creek and up on to the ridge on the other side. Continue along the Yellow Track to its end at a fenced lookout over

Jerrara Creek. Walk past the Track End sign, across the end of an old fire trail, and north down a gully into Jerrara Creek. The first abseil is immediately downstream.

Notes

Scramble down into the pool and climb into the cleft on the right. Abseil 20m off slings around a chockstone. There is a very small stance at the bottom, before a 40m swim.

Some creek walking follows before the next drops. There is a 5m waterfall that can be scrambled. Then a jump in of a couple of metres before the next big abseil. This is about 45m from tapes around a tree on the left, or 40m from bolts on the right. Both are a bit tricky to get to if the rock is wet.

The next short drop is about 7m, and can be abseiled on the right or hand-over-handed on the left.

The next drop is 8m, from bolts on the top of the big chockstone. It is also possible to jump, but the landing zone is very narrow. The abseil ends in a deep pool, with a 50m swim to the end.

A bit more walking brings you out at Jerrara Falls (even though not marked as so on the map). At this point it is possible to take exit (2) below.

To abseil the falls, scramble down from left to right to where the slope steepens. There are several options for abseils. A sling around a small casuarina can be used to get to a set of three (rusty) bolts about 6m down the face. It is about 80m to the bottom from those bolts. There are slings about 20m down from the bolts on the next ledge. The ledge below (40m from the top bolts) has several casuarinas that can be used as anchors. A further 20m down there are slings from 2 rusty pitons, and finally it is about 20m into the pool at the bottom. It is possible to head left and stay dry.

Walk downstream to the junction with Bungonia Creek.

A little way below this is another large drop. It is possible to scramble around this drop to the left. Otherwise, there are a couple of options. Scramble or abseil down a few metres to a large casuarina on the left, and abseil 45m to another ledge above or into a pool depending on whether the pool is full or empty. There are also slings on the right hand side of the creek, but with the pool empty it may be difficult to get out.

There is one more big drop but it is easily scrambled on the left. Continue down exit (1). There are a lot of large boulders in the creek, which makes the going quite slow until the creek swings east.

Exit

There are a couple of options to exit:

Walk down Bungonia Creek to Breton Creek and the Red Track, and exit up this. Note that Breton Creek flows down a narrow slot at the bottom, so keep an eye out for it. Then walk back along the Green Track, or via the roads, back to the campground

From the top of Jerrara Falls, climb the knife edge ridge to your right. This is very exposed, on scree and poor rock, and is quite dangerous. The rock can also get very hot in the afternoon sun and be painful to hold. There are limited opportunities to set up safety lines or belays. Once at the top, walk along the ridge until you pick up the Yellow Track, which can be followed back to the campground.

Comments

Jerrara Creek has a fair few swims, some of them fairly long. However, being an open canyon the water in summer is fairly warm, and wetsuits are optional.

The abseils down Jerrara Falls are big and exposed and a couple of experienced leaders are needed to decide which ledges to stop on.